



## The Advancement Foundation AmeriCorps\*VISTA Overview

The Advancement Foundation, a 501(c)3 organization, provides two primary functions to advance the lives of underprivileged citizens in the Roanoke Valley. First, the Foundation provides strategic planning, fundraising and board development for valuable health and human service organizations so that they are able to continue their critical work in the Valley. The Foundation does this by working with directors and board members to focus on building capacity and encouraging partnerships across organizations. The Foundation also works to provide long lasting social change for citizens by providing programming that allows citizen experiencing chronic poverty to create and execute a comprehensive life plan.

The Advancement Foundation has been chosen to serve as an Intermediary Agency for the AmeriCorps VISTA program. As an Intermediary Agency, The Advancement Foundation manages VISTA members who are assigned different projects within the community aimed at *fighting poverty and improving the lives of disadvantaged individuals*.

VISTA members commit to serve full-time for a year at a nonprofit organization or local governmental agency, working to fight illiteracy, improve health service, create businesses, strengthen community groups, and much more. With passion, commitment and hard work, you will create or expand programs designed to bring individuals and communities out of poverty. Through The Advancement Foundation, VISTA members will have the potential to engage in service learning to the community under the guided supervision by Foundation staff and various nonprofit Directors. Projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Working alongside nonprofit staff to implement development campaigns
- Developing and implementing training materials and curriculum for volunteer orientations, use of database technology, and/or site-based procedures (IE: food distributions center's protocols)
- Coordinating and executing mass appeals to donors (direct mailings, phone-a-thons, listserv contacts)
- Strategic planning and organizational assessments
- Grant writing and funding research

### **Contact Information for The Advancement Foundation VISTA Project:**

**VISTA Program Supervisor:** Judy Wood

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## Roles of a VISTA Supervisor

### **SUPERVISOR**

Checks in periodically on how work is going, clarifies questions related to the assignment, makes sure workload is manageable, and holds the VISTA accountable to the VISTA Assignment Description

### **GUIDE**

Facilitates the learning of the VISTA, recognizing the unique contributions of the VISTA and challenging him/her to grow; offers praise/constructive feedback on the VISTA's work; encourages the VISTA to be innovative

### **COLLABORATOR**

Available for brainstorming, assists with projects, and helps the VISTA understand goals and initiatives of the organization

### **ADVOCATE**

Provides resources (e.g., office equipment, supplies, funding for projects) and ensures others in the organization support and encourage the VISTA

### **VISIONARY**

Connects the purpose of the VISTA's work with the organization's vision for its future; keeps sustainability a goal

### **COMMUNICATOR**

Ensures the VISTA is aware of news, information, and procedures; encourages input/feedback from the VISTA

### **CONNECTOR**

Introduces the VISTA to others in the community so that s/he is better able to find a peer group and is visible in the community

### **TEAM LEADER**

Provides clear expectations for the VISTA's work; includes the VISTA as an integral member of the team



## Expectations of a VISTA Supervisor

The VISTA Supervisor commits to:

1. Holding a weekly meeting with the VISTA to discuss the previous week and set goals for the upcoming week. This is also a chance for VISTAs to ask any questions or voice concerns.
2. Complete evaluations of the VISTA: There are 4 Quarterly Reviews required of the Supervisors and VISTAs. Supervisors must complete the evaluation, review it with the VISTA, and return the completed evaluation to The Advancement Foundation office.
3. Be evaluated by the VISTA at the end of the VISTA's year of service.
4. Monitor and track progress toward the VISTA's assignment goals (included in VAD), including The Advancement Foundation's common project goals.
5. Ensure and encourage VISTA's attendance at required The Advancement Foundation events and professional development opportunities.
6. Monitor the progress being made toward the sustainability plan of your project.
7. Advocate for the VISTAs (make sure they meet the right people, make sure their work is being valued and recognized, etc.).
8. Act as a liaison to The Advancement Foundation to update us on the status of the VISTA on your campus and if your campus would like to apply for another VISTA the next year.

### **Tips for Clear Communication with Your VISTA**

#### **EXPECTATIONS**

Remember to be clear with your VISTAs about what is expected of them and what their role is in the office. Many times the position does not produce readily visible results, which can be frustrating for a young professional. This is especially when working on the tedious tasks that are part of building sustainability (e.g., creating files, entering data into Excel, etc.)

#### **PRIORITIES**

Be specific! What is most important? What should the VISTAs focus on first, and what are more long-term projects? Explain your priorities and then help the VISTAs in creating their own.

#### **ACCESS**

Be available! Let the VISTAs know where, when and how you can be reached. A weekly meeting is essential to review recently completed projects, let the VISTAs explain the goals for the upcoming week, and let them ask any questions.

Give VISTAs details on how to contact you when a question or issue arises. Then be available when you say you will. Also, explain acceptable office etiquette for your space.

#### **SUPERVISION**

Explain your supervision style and how you interact with staff and others. Allow the VISTAs to explain their needs, and work to find the best way to connect based on style and need.