THE ADVANCEMENT FOUNDATION
Leading Community Improvement Through Nonprofit Sustainability & Individual Advocacy

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Overview of Corporation Core Principals

The primary role of VISTA members is to help build a sustainable program by increasing the capacity of the organization.

Capacity Building: VISTA expands the ability of sponsor organizations to fight poverty. Rather than providing services to low-income individuals and communities, VISTAs strengthen and support organizations by building infrastructure, expanding community partnerships, securing long-term resources

(Except for brief training purposes for project development, VISTAs should not be involved in performing direct services such as tutoring, teaching, counseling, driving clients, painting, manual labor, or clerical work.)

- *Obtaining Sustainable Solutions:* VISTAs serve as a short-term resource to help sponsor organizations achieve lasting solutions to poverty.
- VISTAs are assigned to help build an organization to implement its antipoverty program on its own after a period of time (typically three years).
- Organizations should develop a long term sustainability plan beginning in year one of the project's existence, showing the eventual phase out of the VISTA resource.

Capacity Building vs. Direct Service

- ***Capacity building*** is working with staff and the communities to create, expand, or strengthen the systems and processes that help an organization carry out its anti-poverty work. These tasks and activities include the transfer of knowledge/skills, products, and relationships.

- ***Direct service*** refers to activities that immediately address a client's needs. For example, tutoring or providing a meal**.**

Examples of Capacity Building and Direct Service

Capacity Building	Direct Service
Recruit volunteers to build houses	Build Houses
Develop database of mentors	Mentor Teenagers
Write financial literacy course curriculum	Teach Financial Literacy Course
Setting up partnerships in the community	Deliver Meals on Wheels
Organize a Fundraiser	Provide Health Screening Services

Acceptable Services vs. Capacity Building Activities and Sustainable Activities

Acceptable Service	Capacity Building	Sustainable Activities
Recruit Volunteers	Develop forms, Volunteer assignments	Develop Volunteer Handbook
Train Direct Service Providers	Write Training curriculum or the trainer curriculum	Develop Training Manual
Coordinate Projects	Develop procedures and systems for coordinating projects	Develop volunteer management system and procedural guide
Public Speaking	Develop speakers' bureau	Develop community partners
Write press releases	Develop press kits, media database	Secure media partners
Organize fundraising events	Grant writing; develop database	Secure project staff through additional funding
Organize task forces/coalitions	Develop structure of task force/coalition	Create infrastructure
Conduct outreach	Design brochures, posters	Create mechanism for project evaluation

Strategies for Capacity Building Activities

- There are four key types of strategies to consider when building the capacity and, ultimately, the sustainability of your organization and VISTA project.

  1. Recruitment and management of volunteers
  2. Partnerships with community members and organizations
  3. Marketing and promotion
  4. Increase and diversification of resources

1. Recruitment and Management of Volunteers

- Developing a volunteer program where your volunteers recognize how their current and future roles and activities are key to sustaining your project.

  - VISTAs develop data bases, volunteer assignment descriptions, recruitment strategies, retention strategies, and recognition strategies that will be sustained.

2. Partnerships with Community Members and Organizations

- Create effective multidisciplinary solutions to community problems
  Groups that excel in building collaborative relationships open doors to new projects, new funding, new clients, and volunteers.

  - VISTAs work across organizational boundaries to attract and keep the partners you need to solve problems

3. Marketing and Promotion

- **VISTAs can**

  - Generate opportunities for the print or electronic media to spread the word about your organization.
  - Focus the marketing pieces you create about your project.
  - Identify public forums that allow your project to tell its story well.
  - Create a public image and reputation that attracts supporters, customers, and partners

4. Increase and Diversification of Resources

- Develop a realistic plan to solicit contributions of cash or in-kind donations from local organizations
- Research funding and resources opportunities
- Write grants
- Work with local stakeholders to identify resources
- Identify in-kind resources
  - free marketing assistance from a local business,
  - donation of space for a meeting, or
  - food for a special event
  - training and technical assistance from community professionals

Possible Outcomes from Capacity Building Efforts by VISTA Members

- **Increase services**
  - Serving more beneficiaries
  - Increasing the utilization of services by existing beneficiaries

- **Expand service delivery**
  - Developing new programs/services or expanding existing programs/services
  - Improving the quality of programs or services

- **Strengthen organizational capacity**
  - Establishing new partnerships
  - Improving collaboration with existing partners

- **Improve infrastructure**
  - Improving internal systems (e.g., service delivery, volunteer recruitment and training, organizational management, performance measurement)

- **Increase operational resources**
  - Establishing/expanding pool of volunteers to assist with service delivering
  - Developing/expanding a more diversified funding stream

Resources

http://vistacampus.org

http://www.nationalserviceresources.org

http://www.nationalservice.gov/

http://www.americorps.gov/about/programs/vista.asp