



DATE: December 15, 2009

TO: Connecticut Governor's Office, Connecticut Congressional Delegation; Connecticut Commission on Community Service; Connecticut State Department of Education; Current Senior Corps and AmeriCorps VISTA Grantees

FROM: Anne Ostberg, Connecticut State Program Director, Corporation for National and Community Service, aostberg@cns.gov, 860-240-3240

SUBJECT: Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) for New Connecticut AmeriCorps VISTA Projects – Concept Papers due January 15, 2010

INTRODUCTION

The Connecticut State Program Office of the Corporation for National and Community Service announces that funds are available for new AmeriCorps VISTA projects in the state of Connecticut. This Notice of Funds Availability is open to organizations that are NOT currently grantees of the Corporation for National and Community Service. Members of Connecticut's congressional delegation, the Connecticut Commission on Community Service, existing grantees, and other interested individuals and organizations are encouraged to share this notice with other non-profit organizations and to contact the CNCS Connecticut State Office (ct@cns.gov, 860-240-3240), with any questions.

AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) is a full-time, national service program for individuals interested in developing lasting solutions to the problems of poverty in the United States. AmeriCorps VISTA members serve in community and faith-based nonprofit organizations and with other agencies and local governments to develop and expand services and programs that help bring low-income individuals out of poverty.

Non-profit organizations and local and state government agencies interested in sponsoring an AmeriCorps VISTA project with one or more AmeriCorps VISTA members are invited to submit a concept paper to the Corporation for National and Community Service Connecticut State Program Office by January 15, 2010. Concept papers are typically no more than 5-6 pages long and must include an executive summary, a statement of need, a description of how the proposed VISTA project will strengthen the local community, and a statement of the organization's capacity to manage a VISTA project.

Concept papers addressing the following priority areas will be given special consideration: energy assistance; rural medical transportation for low-income and elderly populations; foreclosure assistance; access to affordable food; services for low-income veterans and families of active military members; and services addressing needs of minority populations, including immigrants.

Attached documents are as follows:

- * AmeriCorps VISTA Concept Paper Guidelines; and
- * AmeriCorps VISTA FY 2010 Program Guidance.

On request, organizations will receive electronic copies of two additional documents:

- * Creating an eGrants Account; and
- * Submitting a VISTA Concept Paper in eGrants.

(These are not sent as attachments to this NOFA due to their size, which totals 5 MB.)

Interested organizations may also request a hard copy of the Guide to Becoming an AmeriCorps VISTA Project Sponsor by sending an E-mail to aostberg@cns.gov with “Sponsor guide” in the subject line and a full mailing address in the body of the e-mail message.

TIMELINE

The timeline is as follows:

December 2009: Contact the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) Connecticut State Program Office to indicate your interest in submitting a concept paper and to request the additional documents. Begin preparing a draft concept paper as a Word document. If you would like to submit your draft to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) Connecticut State Program Office, we will be happy to review it prior to your submitting it in eGrants and give you any helpful feedback.

Early January 2010: Create an eGrants account.

January 15, 2010: Deadline for submitting final concept papers in eGrants (earlier if possible).

January 29, 2010: CNCS Connecticut State Program Office staff will review concept papers and notify organizations if their concept paper has been approved no later than January 29, 2010 (earlier if possible).

February 26, 2010: Organizations with approved concept papers submit completed applications no later than February 26 (earlier if possible).

March 29, 2010: CNCS Connecticut State Program Office staff will review applications and notify organizations if their application has been approved no later than March 29, 2010 (earlier if possible)

April and May 2010: Approved projects will start recruiting VISTA candidates. CNCS Connecticut State Program Office will provide online training through Webinars and conference calls for new VISTA project directors.

(NOTE: the following deadlines from June through August are subject to change based on additional guidance that may be provided by AmeriCorps VISTA Headquarters to CNCS State Offices between now and June 2010.)

June 1, 2010: First deadline for projects to submit recommended VISTA candidates to CNCS Connecticut State Program Office – VISTA candidates submitted by June 1 will be able to attend July 13 pre-service orientation in Philadelphia; VISTAs will start service July 17, 2010.

June 14, 2010: Second deadline for projects to submit recommended VISTA candidates to CNCS Connecticut State Program Office – VISTA candidates submitted by June 14 will be able to attend July 26 pre-service orientation in Philadelphia; VISTAs will start service July 30, 2010.

June 28, 2010: Third deadline for projects to submit recommended VISTA candidates to CNCS Connecticut State Program Office – VISTA candidates submitted by June 28 will be able to attend August 10 pre-service orientation in Philadelphia; VISTAs will start service August 14, 2010.

July 12, 2010: Fourth and final deadline for projects to submit recommended VISTA candidates to CNCS Connecticut State Program Office – VISTA candidates submitted by July 12 will be able to attend August 23 pre-service orientation in Philadelphia; VISTAs will start service August 27, 2010.

There may also be opportunities for VISTA supervisors to attend training in Philadelphia – details will be provided to approved VISTA projects in early 2010.

CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL

Criteria for approval are based on whether the proposed project:

- * Fits with one or more of the Corporation's strategic initiatives, VISTA programming priorities, or priority areas listed in the introduction section of this document.
- * Addresses the needs of low-income communities.
- * Leads to building organizational capacity so that the project can continue once the VISTA resources are withdrawn.
- * Involves beneficiaries of the service and the low-income community in project development and implementation.
- * Is designed to generate public and/or private-sector resources.
- * Promotes local volunteer service.
- * Complies with the provisions of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973, as amended; VISTA regulations; and VISTA policies.

Further, criteria for determining approval are based on whether the applicant:

- * Is a local or state government agency or a private organization designated as a non-profit by the Internal Revenue Service.
- * Has resources available for VISTAs to perform their activities, such as space, supplies, and on-the-job transportation, and is able to provide emergency cash advances when needed.
- * Has the management capacity and commitment to recruit, train, supervise, and otherwise support VISTAs recruited locally and nationally.
- * Understands and is committed to promoting national and community service.
- * Has the capacity to build community partnerships and collaborative efforts to achieve project self-sufficiency.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Any interested organization or individual with additional questions not addressed by this NOFA may contact:

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