



FAQs about the VISTA Community Partnerships Coordinator Position 2023-2024

Q: What is a VISTA?

A: A VISTA is a member of AmeriCorps, and is a full-time federally funded volunteer who works on capacity-building and community outreach for a host organization, **rather than direct service**. This means they work on building systems to engage volunteers to work with students, and they themselves **do not** tutor, teach, supervise or organize the students directly. VISTA is unique in the AmeriCorps family in this regard. The VISTA program (Volunteers in Service to America) was established by President Kennedy as part of the War on Poverty and was designed to be the “domestic Peace Corps.”

Q: Is there a job description for this position?

A: Yes, please see [VISTA Community Partnerships Coordinator Job Description](#)

Q: Is there a cost to my school to get this position?

A: Yes. For the 2024-2025 program year, each school will be assessed a \$10,000/year program fee. This fee covers costs associated with recruitment, training and professional development, and additional supervision of your VISTA. These funds also go back to your school in the form of snacks and refreshments at all of your partner meetings, along with other basic supplies for your VISTA.

Q: How long will this position last?

A: Typically, a VISTA position is awarded to a school or organization for up to three years. However, most VISTA members only serve one year; thus, your school may host three different individuals in successive years, all working toward the same project objectives. Our time frame is that each VISTA cycle will begin in early August and run through the following July.

Q: Who are the VISTA candidates?

A: A VISTA is typically a recent college graduate who is passionate about addressing issues of poverty, and is highly energetic and innovative. We anticipate that we will again have an excellent pool of candidates with strong interest and/or experience with urban schools. That said, for many VISTAs, this will be their first full-time professional work experience and will need strong guidance and support from a supervisor.

Q: Will I have input into the choice of the candidate?

A: Yes. PHENND will do the initial vetting of candidates. After this, PHENND will coordinate interviews for the host schools with at least two potential candidates for a final selection. We are not interested in imposing candidates on schools. However, technically, it is AmeriCorps that ultimately selects and places candidates (heavily based on our collective recommendation.)

Q: When would the VISTA start?

A: They will start reporting to their sites in early August of 2024, after a week of intensive trainings at PHENND. This typically takes place during the last week of July or first week of August.

Q: Who is the VISTA's supervisor?

A: The principal or designee committed to building community partnerships will be the in-school supervisor and will need to guide the VISTA's work in the school. There will also be a supervisor at PHENND who will be responsible for continuing professional development and support throughout the year and to whom the VISTAS will report on a regular basis.

Q: Is there support for the in-school supervisor?

A: Yes, PHENND will convene quarterly supervisor meetings and be on call for support as needed.

Q: Where and when will the VISTA work?

A: The VISTA will be at your school full-time during normal school hours. They are also available as needed for evening and weekend meetings and/or special school events. VISTAs are technically available 24/7/365 but we prefer that they be treated as close to regular employees as possible and encourage schools to develop systems for providing comp time for out-of-school time events.

Q: What do I need to provide for the VISTA?

A: Your school will need to provide the VISTA with a consistent work space in your building (can be shared), in addition to access to a phone line and the Internet. If you do not have a working computer for the VISTA, PHENND may be able to provide one.

Q: Can the VISTA help out in the office?

A: Overall, the VISTAs main task is to work on building your school's capacity for community partnerships, not to perform other direct service to the school. However we are allocating 5% (2 hours/week) of his/her time for use at the principal's discretion. This could include calls to parents (no home visits) or office fill-in; but the VISTAS will not be allowed to be on the roster as they are not certified as teachers. A principal can bank those hours for a longer event, such as PSSA support.

Q: Will there be specific performance guidelines for the VISTA?

A: Yes, there will be guidelines that PHENND created with input from the principals. Generally speaking, the VISTAs will be responsible for achieving the goals in their work plan, called the VISTA Assignment Description or VAD. The VAD will closely follow the Job Description referenced above.

Q: How many VISTA positions are available and who is eligible?

A: We anticipate approximately 5-6 new positions will be available to our program citywide for the 2024-2025 academic year.

The most successful candidates will clearly articulate in their application how they will use the Community Partnership Coordinator VISTA position to help them achieve their school improvement objectives. Strong applicants will also submit a letter of recommendation from an existing community partner (which could be a college or university, local nonprofit or community group, or business.)

Q: Do the VISTAs receive training?

A: Yes. In addition to the initial week of intensive onboarding, PHENND provides daylong trainings to the VISTAs at least once a month, with some additional learning opportunities. These trainings enhance the VISTAs' technical skills, as well as build cultural competencies and teambuilding. In addition, VISTAs get to participate in three citywide trainings with partnership coordinators from the Mayor's Office of Education and the SDP Assistant Program Coordinators program.

Q: Will the VISTA be able to cultivate new partnerships?

A: Yes! In collaboration with School Leadership, the VISTA will be able to do the research and leg work to initiate new partnerships as well as coordinate and improve the existing partnerships. PHENND is poised to support this aspect of the work by mobilizing our connections to area colleges and universities, nonprofits, and even the business community.

Q: Will the VISTA have a budget for their activities?

A: Dependent on our ability to fundraise, we anticipate supplying the VISTA with a small budget to offer refreshments at the monthly stakeholder meetings and plan other special events.

Q: When is the application due and how do I apply?

A: The application is due on January 5, 2024. Your work will save automatically if you need to close it and return to the application later if you return to the same computer.

Q: What is the timeline for notification?

A: Final decisions will be determined by the end of March by the review committee, which includes representatives from PHENND's advisory board, AmeriCorps and the School District.

Q: I have more questions, with whom can I speak?

A: Please call Eden Kainer at PHENND at 215-573-2379.

Thank you for your interest.

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