



VISTA STRONG COMMUNITIES

WHAT IS A **VISTA**?

VISTA is a subset of the AmeriCorps national service program. VISTAs are full-time volunteers who commit to a year of service combatting poverty by partnering with local government agencies, nonprofits, and educational institutions. Specifically, they work to expand the capacity of the institution where they serve, creating sustainable solutions that endure after their term of service ends. VISTAs are distinct from employees in that the federal government pays them a stipend, and unlike interns, they volunteer full-time for a whole year. Instead of doing direct service, VISTAs set up systems and projects that empower the whole community. For example, instead of handing out food at a food bank, a VISTA might develop a system for cataloguing food by expiration date to reduce waste.

HOW CAN A VISTA HELP MY ORGANIZATION?

VISTAs mobilize local resources, building capacity and empowering communities. What this looks like varies by organization; some nonprofits need internal support, while others want to start a new outreach program. If you have a project that you've been hoping to turn into a reality, but haven't had a dedicated person able to take it on for a prolonged period of time, a VISTA might be the perfect solution.

WHO ARE VISTAS?

VISTAs come from all different backgrounds, from recent graduates looking to gain meaningful work experience to recent retirees hoping to give back to their communities. Approximately 70% of VISTAs serve in their local communities. VISTAs have a variety of different skills and levels of experience which organizations can put to use to make a difference.

Questions? Contact Samara Bharath at vistaleader@cnhed.org.

HISTORY OF **VISTA**

The VISTA program was founded in 1964 by President Lyndon B. Johnson, following on President Kennedy's dream for a national version of the Peace Corps. By 1966 over 3,000 volunteers were serving all over the United States. In 1973 it was certified under the Domestic Volunteer Service Act, which continues to govern its principles and organization. In 1993 it was incorporated into the AmeriCorps program, a division of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

Today, CNCS engages 324,000 Americans in service across the country, including more than 8,000 VISTAs. Those 8,000 VISTAs recruit an estimated million volunteers a year and raise nearly \$200 million in cash and in-kind donations.

