



Montana | Campus Compact



Guidance For Campus-Community MTCC VISTA Placements January 2006/2007 Program Year

Partnerships between community-based organizations and college campuses are innovative in their approach to addressing critical community problems. *Community-based organization* is the catch-all term for nonprofits, government agencies, faith based organizations, and after school programs. MTCC VISTA members have served from Habitat for Humanity, the Ronan School, the Headwaters Area Food Bank, the Livingston Food Pantry, Tumbleweed Runaway Program in Billings, the Family Basics program in Missoula, The Missoula Forum on Children and Youth, The Missoula City-County Health Department, Bozeman's America Reads/America Counts Program, Miles City's R.O.C.K.S. after-school programs and many more. The following information comes from discussions with community service directors from member institutions that have developed collaborative MTCC VISTA sites with community based organizations. VISTA service benefits both the organization and the campus by creating an outlet for campus-community service while addressing critical poverty problems.

Community-based organizations have a strong incentive to be AmeriCorps*VISTA host sites. Placing a member through this prestigious national program has proven benefits for communities and organizations. The cost of placing a VISTA member – remember a VISTA's living allowance and health care are administered by MTCC and the federal government- is a serious value. VISTAs serve in year-long positions to build community and increase organizational capacity. Growing organizational capacity is exciting business for the majority of nonprofits. When developing a partnership with a community organization, as explicitly as possible, define the poverty problem and what the campus might do about it (e.g. offer student volunteers, staff and faculty expertise/research, technology, service-learning courses, physical space, etc). Think also of what your campus stands to gain: experience, service and citizenship opportunities for students, volunteer experience, deeper community connections, potential work places for graduates, etc. The connection should come logically out of this sort of discussion.

How-to:

In your role managing campus-community service, service-learning and promoting civic engagement you have established connections to your community's nonprofit and government world. Many of these organizations will be very interested to hear about what you have to offer in terms of an enthusiastic, talented human resource working for a year to address poverty issues in your community.

Call your community organization contacts and ask if they would like to host an AmeriCorps*VISTA member. Next, send a copy of our request for proposals so they can absorb what exactly our project does. All of you should have a good idea of how you would like to see the campus-community relationship develop. List the idea(s) for campus-community collaborations explicitly in your application. Provided your community partner is interested in a VISTA, schedule a time to meet to envision the project's work plan. Use your next meeting to write the proposal.

Other tips:

Once you have submitted your proposal and worked out the logistical issues (such as day-to-day supervision, work plan, who pays cost match, location of the VISTA's work station, etc.) take some time to plan for the upcoming year. Plan to meet formally once every three months to discuss progress toward work plan objectives. If you feel that meeting more often, (perhaps monthly) would be beneficial, then schedule a time to meet regularly. Both the site supervisor and campus contact will need to sign the VISTA's quarterly reports.

If you have questions about any part of this guidance, please don't hesitate to call. (Josh Vanek, 406-243-5177 ext. 2)