



Oregon Asset Building Corps  
Host Site Request for  
Proposals (RFP)  
**2012-2013**

*An AmeriCorps\*VISTA program of the  
Oregon Microenterprise Network*



**Oregon Microenterprise Network (OMEN)***Helping Oregon's Smallest Businesses Succeed*

1220 SW Morrison St., Suite 805, Portland, Oregon 97205

Telephone: 503/546-9913 • Fax: 503/808-9031

January 27, 2012

Dear Asset Building Partner,

Would you like to increase your organization's ability to assist underserved communities and populations to build assets? The Oregon Microenterprise Network (OMEN) is currently seeking sites that would like to host an AmeriCorps\*VISTA member during the August 2012-2013 AmeriCorps\*VISTA service term. Since 1965, the *Volunteers in Service to America* (VISTA) program has provided full-time (40 hours per week) volunteers to support the efforts of nonprofit organizations and public agencies working to fight poverty in low-income communities.

OMEN's Oregon Asset Building Corps (OABC) is in its eleventh year as an AmeriCorps\*VISTA intermediary and currently has 19 VISTAs serving throughout Oregon. The service of these members has helped dozens of organizations establish new programs and take existing programs to the next level in their anti-poverty work. In 2012, OMEN aims to place up to 22 VISTAs in organizations across the state, with a focus on increasing the number of VISTAs serving in rural areas. OABC is a "share of costs" program and asks organizations to provide between \$10,500-\$12,000 to be a VISTA host site, based on your location in Oregon and if your organization has previously hosted a VISTA. All placements are subject to availability of funds from the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Oregon State Office will make the final approval of all VISTA site placements

Enclosed you will find an overview of the OABC AmeriCorps\*VISTA program and the OABC Host Site Application.

**Applications are due no later than 5:00pm on Friday, February 24, 2012.** Please limit your response to no more than 7 pages (excluding attachments). **Your completed application will consist of:**

1. Host Site Application Cover Letter (signed by applicant)
2. Narrative Section (7 page maximum)
3. Signed Acknowledgement of Prohibited VISTA Activities
4. VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)
5. VISTA Position Description

Please contact us if you have any questions. For more information about the VISTA program, visit OMEN's website at [www.oregon-microbiz.org](http://www.oregon-microbiz.org). Our review committee looks forward to receiving your proposal.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Leanne Murray in black ink.

Leanne Murray  
Assistant Director/VISTA Program Director  
(503) 546-9913

[Leanne@oregon-microbiz.org](mailto:Leanne@oregon-microbiz.org)

Handwritten signature of Marina Fleming in black ink.

Marina Fleming  
OABC VISTA Leader  
(503) 546-9913

[VistaLeader@oregon-microbiz.org](mailto:VistaLeader@oregon-microbiz.org)

**SECTION I****INTRODUCTION****The Oregon  
Microenterprise  
Network (OMEN)**

The Oregon Microenterprise Network (OMEN) increases opportunities for economically and geographically disadvantaged entrepreneurs and communities by building the capacity of organizations that serve disadvantaged populations throughout Oregon. OMEN is a statewide association of asset-building and microenterprise development programs. OMEN provides training, lending and other resources, such as the Asset Building Corps, to organizations serving underserved populations.

**AmeriCorps\*VISTA**

AmeriCorps\*VISTA is the national service program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) designed specifically to fight poverty. Founded as Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) in 1965 and incorporated into the AmeriCorps network of programs in 1993, VISTA has been on the front lines in the fight against poverty in America for almost 50 years. Since 1965, more than 175,000 VISTAs have been placed in non-profit, public agency, and faith based organizations with the goal of building capacity and sustainability around programs that work to bring individuals and communities out of poverty.

**The Oregon  
Asset Building  
Corps (OABC)  
VISTA Program**

As part of a partnership between OMEN and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the Oregon Asset Building Corps (OABC) is comprised of 16-22 AmeriCorps\*VISTA members per year, who serve to develop the capacity of the OMEN affiliated host site organization at which they are placed. This will mark the 11<sup>th</sup> year of the AmeriCorps\*VISTA member project administered by OMEN and the 8<sup>th</sup> year for the Oregon Asset Building Corps (OABC). Many host organizations work specifically with low-income populations in both rural and urban economically distressed areas. VISTA members serve full-time for a year as part of a statewide team coordinated by a VISTA Leader who serves at the OMEN site. Placement sites are eligible to have a VISTA member serve with their organization for up to three years, but must reapply for the VISTA annually. The service of these members around Oregon has helped many organizations establish new programs and take existing programs to the next level in their anti-poverty and community development work.

Recent project successes include:

- Streamlined organizational policies and procedures and produced procedural manuals to increase organizational effectiveness
- Obtained funding, created donor databases, and developed directory of template language for grant writing to ensure organizational and programmatic sustainability
- Increased host organization's capacity to track fiduciary organizational performance in its Individual Development Account (IDA) program
- Implemented volunteer programs, which increased organizational capacity and effectiveness

## What VISTAs Do: Indirect vs. Direct Service

VISTAs perform *indirect* capacity building activities that focus on creating sustainable projects.

**What is Indirect Service?** VISTAs perform indirect service, which means they help build the capacity of organizations to deliver valuable direct services to people living in poverty. VISTAs typically create new programs, write grants, and recruit volunteers. For example, a VISTA could establish a tutoring program, recruit and train volunteers, and raise money for the program—but would not tutor the children.

**What is Direct Service?** Direct service activities generally refer to activities that provide a direct, measurable benefit to an individual, a group, or a community. Examples of the types of direct service activities AmeriCorps members may perform include, but are not limited to, the following: *tutoring children in reading, helping to run an after-school program, engaging in community clean-up projects, teaching a financial literacy course.* VISTAs do not conduct direct service. If you are interested in hosting an AmeriCorps volunteer who can conduct direct service activities at your organization, please visit the Corporation for National and Community Service's website ([www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)) to learn more about direct service programs or contact Oregon Volunteers at [www.oregonvolunteers.org](http://www.oregonvolunteers.org) to learn more about AmeriCorps programming in Oregon.

### Examples of Appropriate VISTA Activities

Indirect Service	Capacity Building	Sustainable Endeavors
Recruit volunteers	Develop volunteer training, assignments, etc.	Develop volunteer handbook
Train direct service providers	Write training curriculum or manuals, train trainers	Develop and/or evaluate training manual and train the trainer curriculum
Coordinate projects	Develop procedures and systems	Develop volunteer management systems and procedural guidelines
Write grants or organize fundraising events	Complete grant writing applications, develop alternative funding resources	Secure project funding for staffing, new programs, etc.
Conduct outreach	Design brochures, posters, surveys, website/online tools	Create mechanism for project management

## VISTA Benefits

OMEN provides support for recruiting a VISTA member, training opportunities for your organization's VISTA member, orientation and training for host site supervisors, assistance with paperwork required by the Corporation for National Service, site visits to support VISTA member-supervisor relationships, monthly monitoring of VISTA work plan progress and timesheets, food stamp application and housing assistance

### Who are OABC VISTA members?

for VISTA members, and end-of-service assistance for VISTA members as they transition into the workforce or graduate school. The Corporation for National and Community Service provides members with moving allowances for relocation, Pre-Service Orientation forbearance on federal education loans, health benefits, child care assistance if eligible, and post service benefits including the Eli Segal Education Award of \$5,550 or cash stipend of \$1,500.

OABC VISTAs are men and women ages 18 and older who commit a year of full-time service to help local communities develop lasting solutions to poverty. The skill sets and education level of VISTAs are as diverse as the communities they serve. Most VISTAs have college degrees and/or several years of work experience. Others are recently retired professionals looking for a way to spend their retirement years benefiting low-income communities. OABC VISTA members come from around the country with varying backgrounds and professional goals. Each OABC AmeriCorps\*VISTA member remains connected to their network of peers all year, allowing each host organization to benefit from the shared best practices of a network of AmeriCorps\*VISTA members. OABC AmeriCorps\*VISTA members receive training and professional development opportunities throughout the year. Many of the OABC VISTA members pursue careers in asset development and poverty alleviation after their term of service is complete.

### VISTA Member Recruitment

OABC AmeriCorps\*VISTA members are recruited by their host organizations. OMEN will provide recruitment assistance to host organizations as needed and will refer potential VISTA members to apply to host organizations. After the host organization has selected a candidate, the candidate is interviewed by OMEN to ensure they understand the terms of their service. **Sites must recruit their VISTA Members by the deadline of June 12, 2012.** Final approval of the VISTA candidate is given by CNCS. Sites that are unable to recruit by the deadline will not be eligible for a VISTA.

## SECTION II

### OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS

#### Program Goals

OABC VISTA projects must fit under the CNCS Strategic Plan focus area of Economic Opportunity **Asset Development**, and your project must fall under one of the following approaches to community-based poverty alleviation:

- 1) **Microenterprise Development and/or Entrepreneurship Development (including green microenterprise development)**
- 2) **Financial Literacy**
- 3) **Financial Asset Building (including home foreclosure prevention and housing assistance)**
- 4) **Nonprofit Capacity Building (including fund development, volunteer generation, etc.)**
- 5) **Food Security**
- 6) **Other activities that will support economic recovery in communities**

*If you are unsure if your project fits under one of the six listed categories, please contact OMEN to discuss your proposal prior to submitting it.*

### Site Eligibility

Eligible sites include:

- Nonprofit organizations
- Government agencies (city, county, regional, state, tribal or federal)
- Schools

### Cost-Share Requirement

OMEN requires affiliate organizations to share the cost of an AmeriCorps\*VISTA. OMEN asks \$10,500-\$12,000 per VISTA placement, based on the host site location and number of years the organization has hosted a VISTA. This amount is billed in 4 quarterly installments. These funds are used to support the VISTA members through training and support during the VISTA year of service and to provide nearly full time supervision for the project, which includes all federal reporting, recruitment and placement with CNCS and liability for members and programming. Although each site pays only \$10,000-12,000 for their VISTA member, the following estimate provided by CNCS demonstrates that the actual value of each VISTA member to the host site is over \$64,000.

Expenses	Real Value of a VISTA
AmeriCorps *VISTA Living Allowance (Multnomah and Washington counties):	\$11,124
AmeriCorps*VISTA Living Allowance (elsewhere in Oregon)	\$10,704
Education Award or Cash Stipend	\$5,550 or \$1,500
Health Coverage	\$2,700
AmeriCorps Member Training and & Travel	\$1,750
Relocation Allowance (those who move over 50 miles to serve)	\$1,050
Shipping (beginning and end of service)	\$500 max
Childcare	Up to \$3,600
Value of hours served: (2,123 average hours served per VISTA X \$20.85) Value based on Independent Sector figures for 2009.	\$44,265
Total approximate value of AmeriCorps*VISTA Member	\$68,569- \$70,039 (Including Childcare)

### Other Costs Associated With Hosting a VISTA:

In addition to the cost share, host sites are required to provide the following:

- Site supervisor's transportation costs associated with OMEN Site Supervisor Training (two half-day trainings held in Portland, April & August 2012)
- Any project-specific training for the VISTA member, as determined by host sites
- All related travel expenses for the VISTA associated with carrying out the VISTA project (with exception of VISTA required trainings hosted by CNCS and OMEN)

**Other Costs Cont'd.**

- Purchase of supplies and materials necessary to develop the project (including office supplies and equipment)
- \$50.00 set aside for member professional development, as needed (OMEN will provide 1:1 match to be used for non-OMEN, non-CNCS training opportunities during year of service)

**What Do AmeriCorps\* VISTA Members Receive for their Service?**

Part of the commitment for AmeriCorps\*VISTA Members is gain experience in what it is like to live in poverty. Therefore, they are not paid a salary. Instead, they receive a taxable living allowance of \$10,704 (outside of Multnomah/Washington Counties) or \$11,124 (within Multnomah/Washington Counties) per year. In addition they receive basic health coverage, loan forbearance on eligible student loans and childcare (if eligible). AmeriCorps\*VISTA Members have the option to receive the Segal Education Award of \$5,550 (taxable) or a \$1,500 cash stipend (taxable) upon successful completion of their year of service. The education award can be used to cover the costs of future education or to repay qualified student loans. Beyond these benefits, AmeriCorps\*VISTA Members have the opportunity to gain skills, take on leadership roles, work with many partnering agencies, build networks, and know the satisfaction of "Getting Things Done."

**Other AmeriCorps\*VISTA Member Benefits:**

- Student loan forbearance on qualifying student loans
- Repayment of interest accrued during service on qualifying student loans
- Childcare benefits (for qualifying AmeriCorps\*VISTA Members)
- Mileage allowance for those who move over 50 miles to serve
- FICA benefits
- Worker's Compensation eligibility

**Management Expectations**

OMEN's program requires that supervisors make a time commitment of at least five hours per week to supervise and support the VISTA member's activities. This includes direct meetings with the member to determine progress towards goals, answering questions, providing resources for the member in their work, and introducing the AmeriCorps\*VISTA member to community partners, etc. Sites must allow their organization's VISTA member to attend optional trainings held by OMEN and/or CNCS. Site supervisors are responsible for semi-annual reporting to OMEN on project progress and outcomes. Site supervisors and members must also be available to OMEN staff for conducting an annual site visit as well as quarterly phone check-ins to monitor project progress and supervisor-VISTA member relationships.

**Management  
Expectations  
Cont'd**

Two required half-day trainings and orientations will be held in April and August 2012 for AmeriCorps\*VISTA member site supervisors. The purpose of this training is to orient supervisors to the guidelines of the AmeriCorps\*VISTA program, recruiting, network with other supervisors, discuss outcome measurement for the project year, on-site orientation ideas and other topics that will help your organization have a successful partnership with the OABC VISTA program.

OMEN requires that the host site provide the materials necessary for the AmeriCorps\*VISTA member to accomplish his or her work. These materials include a desk, computer with access to the internet, telephone, fax machine, and any other necessary equipment or software. Additionally, the VISTA member must be located at the same physical location as their supervisor to help ensure regular supervision occurs.

**Organizational  
Capacity**

CNCS requires that host sites provide AmeriCorps\*VISTA members with an On-Site Orientation and Training (OSOT) during their first several weeks of service. You will receive guidance from OMEN in developing your OSOT at the host site supervisor training in April. The specific parameters of the OSOT will be determined by the needs of the individual sites but should include:

- An introduction to and explanation of the roles of all site staff and board members
- Introduction to community partners and/or collaborators
- Information regarding general office procedures
- Project-specific information and resources
- If the member is new to the community, general tips in getting to know it

**Award Information**

OMEN will award up to 22 VISTAs to host organizations, which will be chosen by a committee comprised of OMEN staff, board members, OABC AmeriCorps\*VISTAs, and past VISTA supervisors. All approvals are subject to review and acceptance by CNCS.

**Program Duration**

If selected, your site will host a VISTA from **August 18, 2012 to August 17, 2013**.

**Restricted  
Activities**

Prior to the VISTA member's start, host organizations are required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with OMEN that outlines restrictions of the VISTA position including nondiscrimination and sexual harassment provisions. The following are federal restrictions on the use of AmeriCorps\*VISTA positions:

- OABC AmeriCorps\*VISTA members are not permitted to engage in any political or lobbying activities, including voter registration drives and pro- or anti- labor

**Restricted  
Activities  
Cont'd**

- OABC AmeriCorps\*VISTA members are not permitted to hold another job or receive additional compensation for work performed.
- OABC AmeriCorps\*VISTA members are not permitted to proselytize or engage in related activities.
- OABC AmeriCorps\*VISTA positions may not supplant, replace, or eliminate staff positions. They are not to be used as an administrative stopgap.
- OABC AmeriCorps\*VISTAs are not to be used in roles that are centered around direct service (see definition provided on page 2 of this application)

**Project Support  
Provided by  
OMEN**

OMEN is one of several intermediaries for the AmeriCorps\*VISTA program in Oregon. As the intermediary for the Oregon Asset Building Corps, OMEN is committed to providing ongoing support, resources, technical assistance and training for its VISTA members and site supervisors. Specifically, OMEN provides support in these ways:

- Makes available to all potential VISTA sites all application materials and technical assistance on completing applications
- Notifies all applicants of VISTA award status
- Assists selected sites with recruiting and selecting VISTA members
- Assists sites with required paperwork to approve VISTA candidate by CNCS
- Provides Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) between OMEN and each site upon approval of projects and award of funding by CNCS
- Provides two half-day Site Supervisor Trainings to all site supervisors (April & August 2012)
- Provides three-day In-Service-Training for VISTA members (September 2012)
- Acts as liaison between sites and CNCS
- Advises site supervisors and members of reporting requirements and deadlines and reports to CNCS on behalf of sites
- Conducts one in-person site visit during the first six months of the VISTA term
- Provides ongoing support and training for members through VISTA Leader and OMEN Program Director.
- Conducts quarterly check-ins with site supervisor and member
- Provides technical assistance, training, resources and support to site supervisors and VISTA members throughout project year as requested
- Covers travel costs for VISTAs to attend In Service Training and other OMEN required trainings
- Provides member with \$50 matched outside training funds for additional training during year of service. (Funds to be matched by site 1:1)
- Provides invoices for sites for payment of quarterly cost share billing
- Maintains program records as required by CNCS
- Advises sites of changes to CNCS policies and procedures to ensure site compliance

### **SECTION III SUBMISSION PROCESS**

#### **Submission Guidelines & Notification Process**

Applications must be typed using the application form provided. Program narratives **must not exceed 7 pages**, excluding appendices. Applicants must include the following in addition to the application narrative:

- VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) – see template and sample on the OMEN website at: <http://www.oregon-microbiz.org/assetbuildingcorps>.
- VISTA Position Description – see attached template.
- Signed Acknowledgement of Prohibited AmeriCorps\*VISTA Activities (See attached)
- Additionally, current VISTA sites are required to have their current VISTA complete a Site Reference Form. OABC VISTA Leader, Marina Fleming, will contact the current VISTA upon receiving the Current VISTA host site's application to coordinate the completion of this form.

**Applications must be received via email by 5:00 PM on Friday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012.**

Applications should be emailed to Leanne Murray at [leanne@oregon-microbiz.org](mailto:leanne@oregon-microbiz.org).

Notification of application status will be made by **April 6th, 2012** via email.

### **SECTION IV TIMELINE**

January 27, 2012	RFP Released
<b>February 24, 2012</b>	<b>Host Site Proposal due to OMEN</b>
April 6, 2012	Notification of Acceptance
April 6-June 12, 2012	Recruitment Period
April 20, 2012 (half-day)	Supervisor Orientation & Training (Portland)
June 12, 2012	Deadline for Recruitment
August 3, 2012 (half-day)	Supervisor Orientation & Training (Portland)
August 14-17, 2012	Pre-Service Orientation
August 18, 2012	First Day of Service
September 2012	In-Service Training for VISTA members