

**Request for Proposals**  
**Power of We Consortium AmeriCorps\*VISTA Project**  
February 2009

The Investors Steering Committee of the Capital Area Power of We Consortium (PWC) invites proposals from faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) for VISTA (Volunteer in Service to America) projects. AmeriCorps\*VISTA provides capacity-building activities to organizations. Capacity-building means that VISTAs work full-time to increase the ability (or build the capacity) of organizations to address poverty issues. VISTA projects may focus on one of four areas: 1) **financial asset development** such as financial education, job placement and/or the Earned Income Tax Credit promotion, 2) **child and youth development** such as early childhood literacy and after-school projects, 3) **community re-entry by vulnerable populations** such as the homeless, ex-offenders, refugees and youth aging out of foster care, and 4) **neighborhood revitalization** such as community planning and capacity building. For examples please see the "Sample Project Activities" below. The support structures that VISTAs develop and the skills they transfer to others are "capacities" that the organization and the community keep after their VISTA project is over. In this way, VISTAs help communities address poverty with lasting solutions. VISTAs do not provide direct service to the organization (i.e. administrative assistant duties, answer phones, pick up supplies or staff programs)

**Full-time VISTA members are provided extensive training, a \$9,996 a year stipend, health coverage, and a \$4,725 educational allowance (or cash award of \$1,200) at the end of the service term. Organizations are required to pay a cost-share amount for a full-time VISTA. The amount is established according to the organization's budget analysis—an organizational budget of less than \$250,000 will trigger a pledge of \$3,000 per VISTA year; over \$250,000 will trigger a pledge of \$7,000 per VISTA year. The cost-share amount is due by the end of the VISTA term (usually one year from placement) and can be paid in full at the time the VISTA is placed, quarterly or semi-annually—according to a plan described by the organization and approved by the PWC.**

FBCOs that would like to participate in the PWC VISTA Project for the 2009-2010 fiscal year must **submit proposals by Friday, March 27th, for a potential VISTA placement in fall/winter 2009.**

Short (2-3 pages) proposals should address the following areas (typed, single space formatting using the headings and numbering provided below):

1. Briefly describe your organization's mission, history, and programs.
2. Briefly describe your organization's target population and the specific poverty-related need(s) of that population that your VISTA project(s) will address using one of the four project areas listed above.
3. Briefly describe your organization's commitment to building community capacity by engaging residents in planning, developing, and implementing projects.
4. Describe the project activities the requested VISTA member(s) will perform (a list of examples is included below, though other project activities may be proposed as long as they are consistent with VISTA goals related to poverty alleviation).
5. For each project, describe the anticipated outputs and outcomes and how they will be measured. An "output" is a project deliverable, like a health coverage referral made or youth participating in after-school programs. "Outcomes" are concrete changes that result from outputs such as improved health or improved academic performance.
6. Keeping in mind the VISTA goal to help build projects that organizations may eventually sustain on their own, describe how the VISTA work will be sustained after a VISTA's year of service is complete.



7. Briefly describe your organization's capacity to manage the proposed project and member. If your organization has previously hosted VISTA members, note the years, the number of volunteers, and their projects. Briefly describe how the project(s) and member(s) will be supervised, what organizational resources will be available to the member for project work, and how the member will be trained on-site.
8. Provide a plan as to how the cost-share amount will be obtained and payment scheduled.

The PWC is looking to place VISTA members in FBCO sites. Based on VISTA guidelines and Consortium priorities, proposals will be evaluated with the following criteria:

- An organizational and project focus on bringing low-income individuals and communities out of poverty through community development activities
- A commitment to building community capacity by engaging residents in planning, developing, and implementing projects
- A commitment to focus VISTA activity on indirect service, including organizational and project capacity building (e.g., program development, fundraising, volunteer recruitment and management, building partnerships), as opposed to direct service (e.g., administrative duties such as answering phones, direct work with clients, etc.)
- A demonstrated ability to provide a well-equipped work station (including a computer, phone, and access to other office equipment), a designated on-site supervisor, and proper training and guidance for each VISTA
- A commitment to plan for project sustainability after 2-3 years of VISTA service
- A plan to pay the pledged cost-share amount

**Proposals should be submitted to Mary ZumBrunnen, Project Coordinator, by email only at [mzumbrunnen@ingham.org](mailto:mzumbrunnen@ingham.org).** Questions about the PWC's VISTA Project or the proposal process should also be directed to [mzumbrunnen@ingham.org](mailto:mzumbrunnen@ingham.org) or (517) 887-4594.

### **Sample Project Activities**

(provided for reference only – this list is by no means comprehensive)

- Community engagement, planning, and plan implementation
- Human services information and referral
- Housing asset development, including homeownership and home improvement projects
- Financial asset development, including life skills development, financial education, individual development accounts, and Earned Income Tax Credit promotion
- Food security, including farmers' markets, community/school gardens, and nutrition education
- Commercial corridor revitalization, including business development and streetscape improvement
- Health promotion, including health coverage and health education
- Youth development, including mentoring, after-school, and sports programs
- Community building, including leadership development, communications, and other capacity-building programs.