

Corporation for National and Community Service

Beginning With the End in Mind

*A Performance Measurement Toolkit for
AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Applicants*



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Version 3.0

March 2007

This Toolkit is intended to help orient you to the kind of thinking you will have to do to complete the Performance Measurement portion of your AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Application. This Toolkit is intended to provide you with helpful background information. Relying on this information cannot guarantee an award, however, and this Toolkit should not be referred to in your application.

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To download additional material referenced in this toolkit, go to http://nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online_pubs/perf_meas/VISTA_toolkit.php

Additional material available to download:

- Sample Project Plan Narrative, Logic Model, and Project Plan
- Logic Model Form
- AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Plan
- Entering Your Project Plan into eGrants

I. About AmeriCorps*VISTA

AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) provides full-time volunteers to non profit organizations and public agencies to strengthen programs that bring individuals and communities out of poverty. AmeriCorps*VISTA members support anti poverty programs by building the capacity of local organizations that serve low-income communities; encouraging volunteer service; and generating the commitment of private sector resources. The program has been addressing the needs of impoverished communities since 1965, when it was established as Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA).

Key Program Principles

AmeriCorps*VISTA embraces the following *key principles*:

- **Capacity-Building** — AmeriCorps*VISTA achieves its mission by assigning members to organizations to expand the ability of those organizations to fight poverty. AmeriCorps*VISTA members do not provide direct services to low-income individuals, but rather increase the capacity of organizations to fight poverty. Through activities such as fundraising, volunteer recruitment and management, community outreach, and collaborative development, AmeriCorps*VISTA members mobilize local resources to achieve lasting solutions.
- **Anti-poverty Focus** — The purpose of AmeriCorps*VISTA is to support efforts to fight poverty. Any nonprofit organization, educational institution, tribal or public agency with a program that is poverty-related in scope can apply to sponsor an AmeriCorps*VISTA project. The project's goal should address helping individuals and communities out of poverty rather than focusing on making poverty more tolerable. The project should strengthen long term solutions, not merely provide short term services.
- **Community Empowerment** — Organizations must ensure that the project engages residents of the low-income community in planning, developing, and implementing the project. The project must be responsive and relevant to the lives of the community residents, and should tap into inherent community strengths and resources.
- **Sustainable Solutions** — AmeriCorps*VISTA members are a short-term resource to help organizations address a new or existing program area related to their mission. Members are assigned in order to build the capacity of an organization to implement its anti-poverty program on its own after a period of time (typically three years). Organizations should develop a long-term sustainability plan beginning in year one of the project's existence, showing the eventual phase-out of AmeriCorps*VISTA members.

II. Toolkit Overview

Beginning in 2003, the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation) introduced a performance measurement requirement for AmeriCorps*VISTA projects in order to assist VISTA projects with documenting the most important impacts of their work. This toolkit is designed to provide you with a useful framework for project planning and to help you apply the performance measurement requirements to your AmeriCorps*VISTA project.

The performance measurement requirements and recommendations introduced within this toolkit were designed to:

- Empower organizations to determine their own priorities and measure their achievement.
- Increase the capacity of community-based organizations to conduct better analyses of the impact of their work and use the results to improve projects.
- Generate new and better information to inform the policies, training, and technical assistance provided by AmeriCorps*VISTA.
- Demonstrate the value and impact of community-based projects and national service to a broad range of stakeholders, including local communities, the media, funders, and public officials.

Purpose of Toolkit

This toolkit is intended to assist applicants for an AmeriCorps*VISTA grant with the project planning and performance measurement aspects of the application. This toolkit will:

- Familiarize you with the basic concepts of performance measurement
- Explain the performance measurement requirements for AmeriCorps*VISTA
- Demonstrate how tools like the logic model can be used for project planning and for measuring project performance
- Provide you with tips and suggestions for data collection
- Guide you through the steps to complete the project plan component of the AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Application
- Provide you with a sample project plan and logic model
- Refer you to training and technical assistance resources

This toolkit is not meant to be the only resource for preparing applications. It should be used along with other training and technical assistance resources provided by the Corporation and AmeriCorps*VISTA, including the AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Application Instructions and AmeriCorps*VISTA Program Guidance. Used together, these resources will help AmeriCorps*VISTA project applicants to think holistically about what they hope to achieve and to understand and describe the relationships between desired results and performance measures.

III. Performance Measurement and AmeriCorps*VISTA

How will you know that you achieved what you set out to achieve?

This question is central to performance measurement for AmeriCorps*VISTA. Performance measurement responds to the need of both project managers and funding agencies to measure systematically the effectiveness of project activities. Maximizing project effectiveness is critical in light of the limited resources available to meet the needs of the people and communities served.



Important Uses of Performance Measurement

Once a project has been approved and begins tracking its performance measures, the information it reports will be used by both sponsoring organizations and the Corporation in the following ways.

- **Internal Program Assessment and Improvement** – Performance measurement enables sponsoring organizations to clarify the purpose of their projects and the ways specific services contribute to achieving their intended goals and results while also identifying projects’ successes as well as areas for improvement.
- **Fundraising** – Performance measurement enables sponsoring organizations to document the actual results of their project activities and successfully communicate a strong case for funding from both the public and private sectors.
- **Communicating to Stakeholders** – Performance measurement helps sponsoring organizations tell their story and build support for their efforts among project personnel, board members, community residents, and public officials.
- **Project Monitoring, Renewal, and Technical Assistance** – Corporation State Offices and AmeriCorps*VISTA personnel utilize performance measurement data incorporated into Progress Reports to make decisions regarding project site visits, the type of technical assistance offered to projects, and the renewal of AmeriCorps*VISTA projects.
- **Government Performance Results Act (GPRA)** – The Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) is intended to improve government effectiveness and public accountability. As required by GPRA, the Corporation’s programs report publicly on progress toward achieving their goals. Performance measurement data the Corporation receives from AmeriCorps*VISTA grantees is aggregated into these reports.
- **Other Corporation Reports and Publications** – The Corporation utilizes project performance data when compiling budget requests, annual reports, evaluation reports, newsletters, and other written documents. The Corporation also utilizes performance measurement data when responding to media inquiries, congressional requests, and other public requests for information.

Performance Measurement and AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Results

Performance Measurement is the process of regularly measuring the progress of an AmeriCorps*VISTA project with respect to identified performance measures. A **performance measure** is a **result** that you hope to achieve for your AmeriCorps*VISTA project. Results include **outputs**, **intermediate outcomes**, and **end outcomes**. Each performance measure includes information about *what* you will measure (indicators), *how* you will measure it (data collection instruments), and the level of success you will try to achieve (targets). Performance measurement enables you to track the completion of your project's work and the impact of this work on individuals, organizations and the community.

The Corporation guidelines define the following categories of results for AmeriCorps*VISTA projects.

- **Outputs** track the completion of activities, and document the fact that products were created and that individuals participated in services or programs. Outputs do not measure changes to beneficiaries resulting from participating in services or programs.

For example, a sponsoring organization's AmeriCorps*VISTA project might develop a new system to recruit, train and support volunteers for a mentoring program. This may produce a variety of outputs, including:

- Position descriptions for volunteer mentors;
- Procedures for screening volunteer mentors;
- Tracking database;
- Training curriculum for new volunteer mentors;
- Procedures to provide ongoing support to volunteer mentors;
- Training of a sponsoring organization's staff members in new systems and procedures.

These outputs answer the question, "How much service did we do?" rather than the more difficult question, "What changed as a result of the service?"

- **Outcomes** are *changes* or *benefits* that occur as a result of outputs such as creating products or delivering services. Outcomes address changes in organizations, individuals, and communities. Changes in individuals, for example, can include changes in knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, or behavior. Outcomes answer the question, "What difference did our service make for beneficiaries?" In many cases, an AmeriCorps*VISTA project conducts activities that enhance the capacity of a sponsoring organization to serve both individuals and the community at large.

The Corporation recognizes two categories of outcomes: intermediate outcomes and end outcomes.

Intermediate Outcomes refer to changes that occur along the way to accomplishment of the most significant results you hope to achieve each year. Intermediate outcomes are important milestones on the road to end outcomes and often contribute to realizing those outcomes.

For example, if a VISTA project implements a new system to recruit, train, place and support volunteer mentors, we may see the following intermediate outcomes:

- The sponsoring organization's personnel learn new knowledge and skills through training they receive in how to use the new system.
- The new system becomes institutionalized within the sponsoring organization as staff members start using the new system routinely to recruit, train, place and support volunteer mentors.



End Outcomes are the most significant changes that your AmeriCorps*VISTA project can achieve each year. End outcomes closely correspond with the *goal* of the AmeriCorps*VISTA project.

For example, once a sponsoring organization has successfully implemented the new system for recruiting, training, placing and supporting volunteer mentors, we may see the following end outcomes:

- An increase in the number of youth served by volunteer mentors.
- An increase in the number of youth who experience a close and stable relationship with a caring adult.

End outcomes represent changes that reflect the overarching goal (or goals) of your AmeriCorps*VISTA project.

These are the basic terms used for performance measurement. For a complete list of these terms, consult the glossary at the end of this Toolkit.

Establishing the Scope of Outcomes for Your AmeriCorps*VISTA Project

AmeriCorps*VISTA projects focus on capacity building to leverage existing resources and to create new resources so that the sponsoring organization can be more effective in meeting the needs of the community. Some examples of capacity building include:

- Increasing the number of beneficiaries served through programs and services provided by the sponsor organization
- Improving service utilization by beneficiaries (e.g., more of them stay in a program long enough to experience real benefits)
- Helping sponsoring organizations to develop new programs and services or expand existing programs and services
- Helping sponsoring organizations to improve the quality of existing programs and services
- Assisting with partnerships and collaborations
- Helping to improve organizational infrastructure (e.g., by developing volunteer recruitment and training systems or developing and revising policies and procedures)

- Increasing organizational resources by establishing or expanding a pool of volunteers to assist with programs and services
- Increasing financial resources and helping to build sustainable funding streams for organizations.
- Conducting public outreach to increase participation in programs and services.

Capacity-building activities are intended to improve operational systems, expand the range of services provided by an organization sponsoring an AmeriCorps*VISTA project, or improve its external relations.

The results you choose to measure for your AmeriCorps*VISTA project should be tied specifically to the scope of your project and the activities of the VISTA members. Choose results one year at a time. During the first year of your project, for example, choose the results you hope to achieve and measure for that year. For the second year, choose the results you hope to achieve based on the activities of the second year. An AmeriCorps*VISTA project, for instance, could support the sponsoring organization's mission to increase homeownership among low-income families. To assist with this mission, VISTA members may develop an infrastructure to support volunteer recruitment and fundraising.



In this example, during the first year:

- Outputs may include development and implementation of new volunteer recruitment systems and fundraising databases.
- Intermediate outcomes may include staff members beginning to use volunteer recruitment systems and databases..
- An end outcome may be that the preliminary results indicate increases in volunteers and donations.

During the second year:

- Outputs may include volunteer recruitment systems and databases becoming fully operational.
- Intermediate outcomes may include increases in volunteer recruitment and donations collected.
- End outcomes may include more low-income families being placed in homes each year.

The capacity-building efforts of VISTA members contribute to the sponsoring organization's ability to achieve results that address the key program principles of AmeriCorps*VISTA.

When selecting performance measures for your AmeriCorps*VISTA project, carefully consider the suitability of each result for your project. In some cases capacity-building results are the most appropriate choice for performance measurement. In other cases you can measure changes in the lives of individuals in the community or "end beneficiaries." Make sure, however, that the results you measure directly relate to the efforts of the AmeriCorps*VISTA project.

AmeriCorps*VISTA Requirements

1. Developing the Project Plan

Complete the Project Application Project Plan. The performance measurement requirements should be addressed when completing your project plan contained in your AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Application. The format and instructions for the project plan are discussed in Chapter VI.

Start by identifying your multi-year goals. For small or single-issue projects, one goal may suffice. You can include additional goals as needed to detail the project's mission and purpose. In eGrants, you select a service category for each goal.¹

- Develop a project plan for the AmeriCorps*VISTA project.
- The project plan can contain one or more goals.
- Goals must reflect a multi-year approach over the life of the project.

Next, identify the activities for each goal.

- For each goal, state the activities you plan to conduct during the current project year. For new applications, this is Year One.
- Each goal must state results (outputs and outcomes) for the current project year.

2. Choosing Your Performance Measures

Choose your performance measurement goal(s). Once you have identified your goals and the related activities and intended results, select those that are most central to the mission and vision of your project. In doing so, consider the following questions:

- Does the goal reflect the primary purpose of your project? Selecting such a goal ensures that you will be reporting on your project's primary activities.
- Does the goal address areas of special interest to the Corporation, such as the VISTA programming priorities outlined in Chapter I, or elements of the Corporation's Strategic Plan (see http://nationalservice.gov/about/focus_areas/index.asp)?
- Does the goal address an area of service in which your organization has significant experience or special expertise? Selecting such a goal ensures that you will be reporting on program areas that represent your project's particular strengths.
- Will you be able to obtain outcome data for this goal? Selecting such a goal ensures that you have sufficient information to report project results.

Identify performance measurement results. Within the goal(s) identified, choose 3-5 results and label them as “(PERFORMANCE MEASURE)”. They should include at least:

1. One output;
2. One intermediate outcome; and
3. One end outcome.

¹ eGrants is the on-line application system. Contact your State Office for more information on how to access eGrants.

You are strongly encouraged to put all your performance measures under a single goal. This will help to ensure that your performance measures are all aligned under one set of activities.

Develop your performance measures. With respect to each of the outputs and outcomes you label as a “(PERFORMANCE MEASURE)”, identify:

1. The *indicators* you will use to measure performance;
2. The *targets* you expect to meet;
3. The *instruments* or data source you will use and how you will collect the data.

Definitions of these terms and assistance in constructing performance measures are provided in Chapter IV.

3. Reporting Results

Report the progress achieved. If you are approved as an AmeriCorps*VISTA project, you will be required to submit progress reports to the Corporation. When completing a progress report you will include your achievements to date regarding all results identified in your project plan, including your performance measures. You will be required to measure and report your results at least annually.

You are responsible for reporting **all** project results. For results labeled as “performance measures,” report against the specific indicators and targets identified in your project plan.

For results not labeled as “performance measures,” use the best information available to you to describe what you have achieved.



In addition to the report, you may need to provide for review—if requested—the underlying performance measurement documentation (i.e., your raw data). The progress report also is your opportunity to report any operational changes and project improvements that result from information learned from performance data.

The guidelines above are the *minimum requirements* set by the Corporation. In addition, AmeriCorps*VISTA projects are encouraged to measure outputs and outcomes of all of their primary activities. Projects are also encouraged to plan for and document as many results (i.e., outputs, intermediate outcomes, end outcomes) as they feel appropriate to demonstrate the results of their activities.

Checklist of Key Points

Definitions

- ☑ **Outputs** track the completion of activities, and document the fact that products were created and that individuals participated in services or programs. Outputs do not measure changes to beneficiaries resulting from participating in services or programs

For example, a sponsoring organization's AmeriCorps*VISTA project might develop a new system to recruit, train and support volunteers for a mentoring program. This may produce a variety of outputs, including

- Position descriptions for volunteer mentors;
- Procedures for screening volunteer mentors;
- Tracking database;
- Training curriculum for new volunteer mentors;
- Procedures to provide ongoing support to volunteer mentors;
- Training of a sponsoring agency's staff members participate in training in the new systems and procedures.

These outputs answer the question, "How much service did we do?" rather than the more difficult question, "What changed as a result of the service?"

- ☑ **Intermediate outcomes** refer to changes that occur along the way to accomplishment of the most significant results you hope to achieve each year. Intermediate outcomes are important milestones on the road to end outcomes and often contribute to realizing those outcomes.

For example, if a VISTA project implements a new system to recruit, train, place and support volunteer mentors, we may see the following intermediate outcomes:

- The sponsoring agency's personnel learn new knowledge and skills through training they receive in how to use the new system.
- The new system becomes institutionalized within the sponsoring agency as staff members start using the new system routinely to recruit, train, place and support volunteer mentors.

- ☑ **End outcomes** are the most significant changes that your AmeriCorps*VISTA project can achieve each year. End outcomes closely correspond with the *goal* of the AmeriCorps*VISTA project.

For example, once the agency has successfully implemented the new system for recruiting, training, placing and supporting volunteer mentors, we may see the following end outcomes:

- An increase in the number of youth served by volunteer mentors.
- An increase in the number of youth who experience a close and stable relationship with a caring adult.

End outcomes represent challenges that reflect the overarching goal (or goals) of your AmeriCorps*VISTA project.

Establishing the Scope of Outcomes for Your AmeriCorps*VISTA Project

- AmeriCorps*VISTA projects focus on capacity-building to leverage existing resources and to create new resources so that the sponsoring organization can be more effective in meeting the needs of the community.
- The results you choose to measure for your AmeriCorps*VISTA project should be tied specifically to the scope of your project and the activities of the VISTA members.
- In some cases capacity-building results are the most appropriate choice for performance measurement.
- In some cases you can also measure changes in the lives of individuals in the community or “end beneficiaries.” The results being measured should be closely related, however, to the efforts of the VISTA members.

AmeriCorps*VISTA Requirements

- Complete one project plan for your AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Application.
- The goal statement describes a multi-year approach over the life of the project, while the activities and results describe one year’s efforts and accomplishments.
- Choose the goal(s) for which you plan to conduct performance measurement.
- Under that same goal, identify the results you will use as performance measures. At least one output, one intermediate outcome, and one end outcome.
- Develop your performance measures. Include an indicator, a target, and a data source for each measure.
- Report the progress achieved on the performance measures as well other results identified in the project plan.

IV. Project Planning and the Logic Model

*A Logic Model is a planning tool that diagrams how you intend to achieve your AmeriCorps*VISTA project goals by combining resources (inputs) and service activities to produce specific results (outputs and outcomes) that address poverty-related community needs.*

AmeriCorps*VISTA requires projects to engage in multi-year planning that demonstrates that the activities of VISTA members will lead to sustainable results. Planning for a multi-year project means that VISTA members build upon the efforts of previous years, and that project activities may vary from one year to the next. Three years is the typical life span for an AmeriCorps*VISTA project. Projects should typically plan activities, therefore, along a three-year timeline.



You are encouraged to develop a logic model to plan your AmeriCorps*VISTA project. The logic model illustrates how the outputs and outcomes of each year will support the anticipated outputs and outcomes for the subsequent year. The logic model also can help guide you in the selection of performance measures related to the efforts of your VISTA members.



A logic model is not a required component of your AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Application. Rather, it is a recommended tool that will assist you in planning your project and completing your Project Application.

Identifying Needs, Opportunities, Goals, and Project Purpose

Before developing your logic model, consider the basic assumptions and facts you are using to guide your program design. The questions below can help you shape the direction of your logic model.

1. What is the poverty-related condition in the community that needs to be changed or improved?
2. What are the factors that contribute to this condition?
3. Which of these factors is your sponsoring organization capable of addressing?
4. What opportunities exist to address these contributing factors?
5. Which of these opportunities can be addressed with the VISTA resources?
6. What are the goals of your AmeriCorps*VISTA project?
7. What will your project do to meet these goals?
8. Who will benefit?
9. What results do you want to achieve?

By answering each of these questions, you can uncover key assumptions and factors that could potentially influence project results. You can also clarify the broader goals and purpose of your AmeriCorps*VISTA project.

Components of the AmeriCorps*VISTA Logic Model

There are a variety of ways to construct a logic model. One basic approach, illustrated in Figure 1 below, shows the continuum of elements starting with the community need and finishing with the end outcomes.

Figure 1. AmeriCorps*VISTA Logic Model

COMMUNITY NEED →	GOALS →	INPUTS →	ACTIVITIES →	OUTPUTS →	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES →	END OUTCOMES
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Developing a logic model often works best as a group exercise for staff rather than as an “armchair exercise” for one individual. When putting together your logic model, visualize how each component supports the next as you move from left to right through the logic model toward end outcomes. It may be helpful to begin by identifying the anticipated positive changes (end outcomes) you hope occur by the end of the project or a particular year, and work backwards. Whatever order you choose to complete the logic model, thinking through the components will be useful for both project planning and for determining what you hope to accomplish. Figure 2 below shows how the logic model progresses from project planning to intended results, employing an “if A, then B” sequence. Reading this logic model from left to right, you can see how the anticipated changes move in a *logical* continuum through inputs, activities, and outputs, culminating with intermediate and end outcomes.

Figure 2. Project Planning, Intended Results, and the “If-Then” Sequence of the Logic Model

Community Need →	Goals →	Inputs →	Activities →	Outputs →	Intermediate Outcomes →	End Outcomes
You have identified an unmet need existing in your community.	You have identified the broad purpose toward which your project is directed.	Certain resources are needed to operate your project to address unmet needs.	If you have access to resources, then you can use them to carry out your planned activities.	If you carry out your planned activities, then you will deliver the amount of product and/or service that you intended.	If you carry out your planned activities to the extent you intended, then you will achieve the intermediate outcomes leading to your desired end outcomes.	If you achieve the intermediate outcomes to the extent you intended, then this will lead to your desired end outcomes.
<i>Program Planning</i>				<i>Intended Results</i>		

Here are some questions that can help you think through each element as you build your logic model.

Community Need: The problem or issue in the community that your project will address

- What are the poverty-related problems facing the individuals, families, and communities that you serve?
- What are the key factors or issues that contribute to these problems?
- Which community assets are currently being underutilized?
- What are the barriers to fully utilizing these community assets?
- Which of these factors or barriers can VISTA members most effectively address?
- What research or data source is available that provides evidence of this need?

Goal: The broad purpose toward which your project is directed

- Based on your analysis of needs, what can your organization do to promote change in this area?
- How can AmeriCorps*VISTA build your organization's capacity to achieve such goals?
- What goals can be attained within a three-year project term?

Inputs: Resources you will need to produce outputs and outcomes

- What resources, human and financial, are necessary to achieve your goals?
- What resources are currently available to help you achieve your goals?

Activities: What your program will do with the inputs

- What activities will be involved in implementing your strategies?
- What research, theory, or past experience supports your choice of strategies?
- What kind of skills and qualifications will VISTA members need to implement these activities?

Outputs, Intermediate Outcomes, and End Outcomes: Results your project hopes to achieve through the efforts of your VISTA members

- What are your intended results?
- What are the long-term impacts or changes you hope to institute within the community you serve?
- What changes (benchmarks) can you look at along the way to help assess if you are on track to achieve these longer-term impacts?
- Are your intended results SMART (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-sensitive)?
- How will you assess your work along the way to ensure that you are achieving what you set out to do?

Logic Model as a Multi-Year Planning Tool

You can develop separate logic models for individual program years or one that combines multiple program years into a single model. A multi-year logic model is often more useful than a series of single-year models. A multi-year logic model allows you to identify a variety of outputs, intermediate outcomes, and end outcomes covering the anticipated lifespan of your AmeriCorps*VISTA project. Regardless of which type you choose to use, the logic model or models should incorporate activities and results that relate to the development of organizational capacity (e.g., creating or expanding new programs and services). When appropriate, a logic model can also identify the changes you anticipate beneficiaries will make after participating in new or expanded programs and services.

The logic model allows you to plan for project implementation and identify performance measures for the yearly project plan. It also helps you to stay on track as you accomplish intermediate outcomes, and finally the end outcomes, of your multi-year project. Revisit your logic model at least annually to see if your assumptions have withstood the test of time and actual project experience. Have your original goals and results proven realistic? How does your actual progress compare to your anticipated timeline for achieving project results? You may need to sit down with stakeholders to review and revise your logic model based on actual project experience.

Figure 3 on the next page shows an example of a multi-year logic model for a mentoring project.

Figure 3. Logic Model to Build the Capacity and Sustainability of a Mentoring Program

COMMUNITY NEED →	GOAL →		INPUTS →	ACTIVITIES →	OUTPUTS →	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES →	END OUTCOMES
Waketa Community Services seeks to build capacity and sustainability of current mentoring program to better serve children of incarcerated parents. These children need social and emotional support for positive youth development. This support can help them to escape the cycle of poverty.	To ensure that children and youth of incarcerated parents receive social and emotional support, the VISTA project will strengthen an existing mentoring program.	YEAR 1	2 VISTA members Program Staff Board of Directors Financial and Material Resources	Develop, enhance, implement volunteer recruitment and management (R&M) system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing volunteer R&M system. Develop improvement plan. Submit plan to Board of Directors for review and approval. Implement changes to volunteer R&M system. Orient staff to revised volunteer R&M system. 	R&M plan approved by Board. R&M system components created/revised (screening procedures, training curricula, recruitment database, support resources, etc.). Staff orientation completed.	New/revised R&M system is operational: Volunteers are recruited using new system.	New/revised volunteer R&M system is effective: Volunteers serve at least 3 months.
		YEAR 2	2 VISTA members Program Staff Board of Directors Financial and Material Resources	Fine-tune volunteer R&M system based on staff and volunteer feedback. Integrate changes into mentoring program. Develop fundraising plan.	R&M system components further refined. Volunteer mentors recruited. Youth are mentored.	Increased staff use of volunteer R&M system. More volunteers complete mentor training. More volunteers use support systems. Increased retention of volunteers.	More youth are matched with volunteer mentors. Mentoring relationships last longer. Youth and mentors form closer bonds.
		YEAR 3	2 VISTA members Program Staff Board of Directors Financial and Material Resources	Implement fundraising plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host fundraising events Apply for grants. Identify volunteer coordinators Implement annual fundraising campaigns Institutionalize mentoring program changes and sustainability systems. 	Fundraising plan approved by Board of Directors. Fundraising events held. Grant applications submitted.	Long-term system for fundraising is instituted. Long-term commitment for volunteer coordinators is established.	Increased financial and personnel resources are made available to support mentoring program. Staff and Board institutionalize changes/enhancements of mentoring program through policy and on-going staff training.

Note: See additional material on the web for a more complete set of material associated with this example.

Checklist of Key Points



Introduction

- ☑ AmeriCorps*VISTA projects typically should plan on the basis of a three-year timeline.
- ☑ Planning for a multi-year project means that VISTA members build upon the efforts of previous years. Multi-year planning also means that project activities may vary from one year to the next.
- ☑ A logic model is not a required component of your AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Application, but it is a highly recommended tool that can assist you in planning your project and completing your Project Application.

Identifying Community Needs, Opportunities, Goals, and Project Purpose

- ☑ Before developing your logic model, consider the basic facts and assumptions you are using to guide your program design.

Development of an AmeriCorps*VISTA Logic Model

- ☑ Developing a logic model often works best as a group exercise for staff rather than as an “armchair exercise” for one individual.
- ☑ Logic model components include: community need, goal, input, activities, outputs, intermediate outcomes and end outcomes.

Logic Model as a Multi-Year Planning Tool

- ☑ A multi-year logic model can serve as a roadmap for the entire project, and can help you identify performance measures for the yearly project plan.
- ☑ When putting together your logic model, visualize how each component supports the next as you move from left to right through the logic model toward end outcomes.

V. Planning for Data Collection

Data collection is a process of systematically gathering and documenting concrete and measurable evidence that indicates whether your project is achieving its targets for outputs and outcomes.

Collecting data involves gathering the information to determine the amount of service provided or products produced (*outputs*) and the changes that have occurred (*outcomes*). Data are the numbers and other raw factual information you obtain through the process of measurement. You analyze this data to obtain the results (totals, percentages, etc.) that go into the performance measurement section of your Corporation progress reports.

This chapter provides an overview of these key steps to collect performance measurement data:

- Developing outcome indicators
- Formulating annual targets
- Getting the data: Identifying data sources, and choosing instruments

In planning for data collection, you will need to determine what measurable evidence you need to show progress (*indicators*) and determine how you will know when you have achieved the desired amount of change (*targets*). You will also want to know where the information can be obtained and who can provide it—the *data source*. Once you identify the data source, you can think about possible methods and *instruments* for collecting information from the data source.

Developing Outcome Indicators

Outcome indicators are the information you collect to determine how well your project is progressing toward an outcome.

Before you start to collect data, you need to decide what information you will need to assess project results. This process begins with identifying *indicators*. For each outcome you plan to measure, you need to identify at least one indicator. Some outcomes can be identified and measured with ease; others can be difficult to identify and measure.



An outcome indicator is the concrete, measurable evidence that helps define your desired outcome (see examples in Figure 4 on the page 20). The choice of outcome indicators for performance measurement will depend on the type of activity and the results you are trying to measure. These outcome indicators can generate quantitative (numerical) data that are relatively easy to analyze and report.

To identify outcome indicators, ask yourself questions like:

- How would I know that our organizational capacity has increased?
- What would I look for to determine when a program or service has become fully developed, implemented, expanded, or enhanced?
- How would I know that the people we served experienced changes in attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, or skills?

Formulating Annual Targets

*Targets describe the amount and/or level of change you anticipate achieving within a particular timeframe due to the efforts of your AmeriCorps*VISTA members. Targets are based on your indicators.*

Targets related to services quantify the anticipated change for organizations and/or individuals due to your project's efforts. Targets related to organizational capacity quantify ways in which you anticipate that your organization will increase its ability to serve the community. Program staff typically relies on experience and knowledge of the community being served to make a judgment about how much change is reasonable to expect in a given year. See Figure 4 on page 20 for examples of targets.

As you set targets, consider the following issues:

- **Keep in mind the personnel and other resources available to your AmeriCorps*VISTA project.** If resource availability is an issue, you may need to take a more cautious approach to setting targets for outputs and outcomes. Think carefully about what you are and are not capable of both achieving *and* measuring.
- **Consider the community context, the factors contributing to this need, and the characteristics of the beneficiaries.** The more challenges you face in making changes, the lower your target may be. For example, if program staff do not have a lot of time to devote to an Individual Development Account (IDA) program, then conducting one IDA workshop series per year may be sufficient. If the youth in your community are not motivated and jobs are scarce, less youth will be successful in obtaining summer employment as compared to a community where youth are motivated and more jobs are available.
- **Be realistic about your targets!** If this is the first time you are addressing a particular community need, you obviously cannot rely on past program experience. **A first-time target is often an educated guess** that can be refined later based on actual program experience. In addition, **be realistic about the timelines for achieving targets.** Consider what you can reasonably expect to accomplish or change by the end of the year. If you are developing a new project and the necessary infrastructure is not in place, your annual targets for planning, developing, and implementing a new service program may need to be spread over two years rather than one.



The format of your target statement in the project plan is based on your indicators. It can be as simple as offering target values (numbers or percentages) that represent the level of change you

hope to achieve. If your indicator is defined in terms of a tally or count, then your target should be worded in terms of numbers (e.g., five of seven program components piloted will operate satisfactorily). If your indicator is defined in terms of a ratio, then your target should be worded in terms of percentages (e.g., 70 percent of the volunteer mentors complete a six-month service commitment). Essentially, your targets tell the story of “how many” and “by how much?” Figure 4 on the next page provides examples of possible results, indicators, targets, and instruments for an IDA project.

Getting the Data: Identifying Data Sources

Once you have identified your indicators and set annual targets, you are ready to think about getting the data.

➤ *Identifying Data Sources*

The data source is the origin (place, organization, or group of individuals) of the information you collect to measure results. To identify data sources and instruments, ask yourself:

- Who will provide the information?
- Where will it come from?

The instrument you use to record performance measurement data will depend on your data source. The data source and instrument are closely connected; the *instrument* is the specific document or form used to collect information from the *data source*. Examples of data sources include volunteers, agency records, and project participants. Examples of instruments include tracking logs, attendance sheets, attitude questionnaires, and interview procedures.



Figure 4. Sample Results, Indicators, Targets, and Instruments for an Individual Development Account (IDA) Project

	RESULT	INDICATOR	TARGET	INSTRUMENT
CAPACITY BUILDING	Output: Staff will complete training on how to implement IDA program.	Number of staff members who participate in training	Eight staff members participate in training	<i>IDA Staff Training Attendance Roster</i>
	Intermediate Outcome: Staff will gain the knowledge and skills to implement an IDA program.	Proportion of trained staff who receive a score of 80 points or above on the <i>IDA Staff Assessment</i>	In the first year, four out of five trained staff will receive a score of 80 points or above on the <i>IDA Staff Assessment</i> .	<i>IDA Staff Assessment</i>
	End Outcome: Trained staff will implement an IDA program.	Trained staff will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enroll participants, • Facilitate IDA workshops, and • Assign participants to a financial counselor. 	In year one, trained staff will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enroll 50 participants, • Facilitate four IDA workshops, and • Assign 90 percent of participants to a financial counselor. 	<i>IDA Program Implementation Checklist</i>
SERVICE DELIVERY	Output: Low-income household heads (program participants) will complete IDA program.	Number of program participants who complete IDA program	120 low-income household heads will complete IDA program.	<i>IDA Program Attendance Roster</i>
	Intermediate Outcome: IDA program participants will accumulate savings.	Percentage of IDA program participants who make scheduled deposits to their individual development accounts	In the first year, 70 percent of IDA program participants will make at least 90 percent of their scheduled deposits to their individual development accounts.	<i>IDA Statement Log</i>
	End Outcome: IDA program participants will use accumulated savings to purchase assets.	Percentage of IDA program participants who use IDA savings to purchase an asset (e.g., buy a car or pay college or trade school fees)	In the first year, 35 percent of program participants will use IDA savings to acquire an asset.	<i>Record of Asset Purchases</i>

➤ **Data from Other Agencies and Project-Generated Data**

You can use data that your project collects directly or available data from other agencies or data that your project collects directly to show the extent to which your project is meeting performance measurement targets.

- *Data from other agencies* are collected by other organizations that can be shared with your AmeriCorps*VISTA project to measure results.
- *Project-generated data* are collected by AmeriCorps*VISTA projects directly from partner agencies, project participants, and other key stakeholders.

Data from Other Agencies: Examples of such data are classroom attendance records, course grades, and local statistics on employment, crime, and childhood vaccinations. You need to plan ahead for how you will collect data from other agencies. While data may exist that seem relevant to your project, it is important to determine whether or not the data will be available and useful to you. Consider the following:

- *Access:* Will you have permission to access the data, especially if they are personal or confidential?
- *Format:* Will the data be available in the format you need? For example, you may need data on individuals, but the agency may only keep aggregate statistics.
- *Timing:* Will the data be available when you need them? For example, you need job statistics in the spring, but they may not be available until the fall.



You will still need an instrument for recording the data that come from an external source. At the very least, you will need to copy or transfer data from the other agency's records onto your own paper forms or electronic databases for analysis.

Project-Generated Data: If data from other agencies are not available or appropriate, you may need to select or design instruments to collect the data you need to measure project results. You may want to adapt instruments developed by others, or design your own relatively simple instruments. Administering surveys, conducting interviews, observing behavior, or completing journals are common ways of obtaining project-generated data. While it can take more time to develop your own instrument, you will have more control over the format of your data.

If you decide to collect your own data, you will need to **pilot test your instruments**. Pilot testing helps you spot ambiguous language and other common errors that reduce the usefulness of the data you collect.

➤ **Additional Points to Consider:**

Here are a couple of additional points to consider, regardless of whether you plan to rely on data from other agencies or develop your own instruments.

- **Information Technology:** Most data can be computerized by using simple spreadsheets, tables, database programs and software. This is especially helpful if you are using the

same instruments to collect data over a period of time and want to compare results or report results periodically. In addition to greatly facilitating the task of analyzing your data, computer software makes it easy for you to create back-up copies and provides a centralized location for storing performance measurement data.

- **Confidentiality:** This can be especially important when storing data about program participants. Be sure to maintain the confidentiality of all stored data by keeping completed instruments (“raw data”) in a locked filing cabinet and by password-protecting computer files.

Getting the Data: Choosing Methods and Instruments

There are many methods for collecting performance measurement data. These include logs, tally sheets, and tracking forms; surveys, interviews, and focus groups. For more information on selecting appropriate data collection methods, contact Project STAR.

Whether you plan to use data from other agencies or project-generated data, you will need instruments to collect output and outcome data. If you do not yet know what instruments you will use, you can still list your data sources in the AmeriCorps*VISTA project plan. Later, you can decide on the specific instruments you will use to collect data from these sources. Figure 5 below provides some examples of performance measurement questions and instruments that might be used to collect relevant data during the course of a multi-year project.

Figure 5. Examples of Instruments to Address Performance Measurement Questions

General Question	Specific Questions	Instruments
<i>Was a new volunteer generation system developed and implemented at a multi-service, multi-site program for the homeless?</i>	Which system components were implemented?	Volunteer System Component Checklist
	What system components were staff members trained on?	Staff Training Log
	Did staff acquire knowledge and skills to use new systems?	Staff Training Assessment
	How effective are new systems in meeting volunteer needs?	Pre-Post Survey of Site Coordinators
<i>Was a program to train reading tutors successfully implemented?</i>	How many tutors were recruited and trained?	Tutoring Training Log
	How satisfied were parents with tutoring service?	Parent Survey
	How much did students' reading test scores improve?	Student Reading Test Scores Record
<i>Did an effort to build stronger collaboration among family social service providers achieve its goals?</i>	How satisfied were organizations with impact of collaboration?	Provider Survey
	Did participants become more willing to participate in collaborative?	Collaborative Meeting Attendance Logs
	To what extent did child well-being improve?	Client Survey

➤ **Issues to Consider When Choosing Instruments**

Consider the following issues when choosing data collection methods and instruments.



- **Identify who will administer the instrument.** Who will be responsible for collecting the data, and how will you secure their cooperation? How will you train them to administer the instrument?
- **Identify who will complete the instrument.** Will those identified to complete the instrument be willing to do so? Will they be able to understand what the instrument is asking, given their reading level, language skills, age, etc.?
- **Determine when you want the instrument to be administered.**

Does your timeline conflict with other project activities or administrative responsibilities? Will the people who need to complete the instrument be available when the data are to be collected? Do you need the instruments translated into alternative languages?

- **Determine if the data to be collected are accessible to you.** Do you need approval from key individuals or organizations (such as parents, guardians, or school principals) to get the data? Is confidentiality an issue?
- **Verify that the data you want to collect actually exist.** Do the data to be collected actually exist in a format or grouping that you need?
- **Determine when the data will be available.** Will the data be available to you when you need them?

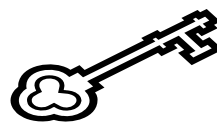


The data you collect for performance measurement serve as the foundation for reporting VISTA project results. You report these results regularly to the Corporation. You may also want to include these results in reports to other stakeholders.

For more information on collecting, and analyzing performance measurement data, see the Project STAR material at

http://nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online_pubs/perf_meas/vista_pm_home.php

Checklist of Key Points



Introduction

- ☑ Data collection is the systematic process of documenting concrete and measurable evidence that indicates whether your project is achieving output and outcome targets.
- ☑ In planning for data collection, you will need to determine what measurable evidence you need to show progress (*indicators*) and determine how you will know when you have achieved the desired amount of change (*targets*).

Developing Outcome Indicators

- ☑ An outcome indicator is concrete, measurable evidence that helps define your desired outcome.

Formulating Annual Targets

- ☑ Targets describe the amount and/or level of change you anticipate achieving due to the efforts of your AmeriCorps*VISTA members. Targets are based on your indicators.
- ☑ As you set targets, be realistic! A first-time target without previous program experience is often an educated guess that will need to be refined later.

Identifying Data Sources

- ☑ The data source is the place, organization, or group of individuals from whom you collect information to measure results.
- ☑ The data source and instrument are closely connected; the *instrument* is the specific document or form used to collect information from the *data source*.

Data From Other Agencies and Project-Generated Data

- ☑ *Data from other agencies* are collected by other organizations that can be shared with your AmeriCorps*VISTA project to measure results. *Project-generated data* are collected by AmeriCorps*VISTA projects directly from partner agencies, project participants, and other key stakeholders.
- ☑ If you decide to collect your own data, you will need to *pilot test* your instruments.
- ☑ Maintain the confidentiality of all data by storing in a safe and secure location, such as a locked filing cabinet or password-protected computer file.

Choosing Instruments

- ☑ Whether you plan to use data from other agencies or project-generated data, you will need instruments to collect output and outcome data.
- ☑ When choosing a data collection method and instrument, consider who will administer the instrument, who will complete it, and when the instrument will be administered. Also, consider whether or not the data will be accessible to you, verify that the data you want to collect actually exist, and determine when the data will be available for collection.

VI. Completing the Project Application Project Plan

The performance measurement requirements are addressed in the project plan section of your AmeriCorps*VISTA application. The instructions in this chapter are for completing the project plan (paper form) available with the AmeriCorps*VISTA application instructions. You can also find the blank form and a filled in example for a first-year project at http://nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online_pubs/perf_meas/VISTA_toolkit.php . See other material at this same web address for guidance on entering the project plan in eGrants.



The primary purpose of the project plan is to identify key goals and results and set up performance measurement. The project plan is not designed to itemize the tasks of individual VISTA members. AmeriCorps*VISTA projects are encouraged to create separate “member assignment(s) description” to describe the day-to-day activities of VISTA members.

Your project plan should clearly demonstrate:

- A realistic effort to help bring individuals and families out of poverty permanently, not simply to make poverty more tolerable;
- AmeriCorps*VISTA member efforts that are geared toward building a permanent infrastructure within the applicant organization; and
- Proposed project results that are measurable and convey the actual impact the project has on the beneficiaries (organizations, individuals, families, and communities).

Project Plan Components

You will need to complete a project plan for each program year (see Figure 6 on next page). *The annual project plan includes goals which are multi-year but the activities and results are identified for a single program year.* If you develop a logic model, you can make use of it when filling out your project plan. Plans should state in measurable and quantifiable terms:

- The goals of the project over the life of the project (*multi-year*);
- The activities for the program year being measured (*single year*);
- The results (outputs and outcomes) for the program year being measured (*single year*); and
- The dates by which you expect to achieve your results during that year.

Figure 6. AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Plan (paper form)

<i>Column A</i> Goals, Activities, and Results	<i>Column B</i> Date(s)	<i>Column C</i> Project Reporting
Identify Goal(s) to which members’ activities are directed.		
Activities: What are the action steps needed to accomplish this goal?		
Identify any Results (outputs, intermediate outcomes, or end outcomes) related to this goal. If the result is to be measured, write “performance measure” in parentheses beside the result. For each result to be measured, identify the indicator, the targets you expect to meet, the instrument(s) you will use to measure this result, and how you will collect the data. If you have data for this objective from prior years, report it here.		

Column A: Goals, Activities, and Results

This column consists of three sections: Goals, Activities, and Results.

A note about service categories: When entering your project plan in eGrants, you will be required to identify an issue area and service category for each goal. Review the list of service categories and identify all of the ones you will address in your multi-year project. Make sure you have at least one goal for each of your service categories. Each goal can only have one service category.

Once you have identified the service category, follow these instructions when completing each section of the project plan:

1. Clearly state the project goal(s).

The project goal(s) should address what you expect the VISTA members to achieve over the life of the project in relation to the problem(s) identified in your project narrative. Each goal is a statement of intent to meet an identified community need through building upon community assets. Unlike the other components, your goal statement addresses the entire life of the project and is usually multi-year in nature. For each goal, be sure to state the number of years you plan to take to complete the tasks.



The goal statement should:

- Address the community need by stating what the VISTA members will do to meet the need. This statement is an **overall description of the intent** of a major component of the VISTA project over the life of the three-year project. How will VISTA project address the community need? The goal statement should be brief, about 1-2 sentences.
- Identify the **desired outcome** that will be achieved by the end of the VISTA project.

The Goal Statement should not:

- List VISTA member activities.
- Focus on a single year.
- Describe the continuation of existing activities, services or processes. Instead, it should describe a self-sustaining product that will be realized at the end of a process.

2. Describe your activities.

For each goal, list the **major** activities (action steps) your project and AmeriCorps*VISTA members will undertake to achieve the desired outputs and outcomes. The text here can include information about who does what, when, where, how, and with whom and for how long. The activities listed should cover only one year's efforts. During subsequent years, you will have the opportunity to list the activities that will build on the first year and support the achievement of each goal. If you have developed a multi-year logic model, you will already have an idea what your activities will be in second and third year.

3. Identify and define your results.

For each goal, you will need to identify the intended results, labeling them as outputs, intermediate outcomes, or end outcomes. Choose only the primary outputs and outcomes that reflect the main accomplishments you hope to achieve during any given year. List the outputs and outcomes for only one year.

4. Identify results to measure performance.

After developing your goals in your project plan, describing your major activities for each goal and identifying the primary outputs and outcomes for each goal, the next step is to choose at least three results to label as "performance measures." Select performance

measures from the goal or goals that are most central to the mission and vision of your AmeriCorps*VISTA project. When choosing your results, you **must** include at least one output, one intermediate outcome, and one end outcome. For each of the results identified as performance measures, identify it as such by writing the words in parenthesis: “(PERFORMANCE MEASURE)”. See additional materials for an example of the project plan.



You will be responsible for reporting ALL project results. For results labeled as “performance measures” you will be reporting against the specific indicators and targets identified in your project plan. For results not labeled as “performance measures” you will need to use the best information available to you to describe what you have achieved.

5. Enhance the performance measure results.

For each of the three (or more) results that you identified as a “performance measure,” additional information must be provided related to measuring and reporting. These “enhancements” are the **target**, **indicator**, and **instrument**. See Chapter V for definitions of indicators, targets, and instruments. List these enhancements under each performance measurement result. Remember to preface each item with a label (target, indicator, instrument) before providing the information (e.g., “*Target: Sixty percent of the program staff will be trained to administer the mentoring program*”).

Column B: Dates

In this column, indicate the periods of time that the VISTA members will work on and achieve the stated results. Performance measures for each type of result (outputs, intermediate outcomes, and end outcomes) should be measured at least annually. Make sure that the dates include the program year as well as the months or quarters.

Column C: Project Reporting

AmeriCorps*VISTA projects use the eGrants on-line system for project reporting. First-year projects are required to file quarterly reports. Second and third year projects may report quarterly or semi-annually. In reporting your results, include discussion of how you measured the results, and what results you obtained using the instruments specified in the project plan. Be sure to clearly state whether or not you met the target identified in your project plan.

Glossary of AmeriCorps*VISTA Performance Measurement Terms

Activity: What an AmeriCorps*VISTA project does with inputs to produce outputs, achieve outcomes, and fulfill its mission.

Beneficiaries: Those who benefit from community activities supported by the VISTA member's efforts. Beneficiaries can include individuals, groups, and organizations.

Capacity Building Outcomes: Refers to the development, encouragement and support of resources and relationships at the individual, organizational, and inter-organizational levels. Examples of capacity-building outcomes include expanding a sponsoring organization's repertoire of programs and services; improving how services are delivered; reducing duplication of services among organizations; and improving service coordination among organizations. Capacity-building activities are intended to improve operational systems, expand the range of services provided by an organization, or improve external relations.

Community Need: The problem or issue in the community that your AmeriCorps*VISTA project will address.

Data: The numbers and other raw factual information you obtain through the process of systematic collection. Data are the "raw materials" from which you obtain results.

Data Source: Identifies the origin (place, organization, or group of individuals) of the information you collect to measure results.

eGrants: The Corporation's online grant application and management system, located at: www.cns.gov/egrants. For more information about eGrants, contact your State Office.

Goal: The broad purpose toward which your project is directed. Goals address what you expect the VISTA members to achieve over the life of the project in relation to the problem(s) identified in the project narrative.

Indicator: A concrete, measurable item of information that specifies progress toward achieving a result. An outcome indicator answers the question, "What is my *source of evidence* that change has occurred?" If, for example, you want to know whether or not IDA program participants are accumulating savings, then you might look at the frequency and amount of deposits participants make to their IDA saving accounts. Indicator statements usually begin with the phrase "number of" or "percent of."

Input: A resource your program will use to produce outputs and achieve outcomes. Examples include staff, members, volunteers, facilities, equipment, curricula, and money.

Instrument: The specific document or form used to collect information from the *data source*. Examples include behavior checklists, tally sheets, and attitude questionnaires.

Logic Model: A diagram or chart that traces the flow from community need to goals, inputs, activities, outputs, intermediate outcomes and end outcomes.

Performance Measure: A *result* that you hope to achieve for your AmeriCorps*VISTA project. Each performance measure includes information about *what* you will measure (indicators), *how* you will measure it (instruments), and how you will gauge success (targets). For AmeriCorps*VISTA projects, a minimum of three performance measures must be identified and tracked each project year.

Performance Measurement: The process of regularly measuring the outputs and outcomes produced by your program. Performance measurement allows you to track both the amount of work done by your program and the impact of this work on your program beneficiaries.

Project Plan: The document describing the goals, activities, and desired results of an AmeriCorps*VISTA project. The project plan encompasses the entire AmeriCorps*VISTA project. The goal reflects a multi-year effort, while the activities and results in the project plan are annual. The primary purpose of the project plan is to identify key results and make it possible to do performance measurement. The project plan is not designed to itemize the tasks of individual VISTA members. AmeriCorps*VISTA projects have created separate “assignment descriptions” for VISTA members to describe the day-to-day activities of members. New projects are encouraged to develop such assignment descriptions for VISTA members.

Results: The outputs and outcomes you intend to achieve by engaging in the service activities.

Outputs refer to the services delivered and products completed by your VISTA members. Outputs do not provide information on changes or benefits in the lives of beneficiaries.

Outcomes are changes or benefits that occur as a result of services delivered. Outcomes address changes in systems, knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, or behavior, and answer the question, “What difference did our service make in the lives of the beneficiaries?” Beneficiaries can include individuals, organizations, and communities. In many cases, VISTA members engage in activities that enhance the capacity of their sponsoring organization to serve individuals in the community at large. The Corporation recognizes two categories of outcomes: intermediate outcomes and end outcomes.

Intermediate Outcomes refer to changes that are short of the “final” result you hope to achieve each year. Intermediate outcomes are important milestones on the way to achieving end outcomes.

End Outcomes are the significant changes that your AmeriCorps*VISTA project hopes to achieve each year. End outcomes address the goals that your AmeriCorps*VISTA project hopes to achieve.

Stakeholder: An individual, group, or organization with an interest in the success of your AmeriCorps*VISTA project. Stakeholders include VISTA members, project staff, partner agencies, boards, funders, program beneficiaries and others in the community.

Target: A statement that describes the amount and/or level of change you anticipate achieving within a particular timeframe due to the efforts of your AmeriCorps*VISTA members. Targets are based on indicators. Targets may be expressed as outputs or outcomes as shown below:

Output Target: In the first year, 150 members of the community will receive financial literacy training.

Outcome Target: In the second year, 75% of IDA program participants will complete scheduled contributions to their IDA savings accounts.

Volunteer: Volunteers are individuals in the community who offer their time and talents to assist your AmeriCorps*VISTA projects. Volunteers differ from AmeriCorps*VISTA members in that they are under no formal obligation to provide a specified amount of assistance (e.g., as measured by service hours), and do not receive a stipend, education award or health benefits.

Directory of Resources



Below is a list of resources recommended by the Corporation for developing performance measurements. To access each of the online resources, type the underlined address into the address field of your web browser. The Corporation also encourages projects to seek the help of local or regional evaluators, professionals who oversee and carry out performance measurement activities. This includes the development of a plan that encompasses the collection of and reporting on outcome data that will be used to improve project quality.

Web Sites

Evaluation Toolkit: A User's Guide to Evaluation for National Service Programs

http://nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online_pubs/perf_meas/usersguide.php

Harvard Family Research Project—After School Resources and Publications

<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/resources.html>

Measuring Volunteering: A Practical Toolkit

<http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/toolkit/default.html>

Online Evaluation Resource Library

<http://oerl.sri.com/>

Project STAR

http://nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online_pubs/perf_meas/index.php

The Results & Performance Accountability Implementation Guide

<http://www.raguide.org/>

United Way of America, Outcome Measurement Resource Network—Resource Library

<http://national.unitedway.org/outcomes/library/pgmomres.cfm>

Urban Institute Report on the Corporation's performance measurement

http://www.nationalservice.org/pdf/outcome_indicators.pdf

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook

<http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub770.pdf>

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide

www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf

StatPac: Designing Surveys and Questionnaires

<http://www.statpac.com/surveys/index.htm#toc>

Free Management Library: General Guidelines for Conducting Interviews

<http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/interview.htm>

Free Management Library: Basics of Conducting Focus Groups

<http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/focusgrp.htm>

Books

All of the following books can be borrowed from the Lending Library of the National Service Resource Center. Instructions for ordering material from the Lending Library can be found at <http://nationalserviceresources.org/publications/index.php>

Hatry, Harry P. 1999. Performance Measurement: Getting Results. Urban Institute Press.

United Way of America. 1996. Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach. United Way of America. (To order, call 1-800-772-0008.)

Juvenile Mentoring Program . 2000. Evaluating Your Program: A Beginner's Self-Evaluation Workbook for Mentoring Programs. Information Technology International.

Ellis, Diana, et al. 1990. Keeping On Track: An Evaluation Guide for Community Groups. Women's Research Centre.

Patton, Michael Quinn, et al., eds. 1997. Measuring the Difference Volunteers Make: A Guide to Outcome Evaluation for Volunteer Program Managers. Minnesota Department of Human Services.