

EDA VISTA: Onboarding Guide

First impressions can set the tone for the entire VISTA service year. Use this resource to ensure that your members understand your site, community, and organizational culture. This way, work expectations are set from the get-go. The goal is to ease the VISTA's into their new role so that they can more effectively empower communities and build organizational capacity and sustainable projects.

What is Onboarding?

Onboarding, also known as organizational socialization, is a process through which employees (VISTAs) move from being organizational outsiders to becoming organizational insiders. In the case of VISTAs who may be relocating, it is the process of becoming community insiders, conscious of the regions that they will serve.

The onboarding process should be planned by the host organization. There should be an understanding that orientations are not a one-day task, but an ongoing process that opens lines of communication with the VISTA, to assist in their professional development, and to ensure that they are well-adjusted to their work conditions.

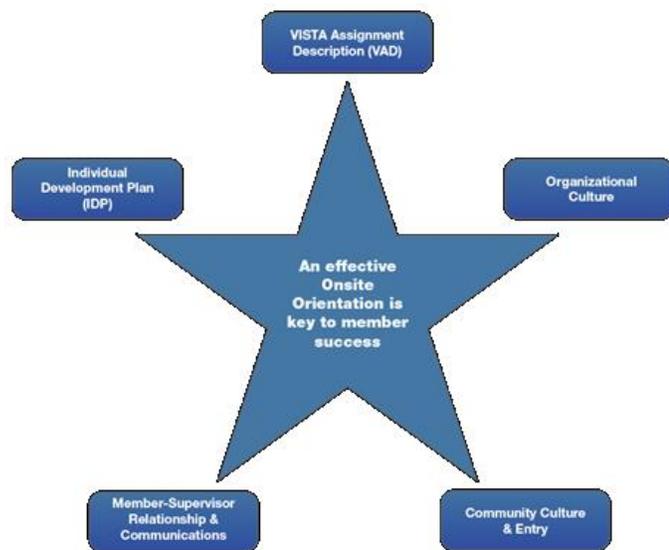
Orientation is the first step in cultivating a positive working relationship, with realistic expectations, with the VISTA.

Orientation Planning:

1. VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)
2. Organizational Culture
3. Community Culture & Entry
4. Member-Supervisor Relationship & Communications
5. Individual Development Plan (IDP)

1. VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

- Review the following on the VAD document with the new VISTA:
 - Their "Title" and how they should communicate their role when networking in the community. Will they have business cards? Name tags for events? Signatures on their emails?
 - Run through the project goal, objectives & member activities. This is your opportunity to go into further detail to describe your vision throughout the year.
 - Timelines: Set some initial dates and due dates so the VISTA can track and understand their progress.
- The following are difficulties that VISTAs can face with their VAD:
 - VAD language is unclear/unrealistic.
 - Confusion coordinating contrasting roles among sites.
 - "Cookie-cutter" VAD's that are unrelated to daily roles.
- The following are strategies to overcome challenges associate with the VAD:



- Ensure that activities and expectations are clear in scope, with specific focus on actionable tasks/deliverables.
- Break down complex goals into sub-tasks.
- Provide the specific timeline for each activity, while focusing on immediate priorities.
- Coordinate with the EDA, VISTA Leader, or other site patterners to avoid pressures and overlaps on intermediary projects, reports, & tasks.
- Make sure that the supervisor follows up with identified trainings, learning resources, development sessions to assist in addressing coherency for upcoming tasks.

2. Organization Culture

- Be sure the VISTA has a copy of the sponsor organization's policies and work guidelines. Are there other guides, manuals or annual reports the VISTA should refer to?
- Set clear expectations on dress code, work hours, how to track time, how to take leave time.
- Give the VISTA an overview of the organization's history and mission.
- Introduce VISTA to other members of the team. Make sure they get an understanding of what individuals' roles are on the EDD's team.
- Ensure that the staff understands the role of the VISTA on the team and understand what it means to serve with AmeriCorps VISTA. Give VISTA an opportunity to introduce themselves at an upcoming staff meeting.
- Help VISTA understand "[Spoken vs. Unspoken Rules](#)" in the workplace.

3. Community Culture & Entry

- Introduce the VISTA to the community. Talk about the socio-economic and political structure of the region. Ease the VISTA into the ecosystem.
- Present on the history of the community and its status on problem-solving efforts. Help the VISTA see where their project fits into the "big picture".
- Provide the VISTA with the necessary community reports, economic studies, and previous CED reports. Provide the VISTA with databases or contacts to community agencies and organizations they can network with.
- Help connect VISTA to upcoming education and community events. Introduce VISTA to local stakeholders and encourage them to network or represent the organization at community events.
- Encourage VISTA to volunteer or attend local cultural events that may not be directly associated to VISTA term.

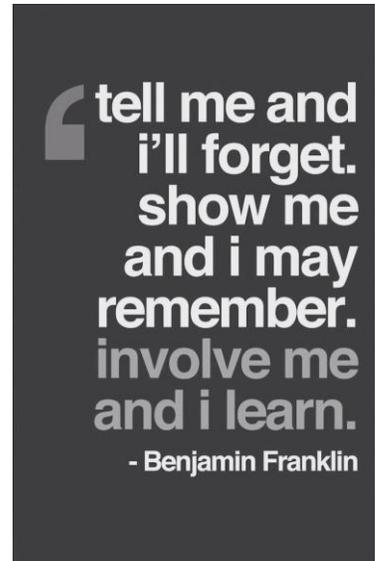
4. Member-Supervisor Relationship & Communications

- The VISTA Supervisor is a: Guide, Collaborator, Visionary, Communicator, Advocate, Connector, Supervisor, & Leader.
- Communicate to your VISTA the other roles and responsibilities you play within the organization so they understand your schedule better and how to be respectful of your time.
- Set clear lines of communication between VISTA and supervisor
- Help the VISTA understand your management style so they can better understand your expectations of them.
- VISTAs who receive supervision and coaching are most satisfied and successful. Members who left service early had less one-on-one contact with supervisors. 70% of alumni met one-on-one with supervisor at least once per week.

- Ensure that VISTA's are engaged in high-level programming. They are not interns and should not be tasked with menial administrative tasks.

Individual Development Plan (IDP)

- VISTA Leader will distribute "Individual Development Plan" to help VISTA identify what they want to learn through the year.
- Connect VISTA's with at least one professional development course related to economic development or their VAD.
- Find relevant webinars and community educational seminars to refer VISTA to.
- Transfer knowledge, relationships and resources.
- Encourage VISTAs to find educational sessions and events to attend.



Useful Webinars

- Managing VISTAs: Fundamental Supervisory Skills:
<https://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/managing-vistas-fundamental-supervisory-skills>
- Helping Your Members Thrive:
<https://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/helping-your-members-thrive>
- 8 VISTA Member Retention Strategies You Can't Ignore:
<https://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/8-vista-member-retention-strategies-you-cant-ignore>

Role of VISTA Leader

- Will co-facilitate monthly check-in calls; respond to VISTA inquiries; facilitate professional development sessions each month; share educational webinars.
- Will collect reporting from VISTAs and help generate success stories.
- Will help track & address: program needs, VISTA member needs, targeted VAD outcomes, expected professional behavior and spur active & ongoing service-learning experiences.

Resources

- [OSOT Checklist](#)
- [On-Site Orientation and Training](#)