

DRAFT

AmeriCorps*VISTA Concept Paper

Statewide, Sustainable Volunteer Recognition Program

I. Executive Summary

- A. Briefly describe your organization's mission, history, and the beneficiaries of your organization's programs.

The Tennessee Commission on National & Community Service, also known as Volunteer Tennessee, is the 25 member volunteer citizen board whose mission is to encourage volunteerism and community service in Tennessee. The Commission sponsors 15 AmeriCorps*State programs and provides service-learning training and technical assistance in partnership with the TN Department of Education. Commission program services primarily address issues related to poverty, including housing, health, education, environment and child abuse prevention. In 2001, Commission won top recognition for Tennessee from the U.S. Committee for the UN International Year of Volunteers initiative.

- B. Describe the project activities the requested AmeriCorps*VISTA members will perform.

The Commission seeks an AmeriCorps*VISTA member to develop a statewide sustainable volunteer recognition program, including youth service-learning volunteers.

II. Strengthening Communities

- A. Describe the specific poverty-related community need(s) the AmeriCorps*VISTA project will address.

Volunteers and national service participants are critical resources for Tennessee in addressing poverty-related community needs. The President's Volunteer Service Award website notes that "Recognizing and honoring volunteers sets a standard for service to others. It encourages a sustained commitment to civic participation and inspires others to make volunteering a central part of their lives." Other than the NFL Community Quarterback award, there is no statewide volunteer recognition program for Tennessee. Even if the Tennessee initiative is developed as a system to maximize participation in national and/or local existing volunteer recognition programs, there is a gap in the infrastructure for volunteerism that this effort would address.

- B. Describe how the proposed project will strengthen your organization's capacity to address the need(s) of the community. What are the project's anticipated outcomes? What strategies will your organization employ to achieve these outcomes? How will You measure your success in achieving these outcomes?

The project will establish the state service commission as the state leader in volunteerism and expand its opportunities for partnerships for national and community service to meet local needs. An effective volunteer recognition program should result in end outcomes of increased volunteerism and reduced community need as reflected in the annual Census

survey of volunteer activity. An intermediate outcome would be securing the state’s capacity to support an on-going volunteer recognition initiative as reflected by growing numbers of nominees after three years. The logic model follows:

Needs	Activities	Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes
More volunteers to address poverty issues; More partners for natl & com service initiatives	Volunteer recognition initiative (event, book, media series, website, agency 3 Star program or other?)	Board leaders VISTA Vol recog plan Non-profits Volunteer heroes Underwriters Media releases	Event # invited to nominate #nominated #Vols recognized # partners \$ raised # media mentions	Increase in % of TN population who volunteer; Increase in partners for natl svc initiatives

Working with the Strategic Partnerships Committee of the TN Commission on National & Community Service, the VISTA will research state program recognition models and current assets and opportunities to develop a sustainable annual TN Volunteer Recognition program plan and then implement the plan. Special attention will be devoted to youth recognition to maximize service-learning, including utilization of the “Clues & News” statewide service-learning electronic newsletter. In addition to recognizing outstanding individual volunteers, the initiative would aim to encourage high quality volunteer management and service-learning practices among agencies and schools. Success will be tracked against the outputs and outcomes listed above.

III. Program Management

- A. What is the estimated length of time required to complete the project? What is your Proposed number of AmeriCorps*VISTA members?

Sustainability—and long-term outcomes--take time. A one-time event, like the 2001 TN Volunteer Heroes book, was coordinated over the course of a year. It was obvious then that the lead time was insufficient to approach a number of potential sponsors. In order to truly institutionalize a sustainable event, a three year project period is needed. A single AmeriCorps*VISTA member should be sufficient for the project.

- B. Describe how you will supervise the project and member(s). In addition to the Training provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service, what Type of training will you provide to AmeriCorps*VISTA members?

While the AmeriCorps*VISTA member will work with the Volunteer Recognition subcommittee of the Strategic Partnerships Committee of the state service commission, day-to-day supervision will be provided by Commission Executive Director Carol White. On training, the AmeriCorps*VISTA member would receive the Commission’s new staff orientation training, including orientation to the mission, vision, history and programs of the national service in TN. Also, similar to other staff, the Commission would develop a development plan to accompany the annual job plan which would be based on the

specific needs of the individual member. The Commission has access to a variety of training resources through its AmeriCorps and service-learning training program and partners; it would be easy to connect one more member in a specific needed training.

IV. Organizational Capacity

- A. Address your organization's capacity to manage the proposed project including previous experience working with community volunteers and /or national service participants. Was your organization previously assigned AmeriCorps*VISTA members? If so, specify the sponsoring organization (if different from your own), years and number of members. Briefly describe how the proposed service activity differs from what your members did previously. Also, if your agency is currently receiving other CNCS resources, specify which program and the number of members.

The state service commission administers AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve America training. The commission has not previously hosted an AmeriCorps*VISTA member, but we have hosted AmeriCorps*State leaders and Points of Light YES Ambassadors as available since the Commission's first year of operation in 1994.

- B. What resources are available to support the project? Identify the names of partner organizations. Please indicate if you are able to support a cost-share member (approximately \$9,500-\$10,400/year).

In partnership with the TN Department of Finance & Administration, the Commission will provide a workspace, computer, telephone, supplies and access to copier, fax and other office equipment. The Commission is unable to support a cost-share member at this time.