



**Twin Cities Affordable Housing Preservation Project
Host Site
Request for Proposals
Fall 2022-23**



OVERVIEW

HOME Line, in partnership with AmeriCorps, seeks proposals from organizations interested in hosting a full-time AmeriCorps VISTA Tenant Organizer during the fall 2022-23 program year.

A HOME Line VISTA Tenant Organizer enables your organization to support low-income tenants in rental properties. This cohort of tenant organizers, placed in up to 5 community-based sites across the 7-county metro, will assist, inform, educate, and engage tenants living in properties that are at risk of loss of affordability and/or face substandard housing conditions.

Rather than provide short-term direct services, VISTA Tenant Organizers work to build your capacity to engage with and support renters for the long-term. They put infrastructure in place for creating, expanding, or improving programs for years beyond their service. Our VISTA Tenant Organizers develop program and training content; build community partnerships; improve volunteer recruitment, training, and management systems; conduct program evaluation and data collection/analysis models; support the creation of tenants' associations, and secure resources to ensure long-term sustainability of programs.

At the same time, VISTA Tenant Organizers build their own leadership, explore career paths, pay for college, and become lifelong advocates for the communities they serve due to the power of their experience. It is a unique opportunity to invest in, coach, and mentor emerging leaders in the housing, neighborhood advocacy, and nonprofit fields.

As a host site, you provide the vision, project plan, day-to-day management of the project, and on-site supervision of the VISTA Tenant Organizer. HOME Line provides training and technical assistance to you and the VISTA Tenant Organizer at all stages of the project.

A VISTA Tenant Organizer serves full-time for 12 months, with the potential option to continue AmeriCorps VISTA service for multiple years.

We invite your organization to participate in this annual selection process.

CONTACT

Kara Lallman
Organizing Project Director
KaraL@homelinemn.org
651-231-8229

Application through Google Form:

<https://forms.gle/iapKj7x3Ebwzsys7>

TIMELINE*

March 7, 2022 Deadline for proposals (submit online)

March 11, 2022 Sites notified of selection

Mid to late March 2022 Site supervisor training, Part 1- Creating VAD (work plan) and SOL (Service Opportunity Listing) and Member experience overview

April 1, 2022 Deadline for VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) and Service Opportunity (SOL) first draft (must be approved before recruiting member)

April 13, 2022 Final deadline for final VAD and SOL

Late April Site Supervisor training, Part 2-Recruiting

April 22, 2022 Deadline for Site Agreement and initial \$1,000 cost-share payment

April- July 2022 Member recruitment, interviews and selection

July 15, 2022 Deadline for VISTA Tenant Organizer selection

Late July, 2022 Site supervisor training Part 3- Onboarding and Supervision Success

August 10, 2022 Member forms due

August 15, 2022 VISTAs begin their year of service. **Second cost-share payment due.**

Mid August-Early September 2022 VISTA Tenant Organizers' Early Service Training at HOME Line

September 2022 CURA Neighborhoods Now Training

November 14, 2022 Final cost-share payment due

**Dates are subject to change, and events on the timeline are contingent upon final decisions from AmeriCorps regarding award of AmeriCorps VISTA resources and sponsor site capacity.*

AmeriCorps VISTA

AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) is a National Service program funded by the federal government through AmeriCorps. Founded in 1965 as a domestic equivalent to the Peace Corps, VISTA became part of the AmeriCorps network of programs in 1993.

VISTA members dedicate one year (12 months) of full-time service to the community to lead anti-poverty projects in exchange for a modest living allowance and benefits. Members bring passion and perseverance where the need is greatest: to organizations that help lift communities out of poverty.

AmeriCorps VISTA members serve as a catalyst for change, living and working alongside community members to meet our nation's most pressing challenges and advance local solutions.

For more info about AmeriCorps VISTA, please visit www.NationalService.gov.

HOME Line

HOME Line is a non-profit statewide tenant advocacy organization with 30 years of experience providing free legal advice, organizing support, and education to renters throughout Minnesota. For more information about HOME Line please visit www.homelinemn.org.

HOME LINE'S AMERICORPS VISTA PROGRAM: OUR GOALS, OBJECTIVES and CORE PRINCIPLES

We partner with communities to collaboratively expand outreach, education, and community-building support for renters, and to ensure access to safe, dignified, equitable, and affordable housing. We support change-makers in building leadership and becoming lifelong advocates for housing justice.

Our objectives:

1. **To increase the number of organizations** serving the needs of low-income Minnesota renters
2. **To serve more low-income Minnesotans** with high-quality tenant rights legal education
3. **To improve living conditions** of low-income individuals and families
4. **To build the capacity of organizations to support renters** in the fight to preserve their homes as affordable and prevent displacement

Our core principles:

- **Housing Stability:** supporting community efforts to gain housing stability and achieve equity
- **Capacity-building:** strengthening and supporting efforts that focus on housing justice by building infrastructure, expanding community partnerships, securing long-term resources, and promoting leadership development
- **Community empowerment:** valuing the inherent strengths and resources of the community and involving those who are most affected in the planning, development, and implementation of projects and solutions
- **Sustainable solutions:** providing short-term resources to help organizations and low-income renters achieve lasting solutions to housing instability
- **Service:** providing individuals with the opportunity to serve their communities as VISTA Tenant Organizers, learning about community organizing to find effective solutions to the housing crisis and about their own strengths in the process

THE ROLE OF VISTA TENANT ORGANIZERS

The purpose of the HOME Line VISTA Project is to build the capacity of organizations. VISTA Tenant Organizers do not provide direct services (e.g., help people find housing). Instead, VISTA Tenant Organizers work to strengthen and support organizations by engaging in capacity-building activities.

Capacity-building activities that AmeriCorps VISTA members perform should enhance the mission, strategy, skills, and culture, as well as systems, infrastructure, and human resources of an organization that is meeting unmet community needs.

Approved capacity building activities include:

- Developing, designing or enhancing program content
- Designing or conducting program evaluation
- Conducting research, mapping community assets, or gathering other information that will strengthen the sponsoring organization's ability to meet community needs
- Developing and nurturing partnerships
- Enhancing volunteer recruitment and/or training. Improving volunteer systems
- Implementing new program-related outreach or fundraising strategies

Examples:

- Create new renter education curriculum
- Design train-the-trainer models
- Engage volunteers as tenant leaders
- Support the formation of new tenants' associations
- Raise funds for tenant engagement and support or new programming
- Use Participatory Action Research to evaluate the effectiveness of programming
- Develop strategic plan for renter engagement using a racial equity lens
- Create a tool that maps disabled accessible housing in your area
- Create a database that tracks property management companies with repeated violations
- Conduct renter surveys
- Organize service days and other events in the community to increase citizen engagement

VISTA Tenant organizers may also create new opportunities for and provide learning and leadership development to renters in order to increase, expand, or enhance your organization's ability to address the most pressing needs identified in the community, and enable the organization to provide a sustained level of additional or improved direct services after the VISTA member's term of service has ended.

VISTA Tenant Organizers may not replace an existing paid staff position and may not take the place of a permanent staff position. VISTA members are a short-term resource that makes a long-term impact.

ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS AND PROJECTS

Nonprofit, government agencies, schools and faith-based organizations delivering needed educational and community services in Minnesota are eligible to apply. Priority will be given to organizations in the Twin Cities 7-county Metro Area; however, organizations within Greater Minnesota that can demonstrate a commitment to engaging and empowering renters in their community are encouraged to apply.

HOW DOES AMERICORPS VISTA AND THE HOME LINE VISTA PROJECT WORK?

HOME Line receives a grant from the AmeriCorps to "sponsor" and distribute AmeriCorps VISTA resources to eligible agencies throughout Minnesota who then host a member. The host site provides the project vision, day-to-day management, progress reporting, and supervision of the AmeriCorps VISTA member. HOME Line provides training, technical assistance, support, and resources to the host site and VISTA Tenant Organizer through every stage of the project. The members are paid, and benefits arranged, directly through AmeriCorps. HOME Line pays a bi-weekly cost-share to AmeriCorps to support the member stipends.

Host sites reapply each year and project plans should be developed with a goal to ultimately eliminate the need for the AmeriCorps VISTA member and maintain programming or results of projects without them. Although the HOME Line project has overall goals, ***specific goals and work plans for your members will be determined by and tailored to your organization.***

Key questions to consider:

- Who would be doing this work if you had no VISTA Tenant Organizer? Who will continue the work after the VISTA resource ends? Is this type of work typically done by paid staff in other similar organizations? (VISTA members are intended to create something new and/or enhance existing efforts and not to deliver core organizational functions.)
- What will remain after your VISTA Tenant Organizer's time ends? (If nothing remains but a hole in your programming that a VISTA member previously filled, capacity was not built.)
- How will the work be sustained? (Creating new programs and/or systems that cannot be sustained after the HOME Line VISTA resources end is counterproductive and a waste of resources and time. Sustainability planning is an essential element of project planning.)

HOST SITE RESPONSIBILITIES

VISTA Tenant Organizer supervision

Site supervisors are expected to be actively and regularly involved in the VISTA's work. ***Site supervisor involvement is the key determinant of a successful VISTA Tenant Organizer placement.*** Expect that your site's VISTA member supervisor will spend, at minimum, an average of **10-15 hours per month** on supervision and project oversight. Please take this into careful consideration when choosing a staff member for the Supervisor position.

Supervisors must make time to meet regularly with VISTA members to provide support, feedback, guidance, training, and mentoring and to assess progress toward project goals. Site supervisors are required to attend three supervisor workshops per year (generally held in early spring and mid-Summer at HOME Line in Bloomington). Site supervisors are also required to complete mid-year and end-of-year performance evaluations for the VISTA members, and quarterly and end-of-service reports.

Project planning

Host sites are expected to work with HOME Line to develop a VISTA Assignment Description (VAD). This document must be approved by AmeriCorps.

Project management

HOME Line expects that host sites will demonstrate commitment to the success of the Twin Cities Affordable Housing Preservation Project by overseeing the day-to-day management of the project on-site, including direct supervision of VISTA members, reporting and evaluation, and ensuring sufficient on-site support and resources are available to VISTA members to fulfill their project responsibilities. This involves **budgeting adequate staff time** for direct supervision of the VISTA member and of the project. Host sites are also responsible for providing the necessary administrative support to design and complete the goals and objectives of the project and ensure sustainability.

Sustainability

Host sites must ensure that the VISTA's work is continually leading toward organizational and community capacity to continue the efforts of the project once the VISTA resources are withdrawn. All projects

should be developed with the goal of **phasing out** the need for VISTA members and strengthening the ability of the project to continue without them. As much as possible, host sites should incorporate feedback from the community, involve community members in the project, and capitalize upon existing community assets in order to support long-term sustainability of the project.

VISTA member recruitment and selection

Host sites are expected to actively **recruit, interview, and check references** for their VISTA Tenant Organizer applicants. HOME Line will assist you in this process by providing training and technical assistance, placing your position description on the AmeriCorps online recruitment website, providing program information to applicants, and conducting general statewide recruitment activities. The primary responsibility for filling the VISTA position, however, rests with the host site.

VISTA Tenant Organizer training and professional development

Host sites must arrange for initial **on-site orientation and training** in the VISTA member's first weeks and ongoing training and professional development throughout the year, as needed. Additionally, sites must allow VISTA Tenant Organizers to attend a mandatory three-day orientation training at HOME Line, ongoing monthly cohort networking/development days, and MLK and 9/11 Days of Service, as applicable. Training is considered a part of the VISTA member's full-time service and is mandatory.

Project evaluation and progress reporting

Host sites must track and report outputs related to the program and the VISTA member's activities (for example, number of individuals served, number of volunteers recruited, number of volunteers trained, amount of donations leveraged, etc.). As much as is feasible, host sites are also asked to track and report on quantifiable measures of the project's impact on the individuals served (for example, number of tenants' associations developed). Site supervisors (with input from VISTA members) are required to complete **three formal online progress reports per year** (two semi-annual progress reports and an end-of service report) to share progress on project goals and impact.

Communication with HOME Line

Host sites are expected to **maintain regular communication** with HOME Line staff about the project and VISTA member. Host sites should notify HOME Line immediately regarding changes to the VISTA member's project plan; any issues that arise with VISTA member performance; unscheduled changes of status and conditions of a VISTA member such as unapproved absences or medical or family emergencies; or anything else impacting the completion of the host site's project.

Adequate work space

Host sites are expected to provide a **comfortable and welcoming work environment**, including reasonable office space, access to building and workspace, materials and supplies necessary to perform their assigned duties, use of a computer, phone, and email access comparable to that of paid staff.

Financial and in-kind match

As part of the host site's agreement to host a VISTA member, the host agency commits to paying a **cost-share contribution** financial match to HOME Line. This cost-share is used to directly support the HOME Line VISTA program including member and supervisor training, technical assistance, and the AmeriCorps expenses for the overall cohort. The cost-share rate is as follows (subject to change in response to federal funding or policy changes):

\$5,000, due in three installments

**This amount may increase in subsequent years due to cost of living increases set by the federal government.*

Service-related travel reimbursement

Host sites are expected to provide **mileage reimbursement (or reimbursement for public transit costs)** to VISTA Tenant Organizers for **project-related travel**, at rates and using processes as approved for the host site's paid staff. If no policy/rate for host site paid staff travel reimbursement exists, use the current federal mileage reimbursement rate.

Additional benefits and support for VISTA Tenant Organizers

Additionally, host sites are not required but **strongly encouraged to provide additional Americorps-approved supports, such as a housing stipend, and other benefits to VISTA Tenant Organizers whenever feasible.** Host sites that have offered such benefits often have an increased ability to recruit and retain high-quality members. They help to create pathways for more people from a wider range of identities and backgrounds to participate in VISTA service (beyond those who have pre-existing financial safety nets) and enable more members to successfully complete a term of service. **Applicants that can provide a housing stipend, with all things being equal, will receive priority consideration.**

According to AmeriCorps policies, AmeriCorps VISTA members may not directly receive any financial support beyond their bi-weekly living allowance and service-related travel reimbursement. However, additional benefits that are allowable and encouraged include:

- Housing assistance (in the form of payment directly to a landlord or mortgage company, or in-kind in the form of physical housing)
- Public transit passes or gas cards
- Food or grocery cards
- Professional development funds
- Cell phone reimbursement (in the form of payment directly to a phone company)
- Formal career coaching and mentoring

Please discuss in advance any additional benefits you might be able to provide with HOME Line.

VISTA TENANT ORGANIZER BENEFITS

VISTA members receive a living allowance paid on a biweekly basis, currently set at a total of \$575.40 pre-tax biweekly, a healthcare allowance, relocation allowance (if eligible), childcare allowance (if eligible), federal student loan deferment/forbearance or credit toward Public Service Loan Forgiveness, 10 personal and 10 medical leave days, workers' compensation, and choice of an education award scholarship (approximately \$6,345) or end-of-year stipend (\$1,800) in exchange for a year (12 months, 365 days) of full-time service.

HOME Line provides support to members in the form of legal rights and organizing training, technical assistance, peer support, additional supervisory support, and networking and professional development opportunities.

VISTA Tenant Organizers serve full-time (about 40 hours per week) in their host sites and should be available for evening and weekend project needs as needed. VISTAs must request approval to hold another part-time job or attend school part-time while in service.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be judged in a competitive selection process against the following criteria:

Category	Weight	Details
Organizational Capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organization information - Contact information - Participation in National Service Programs - Organization description - Project management and supervision 	30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organization’s mission and current programming fit with the proposed project ● Organization is capable of providing the necessary level of support for a successful project and successful VISTA Tenant Organizer ● Narrative demonstrates the organization has the capacity and will be prepared to provide an appropriate work environment ● Narrative demonstrates that the organization has a plan for providing ample supervision and support for both the VISTA member and the project as a whole ● Staff member is identified to directly supervise the VISTA member and manage the project, will be able to dedicate 10-15 hours a month at minimum to project management/supervision and is qualified and prepared to provide adequate supervision and support ● Narrative demonstrates organization has a plan for project management and on-site supervision and support that will provide an attractive service opportunity for a VISTA Tenant Organizer
Project Concept: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summary of request - Need statement - Project vision - Community involvement - Goal statement - Capacity-building focus - Capacity-building results - Capacity-building activities - Programming interventions 	70%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project supports HOME Line and AmeriCorps VISTA missions and goals, specifically as they relate to access to affordable housing and lifting communities out of poverty ● Target population is low-income renters ● Narrative demonstrates the need for VISTA Tenant Organizing resources to expand capacity to serve low-income renters ● Project concept has been well thought-out and has clearly defined goals, objectives and strategies ● Narrative demonstrates an ambitious but manageable plan for utilizing a full-time VISTA Tenant Organizer to build the host site’s capacity to be more effective and/or expand services ● Narrative demonstrates a realistic plan to make the project sustainable ● Narrative demonstrates a plan for community involvement that will give the target community a role to play in decision-making and long-term sustainability of the project ● Project involves appropriate capacity-building activities (not direct service, not replacing a staff role, sustainable)

APPLICATION PROCESS

Proposals for VISTA projects through HOME Line must be submitted through an online application **by March 7, 2022**. The application form is available at: <https://forms.gle/iapKj7x3Ebwzsys7>

Selected host sites are then required to create a detailed work plan for the project (**VISTA Assignment Description, or VAD**) and **Service Opportunity Listing** (position description for member recruitment

purposes) – **first draft due April 1, 2022** – and participate in **three, two-hour supervisor trainings** before their service members start. Dates of trainings are to be determined during the following times at HOME Line, 8011 34th Ave S, Bloomington, MN 55425 (**or virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic**):

Part 1: Supervisor Orientation, Policies, VADs and SOLs

Mid to late March, 2022, exact date TBD

Part 2: Member Recruitment and Supervision

Mid April 2022, exact date TBD

Part 3: On-boarding VISTAs

Mid to late July 2022, exact date TBD