



PUBLIC & SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP VISTA HANDBOOK

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Introduction

Welcome to Public & School Partnership's (PSP) AmeriCorps VISTA program. VISTA Members have been a part of PSP since before 2002. They have served in schools and at other educational sites throughout the following school districts: Cache, Logan, Box Elder, Ogden, Provo, Alpine, Canyons, Jordan, Nebo, and Weber. VISTA service has led to the development, implementation, and support of many programs that enrich the learning experience of youth as well as improve the skills and effectiveness of teachers, administrators, and nonprofit organization staff.

As you work at your site, you will have many questions. This handbook is designed as a reference for you to combine with knowledge gained during VISTA Orientation and On-Site Orientation Training (OSOT) to help you navigate your new work environment. If you cannot find the answer to your questions in this handbook, please contact the VISTA Leader or a PSP Supervisor. They are always happy to help.



PUBLIC & SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

6505 Old Main Hill
Logan, UT 84322-6505

Phone: 435-797-0633

E-mail: pspvista.ut@gmail.com

Web: publicschoolpartnership.com

Facebook: facebook.com/PublicandSchoolPartnership

Public & School Partnership History and Mission

PSP has focused its efforts on creating systematic changes within educational institutions by creating collaborations between school administrators, parents, and community entities. By encouraging cooperation between these three spheres, all three can work together to provide the necessary support for youth and families.

PSP's mission is:

To provide community members with access to the resources, education, and opportunities to elevate themselves and their neighbors out of poverty.

Within its larger mission, PSP has a threefold obligation to invest in and strengthen its greatest assets: a) the national program, b) the partner site, and c) the VISTA member.

- **National AmeriCorps VISTA Program.** PSP has an obligation to uphold the standards and practices of the national AmeriCorps VISTA program. To uphold the VISTA vision, PSP works in tandem with fellow VISTA programs toward the common goal of eradicating poverty in the United States and its communities.
- **The Partner Site.** PSP has an obligation to support its partner sites in meeting their goals to provide quality education and resources to underserved youth and families. By strengthening these organizations, PSP is investing in the future of the local and national community. As part of this obligation, PSP will assist VISTA Members in implementing sustainable practices at their sites that will build capacity and last beyond the member's term.
- **The VISTA Member.** PSP's VISTA Members are clients and beneficiaries of the PSP mission. PSP views VISTA service as a unique development opportunity that builds competent, confident, and capable individuals who will be able to better serve their communities as professionals. As

part of this investment PSP is committed to helping VISTA Members set and meet their own professional and personal development goals.

PSP uses five guiding principles, inspired by Stephen Covey's *7 Habits for Highly Effective People*, to help accomplish its mission. VISTA Members should try to exemplify these principles during their service term and beyond. Training and professional development activities will directly and indirectly focus on these principles.

- **Feel Empowered, Be Proactive!** *Advocate for yourself and your ideas. Don't hesitate to use your unique skills and knowledge.*
- **Begin with the End in Mind!** *Plan ahead for sustainability. Know where you are going and have a map to follow so you get there efficiently.*
- **Think Win-Win-Win!** *Structure tasks and assignments so that you are learning and growing as a person as well as benefiting your site and PSP.*
- **Communication is Key!** *Two-way communication between you and PSP, Site Supervisors, peers, and beneficiaries is critical to success. Seek feedback for continuous improvement and to communicate success!*
- **Balance, Don't Juggle!** *Learn to balance your own wants and needs along with those of PSP and Site Supervisors, peers, and beneficiaries. When you have too many balls in the air you can't focus on any one of them.*

Each of these principles will help remind VISTA Members to see the big picture and the daily details as they increase capacity of their sites and themselves.

About the VISTA Program

VISTA stands for Volunteers In Service To America and is the oldest of AmeriCorps and Senior Corps branches. In 1963, President John F. Kennedy envisioned a national service corps "to help provide urgently needed services in urban and rural poverty areas." President Lyndon B. Johnson realized Kennedy's dream by launching the "War on Poverty" and founding The AmeriCorps VISTA program in 1964. The first VISTA Members took the oath of service in January, 1965. By the end of the year, more than 2,000 VISTA Members were working in

the Appalachian region, California migrant worker camps, and impoverished neighborhoods in Hartford, Connecticut.

Through the decades, VISTA has evolved to respond to local problems and the changing faces of poverty. In the 1990s all AmeriCorps programs were combined under the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), a federal agency with the goal of helping Americans help others. Over the past couple of years, VISTA has become larger, stronger, and more vital than ever before. Its 8,000+ VISTA Members —serving at more than 3,000 sites nationwide—continue to address the root causes of poverty. Including PSP, Utah has 23 VISTA programs with over 140 VISTA Members.

PSP's VISTA program was designed to place volunteers with organizations that support underserved populations to develop programs, generate resources, recruit volunteers, create organizational capacity, and build sustainable programs. These efforts help host sites become better equipped to work with the populations they serve. Through sustainability efforts, they also ensure future success at the site once the VISTA Member has completed their term.

PSP's VISTA program is focused on education. The connection between poverty and education is very strong. The more education a person has, the more likely it is that he or she will be able to provide for their own needs as well as those of their family. This is one of the only ways to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty and ensure a better future for communities.

Public & School Partnership: A Unique VISTA Project

There are a few key differences between VISTA Members serving with PSP and VISTA Members at other projects. For this reason, it is important that PSP VISTA Members ask questions to clarify when needed. Some of these differences include:

- 1) PSP is an *intermediary project* that runs on an operational, or program, grant from CNCS. This means that PSP acts as a link between host sites and the Utah CNCS State Office. In many cases the PSP office performs some of the same functions for our VISTA Members that the state office does for other projects. Because it acts as an intermediary, the PSP VISTA project has been around longer than the typical 1-3 years of most VISTA projects.
- 2) Since PSP VISTA Members serve at different sites that run independently, they do not all follow the exact same work schedule or have the same work-site goals. Each site is considered an independent agency and across-site comparisons are not reasonable and should not be made.
- 3) PSP VISTA Members are paid through Utah State University instead of CNCS; therefore, the PSP pay schedule differs from those of other AmeriCorps VISTA Members and the VISTA Member Handbook found on the VISTA Campus website. There is additional information in the *Payroll* section of this PSP Handbook.
- 4) PSP is a cost-share project, meaning that the financial obligation of the VISTA Member living allowance is shared. Typically, PSP contributes $\frac{1}{2}$ of the VISTA member allowance and the site contributes the other $\frac{1}{2}$. This means that PSP VISTA Members have a responsibility to meet the needs of both organizations. They have multiple individuals supporting their work including their Site Supervisor(s), VISTA Leader, and PSP Supervisors. Information in sections below provides guidance for how to navigate these relationships.

Organizational Structure

As mentioned previously, VISTA Members on the PSP team have multiple supervisors they work with. Here is a brief explanation of their relation and responsibilities:

Corporation for National & Community Service – Utah’s CNCS State Office Director, Jacob Murakami, is in charge of overseeing our project. He works closely with Project Director Rikki Wheatley-Boxx to ensure compliance with CNCS mandates.

Public & School Partnership – Project Director Rikki Wheatley-Boxx and Program Coordinator Shonna Hemmis monitor and support the activity of VISTA Members at all sites and oversee the project on an organizational level.

VISTA Leader – In conjunction with Rikki & Shonna, the VISTA Leader assist in supporting PSP sites and VISTA Members. The VISTA Leader works to communicate with Site Supervisors and support VISTA Members by addressing their concerns as well as advocating on their behalf.

Site Supervisors – Site Supervisors may include chief school and community organization staff. They are responsible for VISTA assignments on a day-to-day basis, and they work with PSP Supervisors on VISTA Member oversight.

Administrative Protocols

VISTA Members are not typical employees - they are exemplary service providers. It is important for VISTA Members to remember that the commitment to VISTA service is the same (if not greater) as if they were working in any other position at their site. Common rules of courtesy, communication, and professional practice are expected of VISTA Members at all times. The following section will outline PSP VISTA Member policies in a variety of categories. VISTA Members should read over them carefully and be prepared to follow them.

Balancing VISTA, PSP, and Site Expectations

During service, VISTA Members create professional objectives to help meet site needs and PSP project performance measures. These objectives and performance measures are a part of PSP's project-wide commitment to fulfilling CNCS grant requirements. VISTA Members will report monthly on the progress of objectives and performance measures by completing online reporting forms and discussing data at site visits. VISTA Members will also have projects and tasks assigned by the Site Supervisors that have been previously approved by PSP Supervisors. It is the VISTA Member's responsibility to balance these objectives and incorporate them into a cohesive work plan. VISTA Members will be supported in this process.

If a problem arises, or if VISTA Members have a concern while serving at site, PSP staff are happy to help.

- 1) VISTA Members should always attempt to handle concerns at the site level first through open discussion with the Site Supervisor. Everyone communicates differently, and Site Supervisors may not realize there is a problem unless VISTA Members express concerns.
- 2) If VISTA Members feel like they need support to address concerns, they can talk to the VISTA Leader or a PSP Supervisor to discuss the best course of action to solve the issue.

3) The Utah CNCS State Office also offers monthly open office hours for VISTA Members to call and ask questions relating to their VISTA experience. The State Office sends emails with updated information monthly.

4) If an issue arises with health benefits, Education Award, or other VISTA provided benefits, VISTA Members can talk to the VISTA Leader or call the VISTA Member Support Unit (VMSU). The phone number for **VMSU** is: 1-800-942-2677 and the office is open 9am to 7pm Eastern Time. The hours change throughout the year so visit the website for more information:

<https://questions.nationalservice.gov/>

Remember that VISTA service focuses on indirect service activities that increase capacity and ensure sustainability of programs. Participation in direct service activities – activities that do not contribute to the increased capacity or sustainability of a program – may be appropriate in order to gain an understanding of a site’s clientele or programs. Direct service should never make up the majority of a VISTA Member’s site activities. VISTA Members should respectfully advocate for this VISTA policy when communicating with Site Supervisors and are welcome to consult with PSP Supervisors or the VISTA Leader for additional guidance.

Appropriate VISTA Terminology

As an AmeriCorps VISTA Member, it is important to use and encourage others to use appropriate VISTA terminology. This includes encouraging Site Supervisors to refer to AmeriCorps VISTA Members as such and not as interns or volunteers, as well as utilizing appropriate terminology in email signatures and social media correspondences. Guidance from the Utah CNCS State Office is as follows:

DO SAY: AmeriCorps VISTA Member, selected to, serve as, a year of AmeriCorps VISTA service, AmeriCorps VISTA member serving with [organization name]

DO NOT SAY: AmeriCorps worker, VISTA volunteer, intern, hired to, work as, a job, service year member (this has a different meaning)

Professional Dress

VISTA Members are expected to use business casual as a minimum dress standard. As a general rule, however, they should dress to fit in with other staff on site and often a notch above.

VISTA Members are representing all of the organizations that they work within. As per CNCS regulations, they are expected to avoid ill-fitting T-shirts, worn jeans, or logos suggestive of sex, drugs or alcohol, and political affiliation. While PSP does encourage VISTA Member self-expression, VISTA Members serve in a highly professional environment. VISTA Members who have visible tattoos, piercings, colored hair, or other non-natural features should openly discuss possible accommodations with Site Supervisors to ensure the comfort of all clients and staff at the site. Additionally, after beginning service, it is courteous for VISTA Members to discuss expectations for possible accommodations prior to making any of the non-natural changes mentioned here.

VISTA Members are encouraged to wear VISTA and PSP buttons, pins, and T-shirts on site in order to help other staff members identify them as VISTA Members. Many of these items are provided by the Utah CNCS State Office and PSP.

If VISTA Members are unsure of what they should wear, they should ask if there is a site policy or check with the VISTA Leader or PSP Supervisor.

Communication

Email is the most vital part of communication as a PSP VISTA Member. It is the primary method of contact between VISTA Members and the PSP Office. *It is imperative that VISTA Members check their email at least once each work day and return phone messages and emails as quickly as possible.* As per the PSP Memorandum of Agreement, VISTA Members agree to thoroughly read all email from PSP Supervisors, the VISTA Leader, and Site Supervisors and respond appropriately within 24 hours.

PSP also uses the PSP website and Facebook to communicate upcoming events and available resources. VISTA Members need to become familiar with these platforms, as they will greatly assist them throughout their term. If a VISTA Member does not have a personal Facebook account but would like to check in on Facebook, they can log into PSP's anonymous account using this login info: pspvistas.ut@gmail.com (password: member2017). Members should never post

messages using this account, except in the PSP VISTA Group. The user's name should always be added to the end of the post so others know who is posting.

www.publicschoolpartnership.com

www.facebook.com/PublicandSchoolPartnership (page)

[PSP VISTA Group](#) (group)

VISTA Members should always check in with a staff member when arriving at site. This helps build relationships with staff and lets the Site Supervisor know VISTA Members are present and available.

VISTA Members should be aware and respectful of what time they are due to arrive at and leave site each day. VISTA Members are expected to arrive on site at the agreed upon time and to stay the entire scheduled shift. *VISTA Members may not make adjustments to their own schedules without prior approval from Site and VISTA Supervisors.* Each VISTA Member should have a current schedule on file with PSP.

Work Day and Week

Generally, VISTA Members with PSP work for 8 hours Monday through Friday, as determined by the site. Site Supervisors have been asked to schedule VISTA Members in site-related activities for approximately 37 hours per week in order to allow 3 hours at site for the completion of reporting, paperwork, and other activities assigned by PSP. Occasionally, participation in weekend or evening service projects or training is **required**. PSP tries to keep this to a minimum out of respect for VISTA Members' personal lives, but when needed, attendance is **expected or even required**.

To be in compliance with CNCS rules, VISTA Members must work **at least** 40 hours per week. There is no cap on the number of hours VISTA Members can work at their sites and VISTA Members do not earn compensatory time (comp time). Every effort will be made to be respectful of VISTA Member time, and the work week should not greatly exceed 40 hours on a consistent basis. However, VISTA Members who work more than 40 hours in a work week should not *expect* to come late or leave early because they have reached 40 hours per week. *This arrangement is occasionally acceptable, but only when pre-arranged as part of a temporary work plan with the Site Supervisor.*

- **Lunch break** arrangements should be determined by agreement between the Site Supervisor and the VISTA Member. Sites are not required to provide a lunch period, but they are strongly encouraged to do so. There are two options for VISTA Member lunch time: a working lunch or a non-working lunch.
 - Working Lunch. If the VISTA Member stays at the site for a “working lunch” the lunch time may be counted in the total working hours (do not clock out). During a working lunch, the VISTA Member should remain focused on site activities and not participate in personal communication or activities.
 - Non-working Lunch. A “non-working lunch” is when a VISTA Member chooses to go off-site or take a break from working during the meal period. In this instance, the lunch time should not be counted into the total working hours, and the VISTA Member may participate in personal activities of his or her choosing (must clock in and out). VISTA Members taking a “non-working lunch”, should schedule a designated lunch period of at least 30 minutes. VISTA Members taking a non-working lunch must take this into account when planning workdays and meeting the minimum of 40 work hours a week.

VISTA Members may use brief breaks or non-working lunch time to answer personal texts or e-mail, make phone calls, or schedule appointments. These activities should be kept to a minimum during the regular work day.

In some cases, professional development activities or classes related to service may be counted toward work hours. These activities are considered alternate service hours. This arrangement requires coordination and approval of Site and PSP Supervisors. Supervisors are not required to allow these activities to count for work hours.

- **Alternate service** hours may be used in certain circumstances, and a written explanation must be indicated in the “notes” section of the monthly time card. These hours must follow certain guidelines:
 - Alternate service hours should be directly related to or supporting site, PSP, or VISTA goals.
 - Alternate service hours can be used if for some reason a VISTA Member has less than 40 hours in the work week. These hours help the VISTA Member reach 40 hours, if circumstances at site did not allow

the VISTA Member to work on site for 40 hours. For example, a VISTA Member may include an after-hours webinar or class time as alternate service hours because their site closed early one day that same week. VISTA Members are permitted to count up to 2 hours per week as alternate service for attending class, at the discretion of Site and PSP Supervisors. Time spent completing homework will not be granted as alternate service, except in extenuating circumstances.

- Alternate service hours should *never* take the place of regularly scheduled hours and should not be used consistently. Members *cannot* leave early simply because they have reached the 40 hours for the week.
- PSP will often host required events, which count as alternate service hours. These events will always be communicated to VISTA Members and Site Supervisors in advance.

In the event a VISTA Member is short on hours for a given week, they should plan to participate in alternate service activities to make up the time. If a VISTA Member runs short on projects to complete, they should let the Site Supervisor know they are ready for additional assignments. If VISTA Members are consistently short on assignments, or would like more variety in activities, talk to the Site Supervisor first, then to the VISTA Leader or PSP Supervisors for more ideas.

Alternate service hours, in any capacity, should NOT consistently make up a sizable portion of monthly hours served. VISTA Members commit to serve at specific sites for 40 hours and should spend a majority of their time working at site on site-assigned projects and VISTA-related activities. If alternate service hours exceed 20% of the total hours served in one month, the VISTA Member will be required to meet with PSP and Site Supervisors to discuss appropriate work activities and schedule.

Breaks, Tardiness, Leaving Early, and Personal Appointments

Breaks

- Short breaks of 5-10 minutes may be offered at the discretion of the Site Supervisor. When offered they should be considered part of the regular work day (do not clock out).

Arriving Late or Leaving Early

- If a VISTA Member is going to be late or needs to leave early due to unforeseen circumstances, s/he should let the Site Supervisor know as soon as possible via phone or text message before the start of the scheduled shift. Then, when possible, the VISTA Member should send a follow up e-mail and CC the VISTA Leader.
 - VISTA Members should request approval in advance from the Site Supervisor before making ANY adjustments to daily schedules. This includes scheduling personal meetings and medical appointments.
 - All requests and approvals should be made in writing, and at least two weeks in advance if possible. E-mail is preferred so there is a written record of the agreement. If a verbal agreement is made, send a follow-up email. The VISTA Leader should be CC'd on all correspondences requesting leave.

Personal Appointments & Make-Up Hours

- As per guidance from the Utah CNCS State Office, if a VISTA Member is late or needs to take short amounts of time off for personal reasons, the Site Supervisor may allow time to be made up within that work week (with written approval) if ALL of the following conditions are met:
 1. All procedures and protocols for notification and approval have been followed (i.e. advance notice in writing).
 2. The total time to be made up does not exceed 3 hours.
 3. The schedule adjustment is convenient for the Site Supervisor.
 4. The time is made up within the same calendar week that it is taken (the same week as indicated on the monthly time card).
 5. Make-up time requests have not been received more than once per month.
 6. The VISTA Member does not have a history of absenteeism or tardiness.

These arrangements are completely at the discretion of the Site Supervisor. Unique cases may also require the approval of PSP Supervisors. All missing and make-up hours must be accurately logged on the time card. Frequent failure to

comply with these procedures may result in disciplinary action or removal from the project.

Cost Share, Leave, and Trainings

Cost Share Agreement

PSP and VISTA sites have entered into a contract to receive VISTA services. A major part of the agreement is to share the cost of the VISTA Member's living stipend, usually by each party paying half of that amount. Another critical part of the contract is the agreement on splitting time between both organizations. An understanding is reached that VISTA Members will attend mandatory VISTA events (such as training and service projects) and be allowed time for reporting for PSP. PSP agrees that the bulk of the time the VISTA Member will work at their site, for their site, doing VISTA-appropriate activities. Each VISTA Member commits to fulfill his/her part of this agreement.

Personal Leave

VISTA Members receive 10 days of personal leave to take as needed throughout their term. Personal days can be used for vacation, non-work events and activities, graduate school interviews, and personal emergencies. While this time is available for VISTA Members to use as needed, it is expected they will receive approval in advance whenever possible AND that they will not schedule personal leave during mandatory PSP events. VISTA Members should **request all leave in writing** from Site and PSP Supervisors at least 5 business days in advance, although more notice is better. VISTA Members should NOT plan to take leave until the request is approved. It is at the discretion of the Site and VISTA Supervisors to approve or deny all leave requests. Approval for personal leave that would require the VISTA Member to miss training or other mandatory events will NOT be granted. VISTA Members should notify the VISTA Leader of any scheduled time off lasting more than 3 business days. VISTA Members should not request personal leave during the first 30 days or last 30 days of their service term. For example, if you started your term on August 5th, leave would not be granted until after September 5th.

Personal leave must be recorded in full (8 hour) or half (4 hour) increments. If a VISTA Member needs a shorter leave time, he/she should see if

the leave qualifies under the *Personal Appointments/Make-Up Hours* policy above.

Personal leave cannot be taken during mandatory events, and it will only be approved in very rare, extenuating circumstances. Time missed for mandatory events can put members at risk for not completing their service terms and may result in loss of end-of-service benefits. If a make-up project is needed, PSP Supervisors will determine the appropriate time and activity. Participation is crucial to the success of PSP projects, and it affects the entire team when a VISTA Member is missing.

Medical Leave

VISTA Members receive 10 days of medical leave to take as needed for personal illness, immediate family illness, mental wellness/self-care. Medical leave does NOT function as personal leave. Medical leave is appropriate to use when VISTA Members are sick, have a doctor or dentist appointment, have a scheduled surgery, are recuperating from an illness or surgery, have an immediate family member who is ill, or require self-care. Self-care, also referred to as mental wellness, is time that is taken for a VISTA Member to be at their best, physically or emotionally. This time can range from needing to cope with personal issues to recuperating after stressful events. VISTA Members should notify their Site Supervisor and VISTA Leader before the shift starts at their site if they need to take medical leave.

If a VISTA Members need to miss a day of work due to an unforeseen emergency, they must notify Site and PSP Supervisors as soon as possible. If a VISTA Member is unsure how much leave they have remaining, they should check with the PSP Program Coordinator to get a current total. It is recommended that VISTA Members keep their own record of days taken and remaining.

Bereavement Leave

The bereavement policy is designed for VISTA Members who experience the death of an immediate family member. VISTA Members must follow these steps to request bereavement leave:

- VISTA Members may request **up to 5 bereavement days** through a **written request** (email is fine).
- The request must **list the number of bereavement days** requested

- The request **must be approved before the bereavement days are taken.**
- Approved bereavement days **must be taken consecutively.**
- A **copy of an obituary or funeral program** must be emailed to PSP Admin no later than two weeks following the bereavement request.

As defined by USU policy, immediate family includes: a spouse or domestic partner, son, daughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, foster child, parents, parents-in-law, brother, sister, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, grandparent, grandparent-in-law, grandchildren, and step-relative.

Additional Leave

In the event of an emergency or other circumstances, there are opportunities for additional leave to accommodate VISTA Members in finishing their term successfully. Please visit this link to view VISTA Campus Handbook for details: <http://www.vistacampus.gov/chapter-9-leave-benefits-0>

If VISTA Members exceed the allotment for days off before the end of their service term, a remedial plan must be made with PSP and Site Supervisors. Failure to fulfill service commitment requirements may result in failure to complete the service term or loss of end-of-service benefits.

Closed Site

In most cases, VISTA Members have federally-recognized holidays off. However, this is not a guarantee. According to the VISTA Member Handbook: *"AmeriCorps VISTA Members enjoy the national holidays that are recognized by their sponsoring organization and are given as time off to the rest of the organization's personnel. Members do not get federal holidays that are not recognized by their sponsoring organization. For example, if your organization does not give its staff a holiday for Veterans Day, you are also expected to work unless you request and receive approval for one day of personal leave. Additionally, if you want the day off for a religious observance, you should request a day of personal leave."*

Many sites may have additional days off, which can lead to some confusion. In general, PSP allows VISTA Members to take the time off if their site

is officially closed. A site is considered closed if ALL staff receive the time off. If any other staff are working, the VISTA Member is expected to be working also. The following example illustrates this rule. A school district scheduled a professional development day for teachers giving the students the day off. A VISTA Member working at the school will be required to work because the teachers, principals and other staff are required to work that day even though the students are not in school. If VISTA Members are unsure about a specific day, they should check with the PSP staff to determine the best way to account for hours. The site's annual calendar and the PSP calendar available on the website will help VISTA Members plan around these closures. Remember that all PSP sites are different and calendars will vary. This means that not all VISTA Members with PSP will have the same days off. This is expected and should be considered appropriate as each site functions as an individual organization.

In the case of **inclement weather** (typically snow days), the *Closed Site* policy applies. VISTA Members should observe the "snow day" with the site and participate in any resulting make-up days, unless specific instructions are given from PSP Supervisors.

Mandatory Days of Service

Several days throughout the year are designated by CNCS as mandated days of service. Typically, the PSP VISTA Leader and Supervisors plan these projects, and projects must be carried out by all VISTA Members on these days, as mandated by CNCS. Service project attendance and outcomes are reported to CNCS and are included in state-wide reporting.

January	Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service
March	AmeriCorps Week to celebrate & bring awareness of AmeriCorps to the community or site
Early April	National Service Recognition Day
September	9/11 Day of Remembrance and Service

In addition to the above CNCS mandated days of service, PSP has planned the following times for VISTA Members to complete service projects.

June/July	Summer Service Project
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November Holiday Service Project

To reiterate, these full days of service are **mandatory**, and it is the VISTA Member's responsibility to remind the Site Supervisor of upcoming days when they will be out of the office.

VISTA Members should not plan to use personal leave, arrive late, or leave early to mandatory service events. Time missing at mandatory service activities must be made up by the VISTA Member doing specifically arranged projects. PSP Supervisors will assign make-up projects to VISTA Members who miss mandatory service events. Make-up service projects are more intense than the original service projects and will be scheduled on an hour-to-hour basis, depending on the amount of time missed.

Quarterly Training

PSP's status as an operational grant ensures that VISTA Members will receive consistent training throughout their service term. Attendance at In-Service quarterly training is **mandatory**. It is separate from additional professional development activities that are optional to VISTA Members. The expectation is that VISTA Members attend and actively participate in all In-Service Training sessions. If a VISTA Member is urgently needed at their site for a pre-scheduled conflict, the Site Supervisor must send an email directly to the PSP Project Director, Rikki.Wheatley@usu.edu, requesting approval for any amount a time the VISTA Member will be absent from the training. A decision will then be made between the two parties.

Hours the VISTA Member does not attend required trainings due to illness will require a doctor's note and will need to be made up in full on an hour-to-hour basis, depending on the amount of time missed. PowerPoints and subsequent quizzes will be given to cover the information from In-Service training that was missed. Additional coursework will also be assigned. Training recovery hours will be at the convenience of PSP Supervisors.

Attendance at training events is **mandatory**, and the VISTA Member is responsible for reminding their Site Supervisor of upcoming days when they will be away from site.

Training sessions are usually all-day events where VISTA Members work on building professional skills and receive important information that can help them

in throughout their service and beyond. It is up to each VISTA Member to apply the information to their own VISTA service experience. If VISTA Members have suggestions for topics, they should let the VISTA Leader know so these ideas can be incorporated into future training events.

Disciplinary Action

In the unlikely event that a VISTA Member fails to meet the commitments made to their host site or PSP team, disciplinary measures will take place. Disciplinary measures are designed to help VISTA Members finish their term of service successfully. In general, the disciplinary measures the following basic format.

1. Meeting with a site supervisor to talk about performance and set goals. PSP administration will likely not be present but instead will be informed via email from site supervisor.
2. If VISTA Member does not improve, a second meeting takes place with the VISTA Member, Site Supervisor, and PSP Supervisor. Clear goals and expectations will be outlined and a formal plan will be implemented for VISTA Member improvement. Signatures and deadlines will be required, and the VISTA Member will be made aware that he/she has entered the disciplinary process .
3. If the VISTA Member fails to meet the goals and expectations agreed upon in step 2, then a third meeting will take place with PSP supervisor, VISTA Member, and Site Supervisor. The meeting will outline the VISTA Member's behavior and discuss the seriousness of the failure to follow the improvement plan made in step 2. Outcomes will be discussed and the VISTA Member will be warned that a recommendation for termination will follow if no improvement is made by a certain date. The state office will be notified of the disciplinary action at this point.
4. If improvement is still not made PSP will recommend termination from the project. The VISTA Member will be put on administrative leave until a determination can be made.

Reporting

Time Cards

Time cards are to be filled out daily and turned in monthly at site visits. There are no exceptions to this policy. Discrepancies can be considered by CNCS as fraud and can result in VISTA termination or forfeiture of the end-of-service award. Hours should be accurately represented on the time card and reflect the actual times and hours worked by the VISTA Member. Time cards **MUST** be signed by the Site Supervisor, the VISTA Member, and a PSP Supervisor. *CNCS mandates state that computer-printed signatures are NOT acceptable.*

VISTA Members are expected to work at least 40 hours per week. Because VISTA Members are considered 24/7 service volunteers, **they do not accrue compensation time**. VISTA Members are responsible for tracking their own hours and managing their time so that the hours are sufficient and reasonable. If a VISTA Member's time cards consistently show insufficient or excessive hours, PSP Supervisors will work with the Site Supervisor and VISTA Member to reach a more reasonable agreement.

All make-up and alternate service hours must be approved following the criteria listed previously in this handbook.

Monthly Reporting and Site Visits

Reporting documents are due by 8 AM, two business days before the scheduled monthly site visit with PSP Supervisors. Time cards need to be signed by Site Supervisor before the monthly site visits. PSP VISTA reporting will cover information about VISTA Member activities from the previous month. For example, reports due in May would contain information from the month of April. Reporting documents and examples are provided and available on the PSP website.

Information collected from these monthly reporting documents is used for quarterly reports that are submitted to the CNCS federal office. VISTA Members are required to fill out their reports completely and on time. Reports lacking sufficient information will be returned to VISTA Members for revision. VISTA Members are expected to use complete sentences for narratives and everywhere the information is not only quantitative. After the VISTA Member adjusts to the reporting process, the paperwork should take approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour. If the reporting is consistently taking more time VISTA Members should

consult with the VISTA Leader on strategies to simplify or better understand the reporting process.

If a VISTA Member encounters questions on the reporting document that they think do not apply to their work, then they are expected to ask the VISTA Leader or PSP Supervisor for clarification. They should not mark any questions as “not applicable” or “N/A.”

Site visits will be conducted monthly (typically within the first or second week of the month). Visits should take place at the VISTA Member’s site in a private space away from other VISTA Members or site staff. Site Supervisors may request a copy of the site visit documents or request to sit in on a site visit at any time.

Balancing the expectations of all supervisors can be confusing. If VISTA Members are not sure what to do, they should not hesitate to ask for support.

How to Prepare for Site Visits

1. Log on to the website at www.publicschoolpartnership.com
2. Click the tab “For VISTAs” then “Reporting”
3. Check the announcements link
4. Click the link to schedule a site visit time
5. Click the appropriate reporting form links to complete reporting
6. Respond to additional requests made by PSP Supervisors before site visit
7. Meet with Site Supervisor to have time card signed
8. Print or upload any needed documents and/or objectives evidences as required

If a VISTA Member becomes ill, has an emergency, or is unable to make the site visit appointment, he/she must notify PSP Supervisors as soon as possible by email and text message and reschedule their site visit. Out of consideration for PSP Supervisor time, VISTA Members should not reschedule site visit times unless absolutely necessary.

Ending Your Term of Service

CNCS places term limits on members who serve in AmeriCorps programs. Currently the limit is five terms, and VISTA Members can receive two full education awards.

As a VISTA term comes to a close, VISTA Members are required to fill out a Future Plans Form through the <http://www.my.americorps.gov> AmeriCorps Portal. VISTA Members are given the opportunity to evaluate their term of service and also to request one of three options:

<p>Re-enroll for a full term</p> <p>Extend for a shorter term</p>	<p><i>See final paragraph of this section</i></p> <p>Maximum 6 months. VISTA Member is eligible for most benefits for time served - living allowance, cash stipend, health coverage, and leave. Partial Education Awards will not be granted.</p>
<p>Terminate service as planned</p>	<p>VISTA member will need to: complete all objectives and performance measures, provide evidence of completed objectives, complete forms in My AmeriCorps Portal, and schedule an exit interview with PSP Supervisors</p>

All PSP VISTA positions will be considered open at the end of a service term. If VISTA Members select to re-enroll, their continuation with the program is NOT guaranteed. The availability of VISTA slots with our program is always subject to change as are the cost-share partnerships. If space is available for VISTA Members to re-enroll, they must also receive a positive evaluation from both the PSP Supervisor and the Site Supervisor who has been overseeing their service. If all the conditions are met, the VISTA Member will be **considered** for reenrollment and may be invited to apply with other candidates.

About VISTA Partner Sites

PSP has partner sites across northern Utah. PSP's partnerships with these sites allows them to receive valuable resources that would otherwise not be available. Although PSP has one unified work plan that all VISTA Members contribute to through performance measures, there are additional projects VISTA Members will work on that are specific to their sites. Comparisons of days off or site policies should not be made across sites. The VISTA Leader and PSP Supervisors are aware of these differences and make sure all PSP VISTA Members are meeting the minimum requirements for schedule and hours in their service.

Advocates for School Trust Lands

ASTL is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to inform educational leaders about the most impactful way to allocate Trust Land resources for the benefit of Utah's at-risk students and schools. ASTL conducts research and provides information, training, and support to educational organizations through online and live events such as the ASTL annual conference.

Box Elder Middle School

Box Elder Middle School is located in Box Elder School District and serves 8th and 9th grade students. Box Elder MS offers excellent counseling, bullying prevention, and student-led support services for its student body. Box Elder MS is also very proud of its Life Skills Conference that occurs during College & Career Week. This event introduces students to career and higher education opportunities.

Bridger Elementary School

Bridger is one of the larger schools within the Logan City School District. It serves students Pre-K through 5th grade. A longtime "Leader in Me" school, Bridger follows leadership principles including "Learn, Lead, and Succeed!" Students can enroll in English language or the Spanish Dual Language Immersion program. Bridger supports healthy students and healthy relationships by offering a range of services including the Food Backpacks and WATCH D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) programs.

Cache High School

Cache High is located in Logan, Utah. The school, one of five high schools in the Cache Valley area, serves approximately 100 students in grades 10-12. This alternative high school primarily caters to students who are at-risk for dropping out of larger schools and would benefit from individualized guidance, support, and resources for academic and social development.

The Family Place

The Family Place supports children and families experiencing high levels of stress by providing a drop-in crisis nursery, positive relationship strategies classes, and community awareness for improved services for children. The VISTA Member will primarily coordinate grant compliance, donation drives, and volunteer recruitment and training.

Green Canyon High School

Green Canyon opened its door for the first time during the 2017-2018 school year. VISTA Members support students by ensuring they transition successfully into the high school environment, maintain the grades and credits needed to graduate, and know their higher education and career options. Specifically, students receive support in areas such as college and career readiness, academic planning and support, study skill development, and curriculum evaluation.

The Logan Family Center

The Logan Family Center's mission is to educate and empower families by supporting parent-child relationships. Onsite, families will find free services to promote school readiness for children and school engagement for parents. These services include a lending library of educational books, DVDs, games, and toys. Staff at the center also coordinate positive parenting programs such as "Love and Logic" and they can adapt courses to meet the individual needs of parents and other adult learners. Every summer children and families can attend "Read Around the World," an interactive educational program preventing summer learning loss while celebrating cultures through music and crafts.

Mountain Crest High School

MCHS is located in Hyrum, UT and is part of Cache County School District. MCHS VISTA Members support students in improving attendance and grades to ensure they are prepared for life during and after high school. Specifically, students receive support in areas such as college and career readiness, academic planning and support, Governor's Youth Council, and response to student crises. Many MCHS VISTA Members come from the Utah State University School Counseling Program.

North Cache Middle School

North Cache is a middle school in Richmond, UT and is part of Cache County School District. North Cache joined PSP as a VISTA site during the 2017-2018 school year. The VISTA Member is housed in the counseling department and helps support school staff through data-based decision making and offering academic and attendance support for students.

Northern Utah Native Connection/Title VI

The Northern UT Native Connection program provides academic assistance to Native American and Alaska Native students in Box Elder, Cache, and Logan school districts. VISTA Members create system-wide growth in grade improvement protocols and mentoring services to help ensure students and families receive needed support.

PSP Office

The PSP main office houses PSP's VISTA Leader. The VISTA Leader works alongside PSP administration and Site Supervisors to ensure that VISTA Members feel successful, are supported during their VISTA service, and have a strong professional relationship with their host site and the community they serve. The VISTA Leader also coordinates service projects, training events, and other service-related opportunities.

Ridgeline High School

Ridgeline opened its door for the first time during the 2016-2017 school year. VISTA Members support students to ensure they are prepared for life

during and after high school. Specifically, students receive support in areas such as college and career readiness, academic planning and support, study skill development, and curriculum evaluation.

Sky View High School

Sky View is located in Smithfield, UT and is part of Cache County School District. Sky View's mission statement "Relationships, Character and Knowledge for Life" is reflected in every facet of the school environment. There is a commitment to coordinate resources that support the learning environment and help ensure students from all backgrounds feel empowered to set academic goals. Faculty and staff pledge to help students achieve these goals. Many VISTA Members at SVHS come from the USU Social Work and School Counseling programs to serve at-risk students and their families.

South Cache Middle School

South Cache is a middle school in Hyrum, UT and is part of Cache County School District. The VISTA Member is housed in the counseling department and helps support school staff through data-based decision making and offering academic and attendance support for students.

Stokes Nature Center

Stokes Nature Center's mission is to promote exploration, provide education, and foster appreciation and stewardship of our natural world for people of all ages. Stokes is currently working to provide outdoor education opportunities to students, especially the area's most underserved students, by providing scholarships and developing sustainable partnerships with local community businesses and organizations.

Up to 3 Early Intervention Program

The mission of the Up to 3 Early Intervention Program is to promote the development of children, under the age of 3, who have any type of disability or developmental delay and to provide services to children and families living in Cache, Box Elder, and Rich Counties. The VISTA Member supports community engagement and outreach efforts.

USU Education Outreach

Through the unified efforts of mentors, administrators, and teachers, the USU Education Outreach office is able to provide students in the Logan City and Cache County School Districts with additional support to help each student develop the necessary academic and social skills to be successful in school. The PSP VISTA Member with the USU Education Outreach program helps provide experiential learning opportunities in various fields to students.

Other Items for Your Reference

Travel Reimbursement

The current reimbursement rate for VISTA Member travel is \$0.27 per a mile. Based on USU's rate for reimbursement and the average vehicle's miles per gallon, mileage reimbursement requests must be for at least 15 miles in a month in order to be approved. Pre-approval for all day-to-day, service-related reimbursable travel is **required**. Examples of day-to-day, service-related travel includes, but is not limited to: picking up donations, off-site meetings when participation is expected, serving at another VISTA site, etc.

For required VISTA trainings and service projects, reimbursement for mileage will typically be approved as long as VISTA Members are carpooling with as many other VISTA Members as possible. If VISTA Members choose to drive alone or have to leave early/come late, they will not be reimbursed for travel. If there are special circumstances, these will be handled on a case-by-case basis and must receive prior approval from PSP Supervisors.

When traveling to and from the PSP Office, there is limited parking. Since there is a cost to PSP for a car to park in the USU lots, parking passes will only be given if VISTA Members carpool. Make arrangements to obtain a parking pass from PSP Supervisors prior to parking on campus. Metered parking is available in the parking lot to the west of the PSP Office. Parking in the black lot in front of the building is free after 5:00 PM, except during some USU athletic events.

Additional Income and School Enrollment

As part of the AmeriCorps VISTA service and contract, VISTA Members may be allowed to hold a second job during their service term upon approval of Site Supervisor, PSP Supervisor, and the Utah CNCS State Office. A VISTA Member requesting secondary employment is required to complete an official CNCS Employment Application form to provide information about the position and agreeing to prioritize VISTA obligations. If a VISTA Member would like to keep employment held prior to beginning their VISTA term, the VISTA Member must complete the same application form. As per CNCS policy, secondary employment **cannot** be through the sponsoring agency (USU and PSP) or a VISTA Member's site. This means that secondary employment must meet two conditions to be considered eligible:

1. The check cannot come from USU, PSP, or the school/district in which the VISTA is working.
2. The employment may not be held at the VISTA member's site.

The purpose for the low living allowance is to help VISTA Members better understand poverty and relate to the people they serve. However, if VISTA Members receive child support, social security, or disability payments, they can continue to do so as a VISTA Member. These types of payments do not count as secondary income since they do not have to take time away from VISTA service to be earned. If VISTA Members have a question about whether a particular situation is allowed, ask PSP Supervisors.

VISTA Members who are enrolled in school or another educational program, full or part time, during their service term will be asked to complete a School Enrollment Request Form documenting the enrollment. This is part of CNCS policy and has no impact on VISTA Member eligibility to serve.

State and Federal Benefits

During their term of service, VISTA Members may seek assistance from various state and federal benefit programs. These include, but are not limited to assistance with food access, health care, child care, and income-based loan repayment options. *Some programs will only disregard a VISTA Member's income if they apply to a benefit program prior to their first day of VISTA service.* While it is the VISTA Member's responsibility to work with the state and federal benefits

programs, PSP Supervisors and VISTA Leader will offer support where possible. Please contact the VISTA Leader for support on a more case-by-case basis.

Many of the service letters that the benefits programs need for verification purposes can be found online at www.my.americorps.gov.

Summer Hours

For many PSP sites, summer will be a slower time since schools are no longer in session. Despite smaller workloads, VISTA Members must still complete an average 40 hours per week.

To maintain the weekly hours requirement, VISTA Members should ask the Site Supervisor for additional projects. If there aren't any available, they should look for ways to develop new skills that will help during VISTA service. Other options include volunteering at other VISTA sites that need support and watching VISTA Campus webinars and learning modules. Prior approval from the Site and PSP Supervisors is needed for these accommodations. Talk with PSP Supervisors for guidance as needed.

Telecommuting/Teleservice/Working from Home

The VISTA federal office has a "No Teleservice" policy. This means VISTA Members are NOT allowed to work from home, except under very strict and rare circumstances. PSP is required to follow the VISTA handbook, which states that teleservice outside of CNCS guidelines will result in disciplinary action by CNCS. If you feel your circumstances could merit teleservice contact PSP Project Director Rikki Wheatley-Boxx. The teleservice policy in the VISTA Handbook can be found at: <https://www.vistacampus.gov/chapter-13-other-terms-conditions-service-0>

Pay Stubs and Tax Information

Log into USU Banner, and follow these steps to access pay stubs -

- **Go to:** <http://banner.usu.edu/> and click "Banner SSB / Access"
- **Log in** using your A # and strong password.
- From the home menu click on "employee."
- In the new menu, click on "pay information."
- In the next menu, click on "pay stub."
- Select the current year from the drop-down menu.

- This where VISTA Member's access pay stubs for that year.

VISTA Members can review paystubs for the correct deposited payment amount and that the appropriate amount of taxes has been taken out. The amount of taxes taken out is based on the number of withholdings VISTA Member's chose when you filled out your W-4 when meeting with the USU Hiring Team. As mandated by CNCS, USU **only** withholds federal income taxes from VISTA Member checks. *Therefore, VISTA Members should be aware that this may have unexpected repercussions when filing taxes, and they may owe taxes at the end of the year. Please consult with a tax professional if you have questions.*

VISTA Members should review pay stubs regularly to ensure they are receiving the correct amount. If there is a discrepancy, or a VISTA Member needs to adjust their withholding status, please contact the PSP Program Coordinator immediately.

Pay Days and Unforeseen Pay Issues

VISTA Members will receive 1/2 of their total monthly living allowance on the 10th and 25th of each month. In the event this date falls on a weekend, paychecks may be direct deposited on the previous or next business day, depending on the schedules and policies followed by a VISTA Member's bank. Pay schedules are as follows: work done from the 1st-15th of each month will be paid on the 25th of that same month, and work done from the 16th – 30th/31st of the month will be paid on the 10th of the next month.

If a VISTA member does not receive a paycheck on the expected date, he/she must immediately follow these steps:

1. Log into the "Paystub" section of USU Banner
2. Confirm that there is no paystub for the expected pay date. Take a screenshot.
3. Email an explanation of the issue and screenshot to the PSP Program Coordinator.
4. From here, the PSP Program Coordinator will contact the department payroll manager, who will then reach out to USU HR. The PSP Program Coordinator will be in touch with the VISTA Member very soon.

It is important to know that PSP does not directly manage VISTA Member pay – that process is managed by the department payroll manager and USU HR.

In other words, the PSP Program Coordinator is the liaison between the VISTA Member and USU. This means that solving this specific issue is at the discretion of USU pay schedules and policies. The PSP Program Coordinator will work quickly and diligently to ensure VISTA Members receive their pay, in compliance with USU scheduled and policies.

Branding Materials

VISTA Members are expected to represent both PSP and VISTA while serving on site and in the community. The Utah CNCS State Office and PSP will provide VISTA Members with several branding materials such as posters, buttons, pins, and handouts. VISTA Members are expected to add the VISTA and/or PSP logo to materials created for their site events. This aspect of service is important to increase awareness about the AmeriCorps VISTA program and the invaluable service VISTA Members provide. Site Supervisors are made aware of this commitment when they request partnership with PSP.

VISTA Campus

The VISTA Campus resource provided by CNCS offers a wide variety of training and professional development opportunities. VISTA Members should all have a VISTA Campus username and are encouraged to use the VISTA Campus resources to enhance their VISTA experience. The VISTA Campus website is:

<http://www.vistacampus.gov/>

VISTA Member Handbook

The VISTA Member Handbook, found online at <http://www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-member-handbook>, provides additional resources and guidance for VISTA Members concerning VISTA-specific policies.

Conclusion

This handbook was created to clarify the expectations for PSP's VISTA Members as they work through their year of service. Remember that this handbook is specific to PSP. If a VISTA Member has a question about a policy and cannot find an answer in this handbook, he/she should refer to the VISTA Handbook that can be found on VISTA Campus. VISTA Members should refer to both handbooks before consulting PSP or Site Supervisors.

On the following page is a PSP Memorandum of Agreement which outlines the policies which have been set forth in this handbook. All PSP VISTA Members are required to sign this MOA. In doing so, PSP VISTA Members indicate they understand and agree to commit to the policies outlined on the MOA. A copy of the signed agreement will be kept on file at the PSP main office, and a copy will remain in this book for VISTA Members to keep as a reference.

PSP Memorandum of Agreement

As a VISTA Member with the Public & School Partnership, I have read and understand the following terms of my AmeriCorps VISTA service:

- Work a minimum of 40 hours per week (combined on-site, training, and service project hours).
- Accurately report my time on the official time card (failure to do so is considered time card fraud).
- Fulfill commitments and attend all off-site meetings as expected (be where you say you are going to be).
- Attend all PSP mandatory training events and service projects.
- Complete monthly reporting and respond to reporting-related requests on time.
- Check e-mail daily, fully read correspondences from the PSP office and Site Supervisors, and respond within 24 hours of receiving correspondence.
- Accurately request and report personal and sick leave on the time card.
- Make sure accurate branding (PSP/CNCS/USU logos and info) exists where appropriate in the workspace and on all created materials.
- Remain focused on capacity building activities that benefit the longevity and increased effectiveness of the site, instead of on direct service activities that do not contribute to the overall capacity of the site and PSP.
- Proactively seek the opportunity to work on programs that directly or indirectly impact community members living in poverty.
- Proactively seek the opportunity to work with volunteers (recruiting, training, coordinating, and/or recognizing).
- Complete the full one-year service commitment.
- Not apply for or accept any employment that would interfere with the completion of the one-year service term.

VISTA Member Printed Name

Signature

Date

PSP Memorandum of Agreement

As a VISTA Member with the Public & School Partnership, I have read and understand the following terms of my AmeriCorps VISTA service:

- Work a minimum of 40 hours per week (combined on-site, training, and service project hours).
- Accurately report my time on the official time card (failure to do so is considered time card fraud).
- Fulfill commitments and attend all off-site meetings as expected (be where you say you are going to be).
- Attend all PSP mandatory training events and service projects.
- Complete monthly reporting and respond to reporting-related requests on time.
- Check e-mail daily, fully read correspondences from the PSP office and Site Supervisors, and respond within 24 hours of receiving correspondence.
- Accurately request and report personal and sick leave on the time card.
- Make sure accurate branding (PSP/CNCS/USU logos and info) exists where appropriate in the workspace and on all created materials.
- Remain focused on capacity building activities that benefit the longevity and increased effectiveness of the site, instead of on direct service activities that do not contribute to the overall capacity of the site and PSP.
- Proactively seek the opportunity to work on programs that directly or indirectly impact community members living in poverty.
- Proactively seek the opportunity to work with volunteers (recruiting, training, coordinating, and/or recognizing).
- Complete the full one-year service commitment.
- Not apply for or accept any employment that would interfere with the completion of the one-year service term.

VISTA Member Printed Name

Signature

Date