Date: Friday, December 13th, 2024
To: Pathfinders Resource Conservation and Development
From: Kate Beeman, Eli Copeland, Pratibha Khatri, Thomas Knudsen and Josh Studer
Re: Community Capacity Challenges in Southeast Iowa

SUMMARY

Pathfinders asked us to address the shortage of personnel capable of accessing, developing, and executing grant-funding initiatives in their six-county service areas by increasing administrative capacity, accessing additional funding streams, and investing in the community's youth. Compared to other U.S. counties, Pathfinders counties have lower capacity by between 24% and 71%, a challenge that is only expected to grow.

BACKGROUND

Rural communities in Southeast Iowa have experienced significant economic shifts and demographic changes over the last century. Rural communities experienced "brain drain," a phenomenon occurring as young and educated folks leave for better opportunities elsewhere. Over the past 15 years, Iowa's youth brain drain has increased by about 11%. In 2008, 27% of college students in Iowa intended to leave the state after graduation. Today, the number has risen to 38%, one of the highest in the nation.[1] Overall, Iowa is losing 34% more college graduates than it is retaining.[2] A contributing factor is large-scale operations displacing small farms, manufacturing jobs shifting to urban centers, and rural areas, like Southeast Iowa, facing economic stagnation.[3] Inconsistent sources of funding have made it difficult for rural communities to tap into income sources through grants and similar opportunities. The lack of capacity in rural communities for individuals skilled in grant writing remains an issue.

Seventy-one percent of counties in the United States have a higher community capacity than Davis County, Iowa. Mahaska County has a better capacity, with only 24% percent of national counties ranking higher. The other Pathfinder RC&D core counties fall somewhere in between.[4] In South Central Iowa, the lack of paid full-time elected and government officials, board members, and nonprofit workers contribute to the score. When communities lack funding to prioritize key positions like planning and zoning, long-term development is challenging.

Thirty counties in Iowa are listed as socially vulnerable by the CDC, 14 of which are in the Southeast corridor, with five in Pathfinders' service counties. Socially vulnerable counties are those that are at-risk of adverse outcomes due to factors like economic disadvantage, limited access to healthcare, inadequate infrastructure, and other issues. Only 18 of the 180 nonmetro-federal grants awarded in Iowa went to Pathfinder's counties.[5] There is a particular lack of capacity to apply for grants that fund community capacity-building initiatives, creating a cycle, fueled by human capital flight. In 2023, just 58% of 2023 graduates from Iowa public high schools immediately enrolled in postsecondary education following graduation.[6] Lower rates of postsecondary enrollment can limit the development of a skilled workforce, making it harder for rural areas to attract and retain the talent needed to sustain local economies and address community needs.

CURRENT EFFORTS

Current efforts in improving gaps in grant writing and nonprofit personnel capacity within Pathfinders and its service area are limited. Many initiatives to support these efforts come from state funding, like the Empower Rural Iowa Initiative (ERI), or federal funding.

- ERI was enacted by Governor Kim Reynolds in 2018 to boost rural innovation and community beautification.[7] Keokuk County Economic Development received a $10,000 BOOST grant to

assist community and business leaders in developing growth plans. This initiative represents a step forward in addressing the challenges faced by rural areas, such as limited economic opportunities and community capacity, by equipping local leaders with resources to foster sustainable growth and development.

- Pathfinders RC&D offers grant writing services for a variety of organizations within its serviced counties. According to the organization, Pathfinders has offered grant writing services for over a decade. Since 2006, Pathfinders has secured their partner organizations more than 100 grants amounting to approximately $1,000,000.[8]
- The South-Central Iowa Local Workforce Development Board in Ottumwa, IA, was one of nine communities in February 2023 selected by the US Department of Labor for the Youth Systems Building Academy, a federal program to expand and improve workforce opportunities for all young people. The Youth Systems Building Academy was established in 2022 and seeks to "serve young people between 16 to 24 years of age who are disconnected from school and the workforce, and those in marginalized and underrepresented communities."[9] The goal of the project is to encourage youth in co-designing their career paths and to build resilient rural communities where young people feel they belong.

BEST PRACTICES
1. Volunteer Iowa: Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque — AmeriCorps VISTA, 2018
The Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque (CFGD), serving Allamakee, Clayton, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, Jones, and Jackson counties in Northeast Iowa, hosted an AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer for one calendar year between 2017 and 2018.[10] The initiative focused on rural capacity and health development—volunteers worked with nonprofits to address opioid abuse and community capacity in the counties CFGD serves.[11] The initiative hosted individuals across Iowa; the VISTA Volunteer working with CFGD was a college graduate tasked with addressing community growth challenges through outreach, endowment building, resource pooling, and grant application and identification.

- CFGD has two funding avenues: standard and cost-share. The standard approach requires no contribution on behalf of CFGD, only the capacity to host a VISTA volunteer, including office space and administrative support. The cost-share approach requires the organization to provide fiscal support to offset the living allowance of the volunteer.[12]
- All VISTA volunteers are unpaid except for a living stipend, which varies by state.
- In 2023, the stipend for a VISTA volunteer living in Dubuque County, IA, was $877.66 paid biweekly.[13] Based on these estimates, CFGD likely required between $8,000 and $22,000 to support their VISTA volunteers, which was likely paid directly from their operational budget or through a state or federal grant.

2. Center for Rural Health, University of North Dakota School of Medicine & Health Sciences – Grant Writing Toolkit
In 2022, the University of North Dakota created its Grant Writing Toolkit[14]. This toolkit provides rural communities with the information, resources, and materials they need to write and submit a grant proposal. The table of contents includes what a grant is, eligibility, federal grants, grant writing tips, sustainability, and federal funds, etc. The Toolkit includes three sections:

1. Grant Writing Basics includes PowerPoint presentation that covers a broad scope of activities, including planning and research, proposal development, and proposal follow-up
2. Grants Learning Center links to a grant database of the federal grants listed on Grants.gov
3. Rural Health Information Hub Resource lists a topic guide focused on how to apply for grants to help support rural health projects.

3. Ottumwa Legacy Foundation, Legacy Youth Alliance
The Legacy Youth Alliance serves and engages high schoolers across Wapello County, Iowa. They work to address community issues through youth-driven initiatives in philanthropy and leadership[15]. The program was established by the Ottumwa Regional Legacy Foundation. The alliance provides students with experience in grant-making, providing their input while assessing local needs. The Youth Alliance allocates funding for projects aimed at benefitting young people. Their mission aligns closely with Pathfinders' by fostering youth development, encouraging community-focused initiatives, and promoting collaborative partnerships that address local needs. Support for the Alliance comes from the Legacy Foundation's broader budget. Funding decisions are reviewed by the Foundation's board to ensure alignment with community goals, making the Legacy Youth Alliance a sustainable model for youth engagement and community improvement in Wapello County.[16]

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
1. A. Request for Proposal
We recommend Pathfinders RC&D issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to hire a full-time grant writer. The RFP [Appendix 1] details a full plan for the grant writer. The proposal sent by interested parties would detail grants they will apply for, communities they wish to work with regarding capital improvement projects, and their qualifications and resume and/or CV. The main goal of this policy recommendation is to:
- Hire a grant writer or external consultant to work on behalf of Pathfinder RC&D.
- The grant writer will:
  - Research capital improvement and transportation projects built into town budgets in the service area.
  - Apply on behalf of the locality for "easy access grants" (e.g., Traffic Safety Improvement Program from the Iowa Department of Transportation).
  - Charge a fee of service to the locality if a grant is awarded.
  - Apply for grants deemed necessary to Pathfinders RC&D.

1.B. Hire an AmeriCorps Member or Freelance Grant Writer for Grant Writing Support
We recommend that Pathfinders RC&D becomes an AmeriCorps VISTA host site for an 11-month full-term service member to boost grant-writing capacity within the organization.

- The process of becoming an AmeriCorps VISTA host site involves the organization contacting Volunteer Iowa, completing an application, and recruiting a member. A description of Iowa's AmeriCorps programs, a sample of the host site application, and last year's application guide are included [Appendix 2].
- The volunteer would write grants, help with the Request for Proposals, aid with the Youth Co-Design Expansion, and provide general assistance. A sample job description is included [Appendix 3].

2. Catalog Existing Grant Opportunities in Rural Iowa

We recommend that Pathfinders RC&D create a centralized online platform that catalogs grant opportunities specific to Southeast Iowa. This would be in addition to the current Pathfinder RC&D website [Appendix 4]. This platform can follow the successful model of the City of Urbandale, prioritizing user–friendly design and easy access to essential resources. The addition will be under the "work with us" → "Grant Writing." The Grant Guide should serve as a comprehensive resource for users providing:

- Grant Database – information about available funding opportunities that contains filters to search
- Items needed to apply for grants
- Overview of the application process from start to end
- Basic grant writing skills
- Additional resources that can assist anyone during the process

The Grant Database provides a searchable and sortable tool to help users identify grants suited to their needs efficiently. The grants are currently cataloged on a spreadsheet to help streamline grant identification and application processes for stakeholders [See Appendix 5]. The spreadsheet consists of the following key columns: grant name, funding agency, purpose of the grant, eligibility requirement, award amount, application deadline. More grants can be added to spreadsheets as they become available.

3. Expand the Youth Co-Design Program

We recommend Pathfinders RC&D take inspiration from current efforts under the Youth Co-Design Program and the Legacy Youth Alliance and scale it to be a city-by-city, school district community-engaged learning program. The goals of the program include:

- Developing students' leadership skills through education, volunteerism, and grant-writing to improve their communities
- Encouraging active participation with guidance from trained professionals or instructors
- Compensating students with volunteer hours, school credit, or pay based on funding.

A list of principals and superintendents [Appendix 10] can be utilized to expand the current codesign program. When meeting with these relevant community stakeholders, Pathfinders would provide a community engagement plan [Appendix 8] that outlines the current efforts and successes. When community partners agree to engage in the program, Pathfinders would help provide an implementation guide [Appendix 9], which outlines the broad steps that need to be completed to begin the program. Additionally, Pathfinders would aid in the recruitment process, by providing a student advertisement form [Appendix 7] and an application to enroll in the program [Appendix 6].

Expanding the Youth Co-Design Program would enhance rural community capacity by fostering local leadership, empowering students to address community challenges, and creating a sustainable network of engaged stakeholders to drive development initiatives. By building local leadership and engaging students in meaningful community projects, the program addresses the broader problem of rural brain drain and economic stagnation by cultivating invested, skilled individuals who contribute to their communities' long-term growth and sustainability.

APPENDIX 1

Note: Items, figures, and dates in **bold text** are suggested dates for the runtime of this project.

PATHFINDERS
resource conservation
& development, inc.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Community Grant-Writing Partnership
_____, _____, 20_____

1. **Summary**
   a. **Introduction.** Pathfinders Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) is currently accepting proposals for services on community grant writing and research to aid the cities of Ottumwa and Fairfield in securing grants for projects related to transportation, quality of life, and community beautification.
   b. **Length of Project**. The desired start for the project is **MARCH 2025** with a tentative duration of twelve months ending on or about **MARCH 2026,** with a preference for an extension of the project indefinitely till no later than **JANUARY 2028,** or until up to **$5,000,000** in grant funding is secured by the proposing party.
   c. **RFP Purpose.** The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to solicit proposals from various services in engineering consultation, professional grant writing, or regional planning*. Pathfinders RC&D will conduct a fair evaluation based on the prescribed criteria, and select the candidate(s) who is/are the best fit for the project. Pathfinders RC&D reserves the right to award contract(s) as it sees fit to the bidder of its choosing when it and how it deems appropriate.
2. **Nature and Scope of Work**
   a. **Project Purpose.** The purpose of this project is to externally contract a professional grant writer or engineering firm with no less than five years of professional experience in local, state, or federal grant writing ("selected candidate") to research, apply, and secure grant funding from bodies of grants such as the Traffic Safety Improvement Program from the Iowa Department of Transportation. An ideal candidate is familiar with researching the capital improvement programs of various local governments and will earn no less than **$250,000** in revenue for localities within the first calendar year of work.
   b. **Project Description.** The selected candidate and Pathfinders RC&D will sit before the city councils of towns in the foundation's service area ("localities") and propose jointly to apply for these grants on behalf of the locality with the expectation that, if funding is secured for transportation, quality-of-life, or community beautification projects pre-built into the operational budget of that fiscal year, the locality will provide a fee of service to Pathfinders RC&D which will be subsidized in part to pay for the services of the selected

candidate. This fee of service shall be ten to twenty percent of the localities budget line item (i.e., $200,000 allocated for an Ottuwma Main Street repavement project funded in full by an IADOT grant applied by the selected candidate, provides Pathfinders RC&D with a $20,000 fee of service from the City of Ottuwma's operational budget). The selected candidate will be expected to, alongside the work spent applying for grants related to the local partnership, research and apply for grants requested by Pathfinders RC&D (e.g., grants for nonprofits in the foundation's area of service). At any time, the selected candidate may be actively applying for grants relevant to the needs of the localities in Pathfinders RC&D service area while additionally researching and applying for grants relevant to Pathfinders RC&D's mission including but not limited to conservation, community development, and housing. In addition to the payment given to the selected candidate upon the start of the project, the selected candidate will receive a majority sum of the fee service provided by the locality if grant funding is secured for a project ordinarily accounted for in the locality's budget (i.e., $15,000 of $20,000 given to the selected candidate). As such, this project allows the selected candidate to earn a broad range of income which shall be either given as income to a single individual or revenue in the event the selected candidate is an organization.

   c. **Scope of Project and Budget.** This RFP seeks to develop a partnership with a trusted individual or entity to install a semi-permanent grant writer who will maintain the Community Grant Partnership Program until **JANUARY 2028**. At that point, Pathfinders RC&D will conduct a review of the flagship program and assess if the services of the selected individual are needed in the future. Interested candidates or entities should be expected to work up to 40 hours per week for a single individual, or less so for organizations based on group capacity. The selected candidate will be provided a prorated, negotiable stipend of **$45,000** by Pathfinders RC&D between **MARCH** and **FEBRUARY** during each year of service. Additional income brought in by the selected candidate from fees of service will be added in addition to this stipend. The selected candidate's additional incentive is based solely on their ability to secure grant funding for projects that subsidize localities' operational budgets.

3. **Process of Bidding**
   a. **Proposal**. If you or your organization are interested in joining the Community Grant Partnership Program, please submit a detailed proposal no later than **FEBRUARY 28TH, 2025**. An ideal candidate's proposal includes a compelling narrative explaining their background in grant writing or relevant work and a non-exhaustive list of grants they seek to apply for meant to subsidize localities' operational costs. It should be noted, that Pathfinders RC&D will build paid time within the year of service for the selected candidate to research grants and Captial Improvement Programs. Bids will be evaluated based on the quality of research and applicable experience in grant writing. Please note a draft evaluation criteria below this RFP.

b. **Submission**. To voice interest in applying for this RFP, please send an acknowledgment of RFP to **CONTACT NAME** at **EMAIL ADDRESS** by **FEBRUARY 28TH, 2025**. A sample acknowledgment letter may be found below. All proposals must be submitted by **FEBRUARY 28TH, 2025** to **CONTACT NAME** at **EMAIL ADDRESS** with the subject line **"RE: Community Grant Partnership Program RFP - YOUR NAME/ORGANIZATION."** A sample submission letter may be found below

c. **Timeline**. Pathfinders RC&D will follow the timeline below for this RFP. Please note that these dates may be adjusted at the sole discretion of Pathfinders RC&D.

	Event	Responsible Party	Date and Time (CST)
1	Issuance of RFP	Pathfinders	01 January 2025, 8 AM
2	Last day to send a completed acknowledgment of RFP	Tenderer	01 February 2025, 5 PM
3	Last date for requests for clarification of the RFP	Tenderer	10 February 2025, 5 PM
4	Last date to reply to questions received/Last date for the amendment	Pathfinders	15 February 2025, 5 PM
5	Date by which the proposal must be received by Pathfinders	Tenderer	28 February 2025, 5 PM
6	Notification of Selected Tenderer	Pathfinders	10 March 2025, 5 PM
7	Start of Tenure for Selected Tenderer		20 March 2025, 5 PM

d. By submitting a proposal to this RFP, bidders are considered to have carefully reviewed the Pathfinders RC&D General Terms and Conditions and be in agreement with all its terms and conditions. Where the bidder has specific issues of concern, those must be raised and indicated. Please be informed however that such issues raised might be negatively evaluated.

Evaluation Criteria

a. A reviewing committee shall be established to evaluate each proposal. The proposal is evaluated individually on the basis of its responsiveness to the technical requirements and will be assessed and scored according to the evaluation criteria below and as per scores in the table.

	Category	Maximum Sub-Score	Maximum Score
1	**Organizational or individual profile**		20
1.1	Overall profile and capability	10	
1.2	Professional resources available	10	
2	**Expertise and experience in activities and deliverables**		40
2.1	Proposed approach and breadth of research	20	
2.2	Proven expertise and experience	20	
3	**Adherence to the project description**	40	40
	Total Score		100

    b. Proposals that score at least **75 points out of 100** will be considered qualified.

Acknowledgment Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

We, the undersigned, acknowledge receipt of your Request for Proposal (RFP) **No.XXXXXX** dated **XX MONTH 2025** and hereby confirm that we:

[ ] INTEND [ ] DO NOT INTEND

to submit a proposal to the point of contact of Pathfinders RC&D by the deadline date of **FEBRUARY 28TH, 2025**.

Name of Authorized Representative:
Signature:
Title:
Name and Address of Vendor:
Telephone:

Kindly return this acknowledgment letter immediately via e-mail to **CONTACT NAME** at **EMAIL ADDRESS**.

Proposal Letter

Dear **CONTACT NAME**:

I/We, the undersigned, offer to provide consulting services for **[Insert title of assignment]** in accordance with your Request for Proposal dated **[Insert Date]** and our Proposal. We are hereby submitting our Proposal which is attached to this email.

We are submitting our Proposal in association with: **[Insert a list with full name and address of each associated Consultant if submitting as an association]**

We hereby declare that all the information and statements made in this Proposal are true and accept that any misinterpretation contained in it may lead to our disqualification.

We confirm that, based on our current best knowledge, there are no real or potential conflicts of interest involved in rendering Services for Pathfinders RC&D. In this regard, we list all the work that we have been involved with Pathfinders RC&D as per the attached. We acknowledge and agree that Pathfinders RC&D has the right to determine whether there is any actual or potential conflicts of interest in its sole discretion.

We undertake, if our Proposal is accepted, to initiate the consulting services related to the Assignment.

We understand you are not bound to accept any Proposal you receive.

Yours sincerely,

Name of Authorized Representative:
Signature:
Title:
Name and Address of Vendor:
Telephone:

APPENDIX 2

Host Site Application Information

There are three active AmeriCorps programs in Iowa (AmeriCorps NCCC, AmeriCorps State & National, and AmeriCorps VISTA). AmeriCorps VISTA, the most applicable for Pathfinder's needs, as they focus on issues related to poverty, including organizational capacity. The program is currently updating its application documents, which will be available in December 2024 for 2025 host-site applications. Applications are due in March 2025, and a new member can begin service in August 2025, September 2025, or January 2026. There is a fee per member per host site for the full year. Typically, the cost is $4000-$5000, but can be reduced to a minimum of $1000 depending on the host site's finances. More, and updated, information about Volunteer Iowa's 2025-2026 priorities, funding, and requests for application link to their website. If Pathfinders choses to implement this recommendation, they can begin the process by emailing Julie Struck (Julie.struck@volunteeriowa.org) to receive guidance and start the application to become an AmeriCorps VISTA host site.

In the process of hiring a new AmeriCorps member, the most challenging aspect for Pathfinders will likely be recruiting a skilled volunteer. To combat potential setbacks, we recommend that Pathfinders focus on using word-of-mouth practices to recruit a VISTA member that already lives in one of Pathfinder's six county areas, with particular focus toward recent graduates in research- or writing-related fields. The organization should utilize their hiring networks and showcase their mission during the process. Often, a new member will be enticed by the organization's purpose and potential more than the position itself.

Once a member is hired, Pathfinders should onboard as if the AmeriCorps volunteer is a junior staff member, ensuring the recruit is welcomed warmly, connected to community networks, provided with needed resources, and trained accordingly. Once an AmeriCorps member is hired, the host site supervisor should expect to spend about ten percent of their time in the first two months overseeing the new member. Beyond two months, the oversight needed may reduce to about five percent of the supervisor's time.

Iowa's AmeriCorps Program

IOWA SUMMARY OF PROGRAMS

	AmeriCorps State (more than 13 separate programs)	AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America)	AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps)
PROGRAM FOCUS	Members serve in either groups or individually at local community-based private and public organizations. Members solve problems primarily through direct service. Service areas include youth, the environment, and other unmet needs (i.e. housing, poverty and crime; domestic violence and child abuse prevention; and legal services).	Members serve through private organizations and public nonprofit agencies, addressing issues related to poverty – such as education, public safety, housing, civil rights, and employment – by developing and mobilizing resources that create long-term sustainable benefits at a community level.	Members live in a campus environment and serve in teams to meet urgent community needs in disaster services, the environment, housing, and youth development. Teams work on projects with non-profit organizations, state and local agencies, and other community and faith-based groups.
ELIGIBILITY	Applicants must be at least 17 years old and a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or lawful permanent resident alien of the U.S.	Applicants must be at least 18 years old and a U.S. citizen or U.S. national, or lawful permanent resident alien of the U.S. Background checks are conducted.	Applicants must be 18 to 24 years old while they serve and a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or lawful permanent resident alien of the U.S. Background checks are conducted.
SKILL REQUIREMENTS	All skills levels are needed.	All skills levels are needed. Bachelor's degree or three years of related volunteer/job experience preferred.	All skill levels are needed.
TERM OF SERVICE	Full-time for 10 months to one year. Part-time opportunities are available of various durations depending on the program.	Full-time one year (365 days). No part-time service opportunities available.	Full-time for 10 months (corps member) and 11 months (team leader). No part-time service opportunities available.
LIVING ALLOWANCE	Most programs provide a modest living allowance.	A modest living allowance is paid biweekly.	A modest living allowance is paid biweekly.
ROOM AND BOARD	In most cases, members are responsible for covering their own housing and meal expenses.	Members are responsible for covering their own housing and meals from their living allowance.	Members are provided with housing/meals and live in residence hall style housing on one of five campuses.
EDUCATION AWARD/STIPEND	Upon successful completion of service, full-time members receive a $4,725 education award. Part-time members receive a prorated education award based on the successful completion of a certain number of required hours. Awards can be used to pay off qualified student loans or pay for future education expenses at qualified institutions of higher education.	Upon successful completion of service, members have a choice of a $4,725 education award or a $1,200 cash stipend.	Upon successful completion of service, members receive a $4,725 education award to help pay for college, graduate school, or to pay back qualified student loans.

www.americorps.gov | (800) 942–2677 | TTY (800) 833-3722

	AmeriCorps State (more than 13 separate programs)	**AmeriCorps VISTA** (Volunteers in Service to America)	**AmeriCorps NCCC** (National Civilian Community Corps)
STUDENT LOANS	Members may qualify for a forbearance (or postponement of the repayment) of their student loans.	Members may qualify for a forbearance (or postponement of the repayment) of student their loans.	Members may qualify for a forbearance of their student loans during their term of service.
INSURANCE AND CHILD CARE	Full-time members receive health coverage and may qualify for childcare assistance.	Members receive health coverage and may qualify for childcare assistance. Members have the option of purchasing life insurance.	Members receive health benefits as well as some assistance with off-campus child care expenses. (Children are not allowed to reside on campus with members.)
RELOCATION EXPENSES	Most programs do not pay for relocation.	Members who relocate over 50 miles to serve may be eligible for relocation assistance.	Members are provided with transportation to and from their campus.
PROJECT LOCATIONS	Program sites are located throughout Iowa. See http://www.volunteeriowa.org/americorps/programs.html for a list of current program sites.	Program sites are located throughout Iowa. Search www.americorps.gov for a list of current program sites.	Members live on one of five campuses, located in Denver, CO; Perry Point, MD.; Sacramento, CA; Vicksburg, MS; and Vinton, IA.
TRAINING	Members receive orientation, in-service training, and end of service training as determined by each program.	Members attend a pre-service orientation, in-service training, and receive additional training as determined by each program.	Members receive training when they arrive on campus and during their service for specific projects. All members receive training in CPR, first aid, disaster relief, leadership, team building, and citizenship.
WHEN/HOW TO APPLY	Applications are accepted year-round. Apply at www.americorps.gov or call programs directly to inquire about opportunities. Refer to http://www.volunteeriowa.org/americorps/programs.html for contact information.	Applications are accepted year-round. Apply at www.americorps.gov or call programs directly to inquire about opportunities.	Deadlines for application are March 15 for the fall session and July 15 for the winter. Apply online at www.americorps.gov or send application to AmeriCorps NCCC Selection 1201 New York Ave, NW, 10th flr. Washington, DC 20525
CONTACT	If you do not have access to the internet or would like an application packet, please call 800-942-2677 or 800-833-3722 (TTY).		

Volunteer Iowa AmeriCorps VISTA Project Host Site Applicant Guidance 2023 - 2034

About the Project

Our Purpose: The VISTA project, through service and volunteering, will seek to create a climate where economically disadvantaged individuals and youth are provided the tools needed for financial well-being and academic success, and communities have the resources needed to address critical needs related to poverty.

How You Can Partner with Us: By completing the host site application you can request one or more full-time VISTA members to complete a year of service meeting a specific need in your community. This document will detail the Volunteer Iowa VISTA program, and key details about utilizing full time VISTA members to fight poverty and build capacity in your community. Please read this document before completing the host site application. This guidance is for all VISTA projects that begin October 2023 – August 2024. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Applications for projects starting fall and winter will have priority over those whose start dates are in the spring and summer.

About Volunteer Iowa

Volunteer Iowa, also known as The Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service (ICVS), is a state agency whose mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. Volunteer Iowa and its partner agencies work with organizations on three main fronts:

1. Help organizations develop quality programs that use service as a strategy to fulfill their missions and address Iowa's greatest areas of need.

2. Help organizations employ strategies to engage Iowans in their communities.

3. To build the volunteer infrastructure to allow service to happen.

One tool used by Volunteer Iowa is the AmeriCorps VISTA project. This document helps outline what you need to know as a host site. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact the Volunteer Iowa VISTA Program Officer at any time. We hope to partner with you!

Volunteer Iowa VISTA Program Officer:

Julie Struck
(515) 349-4715
Julie.Struck@volunteeriowa.org

About AmeriCorps VISTA

AmeriCorps is a national service program that allows individuals to commit a significant amount of time to serving their community to help address problems. The AmeriCorps VISTA program began during the War on Poverty of the 1960s and remains the poverty-fighting branch of AmeriCorps. All VISTA placements support the overall goal of eliminating poverty. As a host site applicant, you should be prepared to articulate how the position you are proposing to create will help address poverty-related issues in Iowa and/or your local community. If you need AmeriCorps members or volunteers for other types of service activities, please contact Volunteer Iowa to discuss your options.

AmeriCorps VISTA Priorities

1.Economic Opportunity: AmeriCorps VISTA's commitment to ending poverty requires focusing on projects that provide opportunities to low-income individuals to get training, education and skills that will meet the needs of employers. In addition, projects that focus on asset building are encouraged to apply. Volunteer Iowa will continue to give priority to projects that support and/or facilitate access to housing and services and resources that contribute to the improved economic well-being and financial security of economically disadvantaged people in rural communities and minorities who experience socioeconomic inequality. Priority areas include, but are not limited to:

- **Employment:** Improving or creating job skills training programs that lead to increased employment

- **Financial Literacy:** Improving access to services and benefits aimed at contributing to enhanced financial literacy.

- **Housing:** Transitioning individuals into or helping them remain in safe, healthy, affordable housing including a focus on eviction prevention, and those that were displaced due to COVID-19.

- **Federal Benefit access:** Increasing awareness of and access to federal benefit programs such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit (CTC), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and others.

2.Education: Volunteer Iowa will give priority to projects that support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged children. Priority areas include, but are not limited to:

- **School readiness** and **learning loss** for economically disadvantaged children.

- **K-12 success** in student educational and behavioral outcomes in low-achieving schools, including remote learning program development.

- **Career and Technical Education** to help students gain the skills they need to compete for employment.
  College access and success for low-income students.

- **STEM** (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) programs as pathways for

- economically disadvantaged students.

2

3.Healthy Futures: The VISTA program will give priority to projects that meet health needs, including access to food resources and health care, for economically disadvantaged individuals. Priority areas include, but are not limited to:

- **Access to health care:** Connecting economically disadvantaged individuals to preventative education and treatment/recovery services regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, to include mental health services.

- **Food security:** Alleviating hunger and increasing access to nutritious food. Potential partners may include, but are not limited to, individual food banks and pantries, networks of food banks, K-12 schools, community gardens, and after-school programs.

- Bring **culturally relevant services** to underserved groups according to age, geography, and disability.

- Create **wrap-around support** including physical, mental, and social welfare elements.

- **Education, Resource Development, Prevention, and Treatment:** Increase and improve services to low-income individuals affected by substance abuse.

4.Veteran and Military Families: The VISTA program will give priority to projects that focus on low-income veterans and military families as beneficiaries.
Priority areas include, but are not limited to:

- **Economic opportunity:** Employment and homelessness prevention/reduction.

- **Education:** School readiness, success in K-12 education, and post-secondary employment success.

- **Healthy futures:** Access to health services, including substance abuse prevention and recovery and mental health services.

5.Environmental Stewardship: Supporting anti-poverty initiatives that focus on environmental stewardship and climate change in low-income communities. Priority areas include, but are not limited to:

- **·Energy Efficiency:** Connecting underserved populations to renewable energy and energy efficient practices.

- **·Awareness & Stewardship:** Building community resilience.

Volunteer Iowa Host Site Selection Process

Through our grant with our federal agency, AmeriCorps, we place members with host sites across the state as well as directly with Volunteer Iowa.

Eligibility: Public and nonprofits with a 501(c) status addressing individual, family, and/or community poverty-related issues are encouraged to apply.

Volunteer Iowa will use the following procedures for determining when to award VISTA positions to partner agencies.

1. Interested organizations must complete the VISTA host site application in its entirety and submit it to the Volunteer Iowa VISTA Program Officer.

2. Applications will be reviewed by the Volunteer Iowa staff to determine whether the proposed goals and activities of the VISTA placement fit within Volunteer Iowa- identified priority areas of (1) Healthy Futures (2) Economic Opportunity (3) Education, (4) Veteran and Military Families, and/or (5) Environmental Stewardship.

3. Volunteer Iowa staff will determine whether the applicant should be approved for placement within the Volunteer Iowa VISTA program, taking into consideration information contained within the application including:

   - The eligibility of the potential host site (i.e., Whether proposed member activities are allowable, whether the proposed host agency is permissible, etc.).
   - Ability to provide cost share funding.
   - Ability to provide adequate supervision to a full-time AmeriCorps VISTA member.
   - Quality of proposed service activities.
   - Ability to meet the needs of unserved or underserved communities.
   - Past performance of previous VISTA project, if applicable.
   - Other factors that help determine which placements would best further Volunteer Iowa strategic goals.

4. Once approved, host sites will consult with VISTA project staff to refine areas of the application, such as the Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD), and will work together to develop a recruitment and outreach strategy focused on the agreed upon VISTA start date.

VISTA Project Timeline

Deadlines: The following schedule outlines the due dates of the host site application as well as the selection of the VISTA member. Applicants can submit at any time as there can be additional VISTA start dates offered based on the best fit for the host site and Volunteer Iowa. Please contact the Volunteer Iowa VISTA Program Officer to discuss alternative dates.

Summer is the primary enrollment period for the VISTA project as, nationally, this is when the highest number of candidates are looking to start their year of service. However, applicants can choose between several start dates throughout the VISTA year.

Applicants should know that it takes on average 120 days from application to placement of a VISTA member with your organization. Most of this time is for recruitment, selection, and placement of the final candidate so this timeframe is flexible based on the success of recruiting the ideal candidate(s).

All applicants will be asked to select a Cohort, and a start date, for the VISTA project. The following is a timeline for start dates and deadlines.

Fall Cohort

Start date: October 2023
Applications due on a rolling basis
Applicant notification and consultation based on application submission date.
Final candidate selection due to Volunteer Iowa: September 2023

Winter Cohort

Start dates: January 2024
Applications due on a rolling basis
Applicant notification and consultation based on application submission date.
Final candidate selection due to Volunteer Iowa: December 2023

Summer Cohort

Start dates: June, July, and August 2024
Applications due on a rolling basis
Applicant notification and consultation based on application submission date.
Final candidate selection due to Volunteer Iowa: various dates in May, June, and July 2024

Memorandum of Agreement

Once a VISTA member placement is awarded to a host site, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) will be sent to for signature. The MOA with Volunteer Iowa outlines the responsibilities of each party regarding the placement of the AmeriCorps VISTA member. Signed MOAs should be in place with each site after placement of the VISTA member but before the VISTA member begins service.

Host Site Applicant Guidance
March 2024 FINAL

Cost to host a VISTA Project

Site Support Payments. Approved host sites under the Volunteer Iowa VISTA Program are required to provide a site support payment to Volunteer Iowa for part or all of the expenses associated with the operation of the VISTA program, such as the living allowance costs, recruitment efforts, training of members and host site staff, and other relatable costs to support the operation of the Volunteer Iowa VISTA Program which is not provided by AmeriCorps via a support or program grant. The site support payments will be required of all approved host sites unless a waiver is provided by Volunteer Iowa. Site support payments will be attributed to the member service term. Site support payment received will be allocated to each fund based on the calculation of members enrolled. Site support payments will be collected based on the organization's ability to pay and based on the expenses directly attributed to the program.

Cost Share. One factor considered when awarding positions is the host site's ability to provide a cash payment towards our cost-sharing fee from AmeriCorps. There are two types of VISTA positions that are awarded to us by AmeriCorps: Standard members (which require no cash match by Volunteer Iowa) and Cost-Share members (for which Volunteer Iowa is charged a fee to help cover a portion of the expenses involved). Our project always includes a mix of Standard and Cost-Share members. Typically, the full cost share fee is about the same amount as the living allowance paid to the VISTA member for the year.

Volunteer Iowa divides these costs among all project sites and our expected cost to host a VISTA project this year is between $4,000 - $22,880 for a full-time VISTA position. In some cases, Volunteer Iowa may award VISTA positions to host sites with demonstrated financial need at a lower rate.

In addition to the above fees, all host site organizations should expect to incur some additional expenses in hosting a member. These may be in-kind expenses, such as those involved in providing a phone and computer to the member, or cash expenses, such as paying for your member to attend a conference related to their service activities, mileage reimbursement for service-related travel, etc. We expect each host site to set aside $250 per VISTA for professional development opportunities. Details about these fees and other financial responsibilities are outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement.

On-site, Virtual Service Site, Teleservice

VISTA members must reside in Iowa and within commuting distance of their project host site. Exception: members may live within 30 miles of the Iowa border if their project host site is near the state's border. Remote service is not permitted. Any host site applicant will be required to provide information on the location in which a VISTA candidate would serve. This is especially important during recruitment as the advertisement will need to be clear about the expectations for service.

On-site: This refers to organizations that will require VISTAs to serve in-person at the host site organization. Typically, this would be a traditional placement where the member has office space and is expected to be in person for the duration of their service year.

Virtual Service: Virtual service sites refer to organizations that do not have a physical location (e.g., brick and mortar building) but maintain a defined geographic service area. Virtual service sites are permitted but must be located within the commuting area, as members are to be physically present to meet with their supervisor and/or attend community events when required.

Teleservice: Is allowable, up to full-time, from a location within the commuting area of project host site and members are to be physically present at the sponsor (Volunteer Iowa), host site and/or community events when required.

VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

The VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) is the document that will guide your VISTA Member in their service, and it is helpful for creating a position description once you are ready to start recruiting for a member.

The VAD provides a broad outline of what a member will work on during their year of service. Similar to a position description, it is valuable in recruiting members and as the basis of a detailed work plan by breaking down objectives identified in the project application into a realistic set of activities to reach those objectives. These activities can be adapted as the project evolves, which means VADs should be updated at least every project year, and to match the unique strengths of the members serving with your project. The VAD will also be used to orient the members to the project, organization, and community. The VAD can also be used to identify areas for skill development and to assess how well the member is doing. You can use the VAD in your recruitment, to share with your applicants the specific problem they will be working to address, the long-term goal of their efforts, and the specific activities in which they will be engaged. Once your VISTA begins service, they should receive their own copy of the VAD.

Writing VADS: There are five elements to a VAD: Title, project details, project goal statement, objectives, and member activities.

Give each VAD a distinct title (with "AmeriCorps VISTA" included) related to the position. **Project**

Details: Each VAD contains the project name, site name, and focus area(s). **Project Goal Statement:**

The VAD begins by stating the overall goal of the project (as opposed to the overall goal of the specific member position). This is a good jumping-off point in describing the assignment to the member. The statement provides context for how the project addresses poverty and how the activities will build capacity. The project goal must:

- Address poverty by member efforts
- Describe who (population) will be served
- Include verbs to describe the member activities
- Define how the member activities will build capacity
- State the specific product(s) or service(s) resulting from member efforts

Objectives: Articulate what the member will achieve throughout the assignment in order to reach the project's goal. Include multiple objectives that link the overall project goal and the member's activities. Use active verbs. Include a performance period (what month of service you want the member to work on the objective) with a clear beginning and end for each objective. It is helpful to be specific with performance periods, as your members will use that information to guide their service terms. For example, a performance period could be, "First through third month of service."

Member Activities: Identify the specific activities the member will carry out to achieve the objectives. Activities that include the desired outcome or deliverable are most informative and effective. Use active verbs and avoid vague statements such as, "will assist with..." Activity statements should be specific enough that someone unfamiliar with the project can understand the expectations of the member.

There are several resources available to help you develop an effective VAD. Contact Volunteer Iowa for examples.

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Recruitment and Placement

If you are awarded a VISTA position, you will be notified by Volunteer Iowa staff regarding when to start your recruitment and what the due date is for nominations. My AmeriCorps, a nationwide database, is used to manage applications for AmeriCorps positions. Recruitment and placement of members will take place in three phases. See below for an outline of the process involved in recruiting an AmeriCorps VISTA member once you have been awarded a placement through the Volunteer Iowa VISTA Program.

There are multiple times per year when VISTA members may begin their service as referenced under 'VISTA Project Timeline'. Recruitment begins well in advance of these dates since selected candidates must be identified and enrolled in the program about one month in advance of their start date.

Volunteer Iowa provides recruitment support through one-on-one assistance to host sites, as well as through distribution of opportunities to serve through our partnership network, Commission members, Service Year, and more broadly through social media and other online platforms. Additionally, the VISTA Leader, when serving, assists with recruitment. However, it is the responsibility of the host site to recruit a candidate for service.

Recruitment Materials: Volunteer Iowa will help you create project-specific recruitment materials to help spread the word about your position. Volunteer Iowa staff will post your position and open it for electronic applications. Potential applicants will see your position by searching on the AmeriCorps recruitment website, My AmeriCorps. You will be expected to advertise the position locally and through your own recruitment channels (i.e., through local college and university service or career centers, in local newspapers, on your agency website, by forwarding to your contacts, etc.).

Interviews & Deadlines: Volunteer Iowa will use a three-step process for selecting AmeriCorps VISTA Members. Host Sites are encouraged to recruit from within their networks, volunteers, and community they serve.

1. The Volunteer Iowa VISTA Program Officer and/or VISTA Leader will do the initial screening of applicants to ensure their understanding of the VISTA program and its terms, conditions, & benefits. These interviews will occur on a rolling basis as applications are received. Please advise the Volunteer Iowa VISTA Program Officer of applicants you directly recruit to expedite the review of their applications. Candidates must apply for the position through MyAmeriCorps before they interview with Volunteer Iowa.

2. Your organization will receive information about the applicants who have passed the initial screening on a rolling basis. Host sites will do their own round of interviewing and select their top candidate (and one to two alternates). The name of the top candidate(s) should be submitted to Volunteer Iowa with the "VISTA Host Site Recommendation Form".

If no concerns arise, Volunteer Iowa will notify the host site that the applicant(s) are approved, and an offer may be made by the host organization. If the first-choice candidate does not accept the position, an offer may be made to the next alternate. Those who accept the offer will be nominated by Volunteer Iowa. Final approval of candidate is completed by AmeriCorps. All enrollment steps by selected applicants, Volunteer Iowa, and host sites must be completed by the specified due date.

More information about VISTA recruitment and creating a plan can be found starting on page 47 of the Sponsor Handbook (linked at the end of this guide).

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Eligibility & Preferred Skills

When recruiting for a VISTA member, it is important to keep in mind the member eligibility criteria and recruitment priorities established by the AmeriCorps and Volunteer Iowa:

- Members must be at least 18 years of age at the time of placement.

- Members must hold one of the following citizenship statuses: US citizen, US National, Lawful Permanent Resident Aliens and persons residing in a state that have the following legal residency classifications: refugee, asylum or asylee, temporary protected status, or deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA) status.
- To earn an education award, members must be U.S. Citizens, U.S. Nationals, or Legal Permanent Residents.
  To earn a cash award, members must be Legal Residents.

- Applicants must have earned a high school diploma or GED, or they must agree to work toward completion during their service. You may set additional educational standards for your position, depending on the skills you feel will be necessary for fulfilling the responsibilities of your position.
- Members must serve on a full-time basis for the 12-month term. Typically, full-time means the Members should follow the work schedule of regular employees at their host site—this may be a regular 9AM-5PM schedule or may include some evening and weekend hours.

- Members should be given the same holiday leave as paid employees at the site. Ten sick and ten personal days are allowed, as well as emergency leave, if necessary. Members may have part-time outside employment during the project period if it does not conflict with AmeriCorps VISTA duties.

- Members may attend classes full-time during their term of service, however it is not recommended as VISTA is full-time and service activities take priority over classes. It is the responsibility of the host site to manage members' time and set appropriate expectations of service.

- Members must not be listed on the National Sex Offenders Public Registry (visit https://www.nsopw.gov/Search/Verification to check a candidate's name on the list—official checks will be conducted by AmeriCorps).

Member Benefits

VISTA members receive modest benefits while in service. These benefits are discussed during the candidate screening call as well as during the Virtual Member Orientation that is provided on their first day:

Living Allowance

The gross annual subsistence allowance is $22,882.

Health Benefit Program Members are eligible to participate in one of two Health Benefit Programs: The AmeriCorps VISTA Health Benefits Plan and the AmeriCorps VISTA Healthcare Allowance. While these are excellent support for most VISTAs, they are not insurance and do not satisfy the individual responsibility requirement of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). International Medical Group (IMG) is the administrator of the AmeriCorps VISTA Healthcare Allowance and the AmeriCorps VISTA Health Benefit Plan. For details about either benefit, please visit: americorpsvista.imglobal.com.

End of Service Benefit

VISTA members must choose either the $7,395 Education Award or the alternative, the end-of-service cash stipend of $1,800 prior to their start of service. Members who are at least 55 years of age at the start of their service may select the education award and transfer the award to their child, stepchild, grandchild, step-grandchild, or foster child. Prior to the members' 10th month of service, they have the option of changing from the educational award to the end-of service stipend. Members are NOT able to change from the end-of-service stipend to the educational award.

Child Care Benefits

Child-care benefits are contingent on having a child under 13, meeting an income threshold, needing child-care assistance to complete the VISTA assignment, and having a financial need to pay necessary child-care expenses. More information can be found here.

Forbearance

Student loan deferment or forbearance or forgiveness opportunities are available depending on the type of student loan. Members are responsible for obtaining information about whether they would qualify for these benefits as a result of VISTA service. This is not an automatic benefit of the program.

Leave

Ten days of personal leave and ten days of medical leave are available during the year of service. Each can be used with the approval of the Host Site supervisor. Additionally, up to 5 emergency leave days can be provided with the approval of Volunteer Iowa.

Training and Professional Development

AmeriCorps VISTA provides a variety of training and development opportunities. These include: VMO: Virtual Member Orientation, an online orientation that introduces VISTA members to the terms, conditions and benefits of service and key programming principles at the start of their service. OSOT: On-Site Orientation and Training is provided by the sponsoring organization and introduces members to the organization, the community, and the goals of the project. Other training and professional development opportunities provided through the VISTA Campus include but are not limited to VISTA Structured Online Courses and VISTA Webinar Series.

Non-Competitive Eligibility

After completing service, non-competitive eligibility allows an AmeriCorps VISTA member who meets the minimum qualifications for a federal job to be hired by a federal agency without having to compete with the general public.

The Federal Employee Compensation and Federal Tort Claims Acts cover VISTA Members. In addition, the Income Disregard provisions apply to any Member who receives government benefits. The AmeriCorps relocation allowance covers members moving over 50 miles to begin service. In addition, the VISTA housing policy encourages sponsors to find ways to provide free or low-cost housing for VISTAs. This practice may yield a larger and more diverse applicant pool.

Training

Virtual Member Orientation (VMO) All VISTA members must attend an AmeriCorps-sponsored virtual member orientation on the first day of their VISTA service. Staff from AmeriCorps will present information on AmeriCorps VISTA and the expectations for and requirements of the program. Your VISTA member should expect to attend the VMO and will then be officially sworn into service.

Host Site Orientation & Training

All AmeriCorps VISTA members need to receive an orientation to their service site and local community. Each host site will develop a host site orientation and training (OSOT) plan to make sure their member is acquainted with the expectations and plans at their site. All host sites will be required to submit a copy of the OSOT plan prior to the member start date. OSOT plans will vary according to the background of the VISTA, but they should provide:

- An understanding of common expectations and agreements for the working relationship between VISTA and supervisor
- An understanding of the culture and mission of the host site organization
- Knowledge of the bigger picture related to the VISTA project and the community
- Understanding of the organization's policies, including

  - Roles and responsibilities
  - Time and attendance, service hours
  - Travel reimbursement policy and procedure
  - Working with the media
  - Evaluation of individual VISTA and of the project
  - Reporting requirements for the VISTA project

- A training plan to build skills and knowledge needed to implement the Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD)

Orientation to the Volunteer Iowa AmeriCorps VISTA Project

All members will be required to attend an in-person or virtual orientation to the Volunteer Iowa AmeriCorps VISTA program within the first few weeks of their service. At this orientation, they will learn more about Volunteer Iowa and the programs we operate, how Commissioners and staff can support the VISTAs, expectations we have for the VISTAs to represent AmeriCorps and Volunteer Iowa in the communities they serve, and other requirements of serving on the Volunteer Iowa project.

Ongoing Training

Host sites should provide on-going training and member development activities to VISTAs, as needed, to improve their skills and provide them with knowledge and resources to complete their assigned activities. Volunteer Iowa will notify host sites of trainings we sponsor that may be relevant to VISTAs. Host sites are also expected to set aside $250 per member to support the participation in training, conferences, and other professional development activities relevant to their position.

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Member Management & Supervision

Each host site is required to designate up to 10 hours of site supervisor time for the AmeriCorps VISTA member(s). This may fluctuate based on the skill level of the VISTA member, as well as during the term of service. For instance, supervisors may have more time spent with the VISTA during the first few months of service while they are onboarded and getting started on their project versus towards the end of the term. The host site supervisor will:

- Provide day to day oversight of the AmeriCorps VISTA member(s).
- Provide regularly scheduled supervision time, twice a month at minimum, though weekly scheduled one-on-one supervisions are highly recommended and considered a best practice.
- Serve as the agency contact with Volunteer Iowa.
- Be allowed to attend any necessary supervisor training.

Sites must also provide AmeriCorps VISTA Members with sufficient office space, materials, and supplies to complete their duties, as outlined in the VAD. Materials and supplies will generally include access to a computer, phone, printer, etc.

If travel is required for the completion of service activities, sites must provide VISTA Members with mileage reimbursement and/or access to agency vehicle. If members are required to use their own personal vehicles, they must be notified of this in advance. Mileage reimbursement and/or agency vehicle access for VISTA member(s) should be in accordance with agency travel policy for other employees or the state rate of $.50/mile, whichever is greater.

Reporting

Reports on VISTA members' progress will be due on a regular basis to the Volunteer Iowa VISTA Program Officer. These Progress Reports document member development activities, volunteer recruitment and resource development, and include narratives on challenges and highlights of service, and document progress under the specific categories outlined in the VAD. Photos, articles written, and other materials produced as a result of the VISTA project and/or members are highly encouraged to be submitted along with the reports. Both members and supervisors will be expected to complete reports.

Host Sites should develop a plan for tracking the required reporting items. Sample reports can be sent, upon request. Additional reports may be required throughout the AmeriCorps VISTA member's service year, especially as requested by AmeriCorps. Information about any additional reporting requirements will be communicated to host sites in writing.

Promotion

Volunteer Iowa supports not only AmeriCorps VISTA, but also many other national service and volunteer efforts throughout Iowa. We see our VISTA host sites and members as partners in our work to promote service and volunteerism. Since we are a very small agency with staff located mostly in Des Moines, our VISTA host sites and members serve as our "eyes and ears" in communities throughout the state. We ask host sites to share with Volunteer Iowa any potential partners or opportunities to expand our work.

VISTA members and host sites are also expected to share information about Volunteer Iowa and our programs with the communities and clients they serve.

VISTAs are expected to participate in Days of Service and special days that highlight various volunteer efforts. VISTA members will be highly encouraged to design and/or participate in a service event for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, held the third Monday in January each year, and AmeriCorps Week, typically held in the spring each year.

Volunteer Iowa encourages AmeriCorps VISTA host sites and members to seek additional ways to partner with Volunteer Iowa, such as by nominating individuals or groups for our volunteer awards programs, sharing information with partner businesses about the Employer Volunteer Initiative, utilizing the statewide volunteer opportunity database "Get Connected" to post volunteer opportunities, or presenting at the Iowa Nonprofit Summit. Organizations that actively collaborate with Volunteer Iowa are looked upon favorably when being considered for continued VISTA placements at their site.

Evaluation & Recognition

Both members and supervisors will be required to complete a mid-term and an end-of-term evaluation. Volunteer Iowa should be notified immediately if performance problems arise during a members term of service.

The Volunteer Iowa VISTA Program Officer and/or other designees from Volunteer Iowa will make at least one site visit to the host agency during the VISTA member's term of service. This may be in person or virtual. These visits will help to ensure compliance with VISTA regulations but also provide host sites with an opportunity to demonstrate what has been accomplished due to the service of a VISTA Member at their site. The site supervisor and the VISTA Member must participate in these visits, but other host agency staff, clients, and/or board members may also be made available to discuss the impact of the VISTA.

Host sites should also consider what they can do to recognize and thank VISTA Members for their service. Volunteer Iowa also makes every effort to support other member gatherings and recognition opportunities.

Resources

- VISTA Sponsor Handbook

- AmeriCorps VISTA Member Benefits

- Volunteer Iowa Service Enterprise

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Volunteer Iowa VISTA Project Host Site
Application 2023-2024

INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you for your interest in AmeriCorps VISTA. Application deadlines are based on VISTA member start dates which are pre-determined by AmeriCorps. Organizations may select project start date that best the VISTA project needs. Please see the VISTA Host Site Guidance for additional information on available VISTA start dates.

Interested applicants are encouraged to set up a consultation to discuss the VISTA program, proposed project ideas, and timeline. Once the application is complete, submit to Julie Struck, Volunteer Iowa VISTA Program Officer, at julie.struck@volunteeriowa.org

This application is for new VISTA projects only. For VISTA projects that are renewing for a 2nd or 3rd year there is a project continuation form that needs to be completed.

Questions? Contact Julie Struck via email or call 515-349-4715.

Core Principles of AmeriCorps VISTA

Projects must be developed in accordance with AmeriCorps VISTA's core principles: an anti-poverty focus; community empowerment; sustainable solutions; and capacity building.

1. **Anti-Poverty Focus**

    The statutory purpose of AmeriCorps VISTA is to strengthen and support efforts to eliminate poverty. Each VISTA project should focus on empowering individuals to emerge from poverty, not simply make poverty more tolerable. VISTA projects should focus on long-term solutions rather than short-term services.

2. **Community Empowerment**

    Prospective and current AmeriCorps VISTA project sponsors must engage low-income community members in planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating the project. Each project must be responsive and relevant to the lives of community residents, and tap into inherent community assets, strengths, and resources.

3. **Sustainable Solutions**

    Congress has directed AmeriCorps VISTA to serve as short-term resources that serve to build the long-term sustainability of anti-poverty programs. Projects should be developed with a goal to phase out the need for VISTAs within three years and have the project continue without them.

4. **Capacity Building**

    VISTAs create systems that remain long after their term of service ends. VISTA projects expand the scale, impact, and resource-leveraging ability of programs and organizations that work to eliminate poverty. Our members strengthen sponsors by building infrastructure, expanding community partnerships, securing long-term resources, coordinating training for participants, and more, as determined by local needs.

    VISTAs focus on capacity-building activities. On occasion, they may perform limited direct service activities if such activities are incidental to the activities required under their VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) duties, a part of a term-limited special initiative, or a necessary part of VISTA training activities. VISTAs are not staff members or employees of the sponsoring organizations to which they are assigned. VISTAs may not engage in activities at sponsoring organizations that would displace or supplant paid staff, contractors, or existing volunteers.

PART ONE: GENERAL INFORMATION	
Organization Name and Mailing Address	
Area to be served by the VISTA (list the specific city, county, or region)	
Title for the AmeriCorps VISTA Position (must include the phrase, "VISTA")	
Organization type (choose one)	Select One:
Organization EIN number:	
Is your organization a certified Service Enterprise? (Additional information about the Service Enterprise Initiative visit https://www.volunteeriowa.org/SEI	Select One No Yes
Which of the VISTA *priorities most closely align with your project goals? *A description of these priority areas can be found in the Applicant Guidance.	Choose One
Organization Contact (Serves as contact with Volunteer Iowa during application process)	
Phone	
Email	
Host Site Supervisor contact (Serves as contact with Volunteer Iowa if a position is awarded)	
Phone	
Email	
Organization Fees Site Support Payment $700 Cost Share Fee $3300 Total fee per VISTA $4000 **Host site is able to pay total fee per VISTA?** **If no, indicate amount that can be paid.** (Awarding priority will be given to organizations able to provide cost share funding)	

PART 2: COMMUNITY NEED AND PROJECT GOAL

VISTA members provide indirect, capacity-building service to improve your organization's ability to accomplish your mission and thereby reduce barriers to poverty. Indirect service can take many forms, such as efforts to secure additional funding, create a community volunteer program, develop new outreach materials or curricula, or improve client intake and service systems, and much more. Complete the following sections in their entirety.

Community need statement: Describe the unmet poverty-related community need you propose to address through your VISTA project. Include the following information: Describe the need in measurable terms. Include relevant characteristics of the community, including the number of low-income people directly affected by the identified problem or unmet need. Cite a reliable source that documents the need in the area being served. Briefly explain the organizations current capacity to address the need.

The suggested length of this statement is 6-8 sentences.

Goal statement: Include the following: Describe who (population) will be served by the VISTA, describe what the VISTA will do using verbs (develop, implement), describe how poverty is addressed by VISTA efforts (breaking the cycle of poverty by…), state the specific self-sustaining product or service resulting from the VISTA efforts (volunteer systems, partnerships, funding), and if applicable describe how resources will be used (VISTA will write grants to support…). *The suggested length of this statement is 3-5 sentences.*

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Sustainability: Describe in measurable terms the anticipated sustainability of results at the conclusion of the project. *The suggested length of this statement is 2-4 sentences.*

Planning: Indicate the involvement of beneficiaries (i.e. advisory group, community involvement, etc.) in project development and implementation throughout the life of the project. *The suggested length of this statement is 1-3 sentences.*

Volunteer Management: Indicate the role of the VISTA member in developing or enhancing the ability of the organization or partner organization(s) to implement effective volunteer management best practices and/or engage volunteers in meaningful service.

The suggested length of this statement is 2-4 sentences.

Service experience and training: Please address how your organization will ensure a meaningful service experience for the AmeriCorps VISTA member. What training opportunities will you offer the member? How will you integrate the VISTA member into your organization and community? *The suggested length of this statement is 2-4 sentences.*

4

Monitoring: Please address how your AmeriCorps VISTA member will be supervised, how you will monitor the VISTA member's progress toward the targets identified in the VAD, and your ability to complete and submit reports in a timely fashion.
The suggested length of this statement is 3-4 sentences.

PART THREE: CONNECTION TO VOLUNTEER IOWA & NATIONAL SERVICE

Connection to the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service mission, vision, and objectives: Describe how the proposed AmeriCorps VISTA project relates to the VOLUNTEER IOWA mission, vision, and goals for service in Iowa). (Reference www.volunteeriowa.org)
The suggested length of this statement is 2-4 sentences.

Does your service site have any other relationships to the VOLUNTEER IOWA? If yes, please describe: Examples may include staff member serves on the Commission, agency hosts another program or grant awarded through the VOLUNTEER IOWA, etc.

Other AmeriCorps programming at your site: Are there other AmeriCorps members serving at your site or other national service programs ? If yes, please share what you know about their service, such as what branch of AmeriCorps and what program. How will the AmeriCorps VISTA's duties relate to the existing members' service activities?

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VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

Title	
Sponsoring Organization	
Project Name	
Project Period	
Site Name	
Focus Area(s)	

VISTA Assignment Objectives & Member Activities	
EXAMPLE: Project Goal	The Grinnell Education Partnership is a "collective impact" project that aims to help local organizations develop, align, and sustain high-impact initiatives and equitable systems to better support low-income students and families. Selected VISTA Member will foster community-wide connections, so ALL Grinnell area kids and families have access to resources and educational opportunities. **TRAINING**. Become familiar with the Grinnell Education Partnership program
EXAMPLE: Objective	objectives, history, stakeholder opportunities, and challenges through general and specific training to prepare for responsibilities. Timeframe: This learning process will take place during week 1 and 2 of the service term.
EXAMPLE: Member Activities	Go through Grinnell Education Partnership orientation: 1. Get introduced to Grinnell Education Partnership stakeholders and their roles. 2. Learn about the background on Grinnell Education Partnership in the previous years. 3. Receive training on the worksheet for long-and short-term Grinnell Education Partnership action plans. 4. Participate in other site-specific training.
Project Goal	
Objective 1	
Member Activities	

Rev. March2024

Objective 2	
Member Activities	
Objective 3	
Member Activities	
Objective 4	
Member Activities	
Objective 5	
Member Activities	

Rev. March 2024

AmeriCorps
Iowa

VISTA POSITION LISTING FORM

VISTA Project Name	
VISTA Project Period	
Contact Name	
Address (city, state, zip)	
Contact Phone	
Email	
Website	

Describe your VISTA Project. Be descriptive and highlight the benefits and opportunities to maximize interest from potential VISTA candidates. The information provided will be used to create a national recruitment post on MyAmeriCorps

Give a brief tagline for the VISTA position to draw in readers *(200 characters or less)*

Enter your VISTA Project description *(2000 characters or less)*

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Answer the following questions:		
	Yes	**No**
Is housing assistance provided? Does the VISTA need their own transportation? Is there a language requirement other than English? Enter Education Requirement *(HS diploma, some college, associate, bachelor, or graduate degree)*		
Is this position full-time in person, full-time teleservice, or hybrid? If hybrid, what percentage of time will VISTA be allowed to serve remotely? *(teleserve = serve remotely occasionally up to full-time)* Is this a virtual service site? (Organization does not have an office – completely virtual).		
Do you require the VISTA to live in the community you serve? Is your organization willing to provide any additional financial or in-kind supplemental benefits for the VISTA member?		
What skills does host site desire in an ideal VISTA member? Ctlr + select all that apply		
Architectural Planning Business/Entrepreneur Communications Community Organization Computers/Technology Conflict Resolution Counseling Disaster Services Education Environment Fine Arts/Crafts First Aid Fundraising/Grant Writing General Skills Law/Medicine Leadership Nonprofit Management Public Health Public Speaking Recruitment Social Services Teaching/Tutoring Teamwork Trade/Construction Urban Planning Veterans Writing/Editing Youth Development		

Rev. March 2024

What will the VISTA member do? Use descriptive, captivating statements to describe VISTA activities *(1000 characters or less)*

Indicate the service areas in which the member(s) will serve. Ctrl + select all that will apply.

Community and Economic Development   Community   Outreach Children/Youth   Disaster   Relief Education   Entrepreneur/Business Elder   Care   Ex-Offender   Reentry Environment   Health   Hunger Homelessness   Housing   Homeland Security   Neighborhood   Revitalization Public   Safety   Technology   Tribal Veterans

Rev. March 2024

APPENDIX 3

Job Description, AmeriCorps VISTA Grant Writer and Youth Coordinator

Term Length: 11 Month Service

Supervised by: Krista Tedrow, Pathfinders RC&D

Qualifications

- Associate or bachelor's degree
- Minimum: 18 Maximum: None
- Program Location: South Central Iowa

Benefits

- Program Benefits: Choice of Education Award or End of Service Stipend, Living Allowance, Training, Childcare assistance if eligible
- For details about AmeriCorps VISTA healthcare benefits, please visit: https://americorps.gov/members-volunteers/vista/benefits
- Permits working at another job during off hours
- Program Start/End Date

Job Description

- Grant Writing:
    - Coordinate the development, preparation, writing, and submission of grant proposals.
    - Arrange the development of the awarded grants to implement initiatives and support Pathfinder's community.
    - Maintain accurate records and documentation related to the proposal, submission, and management of grants.
    - Upkeep Pathfinders grant catalog with an accurate representation of current grant availability, funds, purpose, and timelines for organizations in South Central Iowa.
- Request for Proposals Project
    - Assist Pathfinders to define project needs, objectives, and requirements.
    - Gather stakeholder input about the RFP proposal.
    - Collaborate with Pathfinder's staff to write the RFP.
    - Distribute the document to potential venders, review the proposals, help select the best vendor, and negotiate the final contract.
- Youth Co-Design:
    - Support Pathfinder's Youth Co-Design Academy implementation by assisting to prepare the program.
    - Help recruit youth by preparing informational sessions and collecting applications.
- General:
    - Coordinate with full-time staff and community partners to build connections and capacity in rural South-Central Iowa.
    - Enthusiastically participate in any additional activities and initiatives necessary to support Pathfinder's community and staff.

APPENDIX 4

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HOME   WHO WE ARE ⌄   WHAT WE DO ⌄   WORK WITH US ⌄   NEWS & EVENTS   Q

Grant Writing
Items Needed
Application Process
Basic Writing Skills
Resource List
Grant Database

Grant Writing

Pathfinders provides grant writing, research, and administration services for groups or organizations.

What is involved in grant writing?

We help tell your project's story so funders can understand your vision and provide the support you need. We meet with you to understand the scope of your project and then write a grant to the criteria of the funding source. We can also help identify grant funds that might be available to support your project.

Pathfinders has more than a decade of experience researching and writing grants. We also have access to grant libraries and subscriptions to networks that post when new grants become available.

Since 2006, Pathfinders staff has secured more than 200 grants ranging from a few hundred dollars for smaller project to $1 million. And since 2019 alone, Pathfinders has submitted over $11.5M in grants for local organizations in southeast Iowa.

Contact us for rates and more information!

WELLMARK SMALL MATCH GRANT
BASKETBALL COURT DAVIS COUNTY

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Grant Writing
Items Needed
Application Process
Basic Writing Skills
Resource List
Grant Database

Items Needed

This is a list of all possible items you may need when it comes to writing and applying for a grant.

Common documents to prepare to submit...

IRS 501(c)(3) designation letter (if applicable)
Organizational Budget
Letters of support or commitment from partners
Resumes of key personnel

Organizational Information:

Mission Statement
Project Description/Objectives (SMART)
Sustainability Plan

Financial Document:

Detailed Project Budget Breakdown
Organizational Budget
Audit Reports or Financial Statements (if required)
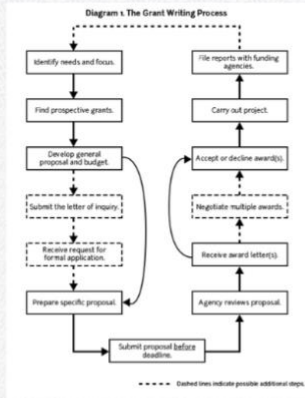IRS Form 990 (nonprofit organizations)

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Grant Writing

Items Needed

Application Process

Basic Writing Skills

Resource List

Grant Database

Application Process

Below provides an timeline of the grant application process from beginning to end.

Diagram 1. The Grant Writing Process

Pre-Application Phase

Identify Funding Opportunities:
  · Research grants aligned with your mission
Determine Eligibility:
  · Ensure your organization or project meets the funder's criteria
Develop Concept:
  · Define the project, its goals, and expected outcomes
Establish Partnerships:
  · Engage collaborators, obtain letters of support.
Gather Required Documents:
  · Collect financial statements, 501(c)(3) status, and other necessary documents

Application Submission:

Format Proposal:
  · Ensure compliance with funder's guidelines
Complete Online Forms:
  · Input organizational details, upload documents
Proofread:
  · Check for typos, errors, and inconsistencies
Submit Early:
  · Allow time to resolve any technical issue

Post-Application Phase

Funder Review
  · The grantmaker evaluates applications
  · Some funders may request additional information or meetings
Decision Announcement
  · Grants awards are typically announced via email or formal letter

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Grant Writing
- - - - - - -
Items Needed
- - - - - - -
Application Process
- - - - - - -
Basic Writing Skills
- - - - - - -
Resource List
- - - - - - -
Grant Database
- - - - - - -

Basic Writing Skills

Grant writing differs from other types of writing due to its purpose, audience, and structure. The primary goal of grant writing is to persuade a funder to provide financial support for a specific project or organization. It focuses on a compelling case for why the grant is needed and how the funds will be used effectively.

The Five R's of Grant Writing

Research: Investigating funding opportunities, potential funders, and their priorities to ensure alignment with your project or organization. Submitting proposals to funders who are a good match increases the likelihood of success and reduces wasted effort.

What does this involve?
- Know the mission, goals, and funding history of potential grantmakers
- Identify grants that match your project type (ex. education, health, environment)
- Review eligibility criteria and past recipient for insights
- Understand the deadlines, application process, and required documentation

Relationships: Building and maintaining strong connections with funders, partners, and stakeholders to support your grant application. Many funders prefer to support organizations they know and trust. Good relationships can provide valuable insights and advocacy.

What does this involve?
- Reach out to grantmakers early to introduce your organization and ask questions about their priorities
- Attend funder workshops, webinars, or networking events
- Cultivate partnerships with other organizations to strengthen your proposal
- Stay in touch with funders even after grants are awarded or denied to maintain goodwill for future opportunities

Relevance: Crafting a clear, concise, and compelling proposal that addresses the funder's requirements and shows the value of your project. A well-written proposal demonstrates professionalism, attention to detail, and the potential impact of your project, increasing your chances of securing funding

What does this involve?
- Follow all instructions, including format, word limits, and required sections
- Write in a professional, persuasive tone, avoiding jargon or overly technical language
- Highlight the need for your project, your goals, and how the funding will create measurable impact
- Include accurate, well-researched data and a realistic, detailed budget

Review: Carefully evaluating your proposal for accuracy, completeness, and alignment with the funder's guidelines before submission.

What does this involve?
- Proofread for grammar, spelling, and formatting errors
- Verify compliance with funder requirements (ex. word count and attachments)
- Seek feedback from colleagues, stakeholders, or professional grant reviewers
- Double-check that all required documents (ex. budget, letters of support) are included

Reporting: Providing funders with formal updates about how grant funds were used, the progress of the funded project, and the outcomes achieved.

What does this involve?
- Track and document all expenditures, comparing them to the approved budget and explaining any variances
- Summarize completed activities, milestones, challenges, and any adjustments made to the project plan
- Collect and analyze data to show the impact of the project, using both quantitative metrics and qualitative success stories

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Resource List

Below is links to other resources that you may utilize throughout the entire grant writing process.

Understanding Grant Proposals

Basic Elements of a Grant Proposal
Elements of a Grant Proposal
What is a Grant Proposal
Tips for Preparing Grant Proposals

Grant Writing

Planning and Writing a Grant Proposal
How to Develop and Write a Grant Proposal
Understanding the Basics of Grant Writing

Grant Research

Pathfinders Grant Excel Spreadsheet
Grants.gov
Iowagrants.gov

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Grant Database

If you are seeking grant money you can use the GrantDatabase to look for funders. You must **contact funders directly** and follow their guidelines to submit your proposals. You can scroll down to the search filters to help find funders whose interests match those of your organization.

Quick Alphabetical Filter

- Choose -　　Go

A (14)

NTEE Classification

Animal Related
Art, Culture and Humanities
Community Improvement
Education
Environment
Health Foundations
Housing
Human Services
Legal

Areas of interest

Arts & culture
Athletics
Child welfare
Clinic
Community improvement
Disabilities
Disaster relief
Economic development
Education

Counties

Adair
Adams
Allamakee
Appanoose
Audubon
Benton
Black Hawk
Boone

Grant Sizes

$ _____ to $ _____

APPENDIX 5

Grant Name	Funding Source	Amount	Deadline	Purpose	Eligiblity
Community Facilities Grant Program	USDA	$ 50,000.00	Open Year Round	This program provides affordabl	Public Bodies, Community-based non-profit corportations, Federally-recognized Tribes
Rural Business Development Grants	USDA	10,000-500,000	Feburary 28	The purpose of the program is to	Public Body/Government Entity, an Indian Tribe, or a Nonprofit entity primarily serving rural areas.
ReConnect Grant Program	HUD	< $150,000,000	May 28th	To provide funds for the costs of	Eligible applicants can be either for- or nonprofit organizations and include: Cooperatives or mutual associations, Corporations, limited liability companies, or limited liability partnerships, States, local governments, or their agencies, subdivisions, instrumentalities, or political subdivisions, A U.S. territory or possession, or Tribes, Tribal organizations, and governments as defined in the current funding announcement.
Community Development Block Grant	HUD	$ 600,000.00	May 14th	Provides annual grants on a form	Eligible grantees are as follows: Principal cities of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), Other metropolitan cities with populations of at least 50,000, Qualified Urban Counties with populations of at least 200,000 (excluding the population of entitled cities), States and insular areas
Economic Adjustment Assistance Program	EDA	$150,000 - $1,000,000	Open Year Round	It provides a wide range of techn	Nonprofits, Federal recognized tribal governments, local governments
Build to Scale Program	EDA	<$5,000,000	October 28th	Aims to: build public and private	Nonprofits, Federal recognized tribal governments, local governments
Area Development Program	ARC	<$1,000,000	November 18th	Aims to support projects that cr	Local development districts, Units of Local Government, Institutions of Higher Education, Nonprofit Orga
POWER Initative	ARC	$400,000-$2,000,000	April 17th	Targets federal resources to hel	Local development districts, Units of Local Government, Institutions of Higher Education, Nonprofit Orga
States' Economic Development Assistance Program	DRA	$50,000-$500,000	June 25th	Provides direct investments for	Local governments, public and private non-profit organizations, regional development organizations, ec
Rural Health Care Services Outreach Program	HRSA	<$13,000,000	January 27th	Aims to support organizations to	Nonprofits, Public and private institutions of higher education State and county health departments Hosp
Rural Residency Planning and Development Program	HRSA	<$750,000	February 12th	Supports start-up costs to creat	If eligible, you must show specific needs in the service area for doctors in one of these medical specialtie
Rural Energy for America Program	DOE	$1,500 - $1,000,000	September 30th	Provides guaranteed loan financ	Agricultural producers, Small businesses
Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act	EPA	$5,000,000-$20,000,000	Rolling Basis	Provides low-interest loans to su	Local, State, Tribal, and federal government entites, partnerships and joint ventures, public-private partn
Brownfields Program	EPA	$500,000-$1,000,000	Year-round	The program aims to assess and	Local governments, tribal organizations, states, non-profits, and certain redevelopment agencies
W.K. Kellogg Foundation Grants	Kellogg Foundation	Varies on project scope an	Year-round	To improve conditions for childr	Nonprofit organizations that align with the foundation's focus areas. Strong emphasis is placed on strate
Building Insitutions Networks	Ford Foundation	Varies on project scope an	Rolling Basis	The BUILD initative focuses on p	Non-profit Organizations selected based on their alignment with the Foundation's goals and their demon
Rural Community Development Initiative Grants	USDA	$50,000-$500,000	July 10th	Awarded to help non-profit hous	Public bodies, Non-profit organizations, Qualified Private Organization
Rural Capacity Building for Community Development and Affordable Housing Grants	HUD	<$6,000,000	March 25th	Enhances the capacity and abili	Activities that strengthen the organizational infrastructure, management, and governance capabilities of
READY Grants to Grow Initative	Department of Health and Human Services	<$100,000	Feburary 14th	Aims to invest in strategies that	Local development districts (LDDs), Indian tribes or a consortium of Indian tribes, States, counties, cities
Rural Health Community Capacity Academy	HRSA	Varies on project scope an	November 1st	Designed to support underserve	Organizations must serve rural communities, especially those impacted by persistent poverty or inequity.
Reach Rural: Advancing Collaborative Solutions	Department of Justice	<$100,000	December 16th	Designed for rural justice and pu	All proposed activities supported under this solicitation are designed for rural communities. T
Rural Communities Opioid Response Program	HRSA	<$750,000	May 6th	To improve access to integrated and coordinated treatment and recovery services for substances use disorder (SUD), including opioid use

APPENDIX 6

IowaWORKS
A proud partner of the AmericanJobCenter network
South Central Workforce Area

Youth Co-Design
Program Application
Form

South Central Iowa Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) is a non-profit organization overseeing the workforce services in the fourteen counties of Appanoose, Davis, Hardin, Jefferson, Keokuk, Lucas, Mahaska, Marshall, Monroe, Poweshiek, Tama, Van Buren, Wapello, and Wayne County in Iowa known as the South Central Iowa Workforce Area (SCIWA). We are looking for youth that are dedicated to using volunteerism, grant making, and philanthropy to develop leadership skills, to act as positive youth role models, and to improve the communities in our area. The Youth Co-Design Program gives youth a voice in the issues that affect them now, and the skills to confront the challenges they will face in the future. The best way to learn generosity, gain leadership skills and value community service is by direct exposure and involvement.

The youth co-design program meets weekly to engage in team-building and leadership activities, to discuss local youth issues, and to engage in grant making.

As a member, it is expected that you.

- Attend weekly meetings from August-May
- Learn about youth needs and assets in our community
- Make decisions about granting funds to youth projects
- Work with adults and show adults that youth are a community resource
- Participate in community service projects
- Are open to opportunities for personal growth
- Communicate via email and/or phone
- Complete pre- and post-surveys for sessions and provide feedback regarding your program experience
- Make a difference in our community

IowaWORKS
A proud partner of the AmericanJobCenter network
South Central Workforce Area

Youth Co-Design
Program Application
Form

What talents, knowledge, or experience do you believe you would bring to the Youth Co-Design Program?

Why do you feel it is important for high school students to learn about community issues and how you play a role in making a difference?

Letter of recommendation was written by:

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Attendance

Attendance is key to this program and to your experience. Meeting days and times will be set by the group members. Members will only be allowed two excused absences for the year – any unexcused absences will be reviewed by the Program Manager. If attendance becomes an issue, you may be asked to meet with the committee chairs for review of your commitment to the group. Please sign and date to agree to the attendance policy.

_____

_____ Signature

Date

Youth Co-Design Program Application Form

IowaWORKS
A proud partner of the AmericanJobCenter network
South Central Workforce Area

Applications must be submitted by xx/xx to <<email>>. A letter of recommendation from an unrelated adult must also be included with the form along with their contact information.

For additional information, please contact:

General Information (please print or type)

Date of Application:

Name:

Parent(s)/Guardian(s)Names:

StreetAddress: **City, Zip:**

EmailAddress: (List an email address you check regularly or you may miss important communications.)

Preferred method of communication: email ☐   Text ☐

School

Age: **YearofGraduation:**

The Youth Co-design Program will meet monthly from August – May. Can you commit to attending monthly meetings as well as other events throughout the year?   Yes ◯ No ◯

Organizations & Activities

How have you become involved in your community? Please list school, religious, social, athletic or other activities or organizations in which you have participated during high school and will continue to remain involved in while serving on the Youth Co-Design Program.

Whyare you willing to take the extra time tojointhe Youth Co-Design Program?

[Download](#)

APPENDIX 7

[To Edit](#)

APPENDIX 8

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Youth Co-Design Program

Youth Co-Design is an innovative approach that empowers young people to collaborate with adults in designing and implementing community-driven solutions. The process emphasizes experiential learning, relationship-building, and leadership development, allowing youth to take ownership of initiatives that address real-world challenges. By focusing on co-creation, the program bridges the gap between intention and action, ensuring projects are meaningful and impactful for all stakeholders.

7 Youth

$90k Invested

14 + Partners

3 Career Pathways

The youth co-designer program significant progress in its first year, overcoming initial challenges and achieving key milestones. The grant from the Legacy Foundation has been instrumental in supporting these efforts, and the program is on track to meet its goals for the upcoming year. Seven youth participated, over fourteen partners were engaged, three career pathways were explored in industries the high school had not provided career exploration for (Economic Development, Non-profit, Government). Additionally youth co-wrote grants securing $90,000 for their initiatives.

5 Skill Areas

[County] at a Glance

- Research and Evaluation
- Logistics and Event Planning
- Marketing and Media
- Grant Writing and Management
- Strategic Planning and Facilitation

Why Co-Design?

BLACK YOUTH   **LATINO YOUTH**   **WHITE YOUTH**

| IOWA | IOWA | IOWA |

17.3% OF **BLACK** YOUTH ARE DISCONNECTED

8.4% OF **LATINO** YOUTH ARE DISCONNECTED

8.5% OF **WHITE** YOUTH ARE DISCONNECTED

Program Success

Ottumwa, IA

1. Ottumwa Youth City Council Formation
Seven students were appointed to the city's first Youth City Council, giving them a direct role in influencing local policies and youth-focused initiatives.

2. Legacy Youth Alliance Collaboration
Partnered with the Legacy Youth Alliance to fund and execute projects addressing literacy, mental health, and post-secondary education, enhancing youth engagement in community development.

3. iJAG Program Integration
Aligned with Ottumwa High School's iJAG program to provide students with career readiness experiences and opportunities to contribute to meaningful community service projects.

APPENDIX 9

Youth Co-Design Implementation Guide

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Step 1: Program Preparation

1. Establish Leadership:
- Designate a Program Coordinator to oversee implementation and serve as the point of contact.
- Recruit Adult Allies (educators, counselors, community members) to mentor students.

2. Secure Resources:
- Facilities: Reserve meeting spaces for workshops, team discussions, and events.
- Funding: Identify grants, school funds, or community sponsorships to support program costs.

3. Build Partnerships:
- Collaborate with local organizations, government agencies, and businesses for funding, mentorship, and project support.

Step 2: Student Recruitment

1. Target Participants:
- Recruit 10-15 students from diverse backgrounds and grade levels.

2. Recruitment Strategies:
- Host informational sessions at school assemblies or through community outreach.
- Share success stories and opportunities to inspire participation.

3. Onboarding Process:
- Require a simple application highlighting student interests and goals.
- Organize an orientation session to introduce students to the program's goals and structure.

Step 3: Training and Skill Building

1. Program Kickoff Workshop:
- Introduce students to co-design principles, emphasizing leadership and collaboration.

2. Core Skill Areas:
- Teach students how to identify community challenges and gather meaningful data.
- Train participants to organize impactful events like youth panels or expos.
- Guide youth through securing and managing project funding.
- Build skills to lead discussions and create actionable plans.

3. Hands-On Activities:
- Integrate experiential learning opportunities, such as mock grant writing or panel facilitation, to build confidence.

Step 4: Implementation

1. Plan and Launch Projects:
- Develop detailed timelines and milestones for each initiative.
- Provide ongoing support to ensure successful execution.

2. Collaborate and Communicate:
- Maintain open lines of communication between students, adult allies, and community stakeholders.
- Celebrate small wins and recognize student achievements throughout the process.

Step 5: Reflection and Evaluation

1. Measure Success:
- Use surveys, interviews, and metrics to evaluate program outcomes, including student growth and community impact.

2. Gather Feedback:
- Conduct debrief sessions with students and stakeholders to identify lessons learned and areas for improvement.

3. Share Results:
- Present findings to the school and community to showcase the program's impact and build support for future initiatives.

Pathfinders RC&D
Email: info@pathfindersrcd.org
Phone: 641-472-6177

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APPENDIX 10

School Name	Mailing Street Address	Mailing City	Administrator	Phone No.	Email Address	Grades Served
Davis County Middle School	500 E North St	Bloomfield	David Milder	6416642200	David.Milder@dcmustangs.com	G5-8
DC Online	608 S. Washington	Bloomfield	Jennifer Donels	6416642200	jennifer.donels@dcmustangs.com	G6-12
Davis County Community High School	503 E. Locust	Bloomfield	Jennifer Donels	6416642200	jennifer.donels@dcmustangs.com	G9-12
Davis County Elementary	500 E North St	Bloomfield	Kyle Steffen	6416642200	kyle.steffen@dcmustangs.com	PK-4
Pence Elementary	1000 South 6th Street	Fairfield	Angela Jones	6414722957	angela.jones@fairfieldsfuture.org	G2-4
Fairfield Middle School	404 W Fillmore	Fairfield	Carly Marten	6414725019	carly.marten@fairfieldsfuture.org	G5-8
Pekin Community Junior/ Senior High School	1062 Birch Ave	Packwood	Shawn Dorman	3196953705	shawn.dorman@pekincsd.org	G7-12
Fairfield High School	605 E Broadway	Fairfield	Mallory Mahon	6414722059	mallory.mahon@fairfieldsfuture.org	G9-12
Washington Elementary	406 East Madison Avenue	Fairfield	Tina Townsend	6414722110	tina.townsend@fairfieldsfuture.org	PK-1
Pekin Elementary School	1062 Birch Ave	Packwood	Jenny Bell	6416612351	jenny.bell@pekincsd.org	PK-6
Keota High School	505 N. Ellis, Box 88	Keota	Lisa Brenneman	6416363491	lisa.brenneman@keota.k12.ia.us	G7-12

Sigourney Jr-Sr High Sch	907 E Pleasant Valley	Sigour ney	Shanno n Webb	64162 22010	shannon.webb@sigourn eyschools.com	G7-12
Tri-County JR/SR High School	3003 Hwy 22	Thorn burg	Jennifer Berg	64163 42636	jennifer.berg@tri-countyschools.com	G7-12
Keota Elementary School	NULL	Keota	Seth Milledg e	64163 62323	seth.milledge@keota.k1 2.ia.us	PK-6
Sigourney Elementary	509 S Jefferson St	Sigour ney	Deanna Spence	64162 22350	deanna.spence@sigour neyschools.com	PK-6
Tri-County Elementary School	3003 Hwy 22	Thorn burg	Jennifer Berg	64163 42632	jennifer.berg@tri-countyschools.com	PK-6
Oskaloosa Middle School	1704 N 3rd St	Oskal oosa	Mark Scholes	64167 38308	scholesm@oskycsd.org	G6-8
North Mahaska Jr-Sr High School	2163 135th St	New Sharo n	Josh McColla m	64163 74187	mccollamj@nmwarhaw ks.org	G7-12
Oskaloosa High School	1816 N 3rd Extension	Oskal oosa	Jeff Kirby	64167 33407	kirbyj@oskycsd.org	G9-12
Oskaloosa Elementary School	1801 Orchard Ave	Oskal oosa	Alana Hutchin son	64167 38092	hutchinsona@oskycsd.o rg	K-5
Oskaloosa Early Childhood Center - PK	1521 Green Street	Oskal oosa	Michael Fisher	64167 67700	fisherm@oskycsd.org	PK
Fremont Elementary	525 East Main	Frem ont	James Fineran	64193 34211	james.fineran@rocketsk 12.org	PK-6
North Mahaska Elementary School	2163 135th St	New Sharo n	Amber Goema at	64163 74041	goemaata@nmwarhawk s.org	PK-6
Van Buren County Community Middle & High School	1313 1st Street	Keosa uqua	Brando n Stuhr	31929 33334	brandon.stuhr@vbcwar riors.org	G7-12
Van Buren County Community School District Douds Center	1313 1st Street	Keosa uqua	Mary Dawn Schuck	64193 64321	marydawn.schuck@vbc warriors.org	PK-6

Van Buren County Community School District Harmony Center	1313 1st Street	Keosauqua	Wesley White	3195923600	wesley.white@vbcwarriors.org	PK-6
Douma Elementary School	307 W. Mary St.	Ottumwa	James Fineran	6416844668	james.fineran@ottumwaschools.com	G1-2
Ottumwa High School	501 E 2nd	Ottumwa	Shelley Bramschhreiber	6416834444	shelley.bramschreiber@ottumwaschools.com	G10-12
Fahrney Elementary	520 South Milner	Ottumwa	Steve Zimmerman	6416846597	steve.zimmerman@ottumwaschools.com	G3-5
Cardinal Junior High	4045 Ashland Road	Eldon	Cindy Green	6416527531	cindy.green@cardinalcomet.com	G5-8
Liberty Intermediate School	50 Traxler Drive	Ottumwa	Heather Platten	6416824502	heather.platten@ottumwaschools.com	G6-7
Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont Jr/Sr High	1301 Berdan St	Eddyville	Steve Noble	6419694288	steve.noble@rocketsk12.org	G7-12
Evans Junior High School	812 Chester Avenue	Ottumwa	Mike Davis	6416846511	mike.davis@ottumwaschools.com	G8-9
Cardinal High School	4045 Ashland Rd	Eldon	James Cason	6416527531	jamie.cason@cardinalcomet.com	G9-12
Gateway High School	907 Gateway Drive	Ottumwa	Aaron Ruff	6416846597	aaron.ruff@ottumwaschools.com	G9-12
Eisenhower Elementary School	2624 Marilyn Rd	Ottumwa	Dawn Sievertsen	6416845617	dawn.sievertsen@ottumwaschools.com	K-5
James Elementary School	1001 N Benton	Ottumwa	Jay Green	6416845411	jay.green@ottumwaschools.com	K-5
Horace Mann Elementary School	1523 N Court St	Ottumwa	Kristi Ridgeway	6416844661	kristi.ridgway@ottumwaschools.com	K-5
Wilson Elementary School	1102 E. 4th St.	Ottumwa	Carmel Vandenberg	6416845441	carmel.vandenberg@ottumwaschools.com	K-5
Ottumwa Virtual Learning	1112 N Van Buren	Ottumwa	Marci Dunlap	6416846597	marci.dunlap@ottumwaschools.com	PK-12

Cardinal Elementary	5414 Hwy 16	Eldon	Heather Buckley	64165 23591	heather.buckley@cardinalcomet.com	PK-4
Eddyville Elementary	702 Vance Street	Eddyville	Jil Nelson	64196 94281	jil.nelson@rocketsk12.org	PK-6
Blakesburg Elementary	407 S Wilson	Blakesburg	Tammy Davis	64193 82203	tammy.davis@rocketsk12.org	PK-6
Pickwick Early Childhood Center	1306 W Williams	Ottumwa	Kim Ledger	64168 47179	kim.ledger@ottumwaschools.com	PK-K

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