

**Corporation for National and Community Service
Volunteers in Service to America (AmeriCorps*VISTA)**

VISTA ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

*Office of Management and Budget
Clearance Package Supporting Statement
for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions*

Part A
Justification

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**CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE
AMERICORPS*VISTA
VISTA ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY**

INTRODUCTION

AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) is developing a systematic approach for assessing the degree to which the VISTA program through fulltime service of VISTA members (VISTAs), enhances the capacity of organizations to build and sustain anti-poverty programs. Due to the diversity of programming within VISTA, previous studies have focused on counting outputs, but have not attempted to evaluate the extent to which VISTA projects are able to achieve their goals and sustain them beyond the life of the project. This study will evaluate the effectiveness of VISTA in supporting local organizations to build and sustain anti-poverty programs and will develop a tool that can serve as a foundation for additional studies in the future.

We will collect information over time on relevant characteristics of 250 closed VISTA projects. Closed projects are defined as projects that no longer have active VISTAs. For those projects, we will examine the final reports to determine whether they achieved the project goals. We will evaluate the extent to which closed projects were able to achieve their goals, and the extent to which the organization has succeeded in sustaining the project outcomes without the VISTA support. Based on what we learn about the closed projects, we will develop a tool to assist in understanding the likelihood that ongoing projects will be sustained beyond their third year of programming, after the VISTA members are no longer present.

After reviewing Corporation documents, we will collect information on the 250 closed projects by telephone interview from a knowledgeable source within the sponsoring organization about whether the project outcomes were continued after the VISTAs completed their service, circumstances related to carrying out the project, and the contributions of the State Offices and the VISTAs.

Following the telephone interviews of closed projects, we plan to conduct site visits to the sponsoring organizations of approximately 40 closed projects: 20 projects that were successful in meeting their goals, and have been able to sustain and build on those goals for a full 2 years beyond the project end date, and 20 projects that failed to meet goals or were unable to sustain the activities or outcomes of the project less than 2 years after the last VISTA left. During the site visits, we will examine in depth the factors leading to successful achievement of goals and the continuation of project outcomes. This study will be conducted by Westat and its subcontractor AMSAQ.

A. Justification

A1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.

Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection.

Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information

The Domestic Volunteer Service Act (As Amended by Public Law 106-170), the authorizing statute for VISTA, requires, in Section 5056 “Evaluation of Programs and Projects.” § 5056, the following:

“Evaluation of programs and projects(a) General objectives; persons conducting the evaluation. The Director shall measure and evaluate the impact of all programs authorized by this chapter (including the VISTA Literacy Corps which shall be evaluated as a separate program at least once every 3 years), their effectiveness in achieving stated goals, in general, and in relation to their cost, their impact on related programs, and their structure and mechanism for delivery of services. Each program shall be evaluated at least once every three years. Evaluations shall be conducted by persons not immediately involved in the administration of the program or project evaluated.”

A2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.

The information collected will be used by VISTA to report its progress on strengthening local organizations to build their capacity to create sustainable anti-poverty programs. By identifying the characteristics of those programs that have demonstrated sustainability, VISTA can more effectively ensure the proliferation of programs likely to be sustainable. The information will also be utilized by VISTA in annually reporting its progress on the programs primary objectives allowing the organization, for the first time, to quantify such progress.

A3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.

We will use a variety of advanced information technologies to maximize the efficiency and completeness of the information gathered for this evaluation and to minimize the burden the evaluation places on respondents at all levels. For example, during the data collection period a toll-free number and an e-mail address will be available to permit respondents to contact the contractor with questions or requests for assistance. The collection of information will occur through a multi-step process, including a pre-notification letter to the closed projects before the telephone interview. The survey instrument will be formatted to minimize burden with the length of the survey not to exceed sixty minutes. Finally, a computer-based system will be used to monitor the flow of data collection activities – beginning with data abstraction, followed by telephone interviews, conversations with Corporation State Office staff, and site visits to processing and coding data for entry into the database. This monitoring will help to ensure the efficiency and completeness of the data collection process.

- A4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.**

This is a one-time study that will provide VISTA a basis on which to measure past, current and future performance toward helping local organizations to build sustainable anti-poverty programs. It does not duplicate any previous or current effort underway.

- A5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small businesses or other small entities (Item 5 of OMB From 83-I), describe any methods used to minimize burden.**

The collection of information does not impact small business.

- A6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.**

Without the information collected, it will be difficult for VISTA to quantifiably measure progress toward its goal of assisting local organizations to build sustainable anti-poverty programs. It will also be more difficult for VISTA to more reliably ensure that the programs which it supports will be successful in building organizational capacity to sustain those programs.

- A7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:**

- * requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;
- * requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;
- * requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;
- * requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records, for more than three years;
- * in connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;
- * requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;
- * that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or
- * requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secrets, or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.

None of the special circumstances listed apply to this data collection.

- A8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.**

Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every 3 years – even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

A 60-day notice was published in the Federal Register on Thursday, January 17, 2008, with an end date of March 17, 2008 on page 3240. No public comments were received. A 30-day notice was published in the Federal Register on Thursday, September 4, 2008 on page 51632.

As part of the survey development, Westat consulted with research experts involved with the VISTA program. Based on comments received from this consultation, we have modified the questions in the survey to assist with ease of reporting. Additionally, Westat conducted a pre-test of the telephone interview and the site visit protocol and have made minor modifications to both instruments.

A9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

There will be no payments or gifts to respondents.

A10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

All Westat staff members sign the Westat pledge of confidentiality for the study. All respondents will be reassured that their participation in the study is completely voluntary. A decision not to participate will not affect their involvement with the VISTA projects and if they choose to participate they may refuse to answer any questions they find intrusive. Telephone interviewers will also explain the purpose of the interview and how the data will be used. In conducting the surveys, respondents will be told that their individual responses will not be provided to VISTA except as unattributed comments and that only aggregate results will be made part of the report on survey results except as required by law. There is no basis for assurance in statute.

Westat's data collection and processing will be set up to protect the anonymity of sampled projects. Westat staff will be identified and will be responsible for maintenance of security. Respondents will not be referenced by either their name or their position title. The data set provided will not include any institutionally-identifiable information.

A11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the

questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to obtain their consent.

The proposed data collection contains no questions of a sensitive nature.

A12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. The statement should:

- * **Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. Unless direct to do so, agencies should not conduct special surveys to obtain information on which to base hour burden estimates. Consultation with a sample (fewer than 10) of potential respondents is desirable. If the hour burden on respondents is expected to vary widely because of differences in activity, size, or complexity, show the range of estimated hour burden, and explain the reasons for the variance. Generally, estimates should not include burden hours for customary and usual business practices.**
- * **If this request for approval covers more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and aggregate the hour burdens in Item 13 of OMB Form 83-I .**
- * **Provide estimates of annualized cost to respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories. The cost of contracting out or paying outside parties for information collection activities should not be included here. Instead, this cost should be included in Item 13.**

The total hour burden for the data collection is estimated at 310.0 hours, 250 hours for 250 respondents for the telephone survey based on an average of one hour per respondent ; and 60 hours to speak to 40 VISTA project supervisors/ Administrators/ other staff during site visits at an average of 1-1/2 hours per respondent. The response time includes time for brief review of project files as well as the time needed to complete the survey itself. The burden cost estimate (\$15 per hour) is based on the 2008 hourly wage data for supervisors/administrators in not-for profit organizations (who typically will be responding to the telephone survey and during site visits) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ National Compensation Survey. The following table summarizes the number of respondents and associated burden estimates and annualized costs to respondents.

Form	Respondents	Estimated Number of Respondents	Estimated Burden per Respondent (Hours)	Total Burden Estimate (hours)	Annualized Cost Estimate (@\$15 per hour)
2008 VISTA Program	VISTA project supervisors/ administrators	250	1.0 hours	250 hours	\$3750.0

Evaluation Telephone Survey					
2008 VISTA Program Evaluation site visits	VISTA project supervisors/ Administrators / other staff	40	1.5 hours	60 hours	\$900.00
TOTAL	-	290	-	310.0 hours	\$4,650.00

A13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information. Do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in Items 12 and 14).

- * The cost estimate should be split into two components: (a) a total capital and start-up cost component (annualized over its expected useful life) and (b) a total operation and maintenance and purchase of services component. The estimates should take into account costs associated with generating, maintaining, and disclosing or providing the information. Include descriptions of methods used to estimate major cost factors including system and technology acquisition, expected useful life of capital equipment, the discount rate(s), and the time period over which costs will be incurred. Capital and start-up costs include, among other items, preparations for collecting information such as purchasing computers and software; monitoring, sampling, drilling and testing equipment; and record storage facilities.
- * If cost estimates are expected to vary widely, agencies should present ranges of cost burdens and explain the reasons for the variance. The cost of purchasing or contracting out information collections services should be a part of this cost burden estimate. In developing cost burden estimates agencies may consult with a sample of respondents (fewer than 10), utilize the 60-day pre-OMB submission public comment process and use existing economic or regulatory impact analysis associated with the rulemaking containing the information collection, as appropriate.\
- * Generally, estimates should not include purchases of equipment or services, or portions thereof, made: (1) prior to October 1, 1995, (2) to achieve regulatory compliance with requirements not associated with the information collection, (3) for reasons other than to provide information or keep records for the government, or (4) as part of customary and usual business or private practices.

There are no additional costs beyond the burden identified in A17.

A14. Provide estimates of annualized costs to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information. Agencies may also aggregate cost estimates from Items 12, 13, and 14 in a single table.

The cost of the data collection to the Federal Government, representing the payment to outside contractors is a one-time cost of \$1,053,687.

A15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in items 13 or 14 of the OMB Form 83-1.

There are no adjustments to Items 13 and 14 of OMB Form 83-I.

A16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

Evaluation results will be published and made available to internal and external interested parties.

A17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

The expiration date will be displayed as required on the survey form.

A18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19, "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions" of OMB Form 83-1.

There are no exceptions to the certification statement in Item 19.