



## **Alliance AmeriCorps Promise Fellow & VISTA Program Overview**



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# I. OVERVIEW

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Founded in 1997, Minnesota Alliance With Youth (the Alliance) is a leading convener, collaborator and capacity-builder for youth development, working with and for youth to ensure that all young people have access to the *Five Promises*: the fundamental resources proven to ensure that youth succeed; Caring Adults, Safe Places, A Healthy Start, Effective Education, and Opportunities to Help Others. As a leading affiliate of the America's Promise Alliance, we are uniquely and powerfully positioned to work alongside communities, schools, government agencies, families and youth to mobilize individuals and systems to invest in young people so they can develop strong voices, be engaged, and acquire the skills needed for success in school, work and life. The Alliance believes that every young person should have the opportunity and resources available to them in order to reach their full potential, yet too many youth face barriers to achieving that vision, while communities lack the resources to support them.

Minnesota Alliance With Youth Strategic Goals:

- 1) Foster youth engagement and leadership in schools, organizations, and communities across Minnesota.
- 2) Promote and practice innovation through collaboration and multi-sector approaches to meet community needs.
- 3) Create collective impact in Minnesota through common goals, agendas, measurements, and messages.
- 4) Ensure the sustainability of the Alliance so that our work may grow and multiply.

Over the last 18 years, the Alliance has hosted over 1,500 AmeriCorps Promise Fellows and VISTA Members. Since its creation, the Alliance has utilized the strength of AmeriCorps to tackle difficult problems, securing our first AmeriCorps Promise Fellows in 1998. The corps, which was dedicated to helping every youth reach their full promise, grew steadily over the years and now has a statewide presence of over 200 Promise Fellows. VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) was founded in 1965 as a national service program to fight poverty in America. In 1993, VISTA was incorporated into the AmeriCorps network of programs and in 2016 the Alliance hosted our first cohort of VISTA Members.

# II. AMERICORPS

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AmeriCorps is a national service program funded by the federal Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). In Minnesota, AmeriCorps programs, including Promise Fellows, are supported by ServeMinnesota, the Minnesota State Commission for national service. AmeriCorps VISTAs, including the Alliance VISTAs, are supported by the state CNCS office. Visit [www.serveminnesota.org](http://www.serveminnesota.org) or [www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-offices/Minnesota](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-offices/Minnesota) for more information.

The Alliance is proud to offer two different opportunities to host AmeriCorps Members. Host Sites are able to apply to host one or both type of Members. Below you will find more information:

- AmeriCorps Promise Fellows** directly serve youth in schools and community-based organizations to help provide integrated youth supports to create a positive climate, increase academic engagement, and prevent school dropouts in communities across Minnesota. AmeriCorps Promise Fellows work with a Site Supervisor, Data Coach and a Youth Success Team comprised of school social workers, counselors, teachers, administrators, and other community partners to analyze data and identify youth in grades 6-10 who need support using early warning indicators, known as the ABC's, (low Attendance, Behavior referrals/disengagement, or poor Course performance), as well as student engagement scores. Promise Fellows provide evidence based interventions and connect them to resources and programs to engage them in school and learning. AmeriCorps Promise Fellows ensure youth receive a variety of interventions utilizing caring adults, service and service-learning, and out of school time supports.
- Alliance AmeriCorps VISTA Members** strengthen communities and bring youth out of poverty by serving at non-profits, government agencies, community-wide coalitions and statewide agencies to implement three key strategies: 1) Build capacity at their host site organization to help address education inequities such as the achievement and opportunity gaps, 2) Coordinate efforts that bridge and build the integration of school and community wide support for youth, focused on providing and sharing resources that increase a young person's school attendance, behavior and/or course performance, and 3) Actively engage youth as agents of change in closing the achievement and opportunity gaps in their communities.

<b>AmeriCorps Promise Fellows</b> <i>220 Placed Throughout Minnesota</i>	<b>Alliance VISTA Members</b> <i>17 Placed Throughout Minnesota</i>
Provide direct service to students	Focused on capacity building
Education equity focus	Education equity & poverty elimination focus
Members serve 11 months (9/1/ to 7/31)	Members serve 12 months
Cash match of \$7,700 per Member	Cash match of \$7,200 per Member
Member benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> \$624 (pre-tax) twice per month as a living allowance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Qualified student loan forbearance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Qualified childcare assistance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> \$5,920 education award upon successful completion of service</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Health and Dental Insurance available (at no monthly cost to members)</li> </ul>	Member benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> \$512 (pretax) biweekly as a living allowance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Qualified student loan forbearance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Qualified childcare assistance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> \$5,920 education award upon successful completion of service OR \$1800 stipend</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 10 sick days and 10 vacation days</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare allowance to pay for out of pocket expenses</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Relocation allowance of up to \$550 if relocating more than 50 miles</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Non-competitive Eligibility (NCE) Status for <i>federal government jobs</i> after successful completion of service</li> </ul>

### III. EDUCATION FOCUS AREA

Young people in Minnesota are facing a graduation crisis. Nearly 1 in 5 Minnesota high school students, some 18%, did not graduate on time in 2015. Those who do not graduate are disproportionately lower-income students and students of color. While 86.9% of White students in the class of 2015 graduated in four years, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) reports that just 62% of Black students, 65.6% of Hispanic/Latino students, and 51.9% of Native American students graduated. This disparity in graduation rates between students of color and White students is the second highest in the nation, just behind Wisconsin. Youth in poverty are also far more likely to drop out before completing high school; statewide, 67.2% of lower-income students graduate, as compared the 81.9% state average.

Students across the state of Minnesota, in rural and urban communities alike, are struggling to rise above the achievement gap. With nearly half of Black, Latino, Native and low-income students not currently graduating, Minnesota will see nearly 200,000 students fall short of high school graduation in the next 12 years.

The importance of high school completion and graduation cannot be understated. Graduating from high school opens the door of opportunity, with research showing that those who drop out are more likely to suffer negative consequences, including unemployment, poverty and poor health outcomes. According to the US Census Bureau, the average high school dropout earns an annual income of \$20,241, a full \$10,386 less than the typical high school graduate. In 2008, Growth and Justice reported that dropouts have higher reliance on public programs such as welfare and Medicaid, and are more likely to be involved with the criminal justice system (Smart Investments in Minnesota’s Students, A Research-Based Investment Proposal, Growth and Justice, 2008). The Center for Disease Control reports that “more formal education is consistently associated with lower death rates, while less education predicts earlier death (Freudenberg and Ruglis, 2007).

Dropping out of school is a process, not a one-day event, and often has multiple causes. Students leaving high school often cite lack of motivation, boredom, an unchallenging atmosphere, or an overall lack of engagement in school as reasons they dropped out (National High School Center, 2007). Unfortunately, many classroom teachers lack the necessary time and data to monitor each of their students from week to week, and students who are struggling may go unnoticed for some time. Historically, extra supports have not been available to students until their trajectory of failure is almost impossible to reverse. The Alliance Promise Fellow model is designed to do the

opposite - to intervene as early as possible to greatly increase their chances for success. The Alliance VISTA model addresses the achievement and opportunity gaps by placing VISTAs to connect communities and organizations with critical resources, best practices and examples of successful efforts occurring in our state.

## IV. AMERICORPS PROMISE FELLOW MODEL



The Alliance Promise Fellow model consists of the following required elements:

- A Multi-Tiered System of Supports approach
- Focus on serving youth at risk of dropping out in grades 6-10 for a minimum of 90 days each
- Youth Success Teams that identify youth to serve, select the programs/resources/interventions to be utilized by the Promise Fellow, and monitor progress over time
- Early Warning Indicators that identify and track the progress of Focus List youth in the areas of Attendance, Behavior (including referrals for behavioral issues and an engagement survey), and Course Performance
- Interventions, organized and tracked by the Promise Fellow, delivered by Promise Fellows, and recommended by the National Dropout Prevention Center

### Step One: Wraparound Supports Perspective

To address the challenges facing Minnesota, the Alliance invests AmeriCorps Promise Fellows in schools and communities to connect high-need and disengaged youth with critical school and community resources. Promise Fellows make it possible for an increasing number of schools to implement a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) approach, a framework that promotes a comprehensive and integrated continuum of system wide resources, strategies, structures and practices with tiered levels of support matched to student need. MTSS is used in education to systematically identify and address academic and behavioral problems before students struggle, fail, and drop out. The MTSS approach uses easily accessible data indicators to quickly identify early warning signs of disengagement and identify appropriate and engaging interventions and supports, designed to meet each student's needs. Promise Fellows work as part of a Youth Success Team, comprised of Site Supervisors, Data Coaches, teachers, school social workers, school personnel, and community members, who use student data to determine thresholds for early warning indicators, student needs based on the three tiers, appropriate interventions for each youth, and monitor participant involvement and improvement over time. Promise Fellows provide the needed capacity to deliver individualized interventions to a core group of youth and support the overall implementation of the MTSS approach to ensuring all youth at the site succeed.

A key aspect of implementing the MTSS approach is having access to student data and information. The ability to review the Early Warning Indicators and youth progress allows the Youth Success Teams to make decisions about which supports are delivered to each youth. All Host Sites, both school and community based organizations, are asked to regularly review the Attendance, Behavior, and Course Performance data of youth on the Promise Fellow's Focus List along with the frequency and dosage of each intervention. This information is shared with the Alliance using a secure online data management system called OnCorps. ALL Promise Fellow Host Sites are required to share and track student progress and complete a formal Data Sharing Agreement with the Alliance.

### Step Two: Early Warning Indicators & Identifying Students

Many future dropouts can be identified as early as sixth grade, using the Early Warning Indicators of:

- Attendance: high number of absences from school
- Behavior: a self-reported score on the School Engagement Instrument Survey (SEI) developed by Dr. Appleton and Dr. Christenson. Please note: referrals, detentions, suspensions, and personal referral can help refer students but only the SEI can qualify. Referrals for behavior issues include but are not limited to office referrals, detentions, or suspensions.
- Course Performance: failing grades in courses, especially core courses such as reading or math, and/or failure to accumulate credits needed to advance and graduate.

AmeriCorps Promise Fellows make it possible for schools and communities to use MTSS to implement effective drop-out prevention strategies that result in increased academic engagement with higher attendance, fewer behavior problems/increased positive behavior, and improved academic performance. During their year of service,

each AmeriCorps Promise Fellow provides intensive support to at least 30 youth (known as their “Focus List”) in grades 6 - 10 for a minimum of 90 days. As students progress, new youth may be added to the Fellow’s Focus List.

### Step Three: Common Strategies & Interventions

The National Dropout Prevention Center recommends the Basic Core Strategies of Mentoring/Tutoring, Service-Learning and Afterschool/Out-of-School Opportunities. The following strategies reflect these core recommendations and help students increase their academic engagement. Promise Fellows ensure youth on their Focus List:

- Become connected to more caring adults
- Engage in meaningful service and service-learning
- Receive out-of-school time supports

A multi-faceted problem like dropping out of school requires multi-faceted solutions. AmeriCorps Promise Fellows, using research-based strategies common across all sites, increase the capacity of schools and communities to use the dropout prevention interventions described below. These strategies are advocated by the National Dropout Prevention Center and adopted by the MN Department of Education. To read about these and other strategies, visit: [www.dropoutprevention.org/effective-strategies](http://www.dropoutprevention.org/effective-strategies)

Depending on the reason a youth has been identified as needing support, Promise Fellows intervene using appropriate strategies to create the most impact. AmeriCorps Promise Fellows work to connect every youth on their Focus List with at least one of following three support strategies:

- Caring Adult Interventions** include; calling home to check in on attendance, discussing attendance issues with the student or their family, conducting behavior check-ins, providing informal mentoring, assisting with schoolwork or homework, providing in-classroom presence and support, and connecting students to mentors.
- Service and Service-Learning Interventions** include; encouraging and supporting students to volunteer in their school or community or participate in a service-learning club, creating mentorship matches with younger peers, and developing and facilitating service projects and clubs.
- Out-of-School Interventions** include; designing and leading lunch time programming and after school clubs, connecting students to afterschool tutors, and encouraging students to join existing groups.

### Step Four: Review Data, Make Adjustments, Repeat

#### Promise Fellow Required Trainings & Visits

- Promise Fellows are required to participate in the following:
  - Online webinar during the first day of service
  - Regional meeting within first two weeks of service (1 day in Fellow's region)
  - Promise Fellow Institute (3 days)
  - On-going Regional and Small Corps meetings (approximately 7 days)
  - Mid-year Training Retreat (1 day)
  - End-of-Year Reflection Retreat (1 day in the Fellow's region)
  - Two Site Visits with Alliance Staff and the Host Site and Promise Fellow(s)
  - Fellows are encouraged to actively participate and connect with Alliance Staff and other Fellows through blogs, webinars, email, phone calls, and days of service.
- Promise Fellow Site Supervisors and Data Coaches are required to participate in the following:
  - Program Requirements and Recruitment Webinar
  - Site Supervisor Orientation (Spring/Summer; 1 Day)
  - Promise Fellow Institute (Fall; 1 Day)
  - Mid-Year Training Retreat (Winter; 1 day)
  - Two Site Visits with Alliance Staff and the Host Site and Promise Fellow(s)
  - Site Supervisors and Data Coaches are encouraged to actively participate and connect with Alliance staff and other Supervisors/Data Coaches through blogs, webinars, email, phone calls, and days of service.

## **SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT FOR PROMISE FELLOWS**

The Alliance provides support to Promise Fellows through regular trainings, weekly communication via email, site visits, and coaching. Members of the Youth Success Team provide day-to-day supervision of Promise Fellows, site specific additional training and evaluation support. Each Host Site and Youth Success Team identifies a Host Site Supervisor and a Data Coach.

- **Site Supervisor:** Acts as the main contact with the Alliance, Host Site and the Promise Fellow. They provide the day-to-day oversight of the activities of the Promise Fellow; signs off on evaluation and timesheets; ensures that the member meets service hour requirements; attends all required meetings with the Alliance and identifies additional allies for the Fellow.
- **Data Coach:** Assists the Promise Fellow in accessing and reviewing student data on a regular basis. They may convene the Youth Success Team to discuss interventions and students to serve.
- **Please note, the Data Coach and Site Supervisor may be the same person, depending on the Host Site.**

**Site Supervisors** play an important role in ensuring the success of the Promise Fellow. In most cases, the supervisor must be a full-time employee with available time to effectively oversee and mentor the Promise Fellow. Weekly or bi-weekly meetings with the Promise Fellow are required. The Site Supervisor signs-off on timesheets, and in collaboration with Data Coach and other partners, will ensure "layered" supervision and support for the Fellow.

To help Promise Fellows successfully reach the highest risk youth, a **Data Coach** at each participating school allocates a portion of his/her time to coordinate the program. The Data Coach will review weekly student data on early warning indicators (low attendance, behavior referrals/disengagement, or poor course performance) and identify youth who are heading off track. In order to provide the right support to the right youth at the right time, the Data Coach and Youth Success Team use this data to determine appropriate interventions for each youth and monitor participant involvement and improvement over time. The Data Coach will also support the Promise Fellow to facilitate and track the School Engagement Surveys. Promise Fellows provide or coordinate interventions for at least 30 identified youth, ultimately helping them get back on track to graduate.

For Host Sites that are community-based, it will be necessary to develop a strong, ongoing relationship with a designated school partner who can assist with the reporting and data requirements. The school partner acts as the gatekeeper for this information. For example, in one community, a Fellow serving at the local drop-in afterschool center was able to access the grades and the attendance information on her students because of the relationship established between her Site Supervisor and the school's Assistant Principal. The Assistant Principal provided access to information for the Fellows and sites and acted as the Data Coach. Host Sites will be required to complete a Data Sharing Agreement before sites can begin recruiting their Promise Fellow.

### **Promise Fellow Data Collection & Reporting**

The Alliance is committed to achieving measurable results through clear and consistent data collection, aggregation, and reporting. Promise Fellow Host Sites must commit to completing all program evaluation requirements.

Data Coaches must use or establish a system to review student data on a weekly basis related to attendance, behavior, and course performance. Working in collaboration with Promise Fellows and other school personnel, data is used to determine which students are heading off-track to graduate, which students should receive support (be added to a Promise Fellow's Focus List), and how students who are receiving support are progressing. Data trends are to be shared with the Youth Success Team to support interventions and program planning.

Promise Fellows are expected to regularly enter data into the online data tracking system, OnCorps. Reporting includes:

- Summary of youth participation and progress, including ongoing data on attendance, behavior, and academic performance for the each individual Focus List youth and comparison baseline data
- Description of Fellows' personal and professional development plans and activities
- Monthly Reflections of when the Promise Fellow has seen success in their service

Host Sites are asked to submit their data sharing agreements as part of the Host Site Agreement. Host Sites are also required to train their Promise Fellows in their site's data privacy procedures and ensure that guidelines are followed throughout the program year.

## V. ALLIANCE AMERICORPS VISTA MODEL

Alliance VISTA Members strengthen communities and bring youth out of poverty by serving at non-profits, government agencies, community-wide coalitions and statewide agencies to implement three key strategies:



- Build capacity at their host site organization to help address education inequities such as the achievement and opportunity gaps,
- Coordinate efforts that bridge and build the integration of school and community wide support for youth, focused on providing and sharing resources that increase a young person's school attendance, behavior and/or course performance (all indicators with a strong link to academic engagement and high school graduation), and
- Actively engage youth as agents of change in closing the opportunity and achievement gaps in their communities.

Alliance VISTA Member activities increase the capacity of their Host Site and community to support young people, and lead to significant increases in the number of additional activities able to be carried out by the host organization and its partners. Possible activities VISTA Members perform that provide a direct link to increasing educational equity in Minnesota include:

- Creating or improving data systems to increase host site's ability to track, evaluate, and replicate positive youth interventions
- Establishing/strengthening volunteer programs
- Developing and implementing a process for recruiting volunteers and caring adults to work with youth in areas such as mentoring, tutoring, civic engagement and college/career exploration
- Convening partners to align goals and activities
- Assessing community needs and conducting asset mapping
- Researching best practices relating to educational equity (ex. access to reliable transportation, ensuring quality data is available and used to target students, providing effective alternative pathways and additional time to earn a diploma, etc.) and conducting literature reviews
- Reducing/eliminating duplication in educational equity efforts
- Identifying and integrating best practices into communities and organizations
- Assisting in the creation and promotion of the GradMinnesota Resource Library
- Creating resources and materials to help inform the community and disseminate information
- Creating or promoting leadership and civic engagement opportunities for youth
- Helping organize community meetings
- Developing communication tools
- Identifying potential collaborators and partners
- Researching youth-led programming models and identifying opportunities to engage youth in co-creating programming

### VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

Host Sites are responsible for creating a VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) once they are selected to host VISTA Members. The purpose of the VAD is to identify the specific objectives and activities of the proposed VISTA project year. The VAD is used throughout the year to help the Alliance, the Site Supervisor, and the VISTA Member identify priorities and monitor progress. The VAD is a critical tool in the recruitment, selection, and ongoing supervision of a VISTA Member. If multiple VISTA Members are placed at one site they will each need their own individual VAD. New Supervisors will be required to attend a workshop in the spring to develop and refine their VISTA project plan and VAD. Returning Supervisors are be asked to submit a VAD as part of the renewal application or after their application is approved.

### VISTA Required Trainings & Visits

- ☐ VISTA Members are required to participate in the following:
  - Attend Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) the week before Service begins (travel/accommodation is provided)
  - Attend Alliance Site Orientation within first 2 weeks of service
  - On-going Cohort meetings (approximately 11 half-days)

- Mid-year Training Retreat (1 day)
- Two Site Visits with Alliance Staff and the Host Site and VISTA Member(s)
- VISTA Members are encouraged to actively participate and connect with Alliance Staff and other AmeriCorps Members through blogs, webinars, email, phone calls, and days of service.
- VISTA Site Supervisors are required to participate in the following:
  - Recruitment Webinar
  - Attend VAD Workshop (Spring) – *New Supervisors Only*
  - Attend Supervisor Training & Submit Onsite Orientation and Training Plan (Spring/Summer)
  - Mid-Year Training Retreat (Winter; 1 day)
  - Two Site Visits with Alliance Staff and the Host Site and VISTA Member(s)
  - Site Supervisors are encouraged to actively participate and connect with Alliance staff and other AmeriCorps Supervisors through blogs, webinars, email, phone calls, and days of service.

**SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT FOR ALLIANCE VISTA MEMBERS**

The Alliance provides support to VISTA Members through regular trainings, on-going email communication, site visits, and coaching. Each Host Site identifies a Host Site Supervisor who acts as the main contact with the Alliance, Host Site and the VISTA Member. They provide the day-to-day oversight of the activities of the VISTA Member and alignment with project goals; signs off on reporting and documents approved days off; ensures that the Member meets service requirements; and identifies additional supports for the VISTA Member. Site Supervisors play an important role in ensuring the success of the VISTA Member. In most cases, the supervisor must be a full-time employee with available time to effectively oversee and mentor the VISTA Member. Weekly or bi-weekly meetings with the VISTA Member are required. Additionally, the Site Supervisor participates in approximately five Alliance meetings during the year.

**VISTA Data Collection & Reporting**

The Alliance is committed to achieving measurable results through clear and consistent data collection, aggregation, and reporting. VISTA Host Sites must commit to completing all program evaluation requirements. When applying to host a VISTA Member, Host Sites set Capacity Building and Anti-Poverty goals for the year. The Capacity Building and Anti-Poverty Performance Measures are as follows:

Performance Measures	
Capacity Building	Number of organizations that received capacity building services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Examples include: # of schools that received training on volunteer management; # of organizations attending coalition meetings; # of sites implementing host site programming.</i></li> </ul>
	Number of additional activities completed and/or program outputs produced by the program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Examples include: # of volunteer trainings; # of partnership development meetings; # of resources developed.</i></li> </ul>
Anti-Poverty	Number of students who completed a VISTA supported education program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Examples include: # of youth who received mentoring; # of youth that attended conferences; # of youth leading focus groups.</i></li> </ul>
	Number of students who completed a VISTA supported education program AND demonstrated improved academic engagement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Examples include: # of youth reporting improved attitude toward school/school climate (out of total #); # of youth reporting increased motivation to be more engaged in school or learning (out of total #), # of youth who increased participation in school activities.</i></li> </ul>

VISTA Members are expected to regularly report on Performance Measure progress. These reports include:

- Periodic reports that summarize VISTA Member daily activities, including what progress has been made in reaching VISTA Member Performance Measures
- Description of VISTA Members' personal and professional development plans and activities
- Monthly Reflections of when the VISTA Member has been successful and challenged in their service

## VI. HOST SITE EXPECTATIONS, ELIGIBILITY & REQUIREMENTS

Host Sites take on a variety of responsibilities when they are selected to host an AmeriCorps Promise Fellow or VISTA Member. The Alliance works to support each Host Site and Youth Success Team in meeting the goals of the Promise Fellow and VISTA model.

Both Promise Fellow and VISTA Host Sites are asked to fulfill the following expectations and commitments:

- Complete Host Site Agreement in July prior to start of service term
- Recruit and select their AmeriCorps Member(s)
- Provide training, orientation, supervision, and support for the AmeriCorps Member(s)
- Ensure Promise Fellow and VISTA Member activities align with AmeriCorps and Alliance goals
- Support AmeriCorps Member(s) in maintaining a full-time schedule (at least 40 hours per week) to meet all service hour requirements, including Promise Fellow and VISTA Member required training and meetings
- Actively participate in trainings, meetings, and site visits
- Provide a Cash Match of \$7,700 per slot awarded by July and meet In-Kind Requirements such as providing a desk, phone, computer, mileage, etc.

Promise Fellows Only:

- Submit Onsite Orientation and Training Plan prior to start of service year
- Complete Data Sharing Agreement prior to start of service term
- Train Promise Fellow(s) in accessing data and data privacy according to site or partner school procedures
- Assist with data collection and reporting requirements

VISTA Member Only:

- Submit Onsite Orientation and Training Plan prior to start of service year
- Submit Completed VISTA Assignment Description
- Assist VISTA Member in periodic reporting

### Cash Match Requirements

For Promise Fellows, Host Sites are required to help offset the cost of the program by providing a cash match of \$7,700 per slot awarded by July 16th. For VISTA, Host Sites are required to help offset the cost of the program by providing a cash match of \$7,200 per slot awarded by July 16th. Host Sites can use a variety of sources to pay for the cash match. If federal funds are used to cover the cost of the AmeriCorps Member cash match, the Alliance requires written authorization from the Federal Program Officer to use federal dollars as match for another federal program.

For those Host Communities that are working to bring together multiple schools and organizations to host Fellows or VISTA Members, the parties involved may collaborate to cover the cost of this payment, but the organization signing the Host Site Application is ultimately responsible for the total payment owed to the Alliance. **Please note that Host Sites are responsible for the full cash match based on number of members AWARDED. The Cash Match will not be refunded if a Site fails to recruit Fellow(s) or VISTA(s).** Although the Alliance assists in recruitment and works closely with Sites throughout the process, members are not placed and Host Sites are ultimately responsible for filling all positions. *The Promise Fellow Cash Match of \$7,700 per slot awarded is required to be paid in full by July 16<sup>th</sup>. The VISTA Cash Match of \$7,200 per slot awarded is required to be paid in full by July 16<sup>th</sup>.* Please note that the Alliance is willing to negotiate this deadline for those Host Sites that demonstrate that requirement would be an extreme hardship or preclude them from applying to host an AmeriCorps Promise Fellow or VISTA Member. Contact Julie Muklebust, CFO, at: [jmuklebust@mnyouth.net](mailto:jmuklebust@mnyouth.net) for questions about the Cash Match.

### In-Kind Requirements:

In addition to the cash payment, Host Site are required to provide their AmeriCorps Member(s) with the following:

- personal workstation/desk and office supplies
- resources and materials for programming
- a computer with current software and individual email account, and access to the internet
- technical support for the computer

- designated time for data tracking and reporting
- a telephone with personal voicemail or a cell phone
- mileage reimbursement for required Alliance trainings
- local travel necessary for conducting service activities
- parking permit or bus pass if necessary

### What Organizations Can Apply?

Promise Fellow and VISTA Host Sites can be any of the following types of organizations:

- Community-Based Youth Serving Organizations (ex. Boys and Girls Clubs, afterschool program, etc.)
- Public Schools, School Districts, Charter Schools
- Healthy Community Initiatives
- Non-profits, government agencies and intermediaries

*\* Priority will be given to schools/communities that have a high school graduation rate lower than the state average of 82.2% and schools/communities that have a majority student population that is economically disadvantaged (demonstrated by greater than 50% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch)\**

### How Many AmeriCorps Members Can Organizations Host?

There is no limit on the number of Promise Fellows or VISTA Members a site can host! Many schools and organizations that have hosted a cohort of AmeriCorps Members have seen great success. Sites requesting multiple Fellows and/or VISTA Members will need to demonstrate the need and capacity to support and supervise multiple members. Promise Fellows are expected to serve in a full-time capacity throughout their 11 month term of service, while VISTA Members serve in a full-time capacity for a 12 month service term, and sites are expected to ensure they meet their service hour requirements and have sufficient activities to maintain their hours. *Please note that the cash match is PER slot awarded. For example, if a site requests three Promise Fellows the total cash match would be: \$23,100 (3 x \$7,700).*

## VII. ALLIANCE AMERICORPS MEMBER RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

The Alliance is dedicated to recruiting a diverse pool of prospective Promise Fellows and VISTA Members reflective of the communities in which they serve. Our goal is to fill 100% of our positions and retain 100% of our Members over the course of the year. We work to assist applicants in finding the best fit between Member and Host Site. Members are recruited both by their Host Site and the staff at the Alliance. Host Sites are expected to recruit aggressively through their networks and local media. The Alliance staff, in partnership with Host Sites, places ads in major state and national websites, newspapers, and works with national AmeriCorps recruiting systems. Sites are required to submit a position description and interview questions to the Alliance for review to ensure that the selection process is fair and equitable for all applicants. Applicants will be screened and interviewed by both the Host Site and Alliance staff before an official offer of service is made. Host Sites will be required to check references. Please note that a complete National Service Criminal History Background check is conducted on each member to meet basic AmeriCorps eligibility requirements (read [42 U.S.C. § 12645g](#) and [45 CFR §2540.200 through §2540.207](#)); Host Sites are encouraged to run their own background checks to meet any additional eligibility requirements of their site. Sites that are unable to meet recruitment deadlines will be at risk of losing their AmeriCorps Member position and risk becoming ineligible to host in the future.

For basic eligibility, AmeriCorps Members must be:

- 18 years or older
- A high school graduate with a diploma or GED
- A U.S. Citizen, U.S. National or a Lawful Permanent Resident Alien of the United States
- Able to serve in a full-time position (e.g., not a full-time student or working elsewhere full-time) – able to maintain a consistent schedule of 40 hours per week throughout their term of service
- Interested in serving youth and the community
- Able to pass a complete National Service Criminal History Background check (including National Sex Offender Registry, State, and FBI checks)

Member Benefits:

- ❑ **Promise Fellows:** The Alliance provides Promise Fellows with approximately \$624 twice per month (pre-tax) as a living allowance. This living allowance, health and dental insurance, workers compensation, FICA, background checks, and much of the Fellows' trainings are paid directly by Minnesota Alliance With Youth. Fellows will receive their living allowance directly from the Alliance through direct deposit. Additionally, members additionally are eligible to receive an Education Award of \$5,920 from CNCS.
- ❑ **VISTA Members:** The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) provides VISTA Members with approximately \$512 (pretax) biweekly as a living allowance. This living allowance, plus the VISTA Members' educational award (worth \$5,920), workers compensation, FICA, and background checks are paid directly by CNCS. VISTAs will receive their living allowance directly from CNCS through direct deposit.

## VIII. HOW TO APPLY

Applications to host an Alliance AmeriCorps Member will be assessed and reviewed by a team of Alliance staff, partners, host sites, and youth using the following criteria:

- Need as demonstrated by a needs/resources assessment completed by Promise Fellow Youth Success Team or VISTA Supervisor with clear plans to connect local activities to dropout prevention and to engage and serve youth who are most at-risk of dropping out
- Commitment to implement the Alliance AmeriCorps program models with fidelity
- Commitment to youth engagement and youth voice, including youth who are disengaged
- Alignment between the planned roles for the AmeriCorps Member and the goals of the program
- Authentic collaboration among members of the Promise Fellow Youth Success Team or VISTA Support Team, including both school and community partners, and youth
- Ability to demonstrate that a high quality Site Supervisor will be assigned to each AmeriCorps Member to provide professional development experiences for the Member
- Commitment to participate in all required meetings by Site Supervisors and Member (e.g. Promise Fellow Institute, VISTA Cohort Meetings, etc.)
- Ability to pay required cash match and in-kind match

Promise Fellows and VISTA Members will follow a pre-determined position description (written by their Host Site) for their year of service. Promise Fellow and VISTA Member roles must relate to the design of this program and contribute to achieving the Alliance's goals.

**As you prepare your host site application, be sure to review what AmeriCorps Promise Fellows and VISTAs can and cannot do.** The below activities are prohibited while AmeriCorps Members are accruing hours that count towards their living allowance and education award:

- AmeriCorps Members may not displace or duplicate roles of other paid staff of the organization
- AmeriCorps Members may not perform secretarial functions for other staff
- AmeriCorps Members may not lobby politicians or organize voter registration drives
- AmeriCorps Members may not attempt to influence legislation
- AmeriCorps Members may not organize or engage in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes
- AmeriCorps Members may not assist, promote, or deter union organizing
- AmeriCorps Members may not engage in activities that have connections to religious instruction, religious proselytizing, or maintenance or construction of facilities that serve a religious purpose
- AmeriCorps Members may not provide abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services

### APPLY TODAY!

In order to help schools and community-based organizations collaborate with strong and enthusiastic partners, Minnesota Alliance With Youth can help connect applicants with existing resources and leaders across the state. We encourage you to ask questions during the preparation of your application!

## APPLICATION CHECKLIST

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- Review this Alliance Promise Fellow and VISTA Program Overview and additional information on our website.
- Complete the Host Site Application available on our [website](#). If you are a current 2017-2018 host site, please contact Christina for the Returning Host Site Application.

**PRIORITY APPLICATIONS ARE DUE JANUARY 12, 2018.  
APPLICATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED ON A ROLLING BASIS BEYOND THAT DATE.**

Please visit our [website](#) or email Christina Berget at [cberget@mnyouth.net](mailto:cberget@mnyouth.net) with any questions.