CSU STEM VISTA
2023-24 REQUEST for PROPOSALS

Proposal Planning Support and Key Dates	
Optional VISTA Program Overview Webinar. Join an _optional_ Zoom Webinar from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm. During the webinar, we will share an overview of the CSU STEM VISTA program and the application process. Attending the webinar is not required to apply.	December 15, 2022
Complete the Intent to Submit Form	January 6, 2023, by 5:00 p.m.
Proposal Application Meeting. Additional proposal development support will be provided during this check-in call. Bring questions or areas you want to review with the VISTA leadership team. Must submit an Intent to Apply before scheduling. _Required for all applicants except 22-23 current VISTA partners._	December 12, 2022 – January 20, 2023
Optional Drop-in Support Session. Join an _optional_ Zoom drop-in session between 11:00am to 2:00pm with any final questions.	January 25, 2023
VISTA Proposal Due. Submit completed CSU STEM VISTA proposal template as one Word or Google document via email to vista@calstate.edu	January 27, 2023, by 11:59 p.m.
Award Announcement. Award notifications will be made via email. Prior to final award decisions, revision requests may be required.	March 15, 2023
Acceptance of Award. Campus awardees confirm acceptance of award by emailing vista@calstate.edu.	March 17, 2023 by 5:00 p.m.
Awarded Host Sites ONLY. Awarded VISTA host sites will be required to submit: recruitment & marketing plan, a signed MOU, the Supervisor Commitment Form, and participate in a Supervisor Orientation	Dates will vary
VISTA Member Hiring Deadline	June 2, 2023
VISTA Member Start Date	July 17, 2023

Questions regarding this RFP should be sent to: vista@calstate.edu.

Awards are contingent on final appropriations and approval by AmeriCorps

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CSU STEM VISTA Program Overview and Opportunity

To bolster the goals of Graduation Initiative 2025, the CSU STEM VISTA program focuses on eliminating race, class and gender disparities in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) undergraduate degree programs as well as supporting PK-12 students in access to highly qualified, well-prepared, and diverse STEM teachers. We recognize that systems and institutions in the United States, including the California State University (CSU), were not created with people of color, low-income communities, and women in mind. We are seeking dedicated CSU campus teams that aspire to improve STEM student retention and completion rates and/or STEM teacher credentialing programs, primarily for students of color, Pell-grant recipients, women, and students who are first in their family to attend college.

Our program is unique in that we do not provide grant funding, but rather a full-time position. Awarded campus programs/departments receive a VISTA position for one year. The full-time VISTA member will help campus programs develop long-term sustainability by focusing on building the capacity of student success efforts within STEM degree and credentialing programs, including leveraging resources, expanding scale and reach, and enhancing program efficiency and effectiveness.

To do our work, we utilize sustainable, asset-based approaches to STEM education reform, including Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model[i]. Traditional education reform models focus on the deficits of students. Our program invites campus teams that believe in and will utilize an asset-based approach to examine and enhance institutional culture and learning environments for all students.

To track our progress, monitoring 6-year graduation rates and annual retention rates is not enough. While the largest attrition typically takes place between the first and second year, we continue to lose students in subsequent years, with leaving patterns that vary by different groups of students[ii]. We are seeking campus teams who will focus their efforts on deepening their understanding of institutional barriers and identifying success indicators along STEM majors and STEM credentialing students' progression to degree.

Through participation in this program, CSU STEM VISTA will:

- Support campus teams in effectively using data to improve student retention and completion by identifying institutional barriers and STEM student success indicators.

- Provide a full-time VISTA position for one-year to build capacity for implementing and/or enhancing opportunities for students to excel in and complete STEM baccalaureate degrees.

- Share effective foundational approaches, frameworks and tools designed to engage and support students of color, Pell-grant recipients, women, and students who are first in their family to attend college.

- Connect campus teams across the CSU system to share insights, expand the use of evidence-based practices and collectively achieve our shared goal of eliminating equity gaps in STEM degree and teacher credentialing programs.

The Opportunity

The Opportunity. In the California State University system (CSU), too few students who begin college declaring a STEM major make it to graduation and the difference in degree attainment continues to be disproportionately associated with race, class, and gender. While the CSU has made noteworthy progress towards its ambitious Graduation Initiative 2025 goals for first-time and transfer students across all majors, when the data is disaggregated by STEM major, Pell-eligible, African American, Latinx and Native American students, disparities among these student populations persist. For example, of the 17,170 first-time, full-time students who declared a STEM major in 2016, only 43% graduated in 2022 with a STEM degree. Of those students 7,514 were low-income and only 33% graduated with a STEM degree in 6-years. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting social and economic distress, and unfinished PK-12 learning have changed the educational landscape for both prospective and current CSU students and increased demand for STEM teachers in public schools which has had a disproportionate impact on schools with higher numbers of students of color from low-income backgrounds. Student enrollment in a STEM teacher credentialing program has averaged at 10% for the past six years comparatively across all other teacher credentialing programs. As a result, this year, the CSU added an extra goal for helping campuses to support the retention of students enrolled in STEM teacher credentialing programs and STEM teachers in partnering districts. [iii]

As the largest, most diverse university system in the country, the CSU plays a critical role in meeting STEM career demands. The CSU is one of California's largest producers of STEM college graduates in the state, one in ten California employees are CSU graduates, and nearly half of the state's bachelor's degrees are awarded by the CSU. The CSU is also a national leader in preparing diverse and highly skilled teachers for California's PK-12 school system, particularly in STEM fields. Earning a college degree is a pathway out of poverty because on average, those who have a bachelor's degree earn nearly $1 million dollars more over their lifetime than high school graduates that have not attended college.

As a systemwide initiative focused on eliminating the equity gap for students of color, Pell-grant recipients, women, and students who are first in their family to attend college, the CSU STEM VISTA program is a key component in effectively serving historically underserved STEM students in the CSU, impacting not only individuals but their families and communities.

OVERVIEW of OUR FUNDER: AMERICORPS VISTA

Our funder, AmeriCorps VISTA, is a national service program. Often referred to as the "domestic Peace Corps," Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) has been fighting poverty in America since 1965. VISTA projects focus on mobilizing resources in low-income communities to create lasting growth and enhance the development of organizations or projects. Our funder does not provide grant funds, but rather a full-time position for one year, a VISTA member, who is a short-term resource to support the creation of lasting change.

Core Principles for VISTA Programming
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 programs is to strengthen and support efforts to eliminate and alleviate poverty and address poverty-related problems in the United States. Each VISTA project should focus on empowering individuals to emerge out of poverty, not simply make poverty more tolerable. VISTA projects focus on long-term solutions to poverty rather than short-term services.

   All VISTA service activities must be designed to support one or more specific anti-poverty programs at a host site. Applications must clearly define the anti-poverty program being created or enhanced as opposed to focusing solely on capacity building for the organization. The anti-poverty program described in the application must carry through to the performance measures and to the VISTA Assignment Descriptions (VAD).

2. **Community Empowerment**
   VISTA project sponsors and host sites must engage people of the communities to be served by the project in planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating the project. Each project must be responsive and relevant to the lives of community residents and should tap into inherent community assets, strengths, and resources.

3. **Sustainable Solutions**
   AmeriCorps members serving at VISTA projects 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 AmeriCorps members within three years and have the project continue without VISTA resources. Both new and continuation applications must address specific steps the host site and partners will take to ensure that the anti-poverty project(s) created or enhanced using VISTA resources will be available to the community after VISTA resources are withdrawn.

4. **Capacity-building**
   VISTA projects leverage AmeriCorps members to create systems that remain long after their term of service ends by expanding the scale, impact, and resource-leveraging ability of specific anti-poverty programs. AmeriCorps members serving at VISTA projects strengthen sponsors by building infrastructure, expanding community partnerships, securing long-term resources and addressing specific local needs with all activities focused on creating pathways out of poverty for low-income communities. AmeriCorps members must focus on building the capacity of specific anti-poverty programs and interventions and not on general capacity building for the host site.

   AmeriCorps members focus on capacity-building activities. On occasion, they may perform limited direct service activities which are deemed a necessary component to completion of the AmeriCorps member's overall capacity building assignment; these activities may be written into the VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) if known at the beginning of the AmeriCorps member's term of service, but this is not a requirement. AmeriCorps members also participate in direct service activities as part of a term-limited special initiative such as National Days of Service.

Beginning in the 2021 fiscal year, AmeriCorps has specified their prioritization and recognition of the way "economic inequity is inexorably linked to the history of racial inequity in this country" and stated their commitment to addressing this issue. AmeriCorps' FY2023 guidance includes prioritization of projects that advance racial equity in all of the priority areas.

Key Legal and Administrative Aspects of the VISTA Program

AmeriCorps VISTA is a federal program that California State University operates, and key items of legislation and legal limitations are important to understand as a campus host site applicant.

Governing Legislation and Regulations

The VISTA program's governing legislation and applicable regulations are the:

- Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (as amended)
- National and Community Service Act of 1990 (as amended)
- Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Chapter 25 Part 2556

The CSU recommends all applicants review relevant legislation and regulations prior to submitting their application.

Prohibition Against Supplanting/Displacing Existing Workers

AmeriCorps VISTA members are not staff members or employees of the CSU, CSU campus host sites or its partners. AmeriCorps VISTA members may not engage in activities at that would displace or supplant paid staff, contractors, or existing volunteers. These prohibitions against displacing or supplanting workers include activities related to the application and management of other Federal grants and programs (including using AmeriCorps members to apply for Federal grant programs).

Force Majeure & COVID-19

To best support VISTA programming during times of uncertainty, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, host sites are asked to plan and prepare for the possibility of teleservice programming. Teleservice capability is dependent on AmeriCorps approval and must ensure the VAD is able to be implemented through that model. This includes providing remote supervision, project management and implementation, necessary equipment and access to materials to support the teleservice of AmeriCorps VISTA members. The CSU STEM VISTA program has developed a Work Agreement for Remote or Hybrid Work, in the event it is needed and approved by AmeriCorps, that the VISTA supervisor and CSU STEM VISTA member will be asked to submit to the CSU STEM VISTA team for approval.

2023-24 CSU STEM VISTA PRIORITY AREAS

For the 2023-24 program year, CSU STEM VISTA is seeking proposals that expand integrative learning strategies as well as campus, organizational and school partnerships that are focused on eliminating race, class and gender disparities in STEM undergraduate degree programs and STEM teacher credential programs.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)

Projects focused on STEM programs as pathways for students who are historically or currently underrepresented in STEM fields providing career exploration and preparation, early exposure to fieldwork, internships, service-learning, undergraduate research, and international study opportunities.

STEM Teacher Credential Students or Retention of High School STEM Teachers

Projects focused on PK-12 teacher education programs that prepare future teachers who are historically or currently underrepresented in STEM teacher credential programs and/or projects focused on retention of STEM teachers in schools and districts.

HOST SITE ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

ELIGIBILITY: All CSUs are eligible, and we invite proposals from campus teams committed to and working towards closing equity gaps in STEM degree and STEM teacher credentialing programs. While program partnerships with organizations, schools and school districts are highly encouraged, applicants and identified lead VISTA supervisors must be from a CSU campus program or department. There is no limit to the number of proposals received from individual CSU universities. For this RFP, STEM is defined as life and physical science, engineering, mathematics, and information technology, excluding social and health sciences.

CONTINUATION: Campus teams must meet the expectations outlined in the MOU and submit a continuation justification in January each year to be eligible for continuation of their VISTA award for the following academic year.

COST SHARE: Campus host sites are required to pay a modest VISTA member cost share of $5,500 per each awarded and filled full-time member. The Chancellor's Office recognizes that for some departments with limited operating budgets that this cost share amount may be prohibitive. We are offering a limited number of sliding scale cost share amounts (ranging from $2,500-$4,500) to qualified, awarded campuses. The CSU STEM VISTA program reserves the right to increase the cost share amount by a maximum of 10% each academic year.

CAMPUS TEAM: Through the proposal writing process, it is recommended that campuses establish a team that can commit to participation in the VISTA program. Campus teams should promote a unified vision for their STEM students and be committed to collaborating and connecting the strengths of existing successful equity and asset-based projects. Campus teams should include representatives from the key departments, offices and programs involved with your proposed projects (deans, associate deans, department chairs, faculty members, faculty and professional advisors, financial aid representatives, student support program staff, faculty developers, institutional researchers, etc.). We strongly encourage selecting campus team members who identify with the student groups the department/program is aiming to reach.

SUPERVISION: Proposals must designate a committed supervisor, who is also a campus team member. This person will be the primary point of contact for the VISTA program and must have the capacity to attend trainings,

periodic webinars and provide day-to-day supervision, guidance, and support for the VISTA member. At minimum, 10% of the supervisor's time (4 hours per week) should be dedicated specifically to the management of the project and supervision of the VISTA member. Supervisors should have a desire to coach and mentor an emerging professional. The VISTA members workspace should be in close proximity to the supervisor's workspace. *Campus teams may identify a different supervisor each year given the context of the planned project(s) for that academic year.*

REPORTING AND SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES: VISTA supervisors will be required to submit disaggregated data of STEM students in undergraduate degree and/or teacher credentialing programs being served through an annual report to the VISTA program in November (in addition to quarterly progress reports submitted by VISTA members). Failure to submit the required annual and quarterly reports and attend trainings may result in the termination of your VISTA award. Additionally, supervisors are required to participate in a quarterly Supervisor Learning Community as well as quarterly one-on-one check-ins with a member of the VISTA leadership team. Optional webinars and drop-in office hours for additional support on things like reports VISTA Assignment Descriptions (VADs) and summer associate applications will also be provided by the VISTA leadership team.

RESOURCES: VISTA members receive several benefits as part of their service through AmeriCorps VISTA. In addition to the AmeriCorps benefits CSU STEM VISTA members receive over 100 hours of training focused on professional development and justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Campus teams are required to work with their human resources department to give the VISTA member a designation (typically 'CSU volunteer') that will provide them access to the following required resources:
- Secure office/desk space with office supplies in close proximity to the supervisor (in the same office space or building)
- Daily access to a computer with internet, phone with voicemail, fax, photocopier, and printer
- Individual CSU email account with privileges equal to faculty/staff (not a student email)
- Access to building (codes or keys) if necessary
- Parking permit
- Campus ID with library privileges
- Travel budget to cover the costs of travel to off-site meetings as a part of their duties (see CSU travel policy)

VISTA members are required to complete a Criminal Background Check, which is paid for by CNCS and the CSU STEM VISTA program. Per federal regulations, VISTA member background checks are processed by CNCS and results are housed within CNCS. This federal VISTA background check requirement supersedes the CSU's HR policy for background checks on volunteers.

VISTA RECRUITMENT: Campus teams are required to help advertise and recruit for the available VISTA positions. The CSU STEM VISTA program will recruit on a national and statewide level. Awarded campuses will be required to submit the VISTA recruitment questionnaire.

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES AND INSTRUCTIONS

Campus teams interested in applying for a 2023-24 CSU STEM VISTA grant must complete the **CSU STEM VISTA Proposal Template found** [here](#) and submit as a Word or Google document via email to: vista@calstate.edu by **Friday, January 27, 2023, by 11:59 p.m.** (.pdfs will not be accepted).

1. **Complete Online** [Intent to Submit](#) – due January 6, 23

The [Proposal Template](#) includes the following sections:

2. **2022-23 VISTA Proposal Cover Page**
   In this section, you will be required to provide information and garner signatures from the CSU campus program/department that is applying, including the CSU VISTA supervisor and any co-VISTA supervisors (may be a partner organization), as well as key campus administrators. The Cover Page should also indicate how many VISTA positions your program/department is requesting and the proposed VISTA position title(s). *Proposals submitted without the required signatures will not be reviewed.*

3. **Continuation Narrative***
   *This section of the Proposal Template is required <u>by</u> current 22-23 VISTA campus grantees only.

4. **VISTA Recruitment Information**
   In this section, you will be required to provide information that will assist with VISTA member recruitment if your campus program/department is awarded a VISTA position. The form provides examples for each of the five questions for which you are asked to respond to: 1) a catchy recruitment statement; 2) a brief description of how your department/program serves students; 3) information about what the VISTA position will do; 4) the top five skills, knowledge and experience your program/department will need for a candidate to be successful in the VISTA position; and, 5) any additional information that may be helpful for the CSU STEM VISTA team to know.

5. **VISTA Sliding Scale Cost Share Request**
   The Chancellor's Office recognizes that for some programs/departments with limited operating budgets, the cost share amount of $5,500 may be prohibitive. We are offering a limited number of sliding scale cost share amounts (ranging from $2,500-$4,500) to awarded campuses. It is strongly encouraged that applicants with limited budgets first seek campus-level support for the VISTA cost-share. For those who would like to request a sliding scale cost share amount, you will be asked to provide a justification for your request, as well as the following information: the amount of your operating budget, the number of students your program/department serves, your staff to student ratio and/or staff to faculty/teacher ratio.

6. **VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)**
   Completion of the CSU STEM VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) is the majority of your VISTA proposal submission. The VAD is shared with the VISTA member and details the activities the VISTA member will perform during their year of service. A strong VAD is the foundation on which the VISTA member experience is built. Applicants <u>must</u> complete all 14 sections of the VAD, including providing 3-5 priorities, for their application to be considered for review. The [VAD instructions](#) walk applicants thru each section with guiding questions and examples.

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