



United States Department of the Interior  
Office of the Secretary



**NOTICE OF INTENT TO ISSUE A NONCOMPETITIVE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AWARD**

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), Office of the Secretary, intends to award a Cooperative Agreement to the Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC). Award of this agreement shall be made on a noncompetitive basis as a discretionary financial assistance award. The purpose of this agreement is to provide the SCC with the funding assistance to establish and maintain a Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) team for the Office of the Secretary. The total estimated 3-year value of this award is \$2,634,000. \$878,000 will be obligated at the time of award to fully fund Year 1 of the project. Funding for this program shall be made available through the DOI & Related Agencies Appropriations Act for FY 2008, Title I, P.L. 110-161: § 125. The authority for DOI's Office of the Secretary to enter into this Cooperative Agreement is given under 16 U.S.C. 1723 (c) Public Land Corps.

The DOI/VISTA Initiative is a new collaboration between the Department of the Interior (DOI) and AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), placing VISTA Volunteers in some of the poorest places in which the DOI has a presence. The DOI/VISTA Initiative offers full-time, college educated VISTA Volunteers an opportunity to engage in national service with non-profit organizations and bureaus within the Department of the Interior. The program aims to advance the Play, Learn, Serve and Work goals of the Secretary's youth priority and increase greater community ownership and partnership. The primary objective of the DOI/VISTA Initiative is to address the root causes of poverty and protect America's natural resources, heritage, and tribal cultures. This is accomplished through three-year DOI/VISTA Projects that partner DOI resources with community partners to address community and economic development, environmental stewardship, and healthy futures in underserved or impoverished communities. DOI/VISTAs serve projects focusing on one of the following antipoverty focus measures: Environmental Stewardship, Economic Opportunity, or Healthy and Sustainable Futures. VISTA Volunteers work on specific capacity building projects that benefit their site and community.

A VISTA may complete the following capacity building activities:

- Develop new programing that creates opportunities for underserved populations to learn about and pursue economic opportunities presented by public lands, science education, and resource management fields.
- Create sustainable programs that strengthen volunteer engagement in DOI public lands and alleviates poverty in communities where the DOI has a presence.
- Write grants, foster and nurture partnerships, recruit and train volunteers, interpret data, coordinate fundraisers, plan festivals, develop educational curricula, create outdoor classrooms, present at professional conferences and more.
- Provide greater operational efficiency to their site, bringing additional support to partnership efforts at low cost.

This Cooperative Agreement will be entered into on a noncompetitive basis in accordance with the criteria set forth in Chapter 2.14 (B) (4) & (5) of the Departmental of the Interior Departmental Manual; Federal



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Assistance Programs Series; Part 505, Chapter 2. This Departmental Manual sets forth various criteria in which a financial assistance agreement can be entered into on a noncompetitive basis. In this instance, the SCC meets the criteria in item (4) Unique Qualifications. The SCC is uniquely qualified to perform this project based upon having the technical expertise and resources to effectively administer the DOI/VISTA Team. In addition to having 13 years of experience in VISTA programs, the SCC has the staff, systems and support currently in place to effectively support nationwide VISTA placements in partnership with DOI and share the cost of operating these programs. SCC has two strong support offices, one in Beckley, WV and one in Durango, CO, already supporting existing VISTAs in the field. These support offices have the experience, systems, infrastructure and resources in place to manage the recruiting, placement, support and training of VISTAs while also having the knowledge and expertise to help VISTA supervisors and other partners.

The anticipated award date of this agreement is August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Please direct any questions or inquiries to Anthony Jasper of DOI's Acquisition Services Directorate; [Anthony\\_Jasper@ibc.doi.gov](mailto:Anthony_Jasper@ibc.doi.gov).

## DETERMINATION FOR SINGLE SOURCE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AWARD

### I. IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

TITLE: U.S. Department of the Interior AmeriCorps  
Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) Team

SPONSORING PROGRAM OFFICE: U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), Office of the  
Secretary, Assistant Secretary- Policy, Management  
and Budget

AWARDING OFFICE: Acquisition Services Directorate (AQD); Division  
IV; Denver, CO

TYPE OF AWARD: Cooperative Agreement

PROPOSED RECIPIENT: Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC)

PROJECT DURATION: Three (3) Years

PROPOSED COST: \$878,000 for Year 1; \$2,634,000 estimated budget  
for all three years

APPROPRIATIONS AUTHORITY: DOI & Related Agencies Appropriations Act for FY  
2008, Title I, P.L. 110-161: § 125; 16 U.S.C. 1723  
(c) Public Land Corps

INTERNAL AUTHORITY: Department of the Interior; Departmental Manual;  
Federal Assistance Programs Series; Part 505,  
Chapter 2; Effective January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008

CFDA NUMBER: 15.154; 21<sup>st</sup> Century Conservation Service Corps

### II. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION

- a. Project Background: The DOI/VISTA Team is a multi-Bureau youth initiative between DOI, its Bureaus and the Corporation for National and Community Service ("CNCS") that is initiated in Fiscal Year 2014 with the Support of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement's ("OSMRE") Appalachian Coal Country Team, and SCC.

Spanning the United States with Bureaus that range from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management and more, the Department of



the Interior has long been a fixture within the diverse communities it serves. The Department is primarily a land-managing agency: its core is built on field work and a commitment to eliciting tangible change. The Department's history and experience within communities across the U.S. makes it an exceptional partner for VISTA. As employees, civil servants, and most importantly citizens, it is the duty of the Department to carry out President Obama's call to service and his "United We Serve" initiative. As a federal agency with over 160 years of experience, the Department has the history, localized base, expertise, and broad base of non-profit partners working together on substantial projects to encourage community empowerment, sustainable solutions, and capacity building, fulfilling the goals of President Obama, CNCS, AmeriCorps VISTA and the Department of the Interior.

Within the Department, VISTAs have the opportunity to work on sustainable, local projects bolstered by DOI employees' expertise and local connections. The Department employs 70,000 persons who serve across 2,400 locations. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, for instance, serves 566 federally recognized tribes, assisting with irrigation direction and assistance, grant writing, housing improvement, and providing electricity among other services. The Bureau of Indian Education, which serves as direct educational support for 183 secondary schools within 64 reservations throughout 23 states, serves a total population of 42,000 Indian students. The National Park Service has a longstanding history serving all across the U.S., with 401 areas covering more than 84 million acres in every state (except Delaware), the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The territory is vast, yet with 28,000 employees, NPS is deeply imbedded within the communities it serves as both a DOI Bureau and as local citizens. The Bureau of Land Management administers over 245 million surface acres for many services including, "energy development, livestock grazing, recreation, and timber harvesting, while protecting a wide array of natural, cultural, and historical resources," again most often from local community bases spread across the rural West.

The DOI base that is created through these local offices is optimized by the employees that live within the communities they assist. The 65 locally-based projects included in the DOI VISTA initiative are all driven by the need to engage with local populations of minority and under-served citizens in ways that leverage DOI assets to directly engage our local communities in improvement. Each site is located in an area facing poverty rates above the national average and is committed to working with local under-served and minority populations in ways that build job skills, support continued education and engage volunteers. Each proposal in this initiative addresses VISTA's priority of alleviating poverty across America.

The Department of the Interior offers VISTAs a specialized opportunity to be on-the-ground change agents throughout the United States. By engaging the two existing OSMRE/VISTA Teams as well, we bring more than a decade of award-winning capacity and experience in recruiting, training and supporting VISTAs in communities throughout the U.S. With its long history, local community-oriented offices and expertise to support



meaningful projects, DOI/VISTAs will be able to elicit sustainable solutions, encourage community empowerment, and facilitate capacity building.

- b. Project Description and objectives: DOI recognizes the need to strengthen our involvement in communities that face conservation, environmental and economic challenges, to engage youth in conservation, and to address many related issues. It is the intent of this Agreement to provide the SCC with funding assistance to help provide the needed administrative support to place, support and track all participants of the DOI/VISTA Teams.

The DOI/VISTA Initiative is a new collaboration between the Department of the Interior (DOI) and AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), placing VISTA Volunteers in some of the poorest places in which the DOI has a presence. The DOI/VISTA Initiative offers full-time, college educated VISTA Volunteers an opportunity to engage in national service with non-profit organizations and bureaus within the Department of the Interior. The program aims to advance the Play, Learn, Serve and Work goals of the Secretary's youth priority and increase greater community ownership and partnership.

The primary objective of the DOI/VISTA Initiative is to address the root causes of poverty and protect America's natural resources, heritage, and tribal cultures. This is accomplished through three-year DOI/VISTA Projects that partner DOI resources with community partners to address community and economic development, environmental stewardship, and healthy futures in underserved or impoverished communities. DOI/VISTAs serve projects focusing on one of the following antipoverty focus measures: Environmental Stewardship, Economic Opportunity, or Healthy and Sustainable Futures. VISTA Volunteers work on specific capacity building projects that benefit their site and community.

A VISTA may complete the following capacity building activities:

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- Write grants, foster and nurture partnerships, recruit and train volunteers, interpret data, coordinate fundraisers, plan festivals, develop educational curricula, create outdoor classrooms, present at professional conferences and more.
- Provide greater operational efficiency to their site, bringing additional support to partnership efforts at low cost.

- c. Project Funding and Appropriations: The total estimated 3-year budget is \$2,634,000 of which \$878,000 will be obligated for Year 1 costs from the DOI & Related Agencies Appropriations Act for FY 2008, Title I, P.L. 110-161: § 125. DOI's Office of the Secretary has the authority to enter into the agreement with the SCC under 16 U.S.C.

1723 (c)(1) Public Land Corps, which states that "The Secretary is authorized to enter into contracts and cooperative agreements with any qualified youth or conservation corps to perform appropriate conservation projects referred to in subsection (d) of this section."

The estimated budget is deemed reasonable and appropriate for completion of the above objectives.

- d. Cost Sharing: There is a mandatory 25% cost sharing requirement for this effort, which SCC has satisfied by including the value of volunteer time with their budget proposal. 2 CFR §200.306 (e) states that Volunteer services furnished by third-party professional and technical personnel, consultants, and other skilled and unskilled labor may be counted as cost sharing or matching if the service is an integral part of an approved project or program. Rates for third-party volunteer services must be consistent with those paid for similar work by the non-Federal entity.

The volunteer time of the 51 VISTA team member is valued at \$1,548,096, of which DOI will only be contributing \$660,000. Therefore SCC is greatly exceeding the mandatory 25% cost sharing requirement.

### III. PROGRAM PARTICIPATION:

- a. Evaluation and relevance: In May 2014, DOI solicited a proposal from the SCC to manage a VISTA program for the Office of the Secretary. A final proposal was submitted on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014. An evaluation and budget analysis of the proposal was performed and a recommendation was made to accept the SCC's proposal. This recommendation considered both the capacity for SCC to successfully manage another AmeriCorps VISTA program and the overall cost to DOI.

The Southwest Conservation Corps (DBA Conservation Legacy) is a national non-profit organization with 15 years of experience engaging youth and veterans on projects for public benefit. Additionally, the OSM/DOI VISTA teams have been in operation since 2001 in the East (Appalachian Coal Country Team) and 2006 in the West (Western Hardrock Watershed Team). SCC and the OSM/VISTA teams have been in partnership since 2009.

SCC and the VISTA Teams have a strong history of engaging youth and young adults from diverse backgrounds, recent-era veterans, and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) students. SCC annually engages approximately 1,000 young people in a variety of programs including both crew-based models and individual placements including VISTA positions; in 2013, SCC and the OSM/VISTA Teams placed approximately 50 OSM/VISTA Volunteers in positions in Coal Country and in Colorado and New Mexico.

SCC has a history of managing interns and VISTAs working on a variety of environmental stewardship projects throughout the Southwest and the United States. Previous VISTA placements have worked directly with community members to build local capacity, encourage



environmental stewardship, enhance outreach and education, engage in economic development and assist in the professional development of OSM/VISTAs and their sponsoring organizations.

The support offices of the OSM/VISTA Teams have been the lead in developing the existing DOI/VISTA positions, which already include five National Park Service placements, one Fish and Wildlife Service placement, and nine Tribal College DOI/VISTA placements. The support offices have been responsible for creating the partnership with the USDA Land Grant Tribal College Program and the DOI Bureaus, working with the Tribal Colleges and Bureaus to get their VISTA applications approved, recruiting VISTA Volunteers to fill those positions, etc. These offices will continue to support all DOI/VISTAs with special training and continuing support over the term of their VISTA service.

b. Public Purpose: SCC and the OSM/VISTA Teams have a 13 year history of placing VISTA Volunteers in local community organizations and non-profits. The partnership provides biannual trainings and offers individualized support to VISTAs serving in remote communities. SCC and the OSM/VISTA Teams are planning to continue and expand these placements based on demonstrated interest from communities and partners.

c. Substantial Involvement: There will be substantial involvement of the Department and its bureaus in this project and in the activities that the SCC will conduct. The Department will:

- Provide program assistance in supporting the ongoing work of the DOI/VISTA Teams throughout the year, including the possible designation of local unit, state, and regional contact personnel.
- Send designated supervisor personnel to DOI/VISTA training at least once a year.
- Provide program monitoring and consultation assistance through the DOI/VISTA Officer with support provided by the Division of Reclamation Support OSMRE/VISTA Program and the DOI Office of the Secretary ("OS") in Washington D.C. to oversee and coordinate the work of the DOI/VISTA team, assist in creating and maintaining partnerships with other national agencies and to provide strategic development advice.
- The OSMRE/VISTA Support Offices at Appalachian Coal Country Team in Beckley, West Virginia and the Western Hardrock Watershed Team in Durango, Colorado will provide oversight and local support on behalf of DOI.
- DOI staff will be available, upon request, to consult with SCC, the public benefitting organizations, and their DOI/VISTA Volunteers to assist in training and provide responses to questions during the course of the DOI/VISTA project.

#### IV. EXPLANATION AND JUSTIFICATION FOR A SINGLE SOURCE AWARD:

- a. Identification: The Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act (31 U.S.C. § 6304 and 6305) prescribes the use of a grant or a cooperative agreement as the legal instrument for a Federal agency to use when entering into a relationship whose principal purpose is to provide United States Government assistance. A Cooperative Agreement is required to be used when the purpose of the relationship between the executive agency and the other recipient is to transfer something of value to the recipient to carry out a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by U.S. law and substantial involvement is contemplated between the executive agency and the other recipient (31 U.S.C. § 6305). A Statement of Substantial Involvement describe above will be included as part of the formal agreement.
- b. Justification: This cooperative agreement will be entered into with SCC on a noncompetitive basis under the authority of, and in accordance with the criteria set forth in Chapter 2.14 (B) (4) of the Department of the Interior Departmental Manual; Federal Assistance Programs Series; Part 505, Chapter 2. This Departmental Manual sets forth the criteria in which an assistance award can be made without competition. In this instance, the conditions under (4) Unique Qualifications, are satisfied. This section describes "unique qualifications" based upon a variety of demonstrable factors such as location, property ownership, voluntary support capacity, cost sharing ability, if applicable, technical expertise, or other such unique qualifications.

SCC has the experience, staff, systems and support currently in place to effectively support nationwide VISTA placements in partnership with DOI and share the cost of operating these programs. SCC and the OSM/VISTA teams have two strong support offices, one in Beckley, WV and one in Durango, CO, already supporting existing VISTAs in the field to assist with this project. These support offices have the experience, systems, infrastructure and resources in place to manage the recruiting, placement, support and training of VISTAs while also having the knowledge and expertise to help VISTA supervisors and other partners. Additionally, SCC has significant experience managing federal funds and reporting requirements along with having detailed knowledge of grant requirements and provisions specifically issued by The Corporation for Community and National Service.



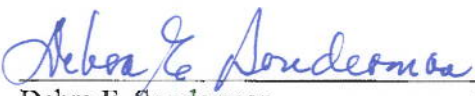
Determination and Approvals:

The undersigned has determined, based on the above findings, that: (1) this cooperative agreement, entered into for the management of the DOI AmeriCorps VISTA Team, will promote a public purpose; (2) the work contemplated by this agreement will require substantial involvement between the DOI and SCC; and the application submitted by SCC meets the criteria set forth in the DOI Departmental Manual; Federal Assistance Programs Series; Part 505, Chapter 2.14, for award of a Single Source Award. Therefore, in accordance with 31 U.S.C. § 6305 and Departmental Manual, Part 505, Chapter 2, the award of this cooperative agreement to the SCC is justified.

 7/21/2014  
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Anthony Jasper Date  
Agreements Officer  
AQD, Division IV

 7/22/2014  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Eric Loveridge Date  
Division Chief  
AQD, Division IV

 7/24/14  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mary Pletcher Date  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for  
Human Capital & Diversity  
U.S. Department of the Interior

 7/24/2014  
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Debra E. Sonderman Date  
Senior Procurement Executive  
Office of Acquisition & Property Management  
U.S. Department of the Interior