



Rochester Youth Year AmeriCorps*VISTA Fellowship Program

Frequently Asked Questions Host Organizations

Q: What is the Rochester Youth Year Fellowship?

A: The Rochester Youth Year (RYY) Fellowship is a post-graduate fellowship for recent graduates of the seven Rochester-area colleges which together compose the Rochester Regional Network. RYY is not an internship. The RYY program seeks to bring the talent and enthusiasm of local college graduates to bear on the challenges confronting the youth of Rochester, many of whom experience poverty. Through their work in community-based organizations, RYY Fellows are expected to develop and enhance their host organizations' programs and relationships with youth through volunteer recruitment, resource development, and substantive collaboration with other organizations.

Q: What is the Rochester Regional Network?

A: The Rochester Regional Network (RRN) is a consortium of seven institutions of higher education in the Rochester-area. This network administers the Rochester Youth Year Fellowship by setting program policy, determining long-term goals and strategies, recruiting participants (host organizations and VISTA members), and providing training opportunities for RYY VISTA members. The RRN supports the operation of the RYY program through membership fees. The following colleges and universities participate in the RRN: The College at Brockport - SUNY, Nazareth College, Roberts Wesleyan College, Rochester Institute of Technology, St. John Fisher College, SUNY Geneseo and the University of Rochester.

Q: What is AmeriCorps*VISTA?

A: AmeriCorps*VISTA is the national service program designed specifically to alleviate poverty. Founded as Volunteers in Service to America in 1965 and incorporated into the AmeriCorps network of programs in 1993, VISTA has been on the front lines in the fight against poverty in America for more than 40 years. AmeriCorps*VISTA is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), an agency of the federal government.

Q: How is the Rochester Youth Year Fellowship connected to AmeriCorps*VISTA?

A: The Rochester Youth Year Fellowship Program first received AmeriCorps*VISTA grant funding in 2008. Thus, all Rochester Youth Year Fellows are also AmeriCorps*VISTA members **upon their completion of CNCS' Pre-Service Orientation**. RYY program staff at the University of Rochester include a program director and an AmeriCorps*VISTA Leader. They work with CNCS and the RRN to ensure that the program is meeting both AmeriCorps*VISTA goals and the core mission and vision of the RYY program.

Q: What are the goals of the RYY Fellowship Program?

A: RYY goals evolve yearly with the various projects that constitute our program. However, there are three overarching program goals that guide the specific objectives at each host site. We take progress on these goals and objectives seriously; Progress on goals and objectives is assessed through monthly and quarterly reports, which are ultimately reviewed by CNCS. While RYY program staff will work with individual host organizations to develop appropriate objectives, all RYY VISTA projects must align with the following overarching goals:

- **Alleviating the Effects of Poverty on Youth**
RYY VISTAs will work with their host organization and necessary stakeholders to develop specific, sustainable services and programs that will not only address the self-identified needs of Rochester's youth, but which will also aim intentionally to build on the strengths and assets of Rochester's youth.
- **Strengthening Communities**
RYY VISTAs will work to build the capacity of their host organizations to develop and/or enhance programs that engage youth and families in positive and productive activities and initiatives. Equally important, RYY VISTAs will work to empower youth and families to take an active role in improving their own neighborhoods.
- **Promoting Civic Engagement and Community-Centered Leadership**
RYY VISTAs will create lasting partnerships between the community, their host organizations, and their alma mater. Serving as role models and liaisons, they will engage college communities in substantial opportunities to contribute to the life of the Rochester community.

Q: What can our organization expect to achieve by hosting a Rochester Youth Year (RYY) AmeriCorps*VISTA member?

A: Hosting a Rochester Youth Year VISTA can help your organization to:

- Develop and implement sustainable new youth programs
- Strengthen and expand existing youth programs
- Recruit, train, and mobilize undergraduate and community volunteers
- Partner with a network of peer agencies to create or expand programs
- Develop new financial or in-kind resources to benefit local youth programs
- Research and evaluate programs for youth and families

Q: Is our organization eligible?

A: To be eligible your organization must:

- Be a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, school or government agency based in the city of Rochester, NY
- Prioritize programs which utilize asset-based models of youth development
- Be operational for at least one year with at least one full-time staff member
- Possess the capacity to supervise a fellow

Q: What deadlines should our organization be aware of?

A: The following is a tentative timeline of recruitment deadlines,

- **December 15th, 2009:** Potential host organizations will be invited to apply for a 2010-2011 RYY Fellow
- **February 1st, 2010:** Full agency applications due to RYY program staff at the University of Rochester
- **February 8th-12th, 2010:** RYY program staff will conduct site visits at selected agencies
- **February 26th, 2010:** 12 agencies will be invited to participate in RYY VISTA candidate interviews
- **March 12th, 2010:** RYY AmeriCorps*VISTA application deadline
- **March 22rd-26th, 2010:** Selected AmeriCorps*VISTA candidates invited to interview with RYY program staff
- **April 5rd, 2010:** 10 VISTAs accepted as RYY Fellows (exact number will depend on federal budgets)
- **April 21st, 2010:** RYY Fellows participate in speed interviewing with RYY host organizations
- **April 26th, 2010:** All RYY Fellows matched with host organizations
- **June 2010:** RYY Host Site Supervisor Orientation
- **July 2010:** First CNCS Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) and potential RYY AmeriCorps*VISTA start date
- **August 2010:** Second CNCS Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) and potential RYY AmeriCorps*VISTA start date

Q: What are the main criteria for a Rochester Youth Year Project?

A: VISTA projects must:

- Meet a defined community need and/or seek to build on a community strength/asset (preferred)
- Benefit urban youth (ages 0-25) and families experiencing poverty
- Aim to create a *new* initiative or develop a significant *expansion* of an existing program
- Have a *measurable* impact on the community your organization serves; community agencies and VISTA members will be responsible for providing regular progress reports in addition to an end of year report

Q: How are new host sites selected?

A: All proposals will be reviewed by RYY program staff and the RRN. Key project elements include:

- Organizational capacity to develop and manage the project and VISTA member
- Explicit plans that ensure the VISTA project is sustainable
- Realistic objectives with measurable outcomes that align with Rochester Youth Year's anti-poverty and youth-serving mission
- Proper support, supervision and training for the VISTA member during the year of service

Q: What kind of background training do RYY VISTAs have?

A: Rochester Youth Year AmeriCorps VISTA members are recent graduates of a college or university in the Rochester area. Rochester Youth Year VISTA members exhibit a strong commitment to community service, civic engagement, and leadership. With a diverse set of skills and educational backgrounds, RYY VISTAs are seeking an intensive, hands-on learning and professional experience.

RYY program staff will provide incoming VISTA members with a one day orientation of RYY. Each RYY AmeriCorps*VISTA member is required to attend a 4-day Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) immediately prior to their first day at their host agencies. This PSO is funded by CNCS. RYY VISTAs' PSO dates will determine their start date.

Q: Are there any prohibited activities?

A: RYY VISTAs *must not*:

- Be involved with political advocacy, religious instruction, voter registration, or union organizing
- Displace the work, or what should be the work, of paid employees of the host organizations, particularly tasks typically reserved for administrative and/or clerical positions. AmeriCorps*VISTA members are to engage in project-based work.
- Engage in direct service

Q: Who is responsible for selecting agencies and recruiting and hiring the fellow?

A: Rochester Youth Year program staff and the representatives of the Rochester Regional Network will be responsible for recruitment and site selection. RYY program staff will work with the members of the Rochester Regional Network to select community organizations whose mission and vision align with the goals of the RYY program and will select high quality applicants to interview with selected agencies. We will invite 10 applicants to participate in the RYY Fellowship. They will then interview with 12 selected agencies and we will collect agency and applicant feedback to ensure the best mutually beneficial match. **Therefore, all agencies that go through the interview process are not guaranteed a VISTA member.**

Q: What is the host site required to provide?

A: Each host site is required to provide the following:

- A clear vision of the project you plan to implement
- One designated host-supervisor who will provide weekly supervision and support to the RYY VISTA and provide regular progress reports and project updates.
- Supportive leadership from site supervisor and host-site staff to ensure that the RYY Fellow achieves their goals.
- Contribute a cost share sum not to exceed \$4,500 to help defray the cost of a Fellow's living stipend
- Adequate work space (access to phone, fax, computer, and office supplies)

Email rochester@youthyear.org, call 585.276.3277 or visit www.youthyear.org for more information!