OSOT Checklist

Welcome to the community organization: Getting started

☐ Introduce member to the head of the organization (president/CEO/director). The head then briefly discusses the history and purpose of the organization, the project, and how the member fits in.

☐ Introduce member to co-workers during tour of facility.

☐ Show member his or her work area.

☐ Show location of rest rooms, lunch, and break rooms/space.

☐ Member attends regular staff meeting. Take time at staff meeting to remind everyone what the member's role will be. Help the member feel welcome and part of the team.

☐ Discuss basic terms of work, policies, procedures.

☐ Explain hours of work and overtime policies, holidays and leave days.

☐ Explain organization rules about absenteeism, tardiness, process for reporting absence or illness.

☐ Discuss timesheets, leave usage.

☐ Explain the VISTA compensation process.

☐ Explain break policy and lunch hour (tell about restaurants in area).

☐ Explain use of telephone, mail services, copier (security code), computer network, etc.

☐ Explain standards of conduct, including rules of dress, personal grooming, smoking, housekeeping, etc.

☐ Explain parking practices and provide (or arrange for) building, office keys.

☐ Explain safety procedures.

☐ Explain how to order supplies.

Tips for the first day

- Review the PSO Blend webinar and Meet-Up schedule. Ensure your member has the webinars and Meet-Ups prioritized on their calendar.

- Lunch with the member to make him or her feel at home.

- If the member has moved from another part of the country, ask how the transition is going and if you might help. Discuss housing situation, local shopping and services, banks, medical facilities, etc. If there is time at the end of the day, give member time to take care of some of these needs - everything related to housing, bank account, phone service, post office, etc.

OSOT Checklist, cont.

Organizational purpose and mission and the VISTA project

☐ Discuss in more detail the mission, background, and purpose of the sponsoring organization.

☐ Explain history and purpose of the organization.

☐ Review organization mission, goals, and objectives.

☐ Review organization structure.

☐ Provide copy of organizational chart and review staff duties.

☐ Explain departmental and divisional functions, goals, teams and team structure, major projects.

☐ Explain the purpose of the VISTA project and role of the members.

☐ Explain project goals and objectives.

☐ Review past work of project if in year 2 or 3.

☐ Give the member time to read any materials given to him/her.

Member assignment, supervisory relationship, and community investigation

☐ Clarify individual member assignment(s), how goals will be achieved, and how the member's progress in achieving project objectives will be assessed.

☐ Review the VISTA Assignment Description, explain specific responsibilities.

☐ Important: Make it clear what the expected project outcomes are, what the member will help create and how it will help individuals or communities move out of poverty.

☐ Explain performance reviews (date for first review, frequency thereafter).

☐ Provide a copy of performance standards.

☐ Discuss performance expectations and standards and reporting requirements.

☐ Discuss specific performance objectives that will be reviewed during the initial period.

☐ Explain supervisory and support structure, communications, reporting, accountability.

☐ Discuss the working relationship between the member and direct supervisor, mutual expectations, communications style, work style, support needs, etc.

☐ Discuss and clarify communication procedures and practices.

☐ Review staff meeting and team meeting schedules.

☐ Explain steps in discipline procedure (verbal warning, written warning, etc.) and specify actions that result in disciplinary action.

☐ End on a positive, affirming note about how excited you are to have the member working on this project.

☐ Have the member interview other staff about work styles, communications, etc.

OSOT Checklist, cont.

Tips for the first week

- Give the member time to take care of any additional basic needs related to, for example, housing, bank account, phone service, post office, etc. If a staff member is available to help, have her or him accompany the new member.

- Plan a lunch with a group of office colleagues.

- Plan a team building activity with staff, other members, project collaborators, other AmeriCorps members, etc.

- Plan a potluck dinner with office staff, other members, AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members, and VISTA alumni.

- Save time for check-ins to answer questions about the organization or project.

- Set up an Independent Community Investigation Activity where the member spends a half-day exploring the community and making a mental inventory of assets, needs, and cultural practices.

Community Investigation Activity Directions:

1. Schedule time with an expert on the community that the member will meet with after his observation.

2. Brief the member before he or she heads out into the community about where to go, what to look for, and how to ensure safety.

3. The member meets with the expert on the community discuss observations from the previous day.

4. This community "expert" provides a background on the community during a more guided tour than the member's previous day's meanderings.

5. The expert explains the nature of the low-income population served by the project.

6. The expert introduces the member to community leaders, especially those involved in the VISTA project.

7. The expert discusses cultural norms, do's and don'ts, social outlets to enjoy and those to stay away from, etc.

8. Have the member spend the afternoon with one or more partner organizations or other members and AmeriCorps state and national members involved in this or related projects.

9. Supervisor discusses impressions and findings from the Independent Community Investigation Activity with the member including the implications these have for the project and the member's assignment.

OSOT Checklist, cont.

Skill development

☐ The member accompanies staff member for the whole day out of the office - conducting community interviews, recruiting volunteer participation in project, managing volunteers on project, etc.

☐ The member accompanies staff member of another organization involved in similar or complementary efforts for the whole day, conducting community interviews, recruiting volunteer participation in project, managing volunteers on project etc.

☐ Informational/collaboration interviews with representatives from a variety of community agencies.

☐ Member drafts a one-month, member assignment, with clear and detailed activities and reviews it with the supervisor.

Tips for the first month

- Have member spend time with a tech tutor or on their own learning or refining computer skills he will need (e.g., Microsoft Word, Excel, Publisher, Access) for producing flyers, pamphlets and posters; writing grant proposals; building or using contact databases; etc.

- Empower the member to begin independent implementation of project with frequent check-in sessions with supervisor and other key organization staff to see how the work is going. Supervisor makes it clear to the member that this third week is still a period of learning, practice, testing, and adapting. He should not worry about making mistakes, asking lots of questions, and experimenting.

- Set up additional skill training for the member as needed: For example, the member could participate in a public speaking class offered by the community continuing education program; learn from an experienced staff member the key components of a quality grant proposal; take an online tutorial about volunteer recruitment on the VISTA Campus (www.vistacampus.gov), or spend an afternoon with someone from the credit union to learn about the management of low-income loan programs, interest rates, and starting a small business.