

CTC AmeriCorps*VISTA Project

Progress Report (first half of Year 5)

April 15, 2005

Covering the period August 15, 2004 — February 14, 2005

& extending to matters taking place a little later in some cases

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Period covered: Quarters 17 and 18

of AmeriCorps VISTAs:

On board at end of reporting period: 37

Completing Service: 31 (those ending in early September)

Terminating Early: 3



The CTC VISTAs at the PreService Orientation (PSO) program August 2004 — for more detail, see the directory at www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/vistas0405.html.

The CTC VISTA Project began its fifth year with a major induction of new members in late August 2004 at its tenth national PreService Orientation program, concluding with the swearing in ceremony presided over by Massachusetts Representative Barney Frank at which UMass/Boston Chancellor Keith Motley also spoke (see the program at Appendix A). Our web site resources for supervisors (www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/SupervisorResources.html) include program progress reports, supplemented by links to the VISTAs' own sites (www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/directory.html), and continues to provide model documentation of exemplary work. Lots of this is continuing to be covered in *The Community Technology Review* which saw the publication of one issue during this period in January (see attached hard copy, online version at www.comtechreview.org); in the CTC VISTA Project Newsletter, which saw issues published in the fall and winter (www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/newsletter); and through the new VISTA weblogs (more below). The CTC VISTA Project continues to serve as the primary field component of the new Community Media and Technology Program at the College of Public and Community Service at UMass/Boston (www.cpcs.umb.edu/cmt). More specifically:

- Establishment and shakeout of the HQ Management Team, including the initiation of a two VISTA Leader approach with Saul Baizman and Daniel Schackmen; the bringing on and then winding up of a VISTA Support Specialist component due to time limitations on the part of Lauren Penney; the abbreviated term of VISTA media specialist Lawanna Fox and bringing on at the end of the reporting period of Shannon McCue.
- Project management enhanced resource development by Assistant Director Paul Hansen and VISTA Leader Saul Baizman including Project web site, expansion of VISTA resources and directory (and alumni communication resources), and development of VISTA weblogs (see www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/blogs.php).
- Informal negotiation with Corporation oversight office re '05-'06 continuation and development of Project Basics guidelines, selection criteria, and process (see www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/projectbasics.htm, also Appendix B), with suggestions and support from Corporation leadership in Washington, DC as well as newly developed Project Advisory Board.
- Continuation of Massachusetts region VISTAs in-person meetings on the first Wednesday of each month.
- Continued support by project VISTAs in Massachusetts of a statewide support group and web site resource for all AmeriCorps programs in the state (see the Massachusetts InterCorps Council's page at on the CTC VISTA Project web site at www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/MICC).
- Publication of the Winter 2005 issue of the *Community Technology Review*, the Project's largest to date, under the co-editorship of CTC VISTA Leader Daniel Schackman.
- Official wind-down of the Commonwealth Broadband Collaborative and establishment of project archives at www.cbcmmedia.net. Final CBC work during the period included video production of EITC public service announcement and special digital media training for Project VISTAs by CBC Coordinator Nettrice Gaskins.

Year Five Project Work Plan and Additional Commentary

<p>Goal 1. Increase the management capacity of the CTC VISTA Project to better meet reporting and VISTA and Supervisor support needs.</p> <p>Obj. 1 Assess staffing needs in light of skills and interests of new Assistant Director or VISTA Leaders; with budgetary considerations in mind, bring on new staff/consultants as appropriate.</p> <p>Obj. 2 Upgrade project Management Information System to better meet project administrative needs and provide a model for other similar programs.</p> <p>Obj. 3 Improve project management system for processing MOUs, exit forms, and other required administrative matters as identified internally and in the Corporation site visit report.</p> <p>Obj. 4 Continue to develop CTC VISTA web sites in conjunction with local operating site supervisor reporting system.</p>	<p>Pre and 1st Qtr</p> <p>Pre, 1st & 2nd Qtr</p> <p>ongoing</p> <p>ongoing</p>
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In addition to accomplishments already mentioned, it is notable that including participating organization submission of their Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at the time of initial VISTA material submission helped insure a much more timely and efficient processing. Response to Corporation request for the timely submission of financial (FSR) reporting also resulted in improved responsiveness.

<p>Goal 2. Increase the capacity of approximately 25 community tech centers to develop and implement their individual programs targeted to their particular low-income communities through the recruitment, placement, and ongoing support of 40 AmeriCorps VISTA members.</p> <p>Obj. 1 Finalize workplans and assignment descriptions for local and national recruitment for 40 VISTA members (including VISTA Leaders)</p> <p>Obj. 2 Develop at least one PreService Orientation program to fill out quota for 40 VISTA Service Years.</p> <p>Obj. 3 Finalize agency agreements/memoranda of understandings regarding local reporting and management, participation in common resource development, and supervision support strategies for the year.</p> <p>Obj. 4 Provide central project support in at least four areas (project web site, discussion lists, in-person support through conferences, and online training) to assist VISTAs in their local capacity-building efforts in the areas of program development or expansion, outreach, and resource acquisition, among other tasks.</p>	<p>Pre and 1st Qtr & ongoing if needed</p> <p>Pre, 1st & 2nd Qtrs</p> <p>Pre and 1st Qtr</p> <p>All quarters</p>
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Project and Corporation responses to new administrative procedures disallowing a small number of additional VISTAs to start during the August PSO as an approach for dealing with anticipated attrition, an approach used since the project's inception, merit mention given the last minute notification and initial disruption to the selection and finalization process. Corporation flexibility provided by Program Officer Marsha Colbert's arrangements to allow for the bringing on of replacement VISTAs during the year has been most helpful in insuring maximum use of program resources.

<p>Goal 3. Develop collaborative training and support mechanisms for strengthening local and national community technology initiatives with at least four other multi-site community technology organizations.</p> <p>Obj. 1 -- Develop the MetroBoston affiliate model program and support structure through increased development of the Commonwealth Broadband Network in collaboration with the CTCNet New England Region, the MA state and Northeast Regional boards of the Alliance for Community Media, and area project operating sites.</p> <p>Obj. 2 -- In collaboration with CTCNet and the Association for Community Network (AFCN) produce and distribute two or more hardcopy and online versions of the <i>Community Technology Review</i>.</p> <p>Obj. 3 – In collaboration with CTCNet, AFCN, the Alliance for Community Media (ACM), and the Mass Service Alliance organize sessions for at least two regional/national conferences including the CTCNet annual one in June '05.</p> <p>Obj. 4 – Undertake online and in-person program support efforts with the Ohio Community Computing Center Network and the National Service Resource Center.</p>	<p>Qtrs 1-4</p> <p>Qtrs 1-4</p> <p>Qtrs 1 – 4</p> <p>Qtrs 1 - 4</p>
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<p>Goal 4 Build local capacity to lead and staff community technology programs.</p> <p>Obj. 1 – Assist in the development of the Community Media and Technology Program at UMass/Boston's College of Public and Community Service.</p> <p>Obj. 2 – Provide additional outreach to AmeriCorps about CPCS agreement to provide special credits for AC*VISTAs who enroll in the College and target outreach especially for the Community Media and Technology Program.</p>	<p>Qtrs 1-4</p> <p>Qtrs 1-4</p>
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<p>Goal 5. Increase the sustainability of the CTC VISTA Project and its ability to recruit, place, and support AC*VISTA and AmeriCorps members for project year five and beyond.</p>	
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Obj. 1 Research and meet with appropriate Corporation staff and others in developing continuation and sustainability plan for the post August 2005 future.	All qtrs
Obj. 2 Expand CBC/CTC VISTA Project Advisory Council to meet its goals of continuing on a national scope with a more diverse base of support.	All qtrs
Obj. 3 Develop and submit at least three proposals to additional funding sources to provide support for the CTC VISTA Project and its related support efforts.	All qtrs

While the status of these goals and activities has been commented on above, some additional developments in addressing Goal 5 sustainability are noteworthy:

The fall meeting in Washington, DC, and comparatively early informal approval for continuation to Year 6 resulted in the development of new project priority areas that indicate a shift in project organization and purpose. As supervisors and other interested organizations were told:

To summarize the changes (and note the new application and reporting requirements with the Corporation for National Service), we are moving from a project that presents itself as a resource to help build the capacity of CTCs and related organizations in a direction solely of their own choosing to one in which applicant organizations are required to address one of the Project's four priority areas:

- community networking
- community organizing and development
- technology support to non-profit organizations
- digital media support programs for youth

The project will develop resources and curriculum to support, learn from, and teach best practices in these arenas...As a result of these changes, we anticipate that while many existing CTCNet affiliates will continue to apply, the challenge of meeting new programmatic and application/reporting requirements may well discourage some. On the other hand, because of the new priority areas, we anticipate a growth in applications from a wider range of organizations that are not currently CTCNet members.

While the announcement also reflects the Project's concerns with the new and more complicated and involvement application procedure for participating programs, we are confident we will be able to meet these new challenges. In developing this new program, a revitalized and reformed Project Advisory Board has been helpful in their development and implementation.

Again, PPR criticism and feedback is sought for this report. Though we believe this and the appended site reports (Appendix C lists the table of contents for this separate report compilation), taken together, provide an excellent overview of our work, Corporation program assistance in completing sections on performance and results data would be most welcome in helping us document our achievements and need areas as effectively as possible.

Appendix A: The CTC VISTA Project
Tenth National Orientation and Support Institute
August 30-September 1, 2004 — Boston, MA (8/26/04)

Monday, August 30

4:00 - Introductions/Icebreaker — to be followed by dinner. Both events at the Phillips Old Colony House Restaurant next to the Ramada Inn.

8:00 - Free time

ALL EVENTS TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY ARE AT UMASS BOSTON, Wheatley Building
Tuesday, August 31

8:45 - Meet in hotel lobby for transportation to UMass/Boston campus for continental breakfast; continental breakfast at the Ramada Inn also available earlier.

9:30 - VISTA Orientation to Corporation for National Service (CNS) requirements and benefits, with Marsha Colbert and Sherry McClintock from CNS — rooms W04-138 & 141, 4th fl.

11:15 - Break

11:30 Find out more about CTCNet, CTC VISTA Project partner, and how you can take advantage of it! Intro to National Service Resource Center and Project Directory/resources. Taylor Multimedia Center –3rd floor Wheatley Building

12:15 Lunch (provided)

1:15 "Digital Media, an Overview" with Nettrice Gaskins, Commonwealth Broadband Collaborative Director and CMT Program, Taylor Multimedia Center, 3rd Fl

3:00 - Break

3:30 - Meet the MetroBoston VISTAs and VISTA Leaders— hear what the current Vistas in our project are doing and how they can help you survive and even flourish during your year of service! Student Lounge – 4th floor, Wheatley Building

5:00 - Break

6:00 - Boat Cruise in Boston Harbor, dinner provided, leaves from near Wheatley drop off area

8:00 - Free time

Wednesday – September 1

9:00 - Meet in hotel lobby for transportation to UMass/Boston campus for continental breakfast; continental breakfast at the Ramada Inn also available earlier. Check out before leaving.

9:30 - "Community Building and the Organizers' Database," with Rich Cowan, founder/director of the Organizers' Collaborative, Taylor Multimedia Center, 3rd floor Wheatley

11:30 - Swearing In, with Representative Barney Frank, Student Lounge, 4th floor.

12:00 - Lunch (provided)

1:00 - Wrap-up, final questions, and discussion, 4th floor student lounge

Appendix C

The CTC VISTA Project / Project Basics for CTCs: 2005-'06

Note: This document is primarily aimed at organizations interested in applying to the project. Individuals interested in applying to serve as CTC VISTAs, please also see: <www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/ctc-vista-faq.php>.

Overview/Project Priorities

Since 2000, the CTC VISTA Project has provided coordination, recruitment, training and support for a yearly cadre of approximately 40 AmeriCorps*VISTAs working in community technology centers (CTCs) and related programs across the country. Organizations interested in becoming involved should meet project priorities and other qualifications and be responsible for covering project fees and other expenses, as described below. The Project is open to all CTCNet members in good standing. If you are not currently a CTCNet member, you can read about these benefits and join at <www.ctcnet.org/membership>.

This year the Corporation for National and Community Service leadership in Washington, DC, has urged the Project to become more directive by promoting program and resource development in targeted areas. The Project has therefore defined a set of priorities that promote cutting edge work in the field and is developing a complementary set of resources to support these efforts. We believe that this approach will enhance the effectiveness of our VISTA members and the organizations that apply to have them and increase the impact of their work with underserved communities, thereby strengthening the Project, supporting the movement, and benefiting all parties involved.

The Project will be working with the Community Media and Technology Program in its home at the College of Public and Community Service at UMass/Boston and other partners to develop special training and educational resources to support project participants. It is expected that organizations hosting CTC VISTAs will participate in online trainings and discussions and otherwise be involved in collaborative program and curriculum development in their chosen area(s).

Applicant organizations are free to address a variety of organizational and program needs, including the traditional AmeriCorps*VISTA ones involving volunteer program development and management, developing partnerships and program material for marketing and fundraising, but the VISTA work plan should contain at least one goal which addresses the project's program priority areas:

1. *Community networking*, including wireless. The recent burst of energy and initiatives around neighborhood and municipal wireless projects, as noted in recent issues of the *Community Technology Review* and elsewhere, underlines this as one of the most promising areas for community information and communications technology development in the immediate future. Experienced community networking projects as well as organizations new to the arena with promising plans that can use the capacity

building resources of an AmeriCorps*VISTA member are encouraged.

2. *Community organizing and development*, using emerging technology organizing tools such as GIS systems, databases, podcasting, and blogs as well as cell phones, photography, and other non-traditional organizing technology. An interest in using and developing open source resources, both applications that run on proprietary operating systems as well as Linux, is especially welcome.
3. *Technology support to other nonprofit organizations*. When the applicant is not a CTC, some programmatic component involving CTC support should be included. With the elimination of traditional technical assistance (TA) to Nonprofit programs supported elsewhere by the Corporation, the need to address technology needs of the entire sector is pressing.
4. *Programs for at-risk youth, with a particular emphasis on digital media skills acquisition*. Project-based arts, media, and technology programs, with academic support, are especially encouraged in helping young people gain skills that prepare them for college and tomorrow's workforce.

Application Process

Organizational applications are accepted on a rolling basis. We anticipate that 40 VISTA member placements will be finalized during the summer. Members will officially begin at the PreService Orientation program, scheduled for August 29th-31st.

The CTC VISTA Project will begin informing potential VISTAs who apply to us through AmeriCorps' national online recruitment system (<https://recruit.cns.gov/>) about our applicant CTCs and organizations beginning April 19. From that point forward, individuals interested in working with the Project are instructed to review the VISTA "job descriptions" (posted on the Project website) and to notify the Project of their interests. Therefore, the sooner your organization applies, the more likely you will be able to find a VISTA through the project's national recruitment resources. (The Project also strongly encourages and supports organizations' local recruitment efforts as well.)

If you are a new organizational applicant or currently participating and wish to reapply, please send a notice of interest and intent to apply to [Paul Hansen](#), briefly describing your program, identifying the community you serve, and summarizing what you would like your VISTA(s) to do (the VISTA "job description"). Then, proceed to the application itself. The organizational application and supporting materials can be found in the [Supervisor Resources](#) section of our website. Do let us know if you have any questions along the way.

New community and faith-based CTCs and support organizations are welcome and should have their program supervisor attend the pre-CTCNet Conference orientation/training session on June 16th in Cleveland. If unable to attend this supervisor training, supervisors of projects with VISTA placements are expected to attend the supervisor training in Boston in September. The project seeks applications from all parts of the country, with a special interest in areas

underserved by community technology programs, such as the southeast. Up to six projects taking the lead on regional organizing can be supported; up to eight VISTA assignments may go to CTC support projects.

Continuing projects that have demonstrated capacity building goals and objectives, provided timely supervisor reports as well as VISTA blogs/web sites/reports, and demonstrated fiscal responsibility and CTC VISTA project involvement by their VISTAs and supervisors are eligible for second and third year continuation. Special sustainability-transition conditions will apply to organizations being supported in their third year; only under special circumstances will programs be supported beyond the third year.

Important note: While the Project's acceptance of an organization's completed application authorizes that organization to recruit for 1-2 VISTAs, it in no way insures that an organization will, in fact, receive any VISTAs through the CTC VISTA Project. In order to ensure that the 40 positions allocated to the project are filled by the deadline, the project approves more than 40 organizational applications and approves the final placement of candidates on a first-come-first-serve basis (taking into consideration Project priorities).

While we cannot guarantee a VISTA placement to any approved applicant organization, we can assist you in finalizing an application and doing local and national recruitment, and direct you to a range of other national and state resources and programs that can also help you obtain VISTA and/or AmeriCorps members. In this regard, applicant organizations that do not find a VISTA through the Project will benefit from having completed the application that is a prerequisite for an organization to get an AmeriCorps*VISTA member from *any* source.

Participating programs commit to a project fee per VISTA and associated costs as described below. Boston metropolitan area VISTAs also commit to attending project meetings held the first Wednesday of each month and to assist with national project support. Eastern MA supervisors agree to attend quarterly meetings.

The selection overview summary below provides further details about the selection process including key dates. Applicant organizations will be notified on their status as the process develops and slots fill up and are finalized through early-mid July.

Program fees/costs:

Program fees include:

- \$2,500/VISTA for CTCs new to the project; \$3,000 for continuing CTCs,
OR
- \$3,000/VISTA for new support organizations and organizations supporting CTCs at more than one site; \$3,500 for continuing support organizations and multi-site projects.

Organizations should additionally budget for:

- CTCNet Membership Fee: \$100; for information on member benefits see <www.ctcnet.org/membership/member_services.htm>

- Approximately \$1,000 for your VISTA to attend the CTCNet annual conference in June 2006. All participating orgs are expected to provide financial support and arrangements for their VISTAs to attend this event.
- The equivalent of a monthly transportation pass; professional development and support funds.
- Supervisor attendance at the June 16th preconference training in Cleveland or at the supervisor session to be held in Boston in September at a date to be determined. If supervisors will be attending the latter, they will be expected to arrange and pay for their transportation and some meals. The Project will provide overnight housing.

Selection Process Overview

The timelines that are applicable for the 2005-06 final selection and prioritization process:

- Applications approved on a rolling basis as they are submitted. Project staff works with organizations to develop the full application.
- **April 19:** list of CTCs, regional and support organizations that have applied is made public and provided to VISTA applicants. Matching process begins. CTCs and other orgs are added to list as applications are approved.
- **May 20:** CTCs which have been supported for three years already and have an application approved by the project and the Corporation for National and Community Service (“the Corporation”) are placed in line behind all others who have applied before this date.
- **June 16:** Supervisor training and orientation session in Cleveland.
- **Week of June 20:** contingent approval by the project begins for those approved applicant CTCs and orgs that have reached agreement with VISTAs (note that final approval requires submission of all required paperwork: see “Completing and confirming your VISTA candidate's selection” on the [Supervisors' page](http://www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/SupervisorResources.html) at www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/SupervisorResources.html; and Corporation approval).
- Applications and VISTA selection continues on a first-come, first-serve basis as per project priorities.
- **Week of July 4:** approval given to CTCs and applicant orgs to take on second VISTAs on a space-available basis as per project priorities.
- **Week of July 11:** process is completed, or extended at the discretion of the Corporation; applicant org. documentation is sent to the appropriate Corporation state offices for approval under the 45 day process notice.
- **July 25 -** All VISTA paperwork due (see "Week of June 20" above).
- **August 29-31:** PreService Orientation program in Boston (all costs paid for by the VISTA project and the Corporation).
- **September 1-6:** VISTA assignments begin at local operating sites.

There has been some good discussion about this year's program with current staff, supervisors, and VISTAs, CTCNet and other project advisory members. You're welcome to submit comments about the project basics to the blog at www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/blog/project_basics/.

Appendix C
CTC AmeriCorps*VISTA Project
Appended Affiliate Progress Reports
 Covering Project Quarters 17 & 18, August 15, 2004 – February 14, 2005

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Appendix D: CTC VISTA Project

www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista

Preconference Supervisor Orientation and Education Session (draft)

June 10, 2004, 10:00-5:00pm

DoubleTree Airport Hotel — Seattle, WA

10:00-noon: Morning session

- Introductions (yellow sheet) and CTCNet welcome (Kavita Singh)
- Overview of special leadership opportunities for VISTA Project Supervisors
—Team Building
- Recruitment strategy session with Angela Stuber and Jeremy Wolford, Ohio Community Computing Network VISTA Project

noon-1:00 — Lunch

1:00 Introductions

1:30 Project Basics: A soup to nuts/everything-there-is-to-know-about-being-a-CTC-VISTA-Supervisor/ Costs & Benefits / Timing (see next page for more detail)

- *The AmeriCorps*VISTA Supervisor's Manual* (hard copy only)
The VISTA Member Handbook (www.americorps.org/members/resource/pdf/FY03VISTA_hdbk.pdf)
- The process — from organizational application to end of the year service wrap-up (www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/SupervisorResources.html — orange sheet)
- One-page overview of VISTA & Supervisor expectations (www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/CTCVISTAbasics1-pager.doc — beige sheet in packet)
- Costs: Dollars and beyond
Benefits: Beyond having a full-time capacity-building staffer
- Time lines (www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/currentlyrecruiting.html — blue sheet)

2:45 Break

3:00: Special Guests: Q&A with the Corporation for National & Community Service on “AmeriCorps update, VISTA benefits, and special resources for Supervisors”—with Carlos Pedraza, Director, Clearinghouse Services, National Service Resource Center
Marsha Colbert, CTC VISTA Project Program Officer, Corp. for National Service

4:00: The CTC VISTA panel and Q&A: “What Good Supervisors Should Know”
with VISTAs from the project

4:45 Debriefing and planning discussion for ongoing supervisor support, and potential for developing the supervisor training as a part of the CTCNet Leadership Development Institute. (Session evaluation — green sheet)

1:30:Project Basics: A soup to nuts/everything-there-is-to-know-about-being-a-CTC-VISTA-Supervisor / Costs & Benefits / Timing

1. *The AmeriCorps*VISTA Supervisor's Manual* (hard copy only)
The VISTA Member Handbook (www.americorps.org/members/resource/pdf/FY03VISTA_hdbk.pdf)
Other: www.nationalservicerresources.org; lists (green sheet)
2. The process — from organizational application to end of the year service wrap-up (www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/SupervisorResources.html — orange sheet)
 - The Organization Application,
 - Selecting your VISTA,
 - Completing and confirming your VISTA candidate's selection,
 - Ongoing supervision,
 - Reporting on your VISTA's progress, and
 - The end of your VISTA's year.
3. One-page overview of VISTA & Supervisor expectations (www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/CTCVISTAbasics1-pager.doc — beige sheet in packet)
4. **Costs:** Dollars and beyond: problems, failures, disasters — your time and effort
Benefits: Beyond having a full-time capacity-building “staffer”
 - Key leadership and development position for Supervisor and VISTA in the community technology movement.
 - How to get VISTAs and AmeriCorps members from other sources.
 - Doing/learning managing by objectives; developing measurable, quantifiable goals; applying for, managing federal grants more generally.
 - How to use your application in other funding proposals, including the in-kind contributions of the Corporation and VISTA Project itself.
 - Community Media and Technology certificate program at UMass/Boston.
 - This year's special priorities, directions, and resources: regional organizing, volunteer program development, community building and multimedia, and:
 - Earned Income Tax Credit program
 - The Community Technology Review (www.comtechreview.org),
 - the Commonwealth Broadband Collaborative/First Tuesday (www.cbcmmedia.net)
 - www.beehive.com
5. Timing: July 5th - completed Part B org. applications submitted to state offices
July 23th - VISTA applicant material due
Check “CTCs Currently Recruiting VISTAs” page
(www.cpcs.umb.edu/vista/ctclist2004.htm — blue sheet)