

Literacy Leadership Program

Literacy Minnesota and AmeriCorps VISTA



I'm here to share the opportunity to host an emerging leader through Literacy Leadership, a national AmeriCorps VISTA program sponsored by Literacy Minnesota.

We're currently searching for Tribal Nations, schools, libraries, nonprofits and other community organizations interested in hosting a member from 2023-2024.

Host sites propose a project with the purpose of building long-lasting capacity for their organization to improve its current services. Some examples of projects have included: curriculum development, volunteer engagement, planning and implementing new digital literacy instruction, generating resources and more.

Literacy Minnesota

Our **mission** is to share the power of learning through education, community building and advocacy.



workforce, advocating for oneself and fulfilling basic needs. Literacy Minnesota has worked since 1972 to build a more equitable society by making quality literacy education available to all.

We're a comprehensive literacy resource and advance the literacy cause through a combination of direct service, legislative advocacy, capacity-building work, creating educator resources and convening a broad network of partnerships.

AmeriCorps VISTA



AmeriCorps

**Volunteers
In
Service
To
America**

National Service program aimed at **eliminating poverty.**



VISTA, or Volunteers in Service to America, started in 1965 as domestic equivalent to Peace Corps. Funding is provided through AmeriCorps, a federal government agency.

AmeriCorps VISTA members are **national service members** who receive a modest living allowance, Education Award scholarship, and other benefits in exchange for their service – along with training, professional development, mentoring and coaching.

We place AmeriCorps VISTA members in organizations to bring leadership, passion and perseverance to help increase access and success in literacy and digital literacy for low-income individuals and communities.

Literacy Minnesota has hosted or sponsored AmeriCorps VISTA members for over 30 years. We're the longest-running sponsor of AmeriCorps VISTA in MN, and we have also operated AmeriCorps State & National direct service programming in the past.

We have two AmeriCorps VISTA programs: LL and SR.

The Literacy Leadership program engages AmeriCorps VISTA members to design and carry out literacy initiatives in partnership with schools and community organizations. Members serve behind the scenes on capacity-building projects. They serve for one full year in programs that benefit individuals of any age.

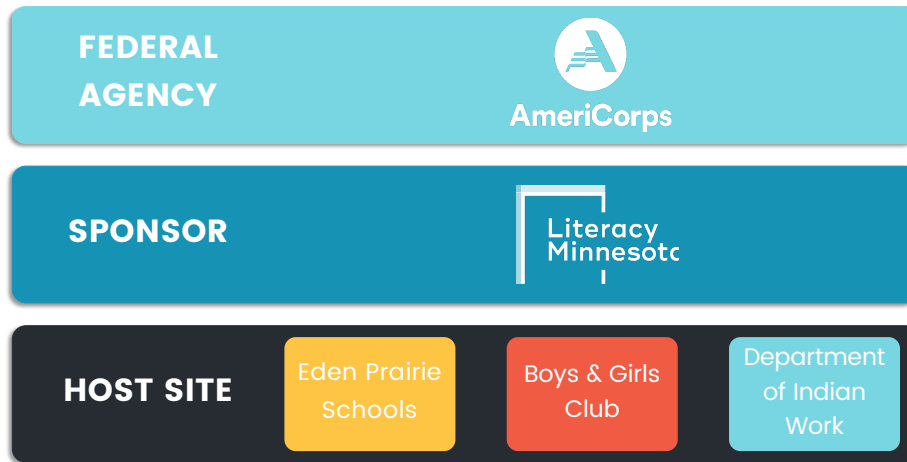
- In 2022, thanks to support from AmeriCorps, we expanded this opportunity and resources to a national scale and sponsor Literacy Leadership members in any state. At present, we have members serving in seven states in addition to Minnesota.

Summer Reads is a direct service program that provides reading tutoring and mentoring directly to individuals for 8 weeks over the summer. Most Summer Reads members serve as Mentors to elementary-aged children in K-5, but this year we successfully piloted an expansion of the program with Summer Reads Coaches, who serve and provide direct literacy services in adult basic education programs.

Organizations may host both types of AmeriCorps VISTA members

For this session, we're just going to focus on Literacy Leadership, but if you are interested in learning more about Summer Reads for 2023, please get in touch with us.

Literacy Minnesota as intermediary



Literacy Minnesota is an intermediary for the AmeriCorps program. Literacy Minnesota applies for and receives a grant from the AmeriCorps federal agency that oversees national service to then distribute and manage AmeriCorps VISTA resources to other agencies, like yours.

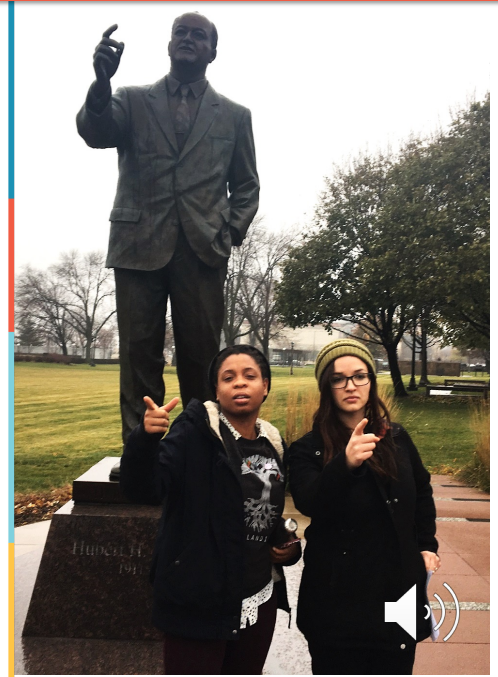
Dual goals of AmeriCorps at Literacy Minnesota

GOAL 1

Increase literacy and/or digital literacy access and success, extend your capacity.

GOAL 2

Invest in emerging leaders.



AmeriCorps has dual goals at Literacy Minnesota.

We want to bring talented, passionate people on board to expand your capacity at a fraction the cost of a full-time employee, help agencies to serve more individuals, reach a greater audience, more deeply impact literacy and digital literacy gaps, and expand the quality and quantity of program offerings. Ultimately, we want to help more people build literacy skills so they can be more self-sufficient.

We want to invest in the next generation of literacy leaders and provide opportunities for AmeriCorps VISTA members to build leadership skills; explore career paths in public service, social service or education; and engage deeply in community work.

Literacy Leadership host site opportunity

3-5 YEAR PROJECTS

- AmeriCorps VISTA members serve full-time for one year (12 months).
- Typically, one member serves per project per year.

BEHIND THE SCENES, CAPACITY-BUILDING PROJECTS THAT YOU IDENTIFY

- Program content.
- Evaluation.
- Community partnerships.
- Systems and organizational change.
- Volunteer engagement.
- Resource generation.

TARGET POPULATION

- Low-income individuals and families of all ages.

ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS

- Nonprofits, public agencies and Tribal Nations anywhere in the United States.



Literacy Leaders serve for one year behind the scenes to create or improve existing programs to support literacy skill-building of low-income individuals and families of all ages. You identify the project, we'll work with you on developing a more detailed workplan.

Members can work on things like:

- developing or improving program content
- designing or conducting program evaluation for continuous improvement of programs
- developing and nurturing partnerships, and engaging volunteers for program delivery
- enhancing fundraising strategies and generating resources for sustainability of programs

Literacy Leaders help you make programs and services more effective or reach a larger or different audience. They help you to launch projects that you have not had the time and staff capacity to do.

Coalitions or partner organizations may apply for a shared member to work on a collaborative project.



Literacy Leadership Project Examples

What do AmeriCorps VISTA members do?



Let's go through a few real life examples of what Literacy Leadership capacity-building AmeriCorps VISTA projects can look like.

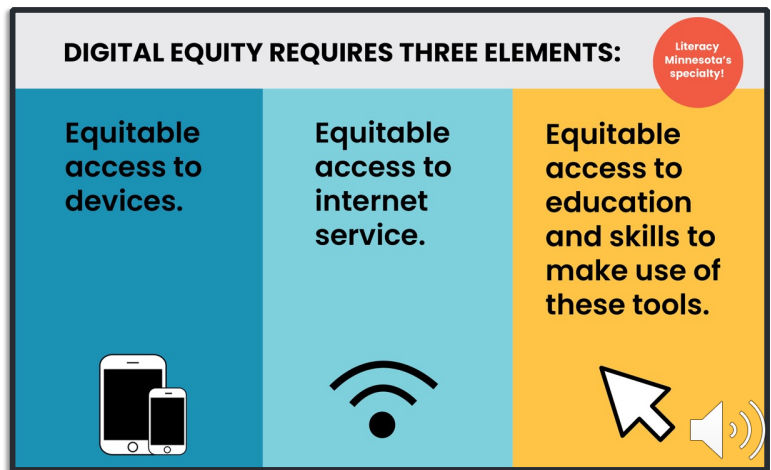
Two tracks for Literacy Leadership

LITERACY FOR ALL

Increasing literacy outcomes for children, youth, adults or families – reading, writing, oral language.

DIGITAL LITERACY

Building digital equity for low-income individuals and communities



We have two tracks – Literacy for All, and Digital Literacy. Literacy includes reading, writing and oral language.

The **Literacy for All track** works on building your capacity to ultimately improve literacy outcomes for children, youth, adults or families.

When we talk about digital equity, we come from a framework that digital equity involves three interrelated elements: equitable access to devices, equitable access to internet service, and equitable access to education and skills to make use of these tools.

Eligible projects in this **Digital Literacy track** will build the capacity of host sites to help low-income individuals and communities improve digital literacy skills. Projects may also work toward improving either or both of the other two components of digital equity: connectivity and device access.

Example: Literacy for All



EAST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES (Minneapolis)

Literacy Leader: Vishnu (he/him)

- Supported out-of-school time programs across six sites.
- Improved literacy curriculum, interventions and training.
- Worked on evaluation and family engagement.
- Examined disparities in education for children of color, immigrant children and children who are English Language Learners.



AmeriCorps



Meet Vishnu. Vishnu was born and raised in the Twin Cities, and after a few years of post-college work abroad and out-of-state, he decided to return to his hometown and do his part for his community.

He served with East Side Neighborhood Services in Minneapolis, where he worked on closing literacy gaps in education, which are more likely to negatively impact children of color, immigrant children and children who are English language learners.

After a successful first year of service, Vishnu returned to serve with Literacy Minnesota's National Service Department as a VISTA Leader, where he provided essential peer support to his fellow Literacy Leadership members by planning trainings, facilitating affinity groups, and improving processes for the department.

Example: Literacy for All

OPEN DOOR LEARNING CENTERS (Twin Cities)

Literacy Leader: Hiba (she/her)



- Serves with six different Open Door Learning Center locations and their learners.
- Engages communities to establish organizational culture centered on learners' voices.
- Increases number of learners served using grassroots outreach strategies.



Meet Hiba, a third-year AmeriCorps VISTA member. She has a degree in mechanical engineering and moved from Iraq to the United States a few years ago.

Hiba served one year with Literacy Minnesota's Open Door Learning Center at Arlington Hills and a second year as a VISTA Leader with Literacy Minnesota.

In her third project, she employs grassroots community engagement and outreach strategies in six Open Door Learning Center locations to establish an organizational culture that centers adult learners' voices and decision making.

Example: Digital Literacy

SCALELIT (Chicago)

Literacy Leader: Neo-Rose (they/them)



- Explores the causes of the Digital Divide in Chicago.
- Examines digital learning, identifies needs and implements programs.
- Develops learning circles and communities of action.
- Focuses on the presence of widespread illiteracy amongst overlooked and underserved populations.



AmeriCorps



Meet Neo, a Digital Navigator with scaleLIT in Chicago, Illinois. They relocated to Chicago just to serve with AmeriCorps VISTA, undertaking a pretty big move in pursuit of a year dedicated to national service.

Neo's project explores the current state of the Digital Divide and its related causes. Their project examines digital learning, identifies the areas of greatest need, and implements programs that aid in the community's development. With Neo's help, scaleLIT is developing learning circles and communities of action that address the presence of widespread illiteracy among overlooked populations.

Example: Digital Literacy

MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK (New York)

Literacy Leader: Denise (she/they)



- Serves the community they live in.
- Expands an integrated digital literacy strategy.
- Deliver workshops and coaching to community leaders who are building proficiency with digital tools.
- Develops navigation resource materials and a digital navigation coaching protocol for community members.



AmeriCorps



Meet Denise. They're from Brooklyn, New York and they're serving the community they live in. Her host site, Make the Road New York, recruited from their local communities because they knew that community voice and representation was important for the project's success.

Denise's project strengthens digital literacy tutoring for adult literacy students to help them better succeed in using educational technology when enrolled in in-person, hybrid or fully-remote classes. She's also developing navigation resource materials and a digital navigation coaching protocol for community members.



Responsibilities of Host Sites and of Literacy Minnesota



Host site responsibilities

PROJECT PLANNING, OVERSIGHT AND REPORTING

MEMBER RECRUITMENT

**MEMBER SUPERVISION, COACHING AND
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**REGULAR COMMUNICATION WITH LITERACY
MINNESOTA**

ADEQUATE WORKSPACE AND RESOURCES

COST-SHARE FINANCIAL MATCH



Literacy Minnesota's responsibilities

PLANNING AND OVERSIGHT

TRAINING, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT

FISCAL MANAGEMENT

INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN SITES/MEMBERS AND AMERICORPS



Generally, communication and program management between sites or members and AmeriCorps happens through Literacy Minnesota instead of directly with AmeriCorps. We're a liaison and intermediary, ensuring compliance with AmeriCorps requirements and easing reporting and paperwork burdens on host sites.

Literacy Minnesota partners with your organization to determine mutually beneficial goals and a plan for utilizing the AmeriCorps VISTA resource to achieve those goals.

We provide training, technical assistance and support for supervisors and members at every stage from application to completion of project.

We manage payment of AmeriCorps VISTA living allowances and other benefits.

We operate on a cohort model, and encourage collaboration, networking and mutual learning across projects in our cohort – including amongst our host site supervisors.



Next Steps

How do I apply?



If all that sounds intriguing, you may be wondering – how do I get in on this?

Process and projected timeline

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2022

Literacy Minnesota will publish Request for Proposals (RFP).

We will collect and review RFP submissions.

DECEMBER 2022 – JANUARY 2023

Submit your host site application.

JANUARY 2023

Award notification from Literacy Minnesota.

FEBRUARY 2023 – JUNE 2023

Supervisor training workshops.

Workplan development.

Member recruitment.

AUGUST 2023

Literacy Leaders begin service.



Our next Request for Proposal cycle will begin this fall, but please reach out early if you're interested in learning more or making a proposal.

We review the request for proposals, have you submit a host site application, and let you know if you've been awarded an AmeriCorps VISTA resource.

Then, we'll work together with some supervisor trainings to get you ready for hosting an AmeriCorps VISTA member and help you develop your workplan.

You'll work on recruiting your member alongside our team, develop an on-site orientation and training plan, and then your Literacy Leader will begin their service term in the summer of 2023.

Information and questions



JESSE CHANG

National Service Director

jchang@literacymn.org

651-251-9069

(he/him/his)



literacymn.org/ameri-corps-vista 

Check our website for more information and the Request for Proposals, which should be available soon.

Jesse Chang, our National Service Director, will work closely with you at every stage – he is more than happy to talk through any questions, give feedback on project ideas, and more.

Thanks for watching! I hope that we'll get to work together this year.