

DOWNTOWN COLORADO, INC
**DOWNTOWN
CAPACITY BUILDERS**

5 YEAR VISTA
PROGRAM
REPORT

AMERICORPS VISTA PARTNERSHIP

EST. 2016

SPONSOR ORGANIZATION



Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI) is a nonprofit, membership association committed to building better communities by providing assistance to Colorado downtowns, commercial districts and town centers. Established in 1982 as Colorado Community Revitalization Association and now dba Downtown Colorado, Inc.. Since 2016, DCI has been a sponsoring organization for the AmeriCorps VISTA program which has allowed communities across Colorado to have added capacity for their downtown revitalization and community development efforts. The DCI VISTA team are known as the Downtown Capacity Builders.

The Downtown Capacity Builders VISTA team has built capacity across Colorado through placements with local governments, commercial districts, Urban Renewal Authorities (URAs), Downtown Development Authorities (DDAs), nonprofits, community organizations, and more.

The Downtown Capacity Builder VISTAs strengthen existing partnerships and connection to resources across Colorado which contribute to the overarching VISTA program goal of alleviating poverty.

VISTA TEAM TRAININGS

Throughout DCI's Downtown Capacity Builders VISTA team experience, there are various training and professional development opportunities. The trainings occur quarterly and provide an opportunity for the statewide VISTA team to collaborate, meet in person, and cover various topics. The training topics have included: grant writing, online event planning, networking, resume building, engaging survey creation, and more.

In addition to the trainings, the DCI VISTA team has access to professional development opportunities in the form of networking, various in person and online educational events, statewide knowledge-sharing, and DCI's annual IN THE GAME conference.



AFTER VISTA

AmeriCorps VISTA is a wonderful opportunity for growing professional development skills, experience in the nonprofit or local government sectors, and as part of the DCI VISTA program specifically being part of the community development field.

Following a year of VISTA service, VISTA alumni can then use their experience and connections made for their next steps.

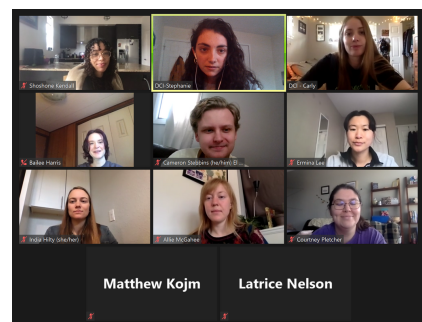
- **10** VISTA Extensions
- **6** Hired Full-Time
- **7** DCI VISTA Alumni now in Community Development Related Field
- **4** Started Grad School



MLK JR. SERVICE DAY

In January 2021, the DCI VISTA team collaborated with Community Resource Center (CRC) for MLK Jr. Service Day amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The service day involved an online transcription of historic documents from History Colorado for the service project aspect. Following the service project, the DCI VISTAs and CRC VISTAs met on Zoom to watch some impactful MLK Jr. historic video clips. After watching the clips, the VISTAs went into breakout rooms for reflection and discussion.



DO-ER.
DOWNTOWN
CAPACITY

DCI'S VISTA PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



Here are highlights of DCI's VISTA, Downtown Capacity Builders Program, and what has been accomplished since the start of the program in 2016.

25

VISTA SITES



31

TOTAL VISTAS



64,500+

TOTAL HOURS SERVED



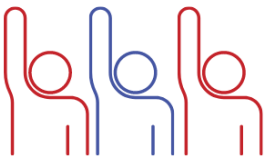
214+

NEW PARTNERSHIPS



159+

VOLUNTEERS RECRUITED

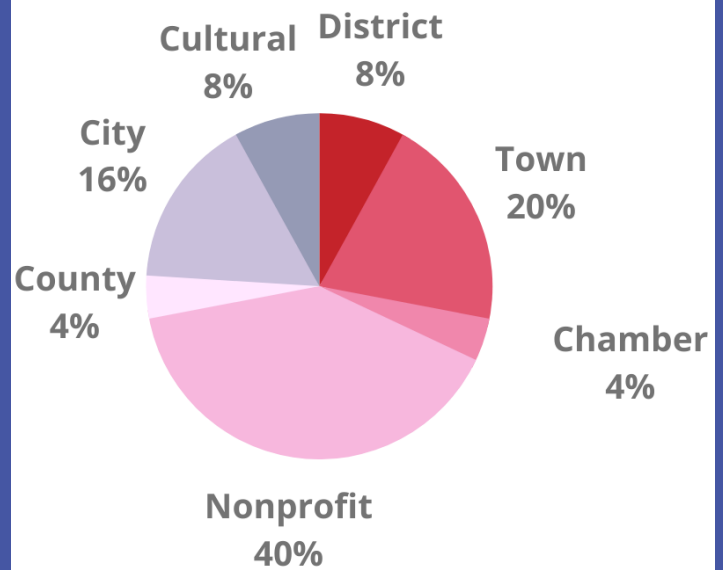


20+

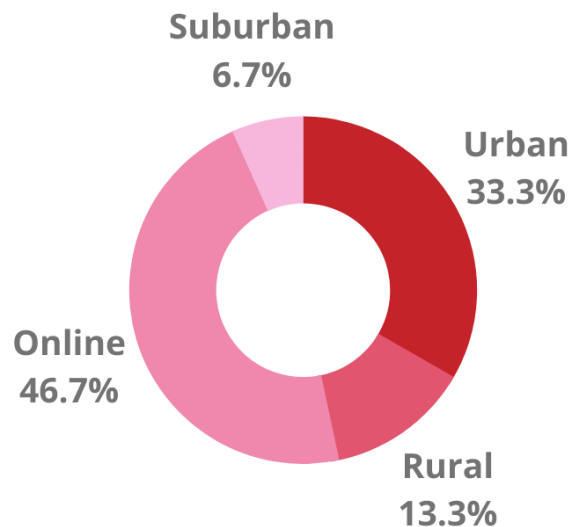
GRANTS WRITTEN



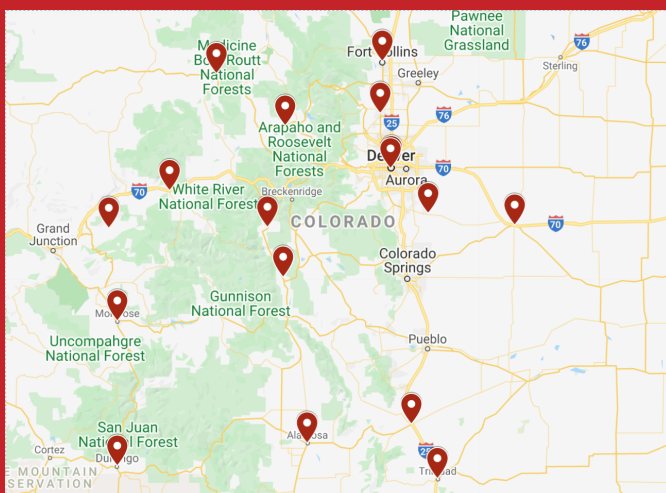
DCI VISTA SITE TYPES



DCI VISTA TRAINING LOCATIONS



DOWNTOWN CAPACITY BUILDERS SITE LOCATIONS



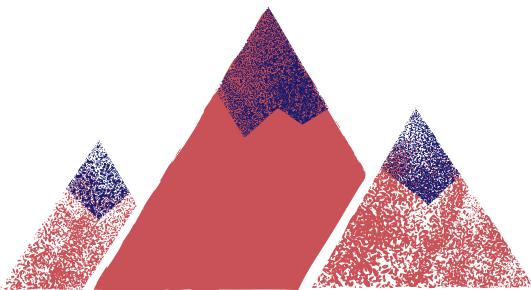
57% Rural
43% Urban

VISTA PROGRAM PROCESS

Since its start in 2016, the Downtown Capacity Builders VISTA program has emphasized local community driven change, vision and initiatives with an emphasis on capacity building and AmeriCorps' mission of poverty alleviation.

Within DCI's VISTA program, there are steps for site creation, recruitment and selection of the right candidate to build capacity focused on community development. The process includes site creation with the prospective host site, creation of the VISTA Assignment Description (VAD), recruitment for potential candidates and selection for the position. Once the VISTA is selected, the VISTA has various training and professional development opportunities throughout the year of service.

The site creation, VAD approval, and recruitment process are all guided by AmeriCorps and their approval.



VISTA EXPERIENCE

The VISTA service term provides various learning opportunities, gaining of new skills, and experience in a career of interest.

"Now, going forward into my next job, I have a larger range of both hard and soft skills, quantitative ways to talk about my achievements, and confidence in client-facing roles."

-Sierra Jeter, Community Builders VISTA

"To date, the experience has allowed me to develop useful skills in employee on-boarding, web development, and community capacity building, with a major emphasis on growing and supporting the local economy."

- Allie McGahee, Manitou Springs Chamber VISTA

CASE STUDY

WALSENBURG, CO

The City of Walsenburg has had multiple VISTAs build capacity in Huerfano County and Walsenburg at various VISTA sites.

The VISTA positions have included:

- Huerfano County Economic Development and Resiliency
- Huerfano County Capacity Builder
- Program Development Manager - Fox Theatre Walsenburg
- Spanish Peaks Business Development Associate

Following their VISTA terms, Walsenburg VISTAs have stayed connected and engaged with Huerfano County.

Carl Young, the first VISTA in Walsenburg working on Economic Development and Resiliency is now Huerfano County Administrator. Dominic Elizondo, the VISTA after Carl, is now the County's Emergency Management Office Coordinator. Evan Ksander, a Walsenburg native extended his service to build capacity for the Fox Theatre Walsenburg. Bailee Harris, the Spanish Peaks VISTA will be DCI's VISTA leader for 2022.

DCI VISTA SUPERVISORS

The role of an AmeriCorps VISTA supervisor is one of support, mentorship, professional development, and leadership.

"Having a vista has made a huge impact on our Downtown and Creative District in Longmont. Mersadi was able to hit the ground running, build upon the success of our previous vista and chart her own path. She made connections with the creatives in our community and created a voice for us on social media. Her service was an invaluable asset for us."

- Kimberlee McKee, Longmont DDA Executive Director

"Evan is precisely the person we hoped would fit in with the rest of our team. His ability to analyze the needs of our various teams is crucial to our success. He saves us time and money, which, for our small non-profit, is invaluable. He leads with his heart and trusts his gut."

- Mike Peters, Fox Theatre-Walsenburg