

VISTA PROJECT NARRATIVE

Please do not write more than 1-3 paragraphs per question but only when needed. Concise is best. Do not redesign or reformat this form. Work in this form only!

A. Executive Summary

Provide a brief narrative of your proposed AmeriCorps*VISTA project, including population to be served, issue areas, history of your organization's activities in these issue areas, and the type of service activities you expect the AmeriCorps*VISTA members to accomplish.

ACCES/SCF are non-profit associations of agencies that provide energy efficiency and other services to low-income communities. Association of California Community and Energy Services (ACCES) was incorporated in 2001 and received status as a 501C3 in 2003. Southern California Forum (SCF) is also a 501C3 organization since 2001 and was incorporated in 1995 as SCF but has existed since 1981. We provide the Low Income Energy Service Providers (LIESP), utilities and vendors a forum to network and communicate about the delivery of services to the low-income communities throughout the state.

The associations have need for a person that can liaison between the member entities to assist on energy efficiency and solar projects for low-income households. This can include assisting the director in all tasks as communications, setting meetings, proposal research and writing and actual field training, follow-up and data collection. The goal is to provide agencies with opportunities to expand services in solar to all low-income communities. All activities will be statewide but sourced in the Los Angeles area.

B. Needs and Activities

1. State in measurable and quantifiable terms the *specific poverty-related need(s)* identified by the community(ies) that the AmeriCorps*VISTA project will address, including the number of low-income people directly affected by the problem(s).

The current Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the Department of Energy (DOE) Weatherization program have both increased the funding for 2009-2011. In addition, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has increased their Low Income Energy Efficiency (LIEE) program three times from the previous year. This has provided the opportunity for the LIESP to expand their workforce and services. These services may include weatherization, bill payment and solar photovoltaic and thermal installations.

The need of the population for LIHEAP/DOE services is growing as the economy becomes weaker, jobs are lost and more families are entering into this segment established as "low-income". In 2008, the statewide average for services provided through LIHEAP was 4.5% according to the Campaign for Home Energy Assistance California fact sheet. <http://www.liheap.com/liheap%20fact%20sheet/CA/liheap-CA.pdf>
<http://www.liheap.com/floor%20statements%20and%20letters/LIHEAP%202008-Investment.pdf>

In California there were 4 million eligible people under the LIHEAP guidelines and only 165,678 were provided some service through the program. In 2009 the funds have increased to \$249 million a significant increase from \$103 million in 2008. The guidelines have also increased to 200% of the state median income. This will help 268,463 more an increase of 162% that are in need but also in this economic climate the need has concurrently increased. Even with this new funding the percentage of households receiving services will remain close to what has traditionally been served. (See attachment A)

C. Strengthening Communities

1. Describe how the new infrastructure or organizational capacity created by your project will bring individuals and, ultimately, the community out of poverty.

With the new 2009 LIHEAP funding, 6% has been set aside for innovative projects. The associations plan to propose a statewide solar water heater and solar photovoltaic program. We plan to partner with a current LIHEAP provider. This proposal is to provide assistance to the agencies to plan, train personnel and install solar thermal and photovoltaic systems in low-income housing. Additionally we will install data loggers to the solar thermal systems and track energy usage data that will show savings, hot water usage and cost effectiveness. This project will allow the low-income households to finally participate in solar technology. Unfortunately this population has not been able to afford solar technology it was far from the scope of consideration. With the collaborations between LIHEAP service providers ACCES/SCF and some other leveraged resources the low-income households will have the benefit of free hot water, the possibility of a portion of their electricity from the sun which will ultimately lower their energy burden and monthly costs.

In effect this project, with the help of a VISTA worker, can benefit the low-income communities of the state, provide training and education to LIESPs and help the environment for everybody.

2. How will you involve the community to ensure the sustainability of the proposed project?

This project will involve possibly 44 LIESPs throughout the state. All counties will be provided services through LIHEAP/DOE. Each Agency will be responsible to engage the local utility, city and county CDBG and other entities and local solar providers in collaboration to provide, locate and fund this project. These collaborations will initiate the sustainability of this service. The California Solar Initiative (CSI) and the not yet started California Solar Thermal (CST) are rebate programs mandated by the state to provide rebates until 2016 for the CSI and until 2020 for the CST.

In addition, through the American Recovery And Reinvestment Act (ARRA) the state is slated to receive:

- \$324.2 million in HOME Funding to enable state and local government, in partnership with community-based organizations, to acquire, construct, and rehabilitate affordable housing and provide rental assistance to poor families.

- \$226 million through the State Energy Program.

- \$185 million through the Weatherization Assistance Program

With these stimulus funds, rebate programs, early collaborations with the entities receiving the funding and the leveraging of LIHEAP and DOE this project can create a sustainable program.

3. How, if at all, will you collaborate with other national service programs (AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, RSVP, NCC) in order to support the proposed project?

The member non-profit agencies all collaborate with and have in service, AmeriCorps, Senior Corps and many other national and local volunteer programs. The strength of the associations is the member agencies. The agencies and these associations work with the state Department of Community Services and Development (CSD), the Investor Owned Utilities (IOU) and city and county governments to provide continued services to the low-income communities. The LIHEAP and DOE WAP have been funded continually since 1980. The CSBG is administered by the Community Action Partnerships (CAP) which are

also members of these associations. These funds are geared to provide low-income families with services that provide ways of reaching self sustainability while making a significant difference to the environment.

A VISTA volunteer can have the opportunity to work with a network of service providers to keep the agencies sustainable to keep providing the services to the low-income communities. The associations can provide this avenue for expanding agencies capabilities into a sustainable future by being a conduit between the entities and to bring these diverse funds and services together to allow a more comprehensive opportunity. The associations have successfully completed several statewide programs. ACCES delivered an energy education program that served all counties in the state. Over 50,000 participants received energy education and a bag of measures that were provided by ACCES. SCF completed an 11 agency solar water heater (SWH) training and installation program. These are the kind of sustainable services that can forward the agencies and bring new and innovative services to the low-income communities.

D. VISTA Assignment Description

1. **List** the tasks and activities AmeriCorps*VISTA member(s) must perform to implement the strategies described in the project plan(s). These tasks and activities should logically relate to the overall project goals and activities you propose in your VISTA Assignment Description. This section will include more detail on the actual service activities.
 - a. Assist director with correspondence, meetings, research and reports.
 - b. Liason between the partners of this project including the LIESPs, the CSD, utilities, low-income communities and households, and others as financial organizations.
 - c. Data collection and interpretation
 - d. Final reports and conclusions
2. **List** the recommended skills and qualifications that an AmeriCorps*VISTA member should have to successfully complete the project plan.

The Member tasks and activities for Year 1 will include:

1. Report writing and data evaluation
2. Learning state and local EE and solar programs
3. Working with a network of non-profit community agencies
4. Attending meetings with state and local entities as CSD, CPUC, the IOUs and the agencies
5. Learning the application process for solar rebates
6. Data collection for SWH project
7. Researching innovative solar products

Recommended skills and qualifications include:

1. An interest or background in solar and energy efficiency (EE) technology
2. Application of solar and EE to low-income households a plus
3. Knowledge of California EE and solar programs a plus
4. Proficient knowledge of English including excellent writing skills
5. Any other language knowledge a plus
6. A California drivers license
7. Ability to travel
8. Excellent people skills for project coordination
9. Proficient computer/internet/search skills
10. An interest in learning technical information and disseminating to others

E. Project Management

1. Describe plans for daily supervision of AmeriCorps*VISTA members. Specify who will supervisor and if supervision will be their full-time or part-time responsibility.

The Director and Administrator will be the supervisor of the VISTA person. Between the two associations it will be a full time responsibility. Arleen Novotney will be the supervisor for these projects.

2. Are 51 percent or more of the persons on your board of directors' members of the low-income community? If not, please describe how your agency has developed, or will develop, an advisory council for the AmeriCorps*VISTA project that consists of members or representatives of the low-income community served by the proposed project.

All of the members of the board of directors are employed by the non-profit organizations that provide the direct services to the low-income communities. We and all of the agencies are advocates for these communities. We serve on the Low-Income Oversight Board (LIOB) that provides recommendations to the CPUC on low-income matters. The board members are members of the Energy Council formed by the CSD to advise and represent the network of providers to better serve our clients.

F. Organizational Capacity

1. What in-kind resources will you provide to ensure the success of the proposed project?
We have volunteer help from the network of agencies that help to ensure all project success. The board is completely volunteer and unpaid. The expertise of the network is always at hand to promote, complete tasks and offer their support in the collaboration that is needed to make the statewide effort to ensure the wanted outcomes. The office and support is an in-kind from the director.
2. Describe current activities your organization and other organizations are undertaking to address the problems identified in your need statement. Describe how the proposed project will complement this work.

SCF is currently working with the Santa Monica City College and the Los Angeles City Colleges (9) to provide energy efficiency and solar training to low-income residents and to the agency's staff. This will not only help the low-income residents to start a new career in a long existing green field but also provide training to existing agency staff to further the green goal and supply the workforce needed to "GoSolar".

ACCES and SCF are currently the entity that tracks, compiles and evaluates solar water heater systems on low-income housing. This is an ongoing project to show the savings and cost effectiveness of SWH systems. The other outcome is to have this measure as a part of the weatherization program. This will create green jobs and expand the services that the agencies provide to the low-income community.

3. Describe the accessibility of services provided to members of the community with disabilities. Is your organization able to accommodate AmeriCorps*VISTA members with disabilities?

As previously stated, the office is donated. It is completely accessible to those with disabilities. All office equipment is also available for the use by any VISTA volunteer. This will include access to the internet, a computer and telephones. This person will be working closely with the director who can provide some transportation especially in conducting business as attending meetings and travel to installation sites and trainings. The office location is also a half a block from public transportation.

ATTACHMENTS

Please submit the following attachments with your project narrative or soon after.

- List of Board of Directors, or governing body (not applicable if public entity).
- List of Advisory Council Members if already selected. If not, the list must be submitted before the end of the first quarter of the project.
- Copy of Articles of Incorporation (not applicable to public entities).
- Organizational chart.
- Tax exempt status: either IRS determination or copy of application to IRS for exemption (not applicable to public entities).
- Copy of Supervisor's Resume and Job Description.
- One letter of commitment from the proposed board of directors. The letter should describe the type of support and/or resources the partner organization will contribute.

