

**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.

The Colusa-Glenn-Trinity Community Action Partnership (The Partnership) serves Colusa, Glenn and Trinity Counties under a joint powers agreement. The Glenn County Board of Supervisors serves as the Governing Body for the Partnership. The Partnership is proposing a project called "Prosperity 4 All" (P4A or "the project"). P4A will bring together people, agencies and organizations to share ideas and to merge other strategies - some existing and some in concept - to promote improved prosperity in Colusa, Glenn and Trinity Counties. We are defining prosperity as the advancement or gain in anything good or desirable, and specifically as it relates to raising people from poverty to a level of self or community defined economic prosperity. To carry out this vision of prosperity, the project has two specific but related outcome focuses, with two VISTA members providing leadership and in carrying much the work. The first component focuses on the outcome of improved household economic well-being. Economic well-being is defined as core family needs being met and a household income that sustains positive net worth and an ability to respond to short term crises. The second component focuses on the outcome of improving youth educational attainment and career planning, which will be the focus of year 2 and 3 of the project

The Partnership has over 20 years of successful experience administering programs and providing direct services to the three counties served. The Partnership administers an annual budget of over five million dollars. Some programs related to the scope of this project are outlined below. The Partnership coordinated a regional mentoring program in 1999-2002. The program ended when funds were no longer available. For over ten (10) years, the partnership has operated the Independent Living Skills Program for youth in foster care; the Youth Employment Services Program; and Workforce Investment Act program in Glenn County. The Partnership has also led efforts to establish [www.fosteryouth.net](http://www.fosteryouth.net), a regional website with resources for youth who are emancipating from the foster care system into adulthood. The Partnership has also provided daily oversight and management under a regional AmeriCorps initiative directed at improving services to children and families involved with the Child Welfare system. In Glenn County, the Partnership administers a Micro-enterprise Program and a Business Services component. The Partnership has also led regional efforts to establish Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Programs and a Homeless Continuum of Care, serving each of the three counties, as well as several Self-Sufficiency Programs. The Partnership ensures safety net resources are available within the counties through food banks and emergency shelter programs.

The project will focus on two populations. The first population to be served is low-income households in Glenn, Colusa and Trinity Counties. The focus for this population will be neighborhoods or communities with the highest incidence of poverty. The second is youth, 10-18 years of age, who live in low-income households in Glenn, Colusa and Trinity Counties and are from schools with lowest high school completion rates. The economic security component will focus on bringing partners together to develop work plans to address economic security outcomes. Although this is somewhat undefined at this time, there are several distinct deliverables that will be accomplished through this project. The VISTA members will support, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Programs, Financial Literacy Programs, Food Resources, Asset Development opportunities, and Homeless Continuum of Care efforts. Members will support other mentioned areas through policy and procedure development, fund development, partnerships development, and outreach and education. Through this project, the Partnership will work to re-establish mentoring services in all three counties that are targeted at promoting high school completion and career readiness. The VISTA members will be asked to re-establish a coalition to guide the process, evaluate approach, assist with the recommendation of strategies, develop partnership agreements, recruit volunteers and revive our policies and procedures.

**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).

Around 10,000 low-income individuals directly are affected by poverty in the three-county area. This project will address the primary needs for educational attainment and increased income in households to sustain basic living needs, and ideally, prosperity. Colusa, Glenn and Trinity Counties have lower educational attainment rates, lower high school graduation rates, lower incomes and significantly higher unemployment than the state average. Additionally, trends for all three counties show children who are socio-economically disadvantaged show lower high school exit exam scores, in both Mathematics and English Language Arts, than children who are not socio-economically disadvantaged (CDE: Dataquest High School Exit exam, 2008). Following, are statistics about Colusa, Glenn and Trinity Counties in contrast to the State of California.

Census Quick Facts	Glenn	Colusa	Trinity	State
Population, 2006 estimate	28,061	21,272	14,313	NA
High school graduates, percent of persons age 25+, 2000	68.5%	64.0%	81.0%	76.8%
Bachelor's degree or higher, pct of persons age 25+, 2000	10.7%	10.6%	15.5%	26.6%
Persons below poverty, percent, (2000, Colusa/Trinity) (2005, Glenn)	17.5%	11.7%	14.2%	13.2%
Median household income, 2000	\$34,883	\$38,350	\$30,307	\$49,894

*Source:* U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts., Last Revised: Friday, 25-Jul-2008 15:41:14 EDT; Insight Center for Community Economic Development

Other Data	Glenn	Colusa	Trinity	State
Free and Reduced Price Meals (CDE: Education Demographics: 07/08)	55.4%	71.7%	56.9%	50.9%
Estimated % of adults lacking basic prose literacy skills (Ntl. Center for Ed Stats)	22%	34%	NA	23%
Unemployment Rate (EDD Monthly Labor Force Data, December 2008)	12.5%	21.6%	14.4%	9.1%

**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.

The capacity to be developed will occur through increased partnerships, resources, procedures, plans and systems that create emphasis on promoting economic prosperity for all.

Increased financial literacy is cited by many as a key to moving individuals and our larger economy to a place of well-being and economic health. This includes shifting some of our individual and community values towards an investment mindset from one of heavy consumption. This shift will create assets, which leads to further investment and prosperity. Immediate relief to household incomes through safety net resources, such as food banks, allows folks to get back on their feet while they pursue education or re-training or simply to save money.

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Increased educational attainment will allow young people the opportunity for living-wage household incomes in the future. The objective will be to motivate more students to travel down a career path and gain increased education. Education is a primary factor to increased incomes. Increased incomes move people from poverty to prosperity.

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

The project will be built on a community partnership model. For example, in preparing for this application, the system has already been defined to provide guidance to the project, and this system is driven by the community and its partners/supporters. Currently, there is a network of regional and local Homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) meetings. This structure is solid with about five years of history and development. A portion of the CoC meeting will now include a P4A Economic Security Council/Committee. This committee will carry out the advisory work for the P4A Project. The committee will include grass roots organizations, community members and agencies, but there remain a lot of open seats at the table, and the VISTA members can assist in filling them, leading to a more sustainable future effort. The other link to the community will be through mentorship efforts. The Youth Employment Services Program has had a "Phase III" plan to include career mentoring, but the plan has never been launched due to lack of dedicated staff to build the partnerships with community members and businesses.

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 project will coordinate with AmeriCorps members assigned in Glenn County to the extent feasible. They will join together on community projects where there is benefit to a mutually served population. For example, the AmeriCorps Glenn County program annually assists with the planning and coordination of a Child Abuse Prevention event. Research indicates that incidents of child abuse can create household economic stress. It is a logical link that the P4A project will overlay nicely with the AmeriCorps Child Welfare project, and will strive toward mutually beneficial outcomes. Over 400 individuals attend this event, of which most are English as Second Language learners and are of low- or very low-income households.

At full implementation and on an annual basis, the project will provide systems to increase access to education for 50 low income youth through the Youth Employment Services Mentor "Phase III" plan. This increased opportunity will affect the future of each youth. A core part of the P4A project will be volunteer and community partnership engagement. It is anticipated that 25 volunteers will be recruited who can share their expertise in financial literacy with the low-income community. The project will also leave the legacy of policy and procedure and community research to populate and update local plans. This will position the counties nicely for competitive funding.

**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.
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 may include:**

1. Attend county and regional Homeless Continuum of Care meetings;
2. Research and develop understanding of the P4A scope of work;
3. Research and develop plan to update the Dos Rios Homeless Continuum of Care;
4. Work with Dos Rios Steering Committee to gather information to update county and regional plans;

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5. Work with P4A advisory council to review and produce regionally acceptable volunteer recruitment forms and process;
6. Work with P4A advisory council to develop regional work plan to address economic security, for example, financial literacy and asset development;
7. Producing outreach materials for volunteer recruitment, and community giving;
8. Recruiting and screening volunteers;
9. Meet with local organizations to solicit participation in a economic council to address financial literacy, and safety net food and shelter; and,
10. Document efforts for the next service term to ensure project sustainability.

#### *Desired Skills & Characteristics*

- *Ability to work with multiple and diverse partners*
- *Ability to work on undefined projects*
- *Ability to self-initiate*
- *Ability to work with limited instruction*
- *Positive and effective communication with the public and community members*
- *Ability to maintain personal and professional boundaries*
- *Willingness to conduct presentations and perform outreach*
- *Organization and planning skills*
- *Project management skills*
- *Ability to work with diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds*
- *Interest and commitment to vulnerable individuals*
- *A passion and spirit for community*
- *Desire to work as a part of a team*
- *Ability to work some nights and weekends*
- *Ability to write at a college level*
- *Ability to understand and document policy and process*

#### *Minimum Qualifications*

- *Must clear a fingerprint background check*
- *Must possess a valid California Drivers License and proof of insurance*

#### *Desired Qualifications*

- *Experience in public relations, social services and/or marketing*
- *Bilingual: Spanish or Hmong*
- *Knowledge of local community resources or community development*
- *Grant development experience*
- *College level education*
- *Individuals native to Colusa, Glenn or Trinity Counties*

### **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.

Daily supervision for the VISTA members will be provided by Elizabeth Kelly, Community Services Manager. Mrs. Kelly is a full-time employee and her supervision of the VISTA members will be a part-time responsibility. The position of Community Services Manager reports directly to the Community Action Deputy Director. It is expected that the VISTA

members will, from time to time, receive functional supervision from others, as related to specific projects to which the members may be assigned.

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.

The Partnership is a public government agency and has a tripartite administrative board, which by law is comprised of two-thirds low-income representatives. Additionally, the project will be advised by the Regional P4A Committee, described earlier, with the Youth Employment Services Committee assisting in guidance. Both of these groups have representation from the low-income community.

## **F. Organizational Capacity**

1. What in-kind resources will you provide to ensure the success of the proposed project?

As in-kind to the project, The Partnership will provide supervision to the VISTA members; office space that includes a desk, phone and a computer with internet access; supplies; and basic office equipment. Additionally, the Partnership will provide training and use of county fleet vehicles for project use. The Partnership will also provide access to resources to help secure basic needs such as housing, food and utility payment assistance.

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.

The P4A project will assist to expand the capacity and improve the sustainability of several complementary projects. These activities include updating the Dos Rios Homeless Continuum of Care Plan; increasing the number of volunteers, donations or access points for food banks; increasing the number of volunteers, developing policy and procedures and conducting fundraising activities for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program; developing the third phase of mentoring for the Youth Employment Services Program; creating sustainability for Asset Development Program, such as outreach, adoption or refinement of financial literacy curriculum; and increasing the number of partnerships and promoting awareness of the business services and classes offered through the Microenterprise program. Additionally, the Partnership has almost five (5) years of experience hosting four (4) AmeriCorps service members per term, who are assigned to fulfill Child Welfare Improvement Activities. The AmeriCorps outcomes (in summary) include 100% retention of all members during their respective term of service. From the first two project years, 100% of the members exited the program with secure employment in a field closely related to their service activities. The Partnership has learned many lessons about effective implementation of a service program and supervision of service members.

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?

The Partnership is a public government agency and provides reasonable accommodation and accessibility to individuals with disabilities. Public transportation is available within Glenn County and there is limited access in the surrounding counties.

## **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.

