

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

As a Partner Agency with the CA Mentoring Children of Prisoners Collaborative, the Folsom Cordova Community Partnership (the Partnership) will develop an AmeriCorps VISTA project to support our mentoring children of prisoners program, Roots and Horizons. Launched in September 2005, Roots and Horizons is part of the Mentoring Children of Prisoners Initiative funded through the federal Department of Health and Human Services under the Administration of Children and Families. The Partnership is a sub-contractor with Prevent Child Abuse, CA (PCA C), the federal MCP grant recipient, and is one of four partner organizations of Community Mentoring Connections, the MCP Program of PCA C.

Roots and Horizons is a community-based, one-to-one mentoring program for children of prisoners living in the communities of Rancho Cordova and Folsom. These youth, ages 8 – 17, are matched with volunteer mentors and meet for a minimum of one-hour a week for one year. Mentoring matches engage in a variety of activities together including arts, music and entertainment, sports and recreation and academic and professional development. Roots and Horizons is built upon Recommended Best Practices for Mentoring Programs and is a member of both the Sacramento Mentoring Partnership (SMP) and the Association of Mentoring Professionals (AMP). In 2007, 85% of mentoring matches completed one-year of mentoring, and of those matches 75% continued mentoring beyond the first year.

Through the MCP VISTA Project, the Partnership's VISTA work plan will focus on sustainability of Roots and Horizons with a particular emphasis on mentor recruitment and fund development. Specifically, the AmeriCorps VISTA member will work to build partnerships with local community businesses and organizations that will bring both volunteer and financial support to the program. The AmeriCorps VISTA member will work with program staff to implement and enhance the program's Annual Recruitment Plan by developing and participating in outreach activities including presentations, media efforts, community events and information sessions. Additionally the AmeriCorps VISTA member will participate in grant writing and donation solicitation to secure new funding and program materials and services. While these two areas will be the focus of the Partnership's VISTA work plan, the VISTA member will additionally support current program efforts and activities on an as needed basis.

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).

A research report produced by the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) in 2005 found a high percentage of significant barriers for students surveyed in the Folsom Cordova Unified School District (FCUSD), the district that serves the communities of Folsom and Rancho Cordova. The barriers and needs assessed by CHKS contribute directly to academic, social and interpersonal problems for youth including: low-academic performance and risk of educational failure; involvement in delinquent, violent and high-risk behaviors; alcohol, drug and tobacco use; and unstable home environments. The FCUSD includes 32 schools with over 18,500 students and a rich diversity which reflects these two communities. With over 28 registered spoken languages, over 40% of students come from a range of backgrounds including Hispanic, African-American, Asian, Russian-Ukrainian, Hmong, Filipino, American-Indian and Pacific Islander.

According to the 2000 Census Report, nearly 30% of individuals in the combined communities are foreign born and over 34% of the total student body is comprised of English language learners. These two communities represent a broad range of socio-economic and educational backgrounds. 89% of Rancho Cordova's residents do not hold a bachelor's degree. 37.6% of the resident live below the poverty level. 16.7% of family households in Rancho Cordova are female-headed,

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single-parent homes and 24.7% of these families are below the poverty level. Nearly 35% of FCUSD students receive free/reduced price meals. Additionally, nearly 2,000 households include intergenerational families and in 34.6% of those homes grandparents are the primary caregivers for the children.

In an informal survey conducted by the Partnership in 2005, FCUSD school principals estimated 400 youth are effected by parental incarceration. Currently the Partnership is the only organization in Folsom and Rancho Cordova that provides services focused on children of incarcerated parents. Additionally, Roots and Horizons in one of the only mentoring programs located within the two communities. MENTOR, a nationally accredited institute and the leading resource on mentoring services throughout the country, offers an on-line database of mentoring programs across the United States. A search of Folsom and Rancho Cordova zip codes through MENTOR's database yields a total of only four programs, including Roots and Horizons, which are located locally within the service zip codes. Additionally two of the other three programs focus solely on group mentoring services, one of which sustains mentoring matches for only 7 – 9 months. Roots and Horizons is still a relatively young program and therefore not much attention has been focused on children of incarcerated parents in the community beforehand; therefore it is difficult to determine exactly how many youth are affected by this problem.

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.

2008 statistics of the program showed that nearly seventy-five percent of the youth participants in the program were from lower-income families that lived from a single income. Additionally, the lack of positive and stable relationships for children of incarcerated parents can lead to developmental regression and reactive behaviors which are often precursors to behavioral consequences such as academic failure, emotional withdrawal, violence and delinquency and risk of intergenerational incarceration (Denise Johnston, Ph.D., Jailed Mothers, Pasadena, California, Pacific Oaks Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents, 1991). Roots and Horizons creates a community in which there is a collective effort to provide every child of an incarcerated parent with a positive, nurturing and supportive adult role model who will support each child's strengths and empower them to discover their own talents, set their own goals, and reach their own aspirations. When a youth receives consistent encouragement for a mentor, these youth are much less likely to engage in detrimental behaviors and, instead, become more productive citizens in the community. In a benchmark study of 1,000 youth involved in Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentoring programs, research conducted through Private/Public Ventures reported that these youth were 53% less likely to skip school, 46% less likely to begin using drugs, and 33% less likely to hit someone. (Joseph P. Tierney and Jean Baldwin Grossman with Nancy Resch, Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Public / Private Ventures, September 2000.) Thus, when youth from the program are matched with a mentor, they are more likely to engage in positive behaviors, both in school and in personal choices, which are key components to bringing an individual out of poverty.

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

Community members participate in this project by volunteering as mentors. Local businesses, foundations and service organizations partner with the program through in-kind and financial donations, sponsorships and grants. The activities will be sustained through strong partnerships with businesses, the school district and other non-profit organizations as well as diligent oversight and a well-developed fundraising/grant writing plan.

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?

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Currently, the Partnership hosts an AmeriCorps project that supports 14 AmeriCorps positions within our agency. While these positions support other programs of the agencies, AmeriCorps members provide supplemental support to the mentoring program through outreach, mentee and mentor recruitment and event support. Through the MCP VISTA project, we will research and pursue, if applicable, relationships with Senior Corps and RSVP.

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.

VISTA member will support the implementation and enhancement of the program's Annual Recruitment Plan. This plan includes outreach and recruitment efforts in the following areas: presentations to all sectors of the community; attendance at community events and meetings; media efforts including press releases, PSAs, articles and interviews; web-based recruitment; orientations and information sessions; mentor mixers and other recruitment events; and targeted outreach events in January during National Mentoring Month. In supporting this plan, the VISTA member will:

- *Identify and build partnerships with community businesses and organizations*
- *Develop a sustainability plan for the continual engagement of community partners after VISTA service is completed*
- *Develop marketing and outreach material as needed*
- *Facilitate meetings, presentations and mentor orientations*
- *Work with program staff to build effective relationships within the media sector, write press releases, media PSAs and pitch story ideas.*
- *Participate in community events and collaborative groups*
- *Participate in trainings, as available, on effective recruitment, marketing and media relations*

VISTA member will also focus on fund development to build program sustainability and enhance program scope and effectiveness. Fund development activities will focus on grant writing, including larger and small grants, and donation solicitation. Current funding needs for the program include funding for additional staff, operational activities, match support and supplies and materials. In supporting these needs, the VISTA member will:

- *Create a fund development plan including funding needs and goals, target funding sources and action plan for securing funding*
- *Further develop a resource guide on funders and business partners*
- *Research grants and write funding proposals*
- *Further develop infrastructure for engaging donors including materials on needs and support opportunities, funder commitments and donor appreciation*
- *Identify and build partnerships with community businesses and organizations*
- *Facilitate meetings and presentations*
- *Solicit community businesses for donations*

2. **List** the recommended skills and qualifications that an AmeriCorps*VISTA member should have to successfully complete the project plan.

For the MCP VISTA project, the Partnership is looking for applicants with the following skills and qualifications:

- *An interest in working on projects related to community development, at-risk youth, mentoring and volunteer services*
- *Strong written and verbal communication skills*
- *Strong organizational skills*
- *Self-motivated and self-directed*
- *An interest in working as part of a team*
- *Must have personal and reliable means of transportation*

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- *Must be comfortable with public speaking and group presentations*

Recommended skills and qualifications include:

- *Experience coordinating a project or group of volunteers*
- *Familiarity with needs of low-income youth*
- *Experience in writing reports and/or proposals*
- *Good driving record*
- *Experience in outreach and recruitment*

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 AmeriCorps VISTA member will work as part of the Roots and Horizons team and will receive direct supervision from the Youth Services Manager (YSM) that oversees the mentoring program. The YSM provides full-time supervision to all staff associated with Roots and Horizons and will engage the VISTA member in both weekly and one-to-one supervision and team meetings. The YSM will act as the direct liaison with RCAA on this project and will work directly with the Director of Youth Services (DYS) on maintaining the MCP VISTA Project Work Plan and assuring that all goals and objectives are met. The current DHS has completed the VISTA Supervisor's Orientation and will direct the YSM on all areas of compliance with AmeriCorps*VISTA.*

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.

*Currently the Board of Director's for the Partnership is not made up of at least 51% members of the low-income community. From September 2005 – March 2006, a community advisory group was established and utilized to provide direction in the development and implementation of the mentoring program. Many of those advisory members currently participate in the Cordova Community Collaborative (CCC), a community group hosted by the Partnership. This group is comprised of a broad range of community members such as business leaders, service providers, school district representatives, parents, non-profit organizations, city officials, faith-based representatives and law enforcement. In the past 15 years, the CCC has acted in an advisory capacity to community projects and currently supports an AmeriCorps*VISTA member working on community health initiatives. In establishing the MCP VISTA project, the Partnership will present the MCP Project to the CCC and ask for support. Utilizing the CCC in this capacity will open the door for the VISTA member to build relationships with the various community sectors represented in the group to support the mentoring program.*

F. Organizational Capacity

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

The Partnership will provide the following in-kind resources for the MCP VISTA project: office space, phone and internet access, mileage reimbursement, staffing support and supervision. While a computer may be provided, a VISTA member with access to a personal laptop would be ideal.

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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.

As stated earlier, Roots and Horizons is the only program in Rancho Cordova and Folsom that focuses specifically on providing mentoring services for children of incarcerated parents. However a few other notable organizations do provide related services in the community. The O.K. Program is a group-mentoring program based in Rancho Cordova servicing middle and high-school African-American male youth. Weed and Seed is a community-based program focused on eliminating blight and providing positive opportunities for youth in a high-risk part of the community. Finally, Powerhouse Ministries, a faith-based organization, offers temporary shelter-services for homeless families in Folsom and was originally founded to support prison families. Recently the Roots and Horizons program was approached by the Rancho Cordova Police Department with an interest in partnering to support mentoring efforts. The Chief of Police has a vision to build positive relationships between law enforcement and young people in the community.

Through the MCP VISTA Project, the VISTA member will be able to strengthen the collaboration between Roots and Horizons and these existing organizations, while also building community awareness around the need of children of incarcerated parents. By establishing relationships with other community sectors and partners, the VISTA member will enhance the services of Roots and Horizons and complement the efforts of other service organizations.

In addition to successfully designing and implementing the Roots and Horizons program, the Partnership has nearly five years experience managing VISTA projects in the community. Over the past four years, the Partnership, in collaboration with FCUSD, has been the lead agency in managing a Youth Development VISTA Project which supports three VISTA members in the community. Also, the Partnership is a Partner Agency with Sacramento ENRICHES and acts as a host site for a Community Health Initiative VISTA member who will complete their service in August 2008.

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?

Our agency is ADA compliant and is able to make reasonable accommodations to meet the needs of qualified persons with disabilities who seek to serve as a VISTA member. However, our proposed work plan will require the VISTA member to travel locally and the communities we serve do not have extensive systems of public transportation. It is necessary that the VISTA member have access to personal and reliable 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).

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- 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.

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