

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.

Founded in 1979, The Ink People Center for the Arts is a collaborative public benefit arts and culture organization that connects the community with resources for cultural sensitivity and development. The Ink People regularly acts as a job training and community service site for youth and senior citizens through the Humboldt County Juvenile Justice System, County Health & Human Services Department, and AARP Senior Employment Program. Over 5,000 low-income and homeless people use our free internet access annually. Our DreamMaker Program began in 1988 to foster self-directing projects inspired by individuals or groups who have a vision of making the community a better place through art. The Ink People provides administrative support and technical assistance to DreamMakers to ensure the best chance of success.

The Coffee Opp is one of over 50 DreamMaker programs, adopted in 2006 for teens of high school ages 14 to 19. In response to a murder committed by a former Eureka High School student, six teens surveyed their classmates about what needed to be done to end the cycle of violence and substance abuse that had culminated in the murder. As a result of the student-initiated survey of over 600 9th and 11th grade high-school students in Eureka, teens had identified the need for space and activities free from drugs, alcohol, discrimination, and violence, as well as a place which would provide training in leadership skills for self-sufficiency.

To ensure that young people have a voice in our community and are empowered to be self-sufficient, the VISTA member will help build the infrastructure necessary for project sustainability. This will be done by continuing to implementing the previously developed business plan, securing a self-sustaining volunteer group and training support network, and obtaining funds to insure prolongation of The Coffee Opp. The VISTA member will conduct monthly planning meetings with youth and adult partners, work to cement new collaborative relationships with other businesses and service organizations in the community, generate new local and outside resources, and promote The Coffee Opp within the community to ensure that the largest percentage of the target population has access to the services offered.

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).

Humboldt County lies on the far northern coast of California in an area experiencing high unemployment and rising housing costs. According to *Children Now, California County Data Book* (2002), 20.4% of children in Humboldt County are living in poverty, with a median family income of \$31,546. The same report indicates that 18.7% of young people ages 16-19 in our county are not in school, and over one-third of these teens are unemployed. Eureka City Schools reported in October, 2005, that 44.92% of students received free meals with another 11.67% being eligible for reduced meals, for a district total of 56.59%. In 2002, figures indicated that over 35% of the 9,100 county youth

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between the ages of 11-17 were identified as “at-risk”; that is, they possess two or more “at-risk” indicators such as low or declining school attendance, poor living conditions, living in a high-risk neighborhood, or maintaining relations with high-risk peers (*The Humboldt County Families, Children, and Youth Services Community Development Study*, funded by Humboldt Area Foundation). In one study the Humboldt County Alcohol and Other Drug Programs for 2003-2004 school year revealed the following facts relative to youth having had at least one alcoholic drink in the 30 days prior to the survey, 33% of females and 25% of males in 9th grade; 43% of females and 46% of males in 11th grade; 54% of females and 53% of males in non-traditional schooling.

When a group of Eureka High students were surveyed regarding attendance at existing after-school youth programs, over 600 students responded. Results indicated that currently available programs tend to draw a younger crowd; that parents do not feel safe sending their kids to local dances where fights occur; and that the two local tertiary institutions draw mostly 20 somethings. As a result, high school students are left out and often resort to weekend parties involving alcohol and drugs. The data revealed that over 80% of those surveyed favored creation of an establishment like The Coffee Opp in Eureka, and many respondents included suggestions for a variety of ethnic foods, drinks, and musical interests to be included in the plans, reflecting the diverse nature of the student population.

With the recent closing of our local Boys and Girls Club Teen Center has created a significant need for The Coffee Opp’s services to be reaching a much expanded population of Eureka teens that need some where safe to go after school.

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 VISTA member will address poverty in our community by securing resources for the sustainability of The Coffee Opp, a project which engages youth to take on leadership roles in creating and running a small business to employ youth, enable youth and adults to work in equal partnerships and recognize each other’s assets, and allow teens to provide a safe space for their peers to grow. Through business management and event production, young people develop empowerment skills to work together toward independence and self-sufficiency as individuals and as a united community. The Coffee Opp will specifically aim its efforts at reducing the impacts of youth living in high-risk neighborhoods and relating to high-risk peer groups. By providing a space where teens have the ability to see their ideas actualized involved youth gain community validation, leadership skills, empowerment of a frequently silenced population, confidence, job experience, cooperative team building strategies, and the ability to provide for themselves and be the change they must have in their own lives. As Eureka youth gain confidence and practical skills, they serve as models to other disadvantaged peers and contribute to the economic and social development of our community.

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

Directed by youth, The Coffee Opp project will connect a number of different youth serving individuals and agencies from the outset to establish community buy-in. Since the project was initiated by a youth forum training facilitated by 4-H, the students continue to maintain close relations with our local UC Cooperative Extension representative through the 4-H Youth In Governance program. The VISTA member will work in conjunction with two local foundations, The Mel & Grace McLean Foundation and Humboldt Area Foundation, for a portion of funding. Already committed to work with The Coffee Opp are our local United Way Executive, the Northcoast Small Business Development Center, Humboldt County Probation, Humboldt County Alcohol and Other Drug Programs, the County Board of Supervisors, and the Eureka Mayor’s office. Support from the

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Parks and Recreation John Ryan Youth Center, Teen Court, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Rotary has also been offered. The VISTA member will maintain and expand these current connections within the community, as well as explore collaborating with students and faculty from College of the Redwoods and Humboldt State University. Students working with The Coffee Opp will also benefit from DreamMaker projects, such as The Placebo and MARZ, which have co-hosted performances, presented workshops on event marketing, and continue to work very closely with The Coffee Opp. The Youth Services Bureau of Redwood Community Action Agency will contribute youth volunteers and flyering services.

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?

Helpful Hint:

One of the primary purposes of AmeriCorps*VISTA is to ensure sustainable solutions to problems facing low-income communities. Address how you will ensure the proposed project and outcomes continue upon completion of the project plan and withdrawal of AmeriCorps*VISTA support.

Example:

The neighborhood credit union organized by the AmeriCorps*VISTA members annually will assist between 500-800 individuals transitioning from welfare to work by helping them develop the financial assets needed to weather personal economic crises and permanently remain self-sufficient. The AmeriCorps*VISTA members will recruit a corps of at least 20 community volunteers with personal finance experience (including finance students from the local university) to staff the credit union. Additionally, the members will secure the start-up funds to hire a full-time coordinator and develop a coalition of community stakeholders to foster the credit union's sustainability.

Our community continues its rich history of engaging national service members. We will collaborate with AmeriCorps, SeniorCorps, and RSVP members for their local expertise, offering training in youth leadership development.

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.
 1. Continue to build on the existing business plan and make the changes needed to ensure that the program can be sustainably run.
 2. Maintain youth-adult advisory board, and hold monthly meetings.
 3. Develop a strategy for continual recruitment and retention of youth and adult volunteers.
 4. Secure long-term funding plans that encourage a self-sustaining program.
 5. Organize and participate in presentations to community agencies, high schools and older groups/clubs.
 6. Utilize youth participants in all phases of The Coffee Opp development/implementation.
 7. Implement and update the policies and procedures for The Coffee Opp.

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

Recommended skills and qualifications include:

1. Experience with and passion for working with youth;
2. Fundraising experience, including grantwriting;
3. Experience implementing a business plan, previous knowledge of business operations;
4. Experience in public speaking;
5. Excellent relational skills;
6. Ability to work independently as well as part of a team;
7. Ability to create fliers, brochures and other media materials;
8. Basic internet and computer skills;
9. Excellent writing skills;
10. Flexibility;
11. Work ethic and professional attitude;
12. Reliable transportation helpful;
13. Education and/or background in business administration.

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 VISTA member will share adjoining office space with The Ink People's Executive Director from whom he or she will receive daily contact and support on a part-time basis. The E.D. will assist the member with developing community partners, grantwriting, and research. In addition to the regular Redwood Community Action Agency VISTA program trainings, our VISTA member will work with The North Coast Small Business Development Center in the implementation of The Coffee Opp's business plan. Also, a local community foundation, Humboldt Area Foundation, provides training to nonprofits and individuals for low or no cost, and we will seek out local training opportunities such as these for our VISTA member.

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.

Sixty-three percent of The Ink People Board of Directors' members are low income. It will be the task of the VISTA member to assemble an advisory board that accurately represents those served by the project. At least 50% of the members will be aged 14-19 and from low-income and/or "at risk" situations. Parents, neighbors, and school affiliates will be encouraged to join, in addition to business owners, youth workers, and local government officials.

F. Organizational Capacity

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

As a nonprofit, The Ink People will manage The Coffee Opp's finances, legal and reporting obligations. We will provide a mailing address, meeting space, community connections, free server space for a website, and technical assistance with fundraising and outreach. For the VISTA member we will provide office space,

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necessary office supplies, computer with internet access, phone, mileage reimbursement for job-related travel, printer and copier use.

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.

Many of our current 50+ DreamMakers respond to needs of disadvantaged youth in the community:

- *Hmong Community of the Northcoast* holding traditional cultural classes and New Year celebrations
- *Institute of Native Knowledge* teaching Indian youth to apply traditional knowledge to contemporary challenges
- *Comité de Madres* bringing community awareness to traditional Mexican holidays celebrating children
- *Rural Burl Mural Bureau* serving at-risk youth referred by probation officers or social workers
- *Humboldt County Youth Arts / Placebo* hosting all-ages music and art shows that remain drug and violence free
- *KKDS (Blue Ox Youth Radio for Humboldt Bay)* operating from Blue Ox Community School a collaboration between Blue Ox Millworks, the court system, Humboldt County Office of Education and the Workability Program
- *Media Art Resource Zone (MARZ)* enabling youth who are fulfilling probation requirements, serving in juvenile detention, living in foster care or receiving home-schooling to creatively express themselves through analog arts & digital storytelling
- *Vagabond Players* working with charter schools to offer students theater performance opportunities
- *United Future* performing graffiti removal, murals and breakdancing
- *Empire Squared* youth arts space offering free and sliding-scale art classes and field-trips for low-income participants.

Commonly, our DreamMakers work collaboratively to support and strengthen each other's efforts, and maximize scarce resources. The Coffee Opp will benefit from being a member of this "family."

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 Ink People Center for the Arts is not wheelchair accessible. Its main facility is an historic building which has been deemed too costly and difficult to upgrade to meet ADA requirements. As a result, we often hold programs at accessible sites in order to make reasonable accommodations.

PART III. 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.