

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.

Redwood Community Action Agency has provided energy, telecommunications and lead hazard control services for Humboldt County's low-income residents for the past twenty-eight (28) and thirteen (13) years respectively.

Community-based education, outreach and service delivery is at the core of all of RCAA's energy, telecommunications and environmental services. The VISTA project will focus on expanding the Division's existing education, outreach and service delivery capabilities. This would be achieved through the development of systems for tracking, organizing and evaluating efforts in addition to the creation of outreach strategies and materials.

In addition, the VISTA member will research potential sources of funding to support these activities and others by submitting applications, as appropriate. One specific area of research will be seek funding for education and efforts to increase energy efficiency through greenhouse gas (ghg) emissions reductions and the emerging climate change policies and legislative actions.

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).

Helpful Hint:

Use current and local statistical data, citing the source wherever possible, to substantiate the problem.

Example:

An applicant proposing to develop a child care program for families transitioning from welfare to work would explain the scope of the child care shortage in their county including statistical references to the number of families transitioning from welfare to work, the average cost of child care in the county, and other data to illustrate the need to be addressed. The applicant also would describe the cause of the child care shortage, how long it has persisted, and the long-term effects it may have on the county.

Humboldt County has approximately 15,000 low-income households that qualify for services but reaching the target communities is not always easy or possible. The energy, telecommunications and lead services are focused upon specific target populations within the low-income community which increases the challenge and cost of providing services. These populations include:

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- ✓ Seniors;
- ✓ Disabled;
- ✓ Families with small children under the age of 6 years – lead;
- ✓ Families with small children;
- ✓ Limited English speaking communities;
- ✓ American Indians;
- ✓ Migrant and seasonal farm workers;
- ✓ Clients in remote communities.

We expect to reach approximately 3,000 clients under all of these programs in Program Year 2009.

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.

Increasing the efficiency of the services will allow RCAA to serve more households and to provide them with the tools and services necessary to reduce their dependency upon governmental services. The ultimate goals will be to provide outreach/education services that will foster self-sufficiency and, secondly, to increase funding through the creation of new funding streams.

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

Community input in the form of client feedback will guide education and outreach efforts.

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.

The project will ensure that services are made available to approximately 3,000 low-income households throughout Humboldt and Modoc counties. We will also include service delivery with other AmeriCorps*VISTA and AmeriCorps members to get the word

out and to provide services. The infrastructure developed during the project will be maintained.

The VISTA member's position will be directly involved in developing the infrastructure and potential funding sources to support the ongoing delivery of these services.

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.
 - Become knowledgeable of the Energy & Environmental Services Division, client demographics and funding sources.
 - Research, develop and produce education materials for low-income households.
 - Develop and submit a monthly Management By Objectives (MBO) plan
 - Research potential funding sources & applicable legislation used to fund programs.
 - Produce database of potential funding sources and application criteria.
 - Assist with the development and submission of grant proposals.
 - Conduct a public awareness campaign to build interest in services and to improve community input.
2. ***List*** the recommended skills and qualifications that an AmeriCorps*VISTA member should have to successfully complete the project plan.

Helpful Hints:

When completing this section, keep in mind that AmeriCorps*VISTA members fulfill a one-year, full-time term of service. Members may serve up to three terms of service, at the discretion of the Corporation, the sponsor (RCAA) and the host site (you).

The AmeriCorps*VISTA assignment description is used to recruit and inform potential members about specific assignments. Members assigned to the project will use the assignment description as their principal guidance for day-to-day activities designed to achieve the outcomes of the project plan.

In determining what skills are recommended, you may want to address whether members will be required to have proficient knowledge of English, Spanish, or any other language.

Sample Assignment Description:

The Member tasks and activities for Year 1 will include:

1. Producing outreach materials for volunteer recruitment;
2. Recruiting and screening volunteers;
3. Meeting with local business owners to solicit assistance in designing job-readiness training sites;
4. Setting up teachers' referral system to select youth candidates for the program; and,
5. Researching and developing funding resources to ensure project sustainability.

Recommended skills and qualifications include:

1. An interest in working on the problem of employment for low-income youth;

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2. Excellent writing skills;
3. Experience coordinating a project or group of volunteers;
4. An educator, counselor, or individual who has experience with youth programs is desirable; and,
5. Proficiency in Spanish and/or experience in English as a Second Language tutoring.

Recommended skills and qualifications include:

- ✓ Computer skills - development of spreadsheets, data entry, WORD, graphics, researching via the internet, email
- ✓ Good written and verbal communications
- ✓ Ability to create and prepare PowerPoint and brochures/flyers
- ✓ Strong organizational skills
- ✓ Basic math proficiency
- ✓ Ability to speak publicly, if necessary
- ✓ Experience coordinating a project or group of volunteers
- ✓ Ability to work well with a minimum of supervision
- ✓ Ability to write and speak Spanish proficiently is desired but not required

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 Project Director will provide daily supervision of the member in the afternoon hours but will be available at all times via the phone. At times when the Supervisor is out of town, an Acting Manager will provide supervision.

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.

RCAA's Tri-Partite Board of Directors is comprised of 1/3 low-income, 1/3 Public representation such as a members of the Board of Supervisors and 1/3 Private representatives of business and/or education. During the project we will seek input from the clients we serve in the form of a quality assurance survey that will be developed by the VISTA person.

F. Organizational Capacity

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

RCAA will provide: staff; training; office space; resources; and all other necessary support services to ensure project success.

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.

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RCAA has provided energy, telecommunications and lead hazard control services for the past twenty-eight (28) and thirteen (13) years respectively. We are the sole provider of these services for Humboldt County's low-income residents. The VISTA project is designed to enhance these services by providing an analysis of the current infrastructure, making recommendations for improving services and by building capacity through seeking new grant sources.

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?

Helpful Hints:

In-kind resources include computers, phones, Internet access, and office space. Include any additional support, such as free or low-cost housing.

You may want to highlight your organization's track record in managing projects similar to the proposed project.

Federal law requires that AmeriCorps*VISTA sponsoring organizations make reasonable accommodations to meet the needs of qualified persons with disabilities wishing to serve as members. Indicate any factors the Corporation should be aware of when assigning members with disabilities to this project, such as availability of transportation and housing, accessibility of facilities, etc.

The Energy & Environmental Services Division is housed in a 1907 Victorian with steps leading into the building and inside the building that are not accessible or advisable for persons with physical disabilities that impact their ability to go up and down stairs.

At this time, the Energy Services Division is where the position is to be located and we would not be able to accommodate someone with the above mentioned limitations if they were to work on site. However, we could make accommodations available for them at an alternate site that is accessible.

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.

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