

## PROJECT NARRATIVE

### 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.**

**Organizational History** - North Coast Big Brothers was founded in 1964, incorporated 1969, and became North Coast Big Brothers Big Sisters in 1973. In the 38 years since our incorporation, North Coast Big Brothers Big Sisters has matched more than 3,200 local children one-on-one with caring adults from our community. North Coast Big Brothers Big Sisters is an accredited member agency of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America and meets the standards of practice developed by the national organization.

In 1904, a young New York City court clerk named Ernest Coulter was seeing more and more boys come through his courtroom. He recognized that caring adults could help many of these kids stay out of trouble, and he set out to find volunteers. Today, there are 470 agencies operating in communities across the country serving over 500,000 children. Big Brothers Big Sisters currently operates in all 50 states and in 35 countries around the world. Big Brothers Big Sisters of America is the oldest, largest, and most effective youth mentoring organization in the United States. We have been the leader in professionally supported one-to-one youth service for more than a century, developing positive relationships that have a direct and lasting impact on the lives of young people.

**Proposed Program** - North Coast Big Brothers Big Sisters (NCBBBS) in conjunction with Redwood Community Action Agency's (RCAA) Northcoast Mentor Program (NMP) in Mentoring Children of Prisoners is committed to provide one-to-one mentors for children in need. Through our program NCBBBS, whose mission is to promote personal and social responsibility through one-to-one mentoring will seek out children in need to match them with appropriate and screened mentors. NCBBBS will utilize an AmeriCorps\* VISTA member to either increase the community awareness of NCBBBS or to increase the amount of monetary support for the agency.

The VISTA member will either serve NCBBBS in the capacity of public relations specialist or fund development specialist. In which ever function the member serves they will work closely with the Executive Director and the appropriate board committee to create a plan of action regarding their respective positions. Upon the completion of the action plan the member will begin supporting the agency by following the action plan with the supervision of the Executive Director as detailed in our site specific work plan. The public relations specialist will concentrate on developing media connections making announcements, submitting articles, etc. The Fund Development specialist will concentrate on developing new funding streams for the agency including, but not limited to grants, special events, and sponsorships.

**Population Served and Issue Area.** No one knows for certain how many children in this country have an incarcerated parent in state or federal prison or on parole. National estimates suggest that approximately 2 million children have an incarcerated parent, and many more have experienced parental incarceration at some point in their lives (Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, US Department of Justice, 1998). The Federal Resource Center for Children of Prisoners reports that the number of children with parents in prison has increased by more than 50% since 1991, a 5.7% annual increase, which suggests that the number of children affected by a parent's incarceration will continue to increase. In California alone, the number is estimated to exceed 200,000 children.

Until recently, children with incarcerated parents had not received attention as a special population with unique needs. Many factors have combined to hide them from view. These include: a criminal justice system struggling to deal with overpopulation; a lack of consideration for an inmate's familial relationships; an overwhelmed child welfare system; negative public attitudes toward incarcerated individuals; lack of a common database; and poor communication and fragmentation of services between agencies serving children with incarcerated parents.

### 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 state correctional system reports that in 2003, 743 inmates were former Humboldt County residents. In the year 2003 more than 600 men and women were on parole in this county. Bureau of Justice statistics show 56% of inmates are parents of children under age 18 nationally. On average, incarcerated parents have 2.4 children, and

in 2003 alone there were approximately 1334 children of prisoners living in Humboldt County. It is not uncommon for this information to be unknown by schools and/or agencies serving children and youth.

For the purposes of this application, the RCAA Mentor Project AmeriCorps\*VISTA members will recruit, screen, and refer 80 mentors to be matched in one-to-one mentoring relationships with youth, ages 4-17, whose parent/s are incarcerated in a county, state or federal prison with mentors recruited from the community.

**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 North Coast Big Brothers Big Sisters agency in collaboration with Redwood Community Action Agency recognizes the potential of all children to succeed to their full adult potential with the support and guidance of a caring and consistent adult in their lives. The AmeriCorps VISTA members will be placed with the NCBBS in order to support our commitment to that goal. VISTA members will either serve as a Public Relations specialist of a Fund Development specialist to build the capacity to expand and enhance the agency’s ability to provide quality-mentoring services.

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

We will collaborate through our association with Redwood Community Action Agency.

**VISTA Assignment Description**

**1. List the tasks and activities AmeriCorps\*VISTA member(s) and Leader(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 Part III, Project plan for AmeriCorps\*VISTA Project Applicants. This section will include more detail on the actual service activities, and should not include direct service activities. Create as many different assignment descriptions as needed for the project.**

AmeriCorps\*VISTA members serving with RCAA’s mentoring programs will:

- Build their knowledge of public relations or fund development by trainings
- Identify public relations or fund development program challenges and needs
- Collaborate with Executive Director and appropriate board committee regarding the development of public relations or fund development plans
- Produce materials for public relations or fund development that further either initiative
- Build community resources regarding public relations or fund development to support program capacity building
- Public relations or fund development research to advance the respective action plans of the agency

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

- Must be self-motivated
- Mentoring experience/knowledge is helpful
- Ability to write and speak well
- Comfortable with speaking in and working with the public
- Ability to motivate others
- Serve as a role model
- Computer skilled
- Volunteer recruitment experience is helpful
- Excellent organizational skills
- Public Relations/Fund Development experience
- Well-developed work ethic to include: integrity, flexibility, accountability and a desire to make a difference

**Project Management**

**1. Describe plans for daily supervision of AmeriCorps\*VISTA members. Specify if supervision will be a full-time or part-time responsibility.**

Daily supervision of the VISTA member will be the part time responsibility of the Executive Director. The VISTA member will receive overall direction, support and resources from on a daily basis.

**2. Are 51 percent or more of the persons on your board of director's 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.**

Two fifths of the NCBBBS board is composed of low income members of the community, two of which are mentors for NCBBBS. The projects that are put forth for the member by NCBBBS are not low-income projects by nature. Public Relations and Fund Development require relationship building and strengthening with persons well connected in more affluent circumstances.

**3. Describe your plans for evaluating progress towards achieving your project's anticipated outcomes and accomplishments. What information and data will you use to demonstrate the concrete impacts of the project?**

The Administration of Children and Families (ACF)(Mentoring Children of Prisoners grantor) evaluation plan is extensive and quarterly reports are required. Program partners submit monthly and quarterly data on the status of mentoring relationships to VISTA members. In addition, VISTA members will glean success and challenges from conversations with staff and board members during staff and committee meetings.

VISTA members are required to track progress on the goals and objectives of their work plan by:

**Public Relations**

- ✓ completing, with the help of the Executive Director and the public relations committee, an action plan tailored to the individual member's strengths and weaknesses
- ✓ number of community informational events, including but not limited to outreach presentations, newspaper, radio, or television coverage of NCBBBS events or stories
- ✓ number of volunteers attracted to serve as either mentors, event, or office volunteers
- ✓ number of attendance at NCBBBS functions
- ✓ number of committee meetings attended

**Fund Development**

- ✓ completing, with the help of the Executive Director and the fund development committee and action plan tailored to the individual member's strengths and weaknesses
- ✓ number of grants written
- ✓ number of fund raising events planned
- ✓ number of resources developed and donations received
- ✓ number of diverse funding streams garnered
- ✓ number of fund raising events completed
- ✓ amount of money raised

**Organizational Capacity**

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

NCBBBS will support the AmeriCorps\*VISTA member with the necessary tools to fulfill their service assignments including desk space, office supplies, computers, phones, resource directories, training, and on the job mileage, etc.

**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.**

NCBBBS participates in the Northcoast Mentor Council (NMC), a coalition of agencies working to strengthen community partnerships and the promotion of quality mentor programs. The NMC was formed to provide leadership, training and support for all entities that serve youth in a mentor capacity throughout the county. The NMC includes: Campfire USA; Eureka City Schools; Girl Scouts; Humboldt County Office of Education Court and Community Schools and Tapestry Program; Humboldt State University YES House; North Coast Big Brothers Big

Sisters; RCAA Family Services, Straight Up AmeriCorps Program and Youth Service Bureau; This Side of the Rock Fellowship, Volunteer Center of the Redwoods, and others. This collaborative approach fosters the expansion of quality assured mentor programs. In addition, we partner with Eureka City Schools, RCAA Family Services and Youth Service Bureau, This Side of the Rock Fellowship Faith-Based Mentor Program, to extend mentoring services to children of incarcerated parents.

**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?**

NCBBBS Is committed to making reasonable accommodations to meet the needs of qualified persons with disabilities wishing to serve as members.