

PROJECT NARRATIVE

Executive Summary

1. 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 3 AmeriCorps VISTA Positions will help support the regional efforts of our Mentoring program- to focus on youth that have and incarcerated parent. These positions will work alongside BBBS staff to implement either our community-based mentoring program or Youth4Youth mentoring program in Marin, Napa and Solano Counties. To this end, they will recruit potential mentors and youth, screen and interview youth and potential mentors, match quality mentor matches, and provide on going match support.

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).

Marin

The Canal- Located in San Rafael, this community of 3,100 is the most ethnically and culturally diverse area in the county, representing over 15 separate cultures. Latinos account for 39.4% of the population, two and a half times the county percentage, Asian/Pacific Islanders represent 17.7% of the community, which is over 4 times the county average, and African Americans represent 4.4%, almost twice the county average (US Census Bureau, 2000). This ethnic and cultural diversity stems from the number of first generation residents living in the community, coming from over 20 different counties. It is estimated from some local service organizations that over 80% of the community are not U.S. citizens.

This diversity also creates incredible challenges for youth in terms of academic ability, family education background and income level. Youth in this community have the dual hardship of achieving academic proficiency while also attempting to learn English. Of the youth living in the Canal, over 42% spoke Spanish as their native language, while another 25% are Asian/Pacific Islander and spoke the language of their country of origin (US Census Bureau, 2000). These youth often have to serve as interpreters for their family with school officials, medical professional, and other service providers. In addition, these families have little experience in the formal education system of this country, with 36.3% of the parents receiving less than a 9th grade education, and an additional 21.4% obtaining less than a 12th grade education (US Census Bureau, 2000) This also translates into the high level of poverty in the community, with over 28% of families living in poverty, and an additional 31% considered low income.

Novato- This community of 46,000 is located in the northernmost region of Marin County. A mix of suburban and rural communities, the youth of Novato also face severe challenges due to poverty, low academic performance and high dropout rates. 29.1% of families in the Novato community live in poverty, almost 4 times the countywide average, with an additional 32.2% considered low income, almost twice the county average (Children Now, 2003). Youth in the community are also at high risk of academic failure, with only 33% of 4th graders achieving reading proficiency and 45% of 8th graders achieving math proficiency according to standardized testing (Children Now, 2003). Added to this is the challenge that Latino youth in Novato face, with a school dropout rate 257% higher than the county average and 700% higher than their Caucasian peers.

Napa

It is estimated that nearly 10% of Napa children are living in poverty (Children Now, 2005) and an additional 3,321 are living in low-income households. Adding to this need are the nearly 4,000 single-parent families, which account for approximately 8,500 children who are in need of additional support and positive role models (US Census Bureau 2000). In addition, 22% of California children in working families are unsupervised in the hours after school (Children Now, 2005). Of the economically disadvantaged children living in Napa, 80% of fourth graders and 79% of eighth graders had reading scores below the 50th national percentile ranking and 67% of fourth graders and 65% of eighth graders had math scores below the 50th national percentile ranking (Children Now, 2005). Influencing academic performance is the fact that 26.3% of K-12 students are English Learner Students and 18.2% of young people between the ages of 16 and 19 years have dropped out of school (Children Now, 2005).

Solano

The need in Solano County for mentoring services for adolescents is evident. There are 111,852 children living in Solano who are under 18 years old, with 28.9% of them between the ages of 10 and 14 (US Census Bureau, 2000). 18,495 children, ages 6-17, are living in single parent families and 7,845 children, ages 6-17, are living below poverty, with 11,852 (10%) below 200% of poverty. In 2004, 43 out of 1,000 kids were suffering abuse. In 2005, there were 32,708 Latino youth, 18,503 African American youth, 13,920 Asian/Pacific Islander, 11,000 another race/ethnicity, and 36,291 Caucasian youth in Solano (Kids Count, 2006). This ethnic and cultural diversity stems from the number of first generation residents living in the community and some even migrating to and from their home countries throughout the year. This diversity also creates incredible challenges for youth in terms of academic ability, family education background, and income level. Solano County youth who are Latino have the dual hardship of achieving academic proficiency while also attempting to learn English.

Thirty one percent of Solano fifth graders reported that they have tried alcohol, inhalants, or marijuana at least once and 31% of Solano County fifth graders think that alcohol is “a little bad” versus “very bad” (California Healthy Kids Survey, aggregate data 2004-2006). In 2003, there were 33 teen births per 1,000 females ages 15-19. 19% of infants were born to both mothers and fathers with less than 12 years of education (Children, Now 2005).

All Counties

Currently there exists a shortage of caring adults in young people’s lives. Many children in our community, whether in single parent or two parent families, have few supportive adults in their life. Increasingly, parents are required to work longer hours, with longer commutes, and more days each week to ensure the financial stability of their family. As a result, children are spending more hours each week without the influence and support of their parents, relying on television, video games, or other children in the same predicament to provide the companionship that they need, making it more tempting to make unhealthy decisions. The children in these families have a host of unique and pressing needs that can be addressed by a culturally and linguistically specific mentoring program. Adult mentor recruitment efforts in the Latino/Latina community need to be expanded and enhanced in order to match within cultural and ethnic groups whenever possible.

Strengthening Communities

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

There is no plan for collaboration with other national service programs.

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

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the North Bay Marin VISTA

Youth4Youth is a mentoring program where high school students provide mentoring to elementary school youth. This program is provided on-site at various schools, youth centers, etc. This position would focus on the youth in our program who are children of prisoners.

The Marin VISTA develops and implements the program at various sites within Marin County under the supervision of the Manager of Marin Programs. The position is responsible for providing training, support, and on-going supervision for the peer mentor matches in Marin County as well as outreach and recruitment for the program.

Additional responsibilities include:

- Conducting orientation and training workshops for mentors
- Facilitating group activities and exercises
- Fundraising activities
- Attend staff, agency, and community meetings

Preferred Qualifications:

- Bachelor's Degree in Counseling, Social Work, Psychology or related field.
- Two years professional experience working with children and adults in a social service setting.
- Ability to make presentations in the community and facilitate group meetings.
- Proficiency with maintaining case records and program statistics.
- Experience working with volunteers, youth, and families.

The person we are looking for will have a passion for working with youth and believe in the leadership abilities of young people. They should possess the ability to work with a creative and energetic staff, have experience working with volunteers and have excellent time management and organizational skills. Knowledge of local community resources, strong work ethic, and the ability to work flexible days and hours for special events are a must. Experience with diverse populations including bilingual, court-involved, and at-risk groups is highly desirable. We strongly encourage individuals who are bilingual to apply.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the North Bay Napa VISTA

The Napa VISTA helps implement our Community Based Mentoring Program under the supervision of the Manager of Napa Programs. Our Community Based mentoring program matches youth, aged 6- 18, with a caring adult mentor one on one. They spend time together weekly based on their interests and availability.

This position would focus on the youth in our program who are children of prisoners. Position responsibilities include conducting volunteer recruitment, screening and enrollment, and match support.

Additional responsibilities include:

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- Conducting trainings and in-services for mentors
- Participation in fundraising activities
- Attend staff, agency, and community meetings

Preferred Qualifications:

- Bachelor's Degree in Counseling, Social Work, Psychology or related field.
- Two years professional experience working with children and adults in a social service setting.
- Ability to make presentations in the community and facilitate group meetings.
- Proficiency with maintaining case records and program statistics.
- Experience working with volunteers, youth, and families.

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Big Brothers Big Sisters of the North Bay Solano VISTA

The Solano VISTA helps implement our Community Based Mentoring Program under the supervision of the Manager of Solano Programs. Our Community Based mentoring program matches youth, aged 6- 18, with a caring adult mentor one on one. They spend time together weekly based on their interests and availability.

This position would focus on the youth in our program who are children of prisoners. The Solano VISTA is responsible for providing adult volunteers who serve as Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Position responsibilities include conducting volunteer recruitment, screening and enrollment, and match support.

Additional responsibilities include:

- Conducting trainings and in-services for mentors
- Participation in Fundraising activities
- Attend staff, agency, and community meetings

Preferred Qualifications:

- Bachelor's Degree in Counseling, Social Work, Psychology or related field.
- Two years professional experience working with children and adults in a social service setting.
- Ability to make presentations in the community and facilitate group meetings.
- Proficiency with maintaining case records and program statistics.
- Experience working with volunteers, youth, and families.

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events are a must. Experience with diverse populations including bilingual, court-involved families, and at-risk groups is highly desirable. We strongly encourage individuals who are bilingual and/or bicultural to apply.

Project Management

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

The AmeriCorps VISTA Members will all be supervised by full time staff, with each member supervised by a management staff member based on the county they are located in: the Manager of Marin Programs supervising Marin, the Manager of Napa Programs supervising Napa, and the Manager of Solano Programs supervising Solano. These staff will be responsible for daily supervision, development of work plans, and evaluation of progress for the VISTA positions.

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.

54% of our Board members are either Big Brothers or Big Sisters, which represent the community that we serve.

Organizational Capacity

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

All VISTA Members will be provided a laptop computer while they are placed with BBBS of the North Bay in order to access e-mail, the internet, and the internet-based mentoring case management program. All VISTA positions will be provided with a desk, phone, and internet access. The agency will also provide an intensive training on BBBS mentoring programs, that will include in person and on-line training. Given that the VISTA positions will be used to expand our existing program that we have implemented for the last 35 years, our agency is well equipped to orient, train, support, and supervise these 3 positions.

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.

To meet the needs of the underserved youth in our community, we have developed two programs to address these needs- our community-based mentoring program and our site-based mentoring program. The community-based mentoring program matches adult mentors one on one with a child in need to spend time together once a week offsite in the community as their schedule permits. The activities to implement this program include- outreach and recruitment of volunteers, interview and screening of volunteers and children, matching of volunteers with children one on one, implementing group match activities for mentor matches, and providing ongoing match support. The site based mentoring program also provides a one to one mentoring relationship, but does it with an adult or high school mentor on-site at schools, after programs, youth centers. The activities to implement this program include- outreach and recruitment of volunteers, interview and screening of volunteers and children, matching of volunteers

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with children one on one, implementing group match activities for mentor matches, supervision of matches on site, and providing ongoing match support.

The VISTA Project will provide support to both of these programs- assisting existing staff to enhance and expand the programs. VISTA members will be engaged in recruitment and outreach, interviewing potential mentors, developing match activities, and providing resources and referrals to the mentor matches.

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 does not discriminate with regards to individuals with disabilities serving as interns or staff. VISTA interns with physical limitations that hamper mobility would be best placed in our Marin and Napa program, given that our Solano office is on the 2nd floor and there is no elevator. Our agency strives to provide reasonable accommodations to staff and interns with disabilities to support their success in the work environment.