

PART II. 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.

Food for People is designated by the California Department of Social Services as the food bank for Humboldt County, and has been providing emergency and supplementary food for people in need for 25 years. We operate a total of 13 programs, each of which is designed to provide a safety net for those who are at risk for hunger and/or malnutrition. Collectively, these programs serve an average of 9,000 to 10,000 people each month. Our mission is:

- ? To provide emergency and supplementary food to those in need
- ? To improve food access through expanded participation in gleaning and gardening projects
- ? To conduct advocacy and outreach for local, state and federal food assistance programs and other anti-hunger activities
- ? To involve low income persons in self sufficiency programs
- ? To encourage self sufficiency in the community as a whole

Food for People's anti-hunger activities have included a focus on gleaning and food gathering and collection as a means of reducing hunger and improving health, and we have sponsored the Eureka Community Garden in order to model gardening and its related benefits, such as knowledge in planting, maintaining, harvesting, and preserving fresh produce. One of our 2006-09 VISTA members will be involved in our Gleaning and Food Acquisition Program and will specifically engage farmers and ranchers to increase the volume of their fresh produce and meat contributions; will participate in education and outreach to low-income residents in order to increase their knowledge and use of growing, freezing, canning, drying, and preserving their own foods; will create a gleaning model for use at each of our 20 pantry sites; and will work within each community to assess their needs and develop a comprehensive plan to address those local needs.

B. Summary of Accomplishments (For Current AmeriCorps*VISTA Sponsoring Organizations Only)
Briefly state your project's objectives and provide a clear description of the project's impact/outcomes, and accomplishments/outputs to date.

Please see the Redwood Community Action Agency AmeriCorps*VISTA Program Overview Narrative, Section B.

C. 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 was recently ranked 3rd in the state for its incidence of hunger and food insecurity, with #1 being the worst. According to 2000 census data, our county has a population of 126,518 people and 19.5% (24,059) live at or below the federal poverty level. This includes 6,618 children, representing 23.2% of all children under the age of 18 in our county. Our children also suffer from anemia at a rate of 18.2%, which is 4% higher than the state average, 16.8% of adults are identified as obese, and approximately 9,000 have been diagnosed with diabetes. Our county covers 3572 square miles with only 35.4 people per square mile. Misunderstandings about eligibility criteria and the rural nature of our county often make it difficult for low income individuals and families in need of food to access food pantries, the food stamp program and other available nutrition services. As poverty, hunger, and related illnesses continue to plague our county, it is critical to maximize the amount of fresh fruits, vegetables, and meats which Food for People gathers and distributes to those in need around the county, for which we rely on increasing contributions of surplus foods produced by our ranchers and farmers.

D. 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 Gleaning project will help to alleviate the incidence of hunger and food insecurity among low-income households struggling to make ends meet by helping them to identify additional food resources, have access to greater volumes of foodstuffs, and educate residents on growing and preserving of their own foods. It will also provide targeted individuals with the education information they need to make healthier food choices. Children who are malnourished fail to grow and develop normally and tend to have a higher than average school dropout

rate. Families need good nutrition to be able to work and care for each other. Seniors and people with disabilities risk a loss of independence when they don't have enough to eat. Our project will help to strengthen our community by providing adequate food resources and nutrition education for some of our most vulnerable citizens.

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

Food for People has a long history of community partnerships and collaborations. Approximately 1200 hours are donated each month by 200 volunteers across each of our programs. Our volunteer base includes, but is not limited to, individuals referred through RSVP, AARP Senior Employment, Welfare to Work (CalWorks), school programs and community service referrals. This does not include the many individuals who volunteer their time to operate the network of food pantries countywide that stretch from Garberville to Orick and Eureka to Willow Creek, all across the large rural county. These pantries are supported by local churches, businesses and civic organizations that provide them with funding, food and volunteers. Our Gleaning and Food Acquisition VISTA member will be working closely with these pantries and their support networks to ensure sustainability. We will also continue to work with AmeriCorps members and VISTA members to support these efforts. AmeriCorps and VISTA volunteers have been a tremendous resource for the food bank at all levels in recent years, and we are grateful for their expertise and assistance.

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?

Part of the AmeriCorps*VISTA members' jobs will be to coordinate with national volunteer programs as they recruit and work with volunteers. We currently have four RSVP volunteers.

E. Recruitment and Development (of Members, Volunteers and Participants)

1. Describe in specific terms how your organization will recruit qualified AmeriCorps*VISTA members to serve on this project. What challenges do you anticipate in recruiting qualified members?

Please see Redwood Community Action Agency AmeriCorps*VISTA Program Overview Narrative, Section E-1

2. Describe the service-related transportation needs of the AmeriCorps*VISTA members and your plans for meeting those needs.

Please see Redwood Community Action Agency AmeriCorps*VISTA Program Overview Narrative, Section E-2.

3. Briefly describe plans for orienting members to your organization and the community. Describe any training opportunities and technical assistance that will be available to members throughout their service.

Please see Redwood Community Action Agency AmeriCorps*VISTA Program Overview Narrative, Section E-3.

F. 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.

The Gleaning and Food Acquisition VISTA member will:

- ? Identify, establish contact, and develop partnerships with local farmers/ranchers for produce and meat donations
- ? Identify and procure equipment needed for gleaning and transporting activities
- ? Recruit a pool of gleaning volunteers to assist with harvesting donated produce
- ? Establish tracking procedures for donated produce and meat
- ? Initiate donor recognition activities, including individual and public acknowledgement
- ? Develop a gleaning model to be adapted for use at any of Food for People's pantry sites

- ? Identify/develop communication strategies for accessing donated food
- ? Assist in increasing the overall volume of fresh produce and/or meat available for food bank clients
- ? Research produce acquisition and distribution methods used by other food banks
- ? Coordinate plot rentals and oversee site activities for the Eureka Community Garden.
- ? .
- ? Conduct outreach to develop a countywide network of community gardens
- ? Coordinate public education efforts through presentations, press releases, flyers, etc.
- ? Provide workshops on freezing, canning, drying or preserving homegrown food
- ? Identify a lead agency (i.e. land trust, agricultural group) to assume overall coordination of the Eureka Community Garden and other community gardens countywide
- ? Assist in transition of sponsorship of the Eureka Community Garden to new lead agency
- ? Assess current operations, capacity for growth, resources, and operations needs at each pantry site.
- ? Work with each local food pantry and members of each community to develop a strategic plan that addresses local needs.

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

Qualifications:

- ? Excellent interpersonal skills
- ? Ability to work with people from a variety of socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds
- ? Excellent writing skills
- ? Strong organizational skills, including the ability to prioritize tasks for self and volunteers
- ? Experience in volunteer recruitment and community resource procurement
- ? Spanish language proficiency is desirable
- ? Ability to lift up to 50 pounds.

G. 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 will be provided by the Executive Director and the Community Education and Outreach Coordinator on a part-time basis as the VISTA will also be working independently in the community a portion of the time.

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.

Our Board of Directors does not reflect a 51% majority of low-income representatives. Based on the level of daily contact we have with members of the low-income community, we do not anticipate any problems in forming an advisory committee that is representative of the individuals served through the food bank.

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?

Specific tracking measures will be utilized for evaluating progress in the gleaning program: number of farmers, ranchers, gardeners participating in food donations; amount of produce, meats, other foodstuffs donated; number of volunteer gleaners; number of community members who grow their own fruits and vegetables and also learn methods of food preservation; and improved capacity of local food pantries to meet their local needs. Tracking data will be supported by surveys and individual interviews with all levels of gleaning project participants.

H. Organizational Capacity

1. Is your organization able to contribute financially for all or some of costs related to AmeriCorps*VISTA members? Please explain. (It's ok to say no.)

Food for People will provide a monthly food box and a Costco membership to enable the VISTA to purchase the "cheapest gas in town". For other information, please refer to the Heath Initiative Component Narrative.

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

All necessary work-related supplies will be provided, along with mileage reimbursement for project-related travel. Resource materials and outreach training will be provided by the Community Education and Outreach Coordinator. A computer, printer access and DSL service will be available at each VISTA's assigned work station. A food bank vehicle can be available on a scheduled basis for travel to pantry sites. Any training offered to Food for People staff will be extended to our VISTAs.

3. 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.

Since 1999, Food for People has conducted gleaning and food acquisition activities as part of an initiative to reduce the incidence of hunger, maintaining both gardening and gleaning activities for community participants. However, surveys of Food Bank clientele indicate that the majority of their households cannot afford to purchase fresh produce and meat due to the costs. This Gleaning and Food Acquisition project will work toward helping this low-income population learn to plant, maintain, and harvest a garden, as well as learn the many facets of food preservation, such as canning, freezing, or drying. These activities will lead to greater nutritional intake for the families involved as well as their ability to become self-sufficient.

4. 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 site is fully accessible to persons with disabilities on the first floor of our facility. The second floor is not currently accessible (all office space), although office space on the first floor can be made available and all program services are delivered on the first floor.

I. Other

Please leave blank unless otherwise instructed.

PART III. PROJECT PLAN

