

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 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 nutrition education and access to food stamp benefits as a means of reducing hunger and improving health, and we have coordinated the Food Stamp Access Task Force since 1999. One of our two VISTA members will be working with our Community Education and Outreach Program staff to extend nutrition education activities and food stamp and other federal food program outreach activities to other community-based programs, including Family Resource Centers, Community Health Centers and Food for People's network of 20 food pantries located throughout Humboldt County. Outreach and support activities will also be provided for low-income individuals.

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 3^d 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. According to our local Food Stamp office, only 36% of those who might be considered eligible are actually receiving food stamps. 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 Nutrition 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 and have access to greater volumes of foodstuffs. It will also provide targeted individuals with the nutrition 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 VISTA members 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 Nutrition and Food Stamp Outreach Program VISTA member will:

- ? Work with Community Education and Outreach Coordinator to prepare nutrition education materials for dissemination monthly at the food bank
- ? Research additional nutrition information and resources through public health/Project LEAN and other nutrition professionals
- ? Create a comprehensive “tool box” of nutrition education and federal food programs information tailored for each pantry site, Family Resource Center and Community Health Center, to be updated monthly
- ? Assist with the scheduling of cooking classes, taste tests and other food/cooking demonstrations
- ? Assist Community Education and Outreach Coordinator with food stamp outreach efforts, including pre-screening and direct application assistance for individuals
- ? Assist with the coordination of activities designed to educate the community about the benefits of food stamps as a nutrition assistance (vs. welfare) resource
- ? Work with the Coordinator to schedule and deliver training on the food stamp application process for case managers in partner organizations serving low income individuals
- ? Recruit and screen additional volunteers to support project activities in each community, as needed
- ? Work with Food for People staff to assess the needs of the individual pantry sites for the volunteers, food and funding necessary to maintain emergency and supplementary food resources within the community
- ? Work with food pantry coordinators to develop a strategic plan to cover future needs
- ? Meet with local businesses and community representatives to solicit resources for the pantry sites, and/or provide support for the pantry coordinator to do so.

- 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

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?**

The goals for nutrition education and outreach for food stamp and other federal food programs will mirror those of the grants and contracts already in place for that program. This includes specific tracking measures for materials disseminated, number of people applying for and receiving food stamps, number of individuals trained, and community partnerships. The outreach to community pantry sites will include discussions with recipients of pantry services in the development of plans to enhance services. Individual interviews with service recipients will also be conducted with 2-5 representatives per site.

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 food stamp outreach and advocacy activities as part of an initiative to increase enrollment and reduce the incidence of hunger. Current outreach efforts include a training session for local case managers entitled, "Food Stamps in Four Hours"; presentations on the food stamp application process for local organizations providing case management services to low income populations; and individualized support for food bank clients. Cooking classes have been offered at the food bank for over 5 years and recipes and other

nutrition and health related information is routinely disseminated in food boxes. The Community Education and Outreach Coordinator is currently funded to work only 20 hours per week, so the assistance and support provided by the Nutrition VISTA will allow us to expand these efforts. It will also allow us to extend these services to the individual pantry sites throughout the community that serve some of our most impoverished citizens.

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.