

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
PARKSIDE

Center for Community Partnerships

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March 21, 2014
Brian O'Connell
Director of City Development
City of Racine
730 Washington Avenue
Racine, WI 53403



Dear Brian,

I am writing to request cost share support in the amount of \$22,000 for two AmeriCorps VISTA members who will work to address economic opportunities in the City of Racine from August 18, 2014-August 15, 2015. Provided through the federal Office of Community and National Community Service, these VISTA members are part of a team of six VISTAs who will be placed in nonprofit and government agencies in Racine in the third year of the UW-Parkside VISTA Project.

The efforts of the VISTA Project complement work that was already being done by local organizations to empower low income population. Beginning in August, 2012, seven VISTAs have been working directly with as many as nine community organizations and two coalitions that support economic development, job skills training, and financial literacy. Over the course of the three year project period, the work of the VISTAs will build and strengthen systems; expand and enhance programming; and create an infrastructure that will allow for the sustainability of effective programs and partnerships.

This year, city funds have supported a VISTA working collaboratively with SEED, RUGN, and HALO as well as a VISTA member working with the Department of City Development. To date, both city supported VISTA members have been providing much needed capacity building support for the host organizations. VISTAs have worked on tasks such as developing and implementing outreach strategies, including brochures, social media and web presence, building partnerships with other local organizations, and preparing grant applications for specific initiatives. Amy Macemon has been instrumental to SEED, RUGN, and HALO by developing programs that offer information to entrepreneurs looking to start their own food businesses, laying the groundwork for a larger food hub in Racine County, and increasing awareness of many local food initiatives. Caitlyn White has been working with the Department of City Development on several initiatives including assisting the Community Economic Development Corporation (CEDCO) with loan files, working with the Preservation Commission to educate citizens, and assessing City owned properties for redevelopment potential.

The VISTA Project will enter the third year in August 2014 with new members building on the work of their predecessors. The Department of City Development VISTA responsibilities will include:

1. Assisting Gateway Technical College in outreach, education, and capacity building for Launch Box, Boot Camps, and apprenticeship programs
2. Assisting Racine Housing and Neighborhood Partnership in establishing a Community Housing Development Organization
3. Continuing support of CEDCO
4. Continuing work with the Department of City Development on commercial corridor support and preservation education

Work on the SEED/RUGN/HALO project will continue through the third project year. This work will include:

1. Assisting SEED in the creation of local investment pool that will ultimately fund local food projects and businesses
2. Continuing the development of a food hub that brings together local farmers, value-added processors, and buyers
3. Supporting the start-up of the HALO hoop house through business plan development, grant writing, and the creation of operating procedures related to local healthy food production

We are looking forward to continuing our partnership with the City of Racine into the third year of the UW-Parkside VISTA project. Although many of the nonprofit host agencies including Human Capital Development, Racine Literacy Council, and the Homeless Assistance Coalition have also provided cost-share funding, city support has been instrumental in realizing this project. We anticipate on-going cost share commitments from the VISTA sites; however, the \$22,000 in city funding remains a crucial piece of support. By providing \$22,000 to support two VISTAs, the City is actually receiving a value of \$44,354, which is the true cost of two VISTA members.

We will be submitting our renewal to the Corporation for National and Community Service by May 2, 2014. We would appreciate knowing of your funding decision by then.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Debra Karp", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Debra Karp
Director of Community Engagement
University of Wisconsin-Parkside

CC: Matt Sadowski