

**2009 Innovations Awards Program
APPLICATION**

CSG reserves the right to use or publish in other CSG products and services the information provided in this Innovations Awards Program Application. If your agency objects to this policy, please advise us in a separate attachment to your program's application.

ID # (assigned by CSG): 09-MW-02IA

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Iowa

Assign Program Category (applicant): Government Operations: Public Information

1. **Program Name:** Iowa Human and Civil Rights VISTA Project
2. **Administering Agency:** Iowa Civil Rights Commission
3. **Contact Person (Name and Title):** Ralph Rosenberg, Executive Director
4. **Address:** Iowa Civil Rights Commission, Grimes State Office Building, 400 E. 14th St., Des Moines, IA 50320
5. **Telephone Number:** 515-242-6537
6. **FAX Number:** 515-242-5840
7. **E-mail Address:** Ralph.Rosenberg@iowa.gov
8. **Website Addresses:**
 - Iowa Civil Rights Commission website: www.state.ia.us/government/crc
 - League of Iowa Human Rights Agencies website: www.iowacivilrights.web.com
 - Iowa Human & Civil Rights VISTA Project website: www.iowavistaproject.web.com
 - Iowa Civil Rights Commission Facebook group:
<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/pages/Des-Moines-IA/Iowa-Civil-Rights-Commission/80313175514?sid=7957774f78b6c3725913508fba58428f&ref=s>
 - Ames Community Conversations on Diversity website:
<http://sites.google.com/site/amescommunityconversations/>
 - Ames Community Conversations on Diversity Facebook page:
<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1444534756>
 - Iowa Immigration Education Coalition: <http://www.iowaimmigrationeducation.org/>
 - Iowa Immigration Education Coalition Facebook page:
<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1586191886>
 - Sioux City Human Rights Commission Facebook page:
<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/group.php?gid=39975528958>
 - Des Moines Human Rights Commission website: <http://www.ci.des-moines.ia.us/departments/HRT/index.htm>

9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The Iowa Human & Civil Rights VISTA Project seeks to increase the capacity of state and local civil and human rights agencies to end discrimination and to both promote and increase

public awareness of civil rights and diversity in Iowa. Through extensive outreach, education, and training of state and local organizations and the general public, this project forges partnerships, fosters ongoing communication regarding the sharing of best practices, and leverages resources among local civil and human rights agencies.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 2, 2009 to be considered.

The project began in August of 2006, making March 2009 its thirty-second month.

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

Notwithstanding the historic election of our new President, efforts to remove discrimination from society have stalled, if not moved backward. Struggles on diversity are revealed by national debates on immigration reform, court battles on affirmative action, and equal pay violations. Individual acts of hate continue and hate crimes persist, including the reappearance of nooses as intimidation tactics. During the second year of the project, we provided follow-up assistance for seven hate crimes and incidents.

On an individual level, discrimination continues to remove employment, education, or housing opportunities, the loss of any one of these respective opportunities directly contributes to ongoing poverty. On a macro level, discrimination harms the community, the economy, and all of society. In the state of Iowa alone, over 2,000 discrimination cases are filed, though many incidents still go unreported for fear of retaliation or lack of knowledge regarding people's civil rights.

In terms of diversity, Iowa is rapidly becoming more diverse, never again to be as white as it was yesterday. Demographic projections indicate that Iowa will be approaching a 15% nonwhite population within 15 years (Census projections, Iowa State University.) Globalization, along with the need for a larger and more diverse workforce combine to create an urgency to address diversity issues. One solution is to network human rights and civil rights groups and seek to bridge gaps and break down barriers between stakeholder groups, and within their communities. Such efforts may also address other intransient issues, such as Iowa possessing the dubious distinction of having one of the highest rates of incarceration of racial or cultural minorities, as well as detention of minors.

According to the 2004 American Community Survey, 9.1% of whites have income below the poverty line. In contrast, 37% of blacks or African Americans, 27% of foreign-born Iowans, 15.4% of Hispanics or Latinos, and 14.4% of people with disabilities have income below the poverty level. The 2008 floods highlight the vulnerability of working class and low income Iowans, including racial and cultural minorities to the consequences of predatory lending or discriminatory housing practices (e.g., being steered to live in a certain area, the same area being in an at-risk flood zone). Recently, the societal debate over the Postville raid dramatizes the continuing conflicts on living within a new Iowa. Major community events, such as the immigration raid in Postville last May, the string of arson-related fires in

Burlington last fall, and a current housing crisis in Sioux City, disproportionately affect low-income and minorities at a higher rate.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

Iowa Civil Rights Commission: November 2006 – Present

Accomplishments of the VISTA members with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission include building the capacity of local and state human civil rights groups; revamping and editing the League and ICRC websites; establishing a League blog; and organizing the League of Iowa Human Rights Agencies' trainings, meetings, and Legislative Breakfasts. They have engaged in extensive housing outreach efforts in Dubuque resulting in the leafleting of over 1000 rental units in Dubuque and Des Moines, created of fair housing posters and flyers with tear-off sheets, and distributed of fair housing outreach ideas to local commissions. For the past two years, the VISTAs have facilitated workshops for three of the State Historical Building's History Through the Arts youth program series, with one more series taking place next month. They collected and published more than a dozen best practices of ending discrimination, promoting diversity, and raising the profile of civil rights. In April 2007, the four Iowa Civil Rights VISTA members at the time received the 2008 Porter Dimery, Jr. Youth Human Rights Award from the Des Moines Human Rights Commission at its annual fair housing and human rights symposium.

Outreach and education remain the hallmarks of the program. Several former and current VISTA members provided translation services for ICRC and local commissions and wrote civil rights articles for Latino newspapers distributed across the state. Others researched and applied for grants, including two successful federal government grants. The VISTA members partnered with the Central Iowa Society for Human Resource Management to staff and coordinate an educational booth at the Iowa State Fair, where they reached over 15,000 people last year. One member worked with One Iowa on the distribution of a civil rights history comic, co-facilitates workshops at conferences, and helped coordinate and participate in public forums on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues in Council Bluffs and Iowa. Various VISTA members reached out to the Chinese, Vietnamese, and Tai Dam communities during their annual lunar year celebrations and distributed educational material concerning civil rights and diversity.

Earlier this year, the VISTA members assisted the state office of the Corporation for National and Community Center in promoting and organizing a state-wide initiative to include food drives within Martin Luther King Day activities, as well as promoting the use of the Inaugural "Day of Service" event registration website. One VISTA member recently published a report on employment issues affecting ex-offenders in Iowa and is currently organizing a state-wide diversity art contest. He also works with the Iowa Immigration Education Coalition in creating a new, more user-friendly website and managing an organizational Facebook page.

Des Moines Human Rights Commission: February 2008 – Present

Fair Housing education serves as the cornerstone of the full-time and summer associate VISTA members' work. The summer associates gave over twenty fair presentations to

different local organizations and distributed fans with fair housing information printed on them to faith communities that did not have air conditioning in their worship spaces. The full-time VISTA members persuaded local businesses to display fair housing posters in their buildings, worked with Dahl's to have fair housing advertisements placed on the plastic grocery bags, included fair housing advertisements in the community's water bills, partnered with the City of Des Moines Government IT personnel to update and revise the commission's website, networked with local businesses at the Central Iowa Society for Human Resource Management's resource fair, and assisted at ICRC's booth at the State Fair. One of the VISTA has coordinated the commission's Annual Fair Housing and Human Rights Symposium for the past two years, secured funding from sponsors, recruited speakers and enlisted the assistance of various volunteers for the event. She also procured a \$10,000 grant for fair housing outreach projects. Another VISTA member updated all the commission's brochures and distributed fair housing posters to agencies across the metro area. The newest VISTA creates innovative fair housing activities for children and youth.

Sioux City Human Rights Commission: March 2008 – Present

The Jones Street Neighborhood Coalition and Sioux City Human Rights Commission worked together to create the Midtown Family Community Center (MFCC), an inner city program for at-risk or vulnerable children and families. The mission of the MFCC is “to improve the quality of life and strengthen individual youth and families through services and activities.” The Jones Street neighborhood is located on the near-north side of Sioux City and is the most culturally diverse and economically challenged area of the city. The VISTA member helped establish this community based nonprofit, built partnerships, collected donations, and oversees all the volunteers. In addition, she serves as the coordinator of the food pantry and created a community library.

More recently, the largest landlord for low income tenants found many of his units in foreclosure, placing close to 1,000 people at risk of losing housing. The VISTA members have been working on addressing the housing crisis by assessing the residents in need, linking them with the appropriate community resources, and educating them about fair housing rights. Several members research and monitor landlord bankruptcies, including the bankruptcy of the primary landlord in early March. Currently, one VISTA member heads up the assistance efforts for the displaced tenants. She has created a hotline for tenants to call using a phone donated from Longlines Cellular, assists with translations, and prepared displaced tenant flyers and events.

Fort Dodge Human Rights Commission: Summer 2008

At the request of the local human rights commission and in response to an increase in criminal activity in Fort Dodge, a VISTA summer associate was placed in the area. The VISTA created a Neighborhood Safety Watch Toolkit for each of the town's five neighborhoods, and was successful in empowering the community in informing them of other local initiatives. This toolkit included a checklist for starting a neighborhood watch program, local police reporting crime data, pre-established local neighborhood watch resources, and a national neighborhood watch survey. The VISTA member also organized Fort Dodge's National Night Out Event, at which the sheriff passed out the neighborhood watch toolkits.

Dubuque Human Rights Commission: July 2008 – Present

The Human Rights Department has established relations with the following organizations: The Multicultural Family Center, Every Child, Every Promise Initiative, Project H.O.P.E., and the Washington Neighborhood Revitalization Project. Besides these three main partnerships, the VISTA collaborated with local radio stations to do PSAs; businesses, civil organizations and colleges regarding the commission's Speakers Bureau; Latino business owners regarding civil rights issues; and the Westminster Presbyterian Church for an event with its Women's Group.

The Multicultural Family Center seeks innovative ways to build cross-cultural collaboration and civic engagement, as well as, provide meeting, recreational and instructional facilities for families, youth and downtown neighborhood residents. The VISTA Human Rights Project, in partnership with the Multicultural Family Center, constructs connections between the Center and groups protected under civil rights law, primarily the Latino and African-American populations. These connections consist of educational and social programming. The educational programming arms individuals with information regarding their civil rights, discrimination, and access to resources (i.e. food pantries, shelters, health care, continuing education, or job training). The social programming develops a sense of civic engagement, cultural immersion, and community interaction through holiday celebrations, culture days, arts and crafts, and discussions of pertinent issues facing the community.

The "Every Child, Every Promise" initiative improves the outcomes for the community's youth by concentrating the focus on the fulfillment of Five Promises: Caring adults, safe places, healthy start, effective education, and opportunities to help others. The VISTA member collaborates with the "Every Child, Every Promise" initiative through its partnership with the Multicultural Family Center. The Center adopted the Five Promises outlined by the initiative to re-focus its service to the youth and families of Dubuque.

Project H.O.P.E. (Help Our People Excel) is a community initiative that encourages and facilitates collaboration, communication, and advocacy, among referral resources, education/training providers, employers, and people in our community to dissolve existing disparity and ensure equity in employment and economic opportunities. Project H.O.P.E. and the Human Rights VISTA Project partnered to aid in the alleviation of poverty and the working poor through helping to construct connections between social service agencies, job training programs, and local businesses. The hope of the Human Rights VISTA Project is to also make sure that those who find employment under project H.O.P.E. (who may come from a position of poverty) understand the middle-class work environment they are entering. The same idea of understating will also need to be established among middle-class managers who take on employees from Project H.O.P.E.

The Washington Neighborhood Revitalization is a project designed to address and remedy the economic and social concerns of the Washington Neighborhood located in downtown Dubuque. The Dubuque VISTA collaborates with the Washington Neighborhood Revitalization on issues relating to economic development, primarily workforce

development, and social/community issues such as race relations and local engagement in the neighborhood.

Postville Recovery Efforts: December 2008 – Present

Postville, a town of 2,500 people is home to the second largest immigration raid in U.S. history, the largest concentration of Hasidic Jews in Iowa (10%), and a significant population of people from all over the world, including Guatemala. After the raid, members of the Guatemalan community were taken into custody, many were charged, jailed, sentenced, and eventually deported. Some former employees remain as potential witnesses pending civil criminal cases against the employer. Numerous state and federal charges filed in 2008 are pending against the plant and its owners. The plant shut down in later summer/early fall, and for a period of time up to eight hundred employees were unemployed. Even today, only about two hundred are employed. In the fall, the plant entered bankruptcy proceedings. Recently, the second largest landlord declared bankruptcy. Three VISTA members from the Iowa Civil Rights Commission spent the month of December assisting with distribution and completion of forms to access emergency housing and utility assistance through local community action agencies and faith-based groups. They also linked citizens with Iowa Legal Aid. They coordinated a multicultural holiday party for the community with a free meal and toys for over 300 children. One VISTA member decided to remain in Postville and was then joined by a new member in January. Together, those two members help manage and increase the effectiveness of the local of the local pantry (going from 30 clients to 150 per week). By having the opportunity to work in a community garden and bring food to the pantry, clients of the pantry have more vested interest in the agency and develop greater empowerment and connection to the community. VISTA members also help organize and facilitate short- and long-term plans for Postville and the surrounding area, all affected by this economic and community crisis. One of the VISTA members provides translation services for the Catholic Archdiocese during interviews for the potential certification of victims of human trafficking visas.

Ames Community Conversations on Diversity: January 2009 to Present

Ames is a city of 25,000 people matched with an equal number of students attending Iowa State University each year. Like several other Iowa communities, Ames has received a recent influx of citizens with Section 8 vouchers from Chicago. There was some community tension and the mayor convened a city-wide meeting, following up with partnerships with the university community, to respond to issues associated with the changing demographics in Ames. One VISTA member has been working with Ames City Hall, community leaders, the faith community, ISU faculty, staff and students to create a sense of inclusiveness in the city. Originally asked to coordinate the efforts of the Ames Community Conversations on Diversity, the VISTA brought focus to the six action teams associated with the conversations by creating interactive websites, helping to introduce plans for a block party trailer proposed by one of the teams, and attending various city-based diversity groups' meetings and informing them of the work being done by the six action teams. The VISTA member reached out to the faith community and ISU for support, involvement, and collaboration on these efforts and complementary works. Recruitment efforts are being made to hire both a Summer VISTA and a full-time VISTA member to serve the Ames community starting in the summer of 2009.

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

This local, state, and federal partnership marks the first time a state civil rights agency has applied for funding from the AmeriCorps VISTA Program to strength statewide efforts of state and local human and civil rights organizations. Due to a combination of changing demographics, limited finances, and existing partnerships with over twenty human and civil rights groups, the Iowa Civil Rights Commission decided to explore hosting VISTA members to assist local and staff educational and outreach efforts. VISTA members use information technology approaches, such as websites and television ads, traditional grass roots work of going door to door explaining rights, as well as using utility bill stuffers, signs on buses, and civil rights quizzes.

While many national community service projects focus on relieving short term problems or focusing on a specific issue, the Iowa Human & Civil Rights VISTA Project addresses the root causes of poverty and discrimination, in addition to building the capacity of agencies mandated to enforce the state's civil rights laws or created to educate the general public on human rights. While the entire project deals with poverty and discrimination, by expanding to multiple sites across the state, it has been able to tailor the approaches to addressing poverty and discrimination to fit the context of the different communities. This means that some VISTA members might work with afterschool programs and community centers in low-income neighborhoods, while other VISTA members connect immigrants and refugees with humanitarian relief and ESL classes. Due to the number of VISTA members in our project, when a crisis happens, such as a series of mass evictions or the discovery of the exploitation of dependent adults with mental disabilities, we can pull members from their sites to address the immediate needs and then create positions to look at long-term solutions, strategic planning, and strengthening community partnerships.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

To make a space for two VISTA members, the Iowa Civil Rights Commission spent around \$1,000 to remodel a cubicle, to set up a couple phone lines, and to install several computers and link them with the state government system. Ralph Rosenberg, the executive director, took care of the applications while Diana Sisler, personnel and finance specialist, oversaw the financial component and ensuring the readiness of the cubicle for the VISTA members.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

Due to the rapid expansion of the program and occasional grants or federal legislation, our annual operation costs fluctuate throughout the year. When we first began with two VISTA members based out of the main office, the total cost of the program was \$20,183, with \$2,500 funded by the Iowa Civil Rights Commission. Excluding the funding from the 2009 Recovery and Reinvestment Act and for the Summer Associate aspect of our program that is estimated in the coming months, our estimated budget for this fiscal year will be \$369,678:

\$281,278 from the federal government for member support, \$78,400 of combined contributions from the Iowa Civil Rights Commission and some local sites for five cost-share positions, and \$10,000 from the Corporation for National and Community Service to offset travel and supervision costs.

16. How is the program funded?

The Corporation for National and Community Service pays for a majority of the cost of this program. The Corporation provided the living stipend, relocation allowances, health coverage, and end of service award. The Iowa Civil Rights Commission provided in-kind donations of office space, laptops, email, and internet access. In addition, it covered the cost of office supplies and travel reimbursement. As the program grew, the Iowa Civil Rights Commission began funding several VISTA positions, along with receiving funding from some of the other sites that receive VISTA members from our program. Both individual agencies and VISTA members engage in grant writing and finding in-kind donations to cover the different activities engaged in by the VISTA members and their local sites.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

No, this particular program did not require passage of legislation. However, the national VISTA program was created as part of President Johnson's War on Poverty in 1965. During this current administration, the AmeriCorps program, of which VISTA is a part of, received additional funding from President Obama's Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The Iowa Human & Civil Rights VISTA Project was awarded additional funding through the Act to add fifteen more people, doubling its current size. Only two other VISTA projects in Iowa will receive funding from the Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

All VISTA members have access to office space, basic office supplies, a computer, email, internet, fax, and phones from their specific location. The types of software and technology used at the different sites varies from state or local government's web hosts to free websites and programs from Freewebs.com, Blogger, Facebook, and Google. The League of Iowa Human Rights Agencies and the Iowa Human & Civil Rights VISTA Project websites were created by VISTA members at the Iowa Civil Rights Commission using freewebs.com. At least four sites use Facebook, one MySpace, one Google.docs, one WordPress, and two Blogger. In addition, mass email distribution lists can be found on the League website, through a Yahoo group, and on Outlook at the Iowa Civil Rights Commission. For publications, VISTA members use whatever desktop publishing software that is available at their site, which ranges from Microsoft Publisher to Adobe PageMaker. Official administration of the program takes place using eGrants, a program run by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Tracking of grant money takes place through the Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Payment Management website and through eGrants.

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

Yes, to our knowledge we were the first state to create this unique local, state, and federal human and civil rights partnership.

Ralph Rosenberg, Executive Director
Iowa Civil Rights Commission
Grimes State Office Building
400 E. 14th St.
Des Moines, IA 50319
(515) 242-6537
Ralph.Rosenberg@iowa.gov

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

We are not aware of any other VISTA programs focusing on civil and human rights commissions and agencies at a statewide level. However, there is one program in Lincoln, Nebraska that operates at a local level with one VISTA member. In Iowa, several other state government agencies run VISTA programs. However, those programs either focus on specific tasks (cleaning up trails and parks) or build the capacity of one specific organization.

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

While we are approaching the final stage, sustainability, of our overall program, we continue to expand to include new sites across the state. In turn, all of our sites are now at different stages of implementation. The sites with past or current VISTA members (both full time and summer associate) tend to have their programs fully implemented, while others sites are in the process of recruiting candidates and completing job descriptions. Overall, we have the systems and resources to guide all the sites to full implementation.

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

In terms of reaching an overarching goal of educating Iowans about their civil rights and diversity, this program continues to reach thousands of people at events across the state. As most of the commissions rely on volunteers and have limited budgets, staff and commissioners can only attend a minimal amount of conferences, festivals, and celebrations and often only had a few basic publications to distribute. However, through the VISTA project, many commissions now have a larger number of publications in English and in other languages distinct to those communities. Thousands more people now know where to turn when they experience discrimination or what civil rights are accorded to them by the law. In 2007, VISTA members attended twenty-six events, reached 4,285 new people, and distributed 9,091 educational items. The next year, these numbers grew to one hundred

twenty five events, 21,750 people, and 54,248 educational items. In the first two months of 2009, VISTA members have attended nineteen events, reached 1,040 people, and distributed 2,614 items.

VISTA members at the Iowa Civil Rights Commission restructured the commission's booth at the Iowa State Fair last summer, coordinated a volunteer crew of one hundred twenty people, secured a number of eco-friendly promotional giveaways, and expanded the civil rights quizzes to include both adults and children. As a result, the number of people taking the civil rights quizzes doubled and thousands of people learned more about their civil rights.

While the training of individual local commissions has not always succeeded in ways we hoped for, we have strengthened local commissions through intensive housing education outreach efforts in Des Moines and Dubuque (leafleting over 1,000 rental units and posting fair housing posters in over 50 public buildings); created an online hate crimes prevention and response resource packet; shared of best practices on how to combat bullying in the schools; translated official forms and publications; assisted with public forums in Council Bluffs and Burlington on gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender issues; coordinated a public hearing in Marshalltown following an immigration raid; and managed web-based dialogue groups for the Ames Community Conversations on Diversity.

VISTA members in Postville run a community food pantry; assist individuals with financial, housing, and basic needs; planned a multicultural holiday party where over 300 children received toys; assist with short- and long-term planning; and provide translation services. The members will be starting a community garden this spring and are preparing to assist people as emergency funding comes to an end, utilities are turned off, and another round of evictions begin.

Recently, the largest landlord and provider of housing to low-income tenants, including many racial and ethnical cultural minorities (Native American, Latinos, African Americans, and others) in Sioux City recently filed for bankruptcy after many foreclosures on some of his rental units. As a result, as many as a thousand individuals living in several hundred rental units found themselves at risk of losing their housing. VISTA members in Sioux City are working on assessing the housing needs of the displaced tenants, directing them to appropriate agencies and resources, and educating them about their rights as renters.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

The VISTA program has grown in three ways: numerically, scope of services, and visibility. In the first year, the program started with two people at the Iowa Civil Rights Commission and then quickly doubled to four people. During the second year, the program expanded across the state to include local commissions in Des Moines, Waterloo, Sioux City, Davenport, and Dubuque. Due to the size of our program, one of the VISTA members in her second year became a VISTA Leader. During the summer of 2008, seven Summer Associates served eight to ten week terms in Des Moines, Sioux City, Fort Dodge, and Waterloo. We filled eight more full-time positions in November of 2008, expanding into the different agencies of the Iowa Department of Human Rights. To address humanitarian needs

in Postville following a May 2008 immigration raid, we added one more full-time position and transferred one person from the Iowa Civil Rights Commission to Postville. Currently, we are recruiting for fifteen Summer Associate positions, fifteen full-time positions funded by the Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and four new full-time positions.

Originally, the Iowa Civil Rights Commission housed all the VISTA members with the idea of having those members serve as circuit riders, providing assistance to local commissions with capacity building, creation of publications, training of commissioners, and coordination of public forums and hearings. As some of the local commissions with paid staff saw the accomplishments of the VISTA members, they began requesting their own VISTA members. The Corporation for National and Community Service consented to letting us expand into a multi-site program, with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission serving as the sponsoring organization. During this time period, we expanded from civil and human rights outreach and education efforts to include one position at a community center, where the VISTA member served as the program director and oversaw a variety of after-school and community programs.

Due to our success as a whole, the Corporation then approached the Iowa Civil Rights Commission about the possibility of having Summer Associates. The difference between a full-time VISTA member and a Summer Associate is that a full-time member focuses on indirect service and capacity building while a Summer Associate can provide direct service. This meant that almost half of the Summer Associates worked on actual discrimination cases, two provided numerous fair housing presentations, and one addressed neighborhood safety and coordinated a town's National Night Out activities.

In the last twelve months, we broadened our reach to include a second community center, emergency humanitarian relief for a four county region impacted by the temporarily closing of the area's main employer following an immigration raid, a community conversations on diversity initiative in a college town experiencing major changes in demographics, a theater through the arts educational program for low-income students, and a statewide community conversations project to address the employment needs and rights of dependent adults with limited mental abilities.

Despite repeated communications with the local civil and human rights agencies across the state, few asked for assistance from the VISTA Project. However, after several of the larger commissions received assistance and the project had experienced several successes, the League of Iowa Human Rights Agencies (an informal group comprised of the Iowa Civil Rights Commission, Iowa Department of Human Rights, and all the local human and civil rights commissions across the state), began to see the benefits of the project. Both the local commissions that housed VISTA members and the Iowa Civil Rights Commission integrated the VISTA Project into their marketing plans and shared with stakeholders the accomplishments of the full-time and summer VISTA members. Also, a sizable component of the VISTAs' work involves building relationships with stakeholder groups in the communities and state. As more people learned about the program, organizations outside of the League, such as the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, the Commission on the Status of African Americans, and the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities, asked

to become part of the VISTA Project. The Iowa Human & Civil Rights VISTA Project has been featured in a variety of newspapers, blogs, radio stations, and magazines, including the online version of Time Magazine.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

If other states do not have informal or formal associates of human and civil rights agencies (or whatever area links the different agencies interested in starting a VISTA Project) across their state, they may struggle initially with getting buy-in from the agencies. It took over a year before we got buy-in from some of the major local commissions, and now only at two and half years do we have full support of the League of Iowa Human Rights Agencies. However, this program could easily be implemented at a local level to begin with and then expand to the statewide effort or begin with a state government department and then expand among its partners.

The U.S. Congress is debating legislation that would take away the administrative responsibilities of the national VISTA Program, along with all the other national volunteer service programs from the Corporation for National and Community Service and give it to state commissions. For states with commissions on volunteer service that have been active with the national volunteer service programs, this will not be an obstacle. However, if those commissions do not have experience with or knowledge of the national service programs, accessing assistance may take longer than with current CNCS personnel who are trained on the nuts and bolts of the various programs, including AmeriCorps VISTA.