

PART I - FACE SHEET

APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to confirm to the Corporation's eGrants System)

1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION:

Application Non-Construction

2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS):
09/09/22

3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE:

STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:

2b. APPLICATION ID:
22VS249729

4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:
09/09/22

FEDERAL IDENTIFIER:
22VSFCT003

5. APPLICATION INFORMATION

LEGAL NAME: United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut
UEI NUMBER: NMH6FMUM6QJ8

NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes):

NAME: John Prescod

ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county):
30 Laurel St
Hartford CT 06106 - 1361
County: Hartford

TELEPHONE NUMBER: (860) 493-1107

FAX NUMBER:

INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: JPrescod@unitedwayinc.org

6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN):
060646653

7. TYPE OF APPLICANT:

7a. Non-Profit

7b.

8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box).

NEW NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE
 CONTINUATION AMENDMENT

If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es):

A. AUGMENTATION B. BUDGET REVISION

C. NO COST EXTENSION D. OTHER (specify below):

9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY:

Corporation for National and Community Service

10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER: 94.013

10b. TITLE: VISTA State

11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT:

United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut-NHAP

Program Type: Standard

Cost Share:

12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc):
Hartford, CT

11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):

13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 09/25/22 END DATE: 09/24/23

14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant b.Program

15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #:

16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS?

YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON:

DATE:

NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372

a. FEDERAL	\$ 0.00
b. APPLICANT	\$ 18,177.00
c. STATE	\$ 0.00
d. LOCAL	\$ 0.00
e. OTHER	\$ 0.00
f. PROGRAM INCOME	\$ 0.00
g. TOTAL	\$ 18,177.00

17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT?

YES if "Yes," attach an explanation. NO

18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.

a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:
John Prescod

b. TITLE:

c. TELEPHONE NUMBER:
(860) 493-6800

d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:

e. DATE SIGNED:
09/23/22

Target Populations

Low-income youth
Low-income communities

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Executive Summary

United Way's mission is to bring together people and resources for the well-being of children and families. The proposed VISTA project aligns with the education focus area. The VISTA project will seek to scale United Way's existing literacy initiatives to two elementary schools in the North Hartford Promise Zone (NHPZ) with a goal of increasing access to literacy resources and targeted literacy-based volunteer-interventions, as well as parent engagement opportunities and expects to benefit 500 children. VISTA members will contribute to the goals of the project by performing activities such as expanding and building the sustainability of two existing literacy programs of United Way, Dolly Parton Imagination Library and United Way Readers and supporting parent and resident engagement efforts over the course of five years (01/01/2022-12/20/2026).

Summary of Accomplishments

N/A

Need

The unmet poverty-related community need(s) you propose to address using AmeriCorps VISTA resources;

Three neighborhoods comprise the federally-designated North Hartford Promise Zone (NHPZ) -- Clay Arsenal, Northeast, and Upper Albany. The NHPZ is a primary entry corridor into the capital city of Hartford and a pathway to the central business district. It was once home to a mixed-income community with several significant manufacturing businesses. Unfortunately, the area experienced a sharp economic decline following three seminal events beginning in the 1960s: 1) construction of a highway isolating NHPZ from the central business; 2) rioting that devastated the area; and 3) a decrease in employment opportunities as manufacturing jobs relocated to the suburbs and/or southern states along the eastern coast.

The NHPZ is a 3.11 square mile and home to 24,463 residents (8,749 households). NHPZ residents are predominantly Black and Hispanic. Hispanics are predominately of Puerto Rican descent (75%) and nine percent of the NHPZ population is of Jamaican and West Indian ancestry.

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The DataHaven Community Index survey highlights several areas of opportunity in the NHPZ, including poverty and young child poverty (37% and 51%, respectively), severe housing cost burden (32%), life expectancy (76.1 years), unemployment (24%) and median household income (\$27,000).

While 78% of respondents reported that children have pre-kindergarten experience, that experience has not translated into school readiness as evidenced by the Kindergarten Entrance Inventory using the Connecticut Documentation of Observation for Teaching System (CT DOTS). Among NHPZ children who entered kindergarten in the Fall of 2019, 38% did not have age-appropriate language and literacy skills; 42% did not have age-appropriate math skills, and 47% did not have age appropriate social/emotional skills, according to the City of Hartford's Department of Children, Youth, Families, and Recreation.

School profiles in SY2020-21 for Wish Museum and SAND elementary schools located in the NHPZ are as follows: 24% and 14% of students (respectively) have a disability/special education status; 68% and 74% of students (respectively) are English Language Learners; 85% and 84% of students (respectively) qualify for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL); and 90% and 87% of students (respectively) are considered "high need" -- defined by the Department of Education as having a disability, learning English as a second language, or eligible for FRPL -- compared to 82% at the school district and 51% state average.

In SY2018-19 (most recent available data), 91% of third graders at Wish Museum and 90% of SAND elementary schools were not reading on grade-level -- compared to the state average of 46%.

Unfortunately, reading proficiency has been exacerbated by COVID-19 and the "digital divide" -- the gap between people who have knowledge of and access to technology/internet and those who do not. Remote learning has also made attendance worse for NHPZ children who already struggled with chronic absenteeism -- students missing 10% or more (as many as 18 days) of the school year -- rates of 37% and 22% (respectively) pre-COVID in SY2018/19 that has skyrocketed to 65% and 57% in SY2020-21.

United Way, like many other non-profits, has been negatively impacted by the pandemic. We continue to experience a disruption in workplace giving and a decline in revenue. Many of our corporate partners have experienced layoffs since March 2020, which has decreased our donor pool, in

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addition to scaling back employee giving campaigns for existing staff. Additionally, the opportunity for in-person fundraising activities has diminished substantially due to social distancing and remote work and has not yet rebounded to pre-COVID levels. Still, we continue to fundraise to meet our campaign goal by diversifying our revenue sources through other corporate and philanthropic sources, including increasing outreach to leadership donors and individuals through our affinity groups; and increasing other funding streams, including grants, grants management services, and sponsorships.

United Way has been very fortunate to receive VISTAs over the years to help support our work (especially in implementing our United Way Readers program detailed below). Thousands of local children and families have benefited from their efforts. Now more than ever, VISTAs play an integral role in helping to build our internal capacity to successfully deploy literacy programming by offsetting staffing costs and scaling our reach to children and families in the community who are experiencing greater need because of COVID-19. VISTAs can help us do the hard work of re-engaging children and families who have been left behind and need additional resources and support to thrive.

We aspire to build on the successes of our literacy initiatives year over year and to continue to scale existing efforts. Since inception of United Way Readers in 2012, we have added one additional full-time staff to support our literacy efforts (a former United Way Readers VISTA himself) and have secured additional grant funding through the North Hartford Ascend Pipeline (detailed below) to support an additional half time position.

With the disruption of COVID-19, we know the need for literacy support continues to be great, as evidenced by the data cited above. Compounding this problem, Hartford Public Schools has implemented many changes in recent years, such as school closures and consolidations, as well as staff turnover that have impacted community providers who work in the schools, including United Way. We continue to need support from VISTAs to deploy programming with fidelity and accommodate limited capacity of school staff on site. Our approach is to more fully embed VISTAs into each school by developing deeper connections with families and getting to know the individual needs of the child and household. As such, it is important that we find VISTAs who reflect the demographics of the children and families we serve by recruiting from the north Hartford neighborhood or neighboring communities.

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Providing children and families in the NHPZ with additional literacy supports and services can improve kindergarten readiness and third grade reading proficiency that is key to closing the achievement gap -- a gap that has only gotten wider from learning loss caused by the pandemic and compounded by time spent away from the formal classroom. Many NHPZ children have limited or no access to technology and internet services at home needed to participate in remote learning.

If our project is successful, children and families in north Hartford will have access to a comprehensive set of supports and services that supplements early childhood education and in school learning that will allow students to gain lost ground and get ahead. Our role is to perform outreach and engage families in available literacy activities in the city, including our Dolly Parton Imagination Library and United Way Readers programs, that will help children meet developmental milestones and succeed in school. By receiving early literacy connections from birth through third grade, our goal is that students are reading proficiently by the start of fourth grade.

Specific results from Dolly Parton Imagination Library and United Way Readers are detailed below.

The related impact on the local beneficiary community(ies) your project would serve, specifying if that includes systemically excluded racial and ethnic communities;

United Way is one of the key partners in developing the North Hartford Ascend Pipeline (NHAP). NHAP is an integrated pipeline of services aimed at helping children and families succeed by making resources more accessible and easier to navigate. This work is made possible through a Promise Neighborhood grant that was recently awarded by the Department of Education for planning and implementation.

A comprehensive analysis, including both qualitative and quantitative data, was undertaken in conjunction with the NHPZ, Hartford Public Schools District-Wide School Redesign, Connecticut Children's Community Health Needs Assessment, and Hartford City Plan in preparation for submitting a proposal for the NHAP to the Department of Education. This assessment identified areas of opportunity that need to be addressed to improve academic achievement, academic attainment, and long-term well-being and quality of life.

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To address these issues, the NHAP will integrate existing resources and develop strategies to address identified gaps within a comprehensive, integrated prenatal through career pipeline. The NHAP project will focus on making services more integrated, available and accessible while engaging residents meaningfully in building community solutions.

The VISTA project will build the community capacity to support the school readiness, early literacy and parent engagement components of the NHAP. VISTA members will focus on building plans to expand our current literacy programs and public awareness efforts into the two north Hartford elementary schools, and develop strategies for family engagement in literacy and school readiness. Today, United Way offers literacy programs in eight Hartford elementary schools, including Wish and SAND elementary schools located in the NHPZ. Currently, a limited number of students from these schools participate in the program when many more could benefit. At the end of the project, the goal is for 80% of the student body to be enrolled in early literacy activities and for strong community engagement to be in place to support ongoing sustainability after the conclusion of the VISTA project.

Equity is the driving force for the VISTA project and NHAP; the projects seek to address differences in outcomes for neighborhood residents based on race, ethnicity, disability, and other factors. The project seeks to address academic, social, economic and health inequities that were compounded by the pandemic. All NHAP-related projects, including the VISTA project, will deploy strategies essential to facilitating the systemic change required for community transformation and improved academic outcomes.

Why the needs are not currently being met:

Since receiving a Federal Promise Zone designation in 2015, the City of Hartford has partnered with residents, public, private, and philanthropic sectors to drive investments in the NHPZ to improve public safety, support young families, build community pride, and create new economic opportunities. While these investments have increased the number of services available to north Hartford residents and community provider presence in the area, resident engagement and supports provided to the community are deployed in silos targeting sub-groups or populations (e.g., disengaged youth) and

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have not influenced key academic, well-being, and quality of life indicators community-wide for all residents.

The NHAP model is a multi-level change strategy supporting measurable transformation at the individual-, community-, and system-level. NHAP is a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated cross-sector, prenatal through career pipeline that engages families in evidence-based services without disruption from cradle to grave. NHAP consists of five domains: 1) early care, education, and learning; 2) primary and secondary education; 3) post-secondary education, training, and career development; 4) health, safety, and well-being; and 5) resident and community leadership and system building.

VISTAs will play a critical role in supporting the design, build out and implementation of the early literacy component of the NHAP. VISTAs will also play a role in developing a plan to bring literacy programs to scale in north Hartford by the end of the five-year grant period that includes building school capacity and family engagement support based on input from parents and educators. Key activities include community listening sessions and events, public awareness efforts, program design support, capacity building for programs and school partners, and planning for replicating the model.

How your proposed project relates to the programming priorities outlined in the AmeriCorps VISTA Program Guidance of the current fiscal year.

Education: School Readiness and Learning Loss, K-12 Success, including remote learning in all areas

Strengthening Communities

Describe how you will ensure that the low-income community and the intended beneficiaries have involvement into your final project plan, execution of the project, and ongoing support.

The project will be rooted in community and family engagement and strategic partnerships with the school district and community-based organizations. Four VISTAs will contribute to the goals of the project by performing activities such as:

Convening parents and residents to inform strategies that further literacy development of children.

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Working with educators to build capacity to support volunteer led interventions and connecting families to resources that are part of the NHAP.

Convening community stakeholders to help accelerate progress and scalability of literacy interventions.

Developing a community driven model for maintaining programs beyond the scope of the VISTA project by providing training and capacity building support to parents, educators and partners.

Community and resident engagement are at the core of the work of NHAP. United Way serves as the lead organization for community and family engagement for the entire NHAP project. Each element of the pipeline is to be designed and implemented in partnership with the community, and this includes the early literacy component. VISTAs will be expected to continuously gather input and feedback from parents and residents along with other stakeholders in north Hartford. Residents will be actively engaged in all strategies implemented in the pipeline; this is essential to the overall design of the project. Specifically, VISTAs will participate in NHAP community conversations and resident and community engagement workgroups and events, with the intent of addressing literacy related program objectives. VISTAs will contribute to a feedback loop between parents, students and stakeholders.

A description of how the project will be designed to build long-term sustainability in your program to ensure it continues after VISTA resources end; and

The model for NHAP is based on The Harlem Children's Zone which focuses on bringing together a comprehensive network of services to keep children on-track through college and/or entry into the job market. The program has had success in improving academic outcomes for children and has been held up as a model for replication nationwide through the Obama Administration's Promise Neighborhood grants. By leveraging the resources available through the Department of Education, we will help build a comprehensive and integrated pipeline of services in north Hartford that has never existed before.

VISTA support is essential to reaching and engaging families, building and developing programs that

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work for educators, children and parents, improving public awareness efforts and creating a model for service delivery that is sustainable and replicable through ongoing community engagement.

A summary of how your project will ultimately strengthen the community and bring individuals out of poverty. This summary should include a description of how the planned program strategy (i.e., intervention) will address the poverty-related need and lead to the final planned anti-poverty outcomes. Include any evidence that suggests your approach will be successful. Evidence could include past performance, results from credible research, or results from a similar, successful program. Evidence would provide the basis for decisions about the design, frequency, and intensity of the proposed intervention.

Research shows that children who read proficiently by the start of fourth grade -- marking the time when students transition from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn' -- is an important predictor of on-time high school graduation. United Way has a track record of success in engaging volunteers to read with students who are struggling with reading proficiency with 90 percent of students enrolled improving literacy skills. While we have had VISTAs in both schools, we have had a low penetration rate due to the aforementioned challenges. VISTA support will provide needed capacity building to support educators, administrators and parents in building a sustainable and scalable program that yields long-term results.

At the end of the VISTA project, our goal is to have a system in place that makes it easy for families to navigate access to a range of programs for children and parents at every stage of life. We also aspire to have sustainable programs supported by engaged families and residents that no longer require VISTA support at the conclusion of the project. Long term we hope to help build a culture of early literacy in north Hartford by providing children with greater access to early interventions and needed supports. Developing early literacy skills and a love of reading through Dolly Parton Imagination Library from birth to five and the support of United Way Readers upon entering elementary school, are two interventions that can improve kindergarten readiness and grade-level reading for children in the NHPZ.

This will be achieved through the VISTAs work in engaging parents, creating volunteer leadership structures within schools to support early literacy, in partnership with Hartford Public Schools and

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United Way staff and bringing early childhood initiatives such as Dolly Parton Imagination Library to scale in north Hartford in a way that can be replicated in other communities in Hartford.

Recruitment and Development

Provide a summary of the key objectives of the VISTA assignment and the activities the full-time member(s) and Leader(s) will perform to implement the proposed project. Please note that members and Leaders serve for an entire year; therefore, please ensure that the activities are enough to engage a member in a one-year, full-time commitment. The tasks and activities should logically align with the project goals you propose in the Performance Measures and the Needs sections.

VISTAs will play a critical role in supporting the design, build out and implementation of the early literacy component of the NHAP. That role includes establishing a plan to bring literacy programs to scale in north Hartford, building school capacity at both WISH Museum and SAND elementary schools, as well as developing strategies for family engagement and raising public awareness about early literacy resources.

Key Objective: To increase access to and parent engagement in community literacy resources and targeted literacy-based volunteer-interventions by expanding and building the sustainability of two existing programs: United Way Readers (a volunteer reading program) and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (free book subscription service).

United Way Readers -- Activities/Tasks:

- * Visit school sites and meet with after-school site coordinators, literacy coaches and other personnel to determine the needs of each site and how the program can best meet their needs
- * Update planning procedures to include an assessment of each site's capacity to scale programming; monitor the program to identify challenges to serving a greater number of students.
- * Devise recruitment strategies to attract more diverse volunteers (targeting parents and community residents) that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the community; engage community organizations as partners in volunteer recruitment; identify ways to overcome barriers to volunteering.
- * Work with curriculum specialists and literacy coaches at Hartford Public Schools and site coordinators at after-school programs to plan and deliver orientation and training that will (1) enable volunteers to support the instructional programming and practices at each site, and (2) develop the

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cultural competencies of volunteers by educating them about the population of the community being served and the needs and issues being addressed through their service.

- * Work with program coordinators and other personnel to identify challenges to scaling the program and reaching more students at each school and helping plan and execute on solutions.

- * Identifying ways to improve volunteer retention and the sustainability of programming long-term.

DPI L -- Activities/Tasks:

- * Meet with community partners and agencies (e.g. childcare centers, after-school programs, etc.) to understand the needs of the community and the children and families receiving services; design appropriate outreach strategies to connect families to available literacy resources.

- * Monitor and assess existing outreach strategies and practices; revise strategies and develop and/or update existing outreach materials based on community feedback and findings.

- * Develop and/or update materials used in outreach efforts

Other -- Activities/Tasks:

- * Strengthen community outreach efforts by developing and/or updating outreach strategies to increase access to available literacy resources to identify underserved populations.

- * Meet with staff at community partners and agencies and with Family & Community Support Service Providers (FCSSPs) at schools to identify opportunities to engage in conversations with community members about literacy needs and their familiarity with available resources; and develop strategies for engagement and raising awareness about early literacy resources.

- * Increase parent and resident engagement opportunities including one-time read aloud events, such as Read Across America Day and Read for the Record and summer reading challenges including the Million Minute Challenge

VISTA Assignment

VISTAs will play a critical role in supporting the design, build out and implementation of the early literacy component of the NHAP. That role includes establishing a plan to bring literacy programs to scale in north Hartford, building school capacity at both WISH Museum and SAND elementary schools, as well as developing strategies for family engagement and raising public awareness about early literacy resources.

Key Objective: To increase access to and parent engagement in community literacy resources and

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targeted literacy-based volunteer-interventions by expanding and building the sustainability of two existing programs: United Way Readers (a volunteer reading program) and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (free book subscription service).

United Way Readers -- Activities/Tasks:

- * Visit school sites and meet with after-school site coordinators, literacy coaches and other personnel to determine the needs of each site and how the program can best meet their needs
- * Update planning procedures to include an assessment of each site's capacity to scale programming; monitor the program to identify challenges to serving a greater number of students.
- * Devise recruitment strategies to attract more diverse volunteers (targeting parents and community residents) that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the community; engage community organizations as partners in volunteer recruitment; identify ways to overcome barriers to volunteering.
- * Work with curriculum specialists and literacy coaches at Hartford Public Schools and site coordinators at after-school programs to plan and deliver orientation and training that will (1) enable volunteers to support the instructional programming and practices at each site, and (2) develop the cultural competencies of volunteers by educating them about the population of the community being served and the needs and issues being addressed through their service.
- * Work with program coordinators and other personnel to identify challenges to scaling the program and reaching more students at each school and helping plan and execute on solutions.
- * Identifying ways to improve volunteer retention and the sustainability of programming long-term.

DPI L -- Activities/Tasks:

- * Meet with community partners and agencies (e.g. childcare centers, after-school programs, etc.) to understand the needs of the community and the children and families receiving services; design appropriate outreach strategies to connect families to available literacy resources.
- * Monitor and assess existing outreach strategies and practices; revise strategies and develop and/or update existing outreach materials based on community feedback and findings.
- * Develop and/or update materials used in outreach efforts

Other -- Activities/Tasks:

- * Strengthen community outreach efforts by developing and/or updating outreach strategies to increase access to available literacy resources to identify underserved populations.
- * Meet with staff at community partners and agencies and with Family & Community Support

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Service Providers (FCSSPs) at schools to identify opportunities to engage in conversations with community members about literacy needs and their familiarity with available resources; and develop strategies for engagement and raising awareness about early literacy resources.

* Increase parent and resident engagement opportunities including one-time read aloud events, such as Read Across America Day and Read for the Record and summer reading challenges including the Million Minute Challenge

Project Management

Mark Olynciw, the United We Read Coordinator at United Way, will supervise all four VISTAs. Mark, himself, served as an AmeriCorps VISTA member with the organization for two terms, prior to being hired full-time by the organization in 2020. Supervising VISTAs will be one of his primary responsibilities.

The supervisor will be responsible for announcing the arrival of incoming VISTAs with United Way staff and community partners and explaining their roles and responsibilities. The supervisor will make arrangements to set up VISTA desk space at United Way offices, including phones, email accounts, and technology/equipment, and design and implement their orientation and onboard training. Upon arrival, the supervisor will give VISTAs a tour of the office building and arrange for them to meet with other United Way staff and leadership. The supervisor will also give VISTAs a tour of the North Hartford community where they will be placed, as well as the school sites and an introduction to school and district staff and community partners that they will be working with. The supervisor will provide all necessary training, materials and resources to learn about United Way's mission and the work of the organization.

Monitoring Progress: The supervisor will provide VISTAs with direct supervision, as well as oversight of day-to-day activities. The supervisor will offer support, feedback, guidance, and mentoring to ensure VISTAs succeed in their role, complete assignments, and achieve project goals. The supervisor will have weekly check-in meetings with each VISTA to ensure they understand the job, the assignments they have been given, and are performing their duties and are on track to completing their learning objectives and project goals. Check-in meetings will also be an opportunity to communicate positive and constructive feedback, address any questions or concerns that they may have and offer solutions.

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Community Involvement: VISTAs will also meet regularly with partners at Hartford Public Schools and with community organizations, who will provide oversight and assessment of their work at each site and assist in devising plans for building the capacity of existing literacy programs and coordinating effective community engagement and outreach activities that contribute to increased access to literacy resources and services and overall program sustainability. This includes working with Hartford Public Schools' FCSSPs (Family & Community Service Support Providers), reading specialists, community school directors, after-school program site coordinators and other school personnel. The supervisor will also convene monthly meetings with appropriate staff at Hartford Public Schools and school-based community partners to ensure that VISTAs have sufficient resources and on-site support to perform assigned duties and meet the goals and objectives of the project, and address barriers to completion.

Organizational Capability

Your organization's experience operating anti-poverty programming in the identified area(s) of activity. Provide examples of past work and impacts in this area.

Dolly Parton Imagination Library: United Way understands the importance of helping young children get the best start in life. That's why we partnered with local workplaces and community leaders like, Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Hartford Hospital, and Trinity Health of New England -- Saint Francis Hospital to launch Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIIL) in Hartford in FY2020/21. Children ages birth-5 enrolled in the book-subscription program receive a free age-appropriate book by mail every month -- creating a home library of 60 books for children enrolled at birth by the start of kindergarten. Outreach has been focused on Hartford children, recruiting and enrolling babies born at Hartford hospitals, as well as children from Hartford-based community partners. To date, nearly 4,000 children ages birth to five have enrolled in DPIIL and 22,000 books have been delivered to local families. Our goal is to scale the program to enroll all eligible Hartford children (7,226) in the next year.

As a 'Local Champion' for DPIIL, United Way is responsible for recruitment of families through partners and direct solicitation, as well as program administration, including submitting postal forms; collecting registration forms; entering information (child's name, birth date, address, etc.) into the Book Order System (BOS) database; placing book orders; collecting returned or undeliverable books from the post office; and updating information in the database.

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United Way Readers: United Way Readers is a supplemental, volunteer-based program designed to improve the reading proficiency of students grades K-3. The program began in 2012 working in the school system and is situated in under-resourced elementary schools, providing individualized attention to struggling readers. United Way uses its relationships with corporate partners to recruit volunteers to read to children typically for one hour per week with one or two students who are reading below grade-level. Volunteers help students with literacy skills such as vocabulary, text comprehension and phonics. Volunteers act as caring adults and mentors to children by providing one-on-one attention and focus on creating a fun and engaging experience to help students develop a lifelong love of reading and learning.

United Way staff help to ensure a quality experience for students and volunteers. They work in concert with the school site coordinator to provide volunteer orientation, training and supervision. United Way provides books tailored to students' interests and an array of literacy supports, including comprehension questions and activities that volunteers can facilitate while reading with students. All literacy supports are created in partnership with district staff to ensure alignment with the school's curriculum. Books and materials help to build classroom and home libraries and either stay with the school or are taken home.

Readers has consistently improved the reading skills of participating students each year. Last year, 129 volunteers worked with 172 students grades K-3. 94% of students in the program improved their reading skills. These are typical of results in prior years. When schools closed in 2020 due to the pandemic, we had to suspend Readers in person and pivot to a virtual platform to provide remote learning capability.

During the initial pilot, volunteers using the platform were able to engage and keep students engaged, provide significant hours of tutoring, and increase reading levels over 12 weeks by 25%. Parents also reported an increase in their child's frequency of reading at home and excitement about books. An added benefit of using the platform is that it has the potential to expand the program to serve more students offsite by increasing the number of participating volunteers by reducing barriers to volunteers.

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United Way Readers currently operates in eight elementary schools in Hartford. Dolly Parton Imagination Library has been rolled out across Hartford with the goal of enrolling all children ages birth to five in the city, but more intentional work needs to be done to focus on connection and accessibility in north Hartford specifically, as well as increasing the number of children enrolled in programming.

VISTAs will support scaling the expansion of these programs and create stable, community driven strategies to sustain programs and groups that come together to support literacy efforts in north Hartford.

Your organization's plan for managing the project, to include recruiting and supervising the VISTA member(s). Explicitly include the number of members you are requesting;

VISTAs will be supported by United Way and our partners in a variety of ways. First and foremost, VISTAs will be supervised by United Way staff and integrated into the organization with a team of colleagues who are focused on community engagement and early literacy. Working hand in hand, VISTAs will be convened regularly through their term of service. Our approach is to fully embed VISTAs in the schools to help build capacity; as such, they will have a support network, including the Office of Community Partnerships, the on-site Family and Community School Partnership Coordinator; and the community-based organization who provides after-school programming. Finally, VISTAs will also have access to a network of training, development, and connections through planned activities involving all NHAP partners. The intent of the NHAP project is to build a new system of coordination and services that will require regular convenings with all partners, including VISTAs, to support successful integration.

United Way is requesting four VISTAs to support the early literacy component of the NHAP. VISTAs will be supervised by Mark Olynciw who served as a VISTA for two years at this United Way prior to being hired as a full-time employee at the end of his service. In addition to Mark's lived experience as a VISTA, our staff has many years of experience in recruiting, orienting, onboarding, and supervising VISTAs.

We will recruit VISTAs from north Hartford and/or neighboring communities (as will be our practice

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with most volunteer and paid staff positions supporting the NHAP project). We will partner with local faith-based communities, resident engagement groups, the school district and local colleges and universities to recruit potential applicants. Applicants will be interviewed by United Way staff and NHAP workgroup team members. Upon beginning their service, VISTAs will be oriented to United Way and to the schools and neighborhoods where they will be working. Weekly supervision will also be provided to VISTAs.

While not required, indicate whether or not your organization can contribute financially to the VISTA living allowance known as cost-sharing;

Our organization will contribute financially to cost sharing one of the four VISTAs.

A description of how other staff or volunteers will be involved in the project. Please indicate what resources--including office and desk space, access to computer and phone, and other supplies--you will provide to the VISTA member(s).

We are requesting four VISTA members to support the NHAP early literacy work. We have a leadership team working on the planning and implementation of NHAP that will provide guidance and strategy development for the program. This team includes:

Gina Federico, Director of Health

Taniqua Huguley, Director of Economic Mobility

Jen Gifford, Vice President, Community Resources

Liz Buczynski, Director, Community Investment

Maura Cook, Sr. Director, Marketing and Engagement

VISTAs will be provided with office space at United Way with a phone and laptop. VISTAs will also have designated space at school locations to work off site and be reimbursed for travel mileage.

Narratives

VISTAs will be included in staff and department meetings so that they have an opportunity to learn more about United Way and gain an understanding of what it's like to work at a non-profit organization. They'll also work closely with school district personnel and community-based organizations providing after-school enrichment and earn experience working in the classroom and directly with children and families.

Other

N/A

Intermediary Justification

n/a

Sites

Site Name: United Way of Central and Northeastern

EIN: 06-0646653

Type: PM and Placement

Address: 30 Laurel Street

SA:

Hartford, CT 06106-1361

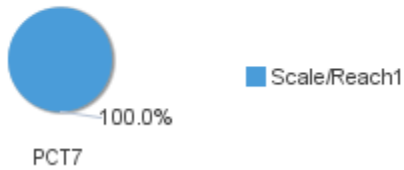
Contact: Mark Olynciw

Phone: 8604936832

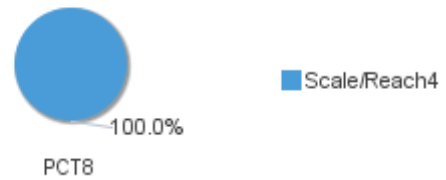
Email: molynciw@unitedwayinc.org

Performance Measures

of Capacity Building PM's per Capacity Building Goal



of VISTA's Requested Per Capacity Building Goal



United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut

Scale/Reach - Full Time

Capacity Goal: Scale/Reach
 Objective: Capacity Building & Leverage
 Project Year: 1
 # of VISTA'S Requested: 4

Output:

[G3- 3.16A: Dollar value of cash or in-kind resources leveraged.](#)
 Target: ***** Resources Leveraged
 Measured By: Tracking System
 Described Instrument: \$29.25 volunteer rate x 100 volunteers x 1 hour x 40 weeks

Output:

[G3- 3.1A Number of Community volunteers recruited or managed](#)
 Target: 100 Activity Log
 Measured By: Tracking System
 Described Instrument: volunteer participation

Output:

[G3- 3.4: Number of organizations that received capacity building services](#)
 Target: 20 Organizations
 Measured By: Tracking System
 Described Instrument: Readers/DPIL community partners

Outcome:

[G3- 3.10A Number of organizations that increase their efficiency, effectiveness, and/or program reach](#)
 Target: 2 Organizations
 Measured By: Tracking System
 Described Instrument: United Way and Hartford Public Schools

Service Activity: [Community assessment](#)

Description: VISTA members will organize and facilitate community conversations

Performance Measures

United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut

Service Activity: [Community awareness and engagement](#)

Description: VISTA members will contribute to outreach efforts, community canvassing, tabling events, etc.

Service Activity: [Expand/strengthen partnerships/networks](#)

Description: VISTA members will work to expand United Way Readers and Dolly Parton Imagination Library services

Service Activity: [Material development](#)

Description: VISTA members will create materials aligned with school curriculum to support volunteer readers

Service Activity: [Outreach](#)

Description: VISTA members will work to connect parents and families to volunteer opportunities and community resources

Service Activity: [Performance measurement](#)

Description: VISTA members will collect and aggregate student achievement data; assess program impact and survey volunteers and community residents

Service Activity: [Program Development and Delivery](#)

Description: VISTA members will support the expansion and sustainability of United Way Readers at two school- based sites

Service Activity: [Technology use](#)

Description: VISTA members will facilitate the use of technology to offer a virtual United Way Readers option

Service Activity: [Volunteer recruitment and management system](#)

Description: VISTA members will be responsible for volunteer recruitment and management

Anti-Poverty PM 1.2 - K-12 Success

Focus Area: Education

Objective: K- 12 Success

of VISTA'S Requested: 4

Performance Measures

United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut

Anti-Poverty Output:

[ED1A: Number of individuals served](#)

Target: 200 Individuals

Measured By: Tracking System

Described Instrument:

Anti-Poverty Outcome:

[ED5A: Number of students with improved academic performance](#)

Target: 98 Students

Measured By: Standardized Test

Described Instrument: 49% achieve reading proficiency

Anti-Poverty Program/Strategy Intervention

[Tutoring- - One on One](#)

Description: volunteer readers

Required Documents

<u>Document Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Articles of Incorporation	Not Applicable
Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement	Not Applicable
Auditor's Statement Page	Sent
Board of Directors	Sent
Organizational Chart	Sent
Tax-Exempt Status Form	Sent
Supervisor's Resume	Sent
Supervisor's Job Description	Sent
Two Letters of Support	Sent

