



A Pathway Out of Poverty
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Western Arizona Community Alliance, VISTA

2016

Yuma, Arizona

Federal Legislative Districts 3 & 4

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

Congressional District(s): 3, 4
State Legislative District(s): 24
Service Area by County/City: Yuma, La Paz, Mohave
Project Federal Share: \$135,954
Project Local Match: \$23,352
Community Volunteers Recruited: 37
Volunteer Hours Served: 584
Value of Volunteer Hours: \$13,151.68
 *2013 Independent Sector Rate for the Value of a Volunteer Hour in Arizona is \$22.52

Community Need

Our tri-county service area (La Paz, Mohave, and Yuma Counties) encompasses the western portion of the State of Arizona. From 2000 to 2010 the region's population grew 22%, while the number of residents living in poverty rose 55%, from 34,589 to 76,059 people, with a large percentage of children living in poverty. The proposed project will address poverty-related needs in all three counties.

National Priority Area and Program Performance Goals

CNCS Focus Areas:

Economic Opportunity, Capacity Building, Leveraged Resources, Healthy Futures, Housing, Education, Veterans and Military Families.

Performance Goals:

- Increase organizational efficiency at 4 organizations.
- Integrated service delivery for 5 systems (3 Health and Wellness; 1 Continuum of Care; 1 Emergency, Employment and Homeless).
- \$5,000 in additional grant funding.
- Recruit 44 volunteers; 150 new beneficiaries receive services.
- LIHEAP program delivery.
- Increase educational attainment.

Program Activities

- Create business plans and marketing strategies to develop a Social Enterprise venture.
- Design an Integrated Service Model and build partnerships which expand and enhance support for persons seeking employment, job training or educational attainment, or homeless services.
- Seek grants and financial resources to support Social Enterprise ventures, service integration strategies and sustainability of WACA and its program partners such as WACOG, working to build the capacity and sustainability of A Pathway out of Poverty.
- Develop healthy, active lifestyle options and educational opportunities for persons of all ages. Recruit volunteers, create a training program, conduct community assessments, develop collaborative partnerships and identify sustainability needs for health and wellness programs.
- Deliver utility assistance to low income individuals.
- Engage parents in their children's academic efforts by creating parent-driven coalitions to develop in- and out-of school interventions to improve educational performance in La Paz County. Develop parent volunteer recruitment methods, create methods to identify skills, identify how to best match skills with needs and create performance measurements and data collection tools.
- Create a La Paz County Homeless Continuum of Care.



Western Arizona Community Alliance, VISTA



Mission:

Our mission is to stimulate, promote and develop human, natural, social and economic resources to their fullest potential.

History:

WACOG, established in 1971, is the designated Community Action Agency for La Paz, Mohave, and Yuma Counties and provides services to help people achieve their highest level of self-sufficiency. Services reach a diverse population of residents from preschool age children and their families participating in Head Start activities to older adults accessing senior services. WACOG's purpose is to eradicate the causes of poverty by helping people help themselves when they are in economic, social, and/or educational need. WACOG's primary programs include Head Start, the Area Agency on Aging and Human Services.

WACA was formed by WACOG to foster neighborhood revitalization, promote community and economic development, reduce poverty, and advocate for social equity for low income populations.

Program Impact

Full-time, year-round employment is a sustainable way to fight poverty which is why WACOG's VISTA's focus on building a partnership with Yuma County's workforce development agency (YPIC). In addition to promoting each others' services, WACOG holds workshops at YPIC, helping job seekers gain resources and know-how to successfully transition into full-time employment. Over the coming months the program will create a community-wide service map to make Yuma's array of services and resources navigable to users and agencies alike.

VISTA Summer Associates help to deliver the LIHEAP program. The VISTA's assisted many elderly individuals and were able to inform them about resources that they otherwise would not have known about. One VISTA noted that an elderly woman encouraged her, saying, "because of you, my bill was able to be paid. Thank you so much."

Partnerships

Yuma Private Industry Council, La Paz Education Service Agency, City of Yuma, City of San Luis, City of Somerton, Arizona Public Service, Town of Wellton, Bullhead City, County Health Departments, Yuma Regional medical Center, Head Start Centers in Western Arizona

OTHER

In April 2015 WACA participated in the VISTA 50 celebration. WACA, along with the Southwest Arizona Futures Forum (SAFF) and the Yuma Community Action Poverty Simulation (CAPS) held a plenary session entitled "Understanding Poverty In Yuma." Approximately 100 people were in attendance at the plenary session, consisting of community leaders throughout the Yuma area. The day included a role-playing exercise simulating what it is like to live a month in poverty, a community discussion on poverty, a research document providing poverty facts, speakers discussing the realities of living in poverty and break-out sessions discussing poverty. The day concluded with a presentation by one of our VISTA members and the Arizona State Program Director, Kimberly Will, on VISTA and its role in providing resources to end poverty.



