

***A New Look at Volunteering:
Promising Approaches for TANF and Community Leaders***
TANF Faith-Based and Community Organizations Initiative
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Operator: Good day everyone and welcome to the Office of Family Assistance conference entitled A New Look at Volunteering, Promising Approaches for TANF and Community Leaders. Just a reminder today's conference is being recorded.

Now for opening remarks and introductions, I'll turn the call over to Lisa Washington-Thomas.

Lisa, please go ahead.

Lisa Washington-Thomas: Good afternoon everyone and welcome to today's TANF Faith Based and Community Organization Initiative webinar, A New Look at Volunteering, Promising Approaches for TANF and Community Leaders.

The TANF FBCO initiative is a four year research and implementation project funded by our Office of Family Assistance within the Administration for Children and Families at the US Department of Health and Human Services.

The project's primary goal is to identify promising practices and strengthen collaboration between TANF programs and local community and faith based organizations.

As today's speakers will describe their own experiences many faith based and community organizations have access to volunteers, monetary resources, they are strategically located in buildings and have other support that volunteers can use in helping low income families achieve self sufficiency.

Today's webinar emerges from one of the most popular sessions at our recent series of collaboration institute meetings where over 150 leaders gathered to develop their local partnerships on behalf of the TANF eligible families.

During these trainings regional state and local TANF officials were at the local faith based or community partners to a one day workshop designed to develop strategic interagency partnerships, organizational development, volunteering and action planning.

The collaboration institute emphasized that managing volunteers is in some ways like managing staff, it takes intentionality, skill and support.

It doesn't happen by itself and while literally millions of Americans are willing to volunteer, research shows it usually takes a personal act to get volunteers to actually serve in your organization.

Today's webinar offers a direct window into the work and wide ranging opportunities involved in supporting volunteers. As you know this afternoon we have lead representatives of the National Volunteering Organization, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and executive director of a 52 person job training center and homeless shelter in Little Rock Arkansas and a senior official from an innovative TANF agency, the Illinois Department of Human Services Human Capital Development program.

Thank you so much for joining us today and we look forward to your active participation and your questions. One of the project team members Josh Good will now share a few more details about our webinar and introduce this afternoon's presenters. Josh?

Josh Good: Thank you, Lisa. My name is Josh Good and I serve as the project technical specialist. We know from Bureau of Labor statistics that over 62 million Americans volunteered between 2009

and 2010. For those looking for work, we also know that volunteering broadens a person's networking contacts and often encourages job skills and leadership.

But today's webinar which emerges on the heels of the collaboration meetings Lisa just described is intended to support you as TANF program officials and leaders of grass roots organizations as you think through the practicalities of promoting strategic volunteer opportunities in your community.

This past year, the Department of Labor has been supporting jobs clubs which meet on a voluntary basis in congregations and in community organizations throughout the country.

As we'll hear this afternoon many TANF programs encourage participants to volunteer their time and talent in settings that may lead to a job or may simply benefit their neighbors.

Research also tells us that volunteering is good for a person's mental health, particularly when they've been without work for more than 12 weeks.

And many community based programs rely extensively on volunteers through informal relationships at the local level and through partnerships with organizations like the Corporation for national Community Service, the Hands On Network, United Way and many others.

I'd like now to introduce our first speaker Georgia Mjartan, who has served for more than 15 years as a board member and now as executive director of Our House Incorporated in Little Rock Arkansas. Our House was founded in 1987 out of an interfaith movement in Central Arkansas to support a growing homeless population.

Its model has been replicated in 39 states, and it feeds more than 7000 people each week.

Georgia, the floor is yours.

Georgia Mjartan: Thanks Josh. Like you said, I'm Georgia Mjartan and it's my pleasure to be on this call.

So I'm the executive director of Our House and I think one of the reasons we were invited to participate is that we are a community based organization that is completely driven by volunteers.

And when I say completely driven, that doesn't mean that we don't have full time paid staff, we certainly do because it takes those on the ground folks to really plug in volunteers in a strong way.

But if you can imagine from my little four acre campus here in Little Rock Arkansas, we serve 1000 homeless people a year.

And we have 7000 different people who volunteer at our organization each year. So what that looks like is a ratio of one to seven, so for every one homeless child or homeless parent that comes into our program they are receiving volunteer services from seven people over the course of their stay.

So I just thought I'd come and give you an insight into how we've been able to use volunteers and a lot of different kinds of volunteers in our organization.

So if you want to just start with that first slide and I'm not sure if it's showing up very well on your screens but I wanted to just kind of walk you through, there's a reason I chose these photos.

So these are photos from our after school and summer program which is actually the only after school and summer program for homeless kids in the state of Arkansas.

We created it after just if you look on the left hand column, after we did a needs assessment. So we brought our organizational staff together that time we didn't have so many volunteers, and we

brainstormed about what would it look like if we could meet all of our needs, what are the problems that we are encountering and what are our big dreams and what are our small ideas?

So that's kind of my first step is before you ask your staff or your team to question how can we use volunteers, that can in itself be a little bit limiting.

So start bigger, start broader, so for us what that looked like is that we had on any given day we had between 30 and 40 children in our organization and about half of those were school aged.

So the parents were required to find full time work so the parents were at jobs and we had 20 to 25 kids coming in every day after school, coming to our shelter with no activity, no parent and it was a real problem for our organization.

So in response to that we said how can we meet this need, how can we solve this problem and we had this idea of an after school program that would not only meet the need of the parents to have their children in a healthy educational and safe environment during that important period from 2:30 to 6:00 but would also really invest in the kids, would equip them for success in school and success as they got older in the workplace.

So if you look at these pictures I want to just say that we used volunteers from the very beginning so in that photo of a room, that's our club space and everything in that room was put there from volunteers from the carpet that was laid to the paint on the walls to the bookshelf that was built by volunteers.

You see a volunteer here in the next photo kind of moving clockwise, you see this volunteer who's doing her homework power hour with the kids so for us to staff this program it's pretty inexpensive for us when we're able to plug in volunteers in that capacity.

We brought in boy scouts to establish a Boy Scout troop all on a voluntary basis. In the bottom photo which you can't see that well, those are some kids on a field trip and that's during the summer.

We realized that for us to take 60 homeless kids on a field trip every day we would need some extra hands to monitor them and to make sure that they were safe. And so that's an area where we were able to plug in a national service program which is called AmeriCorps VISTA, Volunteers in Service to America.

There's a VISTA summer associates program and so through that we were able to plug in 14 full time basically summer staff to work with our kids and work in our programs and that really didn't cost us anything.

It was a free resource that we were able to tap into. And so you can just kind of go through those photos and see what that looks like. The next step on here, number two is just which of these dreams can be accomplished by volunteers.

And I think within our organization what we've been able to do really well is to say any dream can be accomplished by volunteers. Sometimes it's limiting to start and just say you know that we want to use volunteers in this capacity but if you say everything we can do can be accomplished by volunteers, then it expands your thinking about what they can do.

And the last step is really hone what that looks like how you're going to plug in your volunteers. So write job description, write an internship proposal and write a one liner, so you know a one liner is just you know come for an hour once a week and sit with our kids and help them with their homework.

That's a one liner that anyone can plug in to, a longer job description is something that you might give a volunteer who's going to serve with you full time for a year, let's say through an AmeriCorps program.

So if you want to advance to the next slide, the next step is know what you're looking for before you start looking for your volunteers. And along the left hand column, these are just some different groupings, so short term volunteers, long term volunteers, individuals or groups, unskilled volunteers are sometimes really useful.

I just want to stop here and kind of point this out, we use people who are parolees, people who are on probation who need mandatory community service and some of our most wonderful stories come from people who come out here who are unskilled, who care for our outdoor facilities, who do some general maintenance for us for free as volunteers do and mandatory community service.

And then they see that even though they're just coming out of prison or they're on probation they think that their life is going pretty bad, sometimes those folks see that they're actually able to do something meaningful, they're able to help homeless people and we've seen a lot of people come through that program who are really inspired to do something good and not just mandatory community service.

And then the last one that I kind of want to call attention to is sometimes rather than looking broadly at do we need professionals or do we need short term or long term volunteers, sometimes you'll identify that you have a gap in your organization or in your services.

So a gap that we identified you can advance to the next slide now, so a gap that we identified was that we in our youth program, we were serving about 90% African American youth and there was this one day when I walked into our summer program and I saw a room full of African

American boys and I saw that our volunteers and our AmeriCorps VISTA members were primarily white women and some black women.

But we just had very few African American men serving in our program. And so we intentionally went out to an African American fraternity at one of our local colleges and really intentionally recruited African American males to serve as mentors at these kids and you can see in this photo these are two of our best volunteers, volunteering with some of our young boys, teaching them how to tie ties.

So sometimes that's really important to be very targeted in your recruitment. So I'm just going to let - leave this for you as kind of a resource. A good thing to do when you do get your volunteer in is to really get to know who is this volunteer? And so this is just a rubric to help you kind of work through that.

So heart being just help you understand why is this person volunteering? What's their heart motivation, head being what is their practical motivation, what's they're need or want and Josh mentioned, sometimes people are out of work and just need to network or gain some skills.

Those are practical needs. The heart calling is going to be something more like you know I love children or I was homeless for a number of years and I feel called now to give back now that I'm on my feet. Those are some of the emotional drivers that we've seen.

The can and the can't is also really important. So when they can, we want to say okay what can you do? So I'll just give you this example, really bright young woman, you can advance to the next slide because I've got a photo of her in here, this sweet girl on the left, Jazzy Jackson came to us with a lot of barriers.

If you looked at her on paper she didn't have transportation, she was very low income, she lived with her aunt and uncle who are disabled, sometimes she had to take care of her nieces and nephews and she was just a high school kid.

So in a lot of ways she had many barriers, but when we looked at her can, when we looked at her talents, we said well first of all you've got an entire summer to give, second of all in terms of your talents and abilities, this is a girl who is a straight A student who had lived through poverty, was really in a poverty situation who could really relate to our homeless children.

And was succeeding, was striving and we said what a beautiful inspiration. So you can advance to the next slide, and you can see here how this grid kind of works out for someone like Jazzy.

So we would literally fill this in and just coming up to the head side where we identified that she had a lot of needs, she had a lot of reasons why she wanted to serve with us.

One of those was that she needed financial support. Then you can go down to the cannon, I'm not sure if it's cutting off on your screen but under resources and connections, one of the resources that she had because she was a good student is she was able to plug into an internship that allowed her to get a summer stipend for her service.

So we were able to help her meet her financial need by plugging her into this resource. So sometimes it's like matchmaking and making a volunteer really fit within your organization.

And she has just a quick story, but she has served with us now for three years, every summer and has now gotten into college on a scholarship, is just really a success story, we're so proud of her.

And she's made a huge impact on so many of our kids' lives. If you want to go to the next slide, I won't really talk about this, this is just for you to print off and use within your own organization.

So you can just move on to the next. All right, so once you get your volunteers in I think one of the most important things is how do you keep your volunteers happy and coming back and really motivated to continue to serve in a meaningful way?

The first step is it's super important to set clear expectations, what do you want? What do you want to get out of this volunteer and what does your volunteer want?

When we bring in our AmeriCorps VISTA members and I'll just say a word about that, throughout the year we have 11 full time AmeriCorps VISTA members so VISTA being volunteers in service to America, who basically serve similar to staff.

You know they're here, they come to our staff meetings, a very intentional or their supervisors are very intentional when they first apply we want to understand from them why do you want to do this?

And so, just to use this as an example, we had one AmeriCorps VISTA member who had just finished her PhD so incredibly bright, incredibly educationally talented, had no work experience.

Knew that she was going to go into teaching position in a university and she said I need to get some real organizational experience.

So we were able to meet that need of hers while plugging in basically for free for our organization a PhD level person which was tremendous, a tremendous gift to our organization.

Next energize your volunteers, make sure that they're getting something out of the experience. I think it's an easy mistake to think that just being thankful and doing nice things for your volunteers and thanking them is enough.

That works for some folks, it doesn't work for everybody. It's kind of like you know that book about love languages, you know you need to understand what is the love language of your volunteer?

For some a thank you card will be great and will meet their needs. For others it's a letter of recommendation and for others it will be that job contact that you can make for them if it's an unemployed volunteer person trying to get back into the workforce.

And finally communicate with your volunteers as frequently as possible. You can advance to the next slide.

And this is just my last kind of screen capture of everything that we've walked through. So first know your needs before you go out and try to get volunteers. Know what you're looking for. Know your volunteers really get to know them and that's what that rubric is for and finally just nurture your volunteers to keep them.

And the last thing I wanted to kind of point out is all of the photos in this presentation, I know the screen was a little bit grainy, you didn't get to see them that well but all of these photographs were taken by (Amanda Woods) who is an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer with Our House.

We also have I mentioned 11 year round VISTA's, we also have three AmeriCorps members who serve on a year round basis and then we have another 14 members who serve in the summer.

So that's an important driver for our organization. Amanda just a side note is actually a person who is on disability. She's a disabled person and one of the beautiful things about the

AmeriCorps and the AmeriCorps VISTA programs is that the income that people receive through that doesn't count as income.

And so she's able to continue to receive her SSI and to be on disability and to also you know get that value of serving in a meaningful capacity in an organization like Our House and we're just so grateful for her and for the photographs that she takes within our organization.

So I'll welcome questions during the Q&A time and I hope that that was helpful to you all who are listening to this call.

Josh Good: Thank you very much, Georgia and just to quickly assure anyone who didn't copy down all the notes about heart and head quickly, we will be sending all three PowerPoint's to you by way of follow up to this webinar today so you'll have a PDF version of all of the slides that you see today.

Our next speaker is Michael Laverty who directs state programming in both Missouri and Kansas for the Corporation for National and Community Service. Corporation CNCS is a federal agency that was created in 1993 to promote national service.

It directly engages over 5 million Americans in services through SeniorCorps, AmeriCorps and learn and serve America. Michael the floor is yours.

Michael Laverty: Thanks Josh. As you can see on the slide the mission of the corporation for National and Community Service is to improve lives, strengthen communities and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.

The next slide shows a breakdown of our programs and how the corporation is broken down by different programs. You'll see SeniorCorps there to the far left, I won't spend a lot of time

explaining SeniorCorps programming but I will say foster grandparents and senior companions are individuals who are of low income in a community that are placed with a one to one match with an individual who needs services.

So many of your clients or program participants may qualify to participate through foster grandparents or senior companions. You'll find more information about this program on our website.

But RSVP I noticed that the last presentation touched briefly on the fact that RSVP volunteers are integral in short and long term volunteer assignments through the organizations.

So again I'm not going to go into much detail about SeniorCorps but I just wanted to highlight the fact that those three programs are out there and also available for your clients or your programs to partner with as we move forward.

But today what we really wanted to highlight on this call and from our office what we manage program development wise is AmeriCorps VISTA. So you'll see there in the center VISTA is front and center of the AmeriCorps family. The other members of the AmeriCorps family are NCCC which is national civilian community corps, AmeriCorps State, AmeriCorps National Direct and AmeriCorps Tribal.

So each of these programs has very different outcomes and participant requirements. AmeriCorps State can be garnered in each of your states on our website, there are links to how you can get more information about AmeriCorps State but to give you the brief and quick version of AmeriCorps State, keep in mind if you wanted to deliver a service, if there's something you needed to have delivered AmeriCorps members through AmeriCorps state and national as well they actually deliver a service.

So we often use the analogy of Habitat for Humanity or a non-profit similar. If they needed a house built, AmeriCorps State and National would be a great partner.

Now these are long term assignments, as we just heard before but for NCCC it's a team that moves about the country. For instance I am in Missouri just after the tornado in Joplin, NCCC has been integral in coming in in two to six week stints where these teams are working to clean up debris.

They can do intense tutoring programs, you name it, they can do it. You just have to provide them housing and a place where they can prepare meals and bed down for the night.

They basically camp, they bring their own gear, but again I could get mired down in the details of our programs, there are so many different programs you can see on this slide.

And over to the far right before I jump into a detailed dive of VISTA you see Learn and Serve America. We have a number of different learn and serve programs, all of the learn and serve programs are designed to engage individuals with volunteer service in their community between the ages of K through 12 or higher education.

So while these individuals are volunteering in the community they must have an activity that's tied to their curriculum so they're learning based on the service they're providing to a community.

So on the next slide we delve into what Volunteers in Service to America really means, that's VISTA, the acronym. Getting things done for America and you'll see on the next slide a breakdown of AmeriCorps being the poverty fighting arm.

So in that slide before last where you saw the breakdown of the different programs in AmeriCorps there's one program that's designed specifically to address and work to eradicate poverty.

And that would be AmeriCorps VISTA so all of the programs that our offices approve have to have that component. So whether you're working in a project such as Our House or whether you're working to recruit volunteers for Habitat or you're fund raising for another non-profit there has to be a service component that includes a plan to work on eradicating poverty through AmeriCorps VISTA.

You see on the second point there that 6500 positions are filled nationally each year. That's closer to 8000 in the last couple of years since as you heard before summer associates has really been a push of our organization which allows individuals a short term opportunity to volunteer and give back in their community.

So VISTA members collaborate with low income individuals in communities to fight poverty, focus on capacity building.

So I briefly mentioned raising funds, so if your organization or program needs resources in order to implement say a new program in your community or even expand to an area that you're not able to cover currently.

An AmeriCorps VISTA position could be dedicated to that for a full 365 days of service and they could be focused on raising funds, grant writing, just implementing tracking systems, whatever it may be around fundraising issues, that your organization or program may have.

They can also serve full time to recruit volunteers and design a sustainable program. So as I mentioned before these can be used to expand programming if there's an area that you wanted to reach that you're not currently reaching or if you have a program that's not currently supported with funds in your organization.

So we have more than 1200 project sponsors including non-profit and public agencies, those are the two requirements or one of each, you either have to be a non-profit or public agency to partner and be a program sponsor with the corporation offices.

And these positions as I mentioned before are full time year long service, 365 days a year. On the next slide you will see the initiatives that the corporation is focused on.

As we move in to 2012 education, veterans, military families the second one there, veterans and military families is a real - it's a push for our agency this year, that's kind of the new area for us.

So we're seeing a lot of programming spring up devoted to that issue area. Environmental stewardship, disaster preparedness, we have a great presence; we have had for many years in New Orleans.

We're shifting away from that and now we've seen a great presence in the Tuscaloosa region as well as Joplin and many other areas throughout the nation where there's disaster, most often NCCC is dispatched to help with that.

Economic opportunities, and healthy futures or the other two, and you'll see on the next slide VISTA really is focused on sustainability and capacity building.

So the focus should be development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. VISTA projects typically last three years, so if you're thinking about you know what could VISTA do for you, visualize what you could conceivably begin and hopefully have sustained within a three year period.

Our offices often see partnerships go beyond the three years but typically that's only for say a fourth year and potentially a fifth year if there is some challenge or hurdle that your program has experienced that didn't allow it to materialize in a full three year period.

So VISTA members they increase the capacity and work with other outcomes for the VISTA member's work so that you're not back to square one at the end of the your VISTA project.

So you have to think about building something that once the member is gone is the next point brings out, service builds capacity within the agencies where they're placed.

So when the member leaves, something has been created that will continue with out the resources of VISTA. So what VISTA members do, VISTA members, they build volunteer management on the next slide.

Leadership and training systems, they build development systems and do developmental work, create community partnerships, they expand current programs and develop new programs.

These are just a few of the examples of what VISTA members can do but again one of the things we often tell projects as they're thinking about what they would like to see done with VISTA resources from our offices, you know dream big, think if I had the resources or if I could bring in someone to really help me strategize and plan, what would that look like and where would I want to go with that?

And then we can help you plug VISTA into that thought. So what VISTA members do not do as I mentioned before is direct service.

So VISTA members are the poverty fighting arm of AmeriCorps but they do not provide direct services. So they aren't the ones mentoring, they would be the ones recruiting mentors.

They're the ones behind the scenes, they're the ones back at the desk making sure that things are going to happen programmatically. They are not part time service.

We do have programs that allow for part time service but VISTA is not a program for someone interested in part time service. It is a full term of service which we consider 365 days.

They cannot hold employment outside of their VISTA placement. That tends to really weed out individuals as we heard before, the heart, many of our VISTA members are doing it because they're driven to provide needy communities and needed services within their own community.

And the stipend that they receive which we'll touch on in a moment is minimal so these individuals are serving for a full year, 365 days because of their heart.

They do not do international work; they do not supervise employees or other volunteers. Now with that said they can coordinate volunteers so if your agency does not have or your program does not have a volunteer coordinator, VISTA position could be approved for such an activity.

So on the next slide you'll see what our organization provides for these individuals and for organizations hosting AmeriCorps VISTA members.

You can see the first point is the education award, often referred to as a scholarship but this is achieved after a full 365 day term of service. Individuals can receive two of these education awards in a lifetime.

And if they choose to serve a third term they can receive a \$1500 cash stipend at the end of their service. While serving they receive a member living allowance from our organization which is roughly \$10,000 to \$11,000 a year depending on where they're serving.

So as you heard me say before this is someone who's really giving of the heart and also as we heard before in the example it could be an individual who is already receiving some other type of benefit.

This can be supplemental to that and does not affect the benefits they may already be receiving. So we see many types of recruits from individuals who have a college education to individuals who are from the low income community and have no education but they would like to use this as an opportunity to gain that opportunity to educate themselves.

So at the end of their service they would have availability to the education awards. We provide health coverage during the member's term of service for that individual alone, it does provide for family but for that individual there is health coverage during their year of service.

We provide the payroll services from our offices, so as an organization you're not saddled with that challenge. Training for the members, and for supervisors, so if you've applied to our office your application has been approved.

You would identify a supervisor; we would send your supervisor designee to one of our training events held in various locations throughout the country.

Then you would ideally go home to your program and then you would use our resources that we provide you to help you recruit either local or national recruits to support the program.

And then those members would go to one of our trainings at a designated site throughout the country that we would also pay for. We provide a moving allowance for members up to \$500 so if someone you have identified say in another state would like to come serve in your community, we provide that assistance to get them started.

And there's liability coverage for members as well. For members or candidates that you've chosen who qualify there's childcare reimbursement. That is a maximum of \$550 per family or per household based on eligibility.

Assistance with member recruitment, so I've mentioned that already but I'll go into a little more detail here. We have an online recruitment system over the last several years we have seen the number of individuals interested in participating in AmeriCorps VISTA and other AmeriCorps programs grow astronomically.

We have more than 300,000 individuals in the system who have created applications and would like to be placed with projects.

Now granted there are some caveats to that, not everyone wants to come to your community. So once you gain access to the recruitment system though you can search many different ways, by zip code, by area code, different ways that you can find who has an application in the system.

Here in Missouri we have a very successful program out of St. Louis and they always joke with us saying you know who wants to come to St. Louis and work in the inner city where you know there's a low income, high number of senior citizens.

And that was this program's focus and they started recruiting their first year which was about four or five years ago and their first group of VISTA class members, they recruited five members from different states throughout the nation to come to St. Louis.

And our office hadn't seen such a high number, it's very seldom that 100% of the recruits are from out of state as we were talking to them, asking them you know what's your secret?

I said we actually searched the database for individuals who have the qualifications we desire and then we go after them. And we really recruit them heavily. And it has been one of the most successful projects we've ever had in Missouri.

And all of the first class of those VISTA members after year one went on to grad school. So it was quite a story and unusual but you know you get to decide what level of education your individual recruit may have so if you need a highly skilled individual then you can set the requirement of a bachelor's degree or some college.

If that's not necessary you're looking for someone to really make connections within the community from where they live, maybe education requirement isn't going to need to be set so high for that.

So the last bullet there you see, FICA is provided by organization, we pay that from the living allowance and on the next slide we'll talk quickly about sponsor responsibilities.

To develop and implement a project plan and performance measures, everything that we do has to have a trackable outcome. So as we move through the process we help you develop those performance measures.

As I mentioned before you'll need to identify supervisors for the members, someone who can actually be the point of contact to handle any situations that your members may have while serving throughout their year of service.

Create an advisory council that must be made up of representatives from the low income community that you plan to serve. Recruit and place VISTA members as I was just describing.

You can recruit members locally or you can use our online database to search national recruits. Either way the members have to come through that system so if you identified someone locally from your community that you know would be a high quality year long volunteer they would then go to the system and apply to the position that we would help you create as part of the application process.

You'd have to provide workspace equipment and supplies, anything necessary for this individual to be successful within your organization to achieve what it is that you hope they're going to achieve within their year of service.

So on the next slide we'll continue responsibilities, you need to create a two week member onsite orientation and training.

Helping the individual get acclimated to the community, so you would assist the VISTA member with community entry. Introduce them in a proper way, we often see projects highlighting the arrival of their VISTA member in newsletters, meetings, whatever that may be within your organization.

And within the community conduct member performance appraisals, track time and attendance and perform other supervisory duties. Connect VISTA members with training and development opportunities throughout their year of service to make certain that they're going to be successful doing what it is you hope that they would do and achieve for your organization.

And document all project achievements and legacy through our PPR which is the project progress report and that's an online system.

So next steps you'll see here we have - you would design and submit a concept paper and there's a lot of information coming at you through this webinar and these slides are content heavy.

But - so just to take a step back be thinking about what you would want to achieve in your concept paper.

We want brief information in this concept paper. We want you really just to give us some of the few details of what your organization is about and what you hope to achieve.

We'll go into this a little bit more on a slide beyond here but if approved you'll create and submit a full application and if awarded as I mentioned before supervisors would go to an orientation and you can see in months there's a snapshot of a timeline about how long that can take, depending on the resources within your state offices budget, this can be potential sped up or it could take longer just depending on resource availability.

So on the next slide there's a screen shot of our web page where you would go to create your online user account which would also allow you to create a concept paper.

So you can see our web address is cns.gov, you would choose e-grants which is near the center of the screen at our home page.

If you didn't have an account you would create your account and then you would use the system to create your concept paper. The concept paper on the next slide, you'll see covers basic applicant information, application information such as the narratives which is an executive summary.

Basically telling us you know what you hope to do, who you are but in the second narrative is need, that's where we really want to hear from you briefly what your community's need is that you'll be addressing with our resources.

How you will strengthen communities utilizing VISTA resources and what your organization's capacity is, what your track record is. Do you have other resources as you heard before Georgia mentioned that she utilizes other corporation programs as well as other volunteer opportunities and other federal agency resources.

So tell us a little bit about that there, and then you would review, authorize and you would submit it. So almost finished here, a few things to consider, some of this is a revisit of what I've just shared with you but what changes will you measure within your agency where the members are going to serve.

What changes will you measure in the community and the people for which these agencies are serving. How will you engage community members and as I said before especially thinking about advisory council, particularly representatives from the low income community.

And how will the VISTA members work, lift people out of poverty. How will the systems members create - that the members create be sustainable beyond the three year project.

So you want to think of something that they can prop up and leave standing once they exit from your organization. One thing to add there, many times VISTA members who are very successful in developing something often have utilized skills that have allowed them to create something that will potentially employ them.

Many times VISTA's create a program and develop the resources that could potentially employ them. That's not always the case but it's not uncommon. So on the next slide you'll see how you can follow us or find more information about us.

That's our website there at the top, you can friend us on Facebook using that link, we also have Twitter feeds so if you want to follow us on Twitter you can.

We have a number of resources on YouTube, particularly the national conferences and presentations that have been done over the years by organizations as well as hands on.

And other resources, some of the statistics that were being shared by Josh at the beginning are compiled also by our agency through Volunteering in America. You can craft pages about your state or your community and track where your community stands as far as number of volunteers and other useful information there at volunteeringinamerica.gov.

And I'll take questions during Q&A.

Josh Good: Thanks very much Michael. And so just a quick word about questions, we will have a slide immediately following our third speaker's presentation that explains how to enter a question that you may have.

So please keep those in the queue as you think ahead for our discussion time. Our final speaker today is Caprisca Randolph-Robinson who leads the human capital development program in the Illinois Department of Human Services.

This summer Caprisca attended a collaboration meeting and has since lead an effort within Illinois Department of Human Services to support TANF participants as volunteers in local work settings.

She will share with us a bit about local TANF partnership there and their volunteer services program which supports statewide volunteer services through a manager in the volunteer services program.

Caprisca, the floor is yours and will be followed by James Butler of the Office of Family Assistance.

Caprisca Robinson: Thank you, Josh and good afternoon. I hope you guys can hear me very clearly.

Again my name is Caprisca Randolph-Robinson and I'm with Illinois Department of Human Services, Human Capital Development.

And I'm going to talk a little bit about creating opportunities for TANF participants through partnerships.

I want to just tell you a little short true story real quick. I have a friend that was laid off about a year and a half. She has a bachelor's degree about 15 years of management experience wasn't receiving unemployment during this time period, doing a lot of job searching, had a lot of telephone interviews but never passed that first screening step.

And was wondering why she wasn't getting any you know face to face interviews. Well finally got a face to face interview, excited about doing it, you know I'm going to get this job, I'm going to get it.

Well she didn't end up getting the job. And she said you know what, I'm going to give them a call to find out what happened because I was just sure I got this job.

Well she talked to the unit resource director and they told her you know I'm not supposed to be sharing this information but I'm going to give you a suggestion.

That while you're receiving unemployment you have to be doing something else just besides getting unemployment. You need to be out there doing some type of work experience, taking some type of leadership classes, you have to be making yourself more marketable, especially in this type of the economy where you're competing with other people who might not be laid off.

Or if they are laid off, so that's - I want to just tie that into what I'm going to be talking about today and emphasizing how important volunteering is. And I'm going to be speaking on it from a different perspective of volunteering and calling it a work experience opportunity.

If you could proceed to the next slide, in Illinois in the fiscal year 2012 unfortunately our contracted employment training providers were reduced by 50%.

And this was the main way that we utilized engagement activities for our TANF participants. So of course our TANF offices and staff, we were very concerned about what are we going to do, where are we going to send our customer?

And of course the agencies, we still have the mission of self sufficiency, independence for TANF customers and we want to work with our TANF population.

Of course we had increased TANF case loads so we said well what are we going to do? Also we had other performance outcomes we had to meet as well, but send you to meet our work participation rates which we wanted to avoid financial penalties as many other states wanted to.

As you can proceed to the next slide, so one of the things that we wanted to do in sort of developing some strategies, and I'm just going to speak about one of them is we entered into work experience partnerships.

And what is work experience? It's basically an activity in which TANF participants are placed in a supervised assignment with public, private or not for profit employer, organizations and government agencies that have a written agreement with the department.

So TANF participants do this in exchange for the TANF snap benefits, and this will provide the participant with experience in a work setting to develop those work skills while you know receiving TANF assistance.

And then the next slide I'm going to talk about who are the partners that we partnered and collaborated with, a variety of people. Hospitals, hospice agencies, and nursing homes within this healthcare sector this was a good area to partner with.

It seemed during the economy they didn't get hit as hard as some other places, they were still doing a lot of hiring, and through working with some hospitals and hospice agencies we found out that they have to have a certain percentage of volunteers, especially with the hospice agency.

I believe it's about 5% volunteers and this was based on them continually getting their Medicaid funding that they informed us, so this was a real win-win for us and through this developing a relationship with this particular hospice agency we were able to build on that with two TANF offices, they opened up a third hospice agency on the north side.

So we just kind of partner with them as well. We were actually able to get hired from this. So they did all the background checks and so forth. So the healthcare sector is just a good place to tap into as far as employment opportunities.

We also have been working with factories, restaurants, day care centers, head start programs or where the daycare center is also a head start also.

This is an area where we learned from working with the head start program that working and partnering with the TANF participants doing work experience in those settings, this also assists and helps them to meet in kind match up to 25% as far as the supervision that they provided for the TANF participants.

So that's something that we learned from them and so when we meet with them we just kind of put that out there as an incentive for them to want to partner with us.

And also partnering with non for profit agencies, foster care agencies, etcetera. Now going to the next slide, entering into a partnership with a partner this is just some of their responsibilities.

We basically enter into a written work experience agreement. There's no money attached. They have to complete a work experience description so whatever those work experiences positions that they have for example if they have two janitorial positions or two clerical positions, they would actually identify that in the details of that information.

We would review the expectation for both the partner and the IDHS panel offices. We definitely will want the TANF participant to be assigned to a meaningful specify work ((inaudible)) where they're going to actually gain real job skills.

And it's best to treat them as an employee that's going to assist helping building those soft skills and teaching them how they work in a real environment.

And just making them feel important. Most definitely providing daily supervision and emphasizing that the weekly time sheet for any TANF participants that are doing work experience at any of their - any of the agencies that they have to provide that on a weekly basis.

Going into the next slide as we're meeting with the partner just to see if they would like to partner with us, we will be emphasizing these are some of the benefits for you.

There are no out of pocket expenses for you, now the TANF participant will be there for - they're not going to be there forever. They'll be there anywhere between six and nine months or unless time depending on if the TANF office might have another opportunity they might want to place that TANF participant.

So that's just to let them know we're not going to have people doing work experience here forever. It's going to be time limited. Our focus is we want the customer to actually gain work experience and skills.

And we also let the partner know that hiring is not mandatory but we definitely remind them that employment is our outcome and that we hope during this partnership they will find a TANF participant that they will hire and that if they're not hiring during that time period we're going to take those skills and knowledge and experience that they learned from one entity, take that, start incorporating job search into that work experience assignment.

So they can take whatever the skills that they learned there and go somewhere else in the same entity and get hired somewhere. So it still can be a win-win for us.

We also indicate if there are some other things such as it meets their volunteer Medicaid match, we remind them of that if they're a hospice agency or if they're a head start program we remind them of the in kind match that it can help meet for them in those regards.

We also indicated that it can be used as a screening tool for potential employees, maybe they're working with a temp agency and this will be a win-win for them as well.

Lastly we indicated that if they hire a TANF participant that they are eligible for the work opportunity tax credit and just provide them or remind them of that information as well.

Can you proceed to the next one? Now for the TANF offices, what are our responsibilities? Well in this partnership we want to make sure we just screen suitable TANF participants and we complete whatever the agreed upon referral process is with that particular partner.

As the TANF case worker is referring TANF participants to this partner, we want to make sure we emphasize this to the TANF participant that this is a great opportunity.

We don't promise employment but we let them, we make sure we inform them that this can lead to employment and that you always want to do your best job.

You never know who's looking at you on that work experience assignment. So you want to always do your best. That TANF office makes sure that they determine the appropriate number of hours that the TANF participant is going to do work experience there.

We want to make sure that we're monitoring, making visits to the location so we can resolve any problems and issues, so we can keep the lines of communication open between the partner in the office and as long as that TANF participant is going so we're getting weekly time sheets to know that the TANF participant is going as they're supposed to, we're going to provide supportive services for that participant.

Can you proceed to the next slide? Now these are some of the benefits for us. This is going to be engagement in a suitable activity for the TANF participant so we're still on our - well on our way of our plan of independence and self sufficiency.

We're going to meet expected performance outcomes and this is also going to assist us in many work participation rates. Because work experience is accountable activity.

Proceed it to the next slide, now the participant also has responsibility and again we want to remind them that they have to report to their work experience assignment timely.

They have to follow work rules and we want them to gain work experience to enhance their skills and make them more marketable in the job market. And in my next slide, this is just going to talk about the benefits of the TANF participant which is most important of all.

This - once you know this work experience assignment is going to build self esteem, it's going to build soft skills, it allows time and work experience that they're doing in these various positions to transfer on to a resume.

It also allows employment opportunities through these partnerships that we have developed so we've actually gotten TANF participants actually hired. So when you have other TANF participants that are doing work experience and they see people who have actually gotten hired that motivates them to even do their best and to say you know I'm doing this work experience, I'm just not doing it just to be doing it.

But there is actually some employment opportunities there, I'm actually gaining some knowledge and skills that I can take and transfer somewhere.

Also the partnering agency can also be used as a work reference, so that's the great thing. Lastly it can direct a career pathway to self sufficiency. Possibly through this work experience that this person might realize that you know doing work experience at this hospital I really found out I really do like assisting with patients.

Or they may want to go into nursing, etcetera or working in the daycare or the head start. Maybe from working from there they go and they take some childcare development classes that's going to help them on their way.

Lastly within Illinois Department of Human Services we do have a particular department that's not under my leadership but I'm going to provide you some overview of the program.

And if somebody wants some additional information afterwards I definitely can probably connect them to the particular people who handle that, who handle this particular department.

Under the Bureau of Training and Support Services within the Office of Human Resources they manage the department volunteer service program.

And so basically in providing you a overview as a result of July 1 in the next slide, 1997 several human service agencies merge into the agency what we call today Illinois Department of Human Services.

And as a result of this collaboration there was a state wide volunteer services program that was created by IDHS just to improve the delivery of human services.

So through this the value of volunteers is a measurable and enhances the lives of individuals we serve.

All potential volunteers are required to complete an application, have the Department of Children and Family Services background check and to assure confidentiality is not compromised.

So services volunteers provide are viewed as being supplemental and not a replacement for staff. Volunteers assist by providing services such as companionship, mentoring, entertainment, special events, sporting, distributing cloths, tutoring, greeters, donations, etcetera.

So there's a volunteer services program manager that oversees the statewide volunteer services program within Illinois and each IDHS facility or office who actually have volunteers have to have an assignment description, or reflect the coordination of volunteer services and this person again has go to through appropriate qualifications, experience, and authority to actually implement the volunteer program.

So again if you have any further questions about the volunteer, the state wide volunteer program I'll be more than happy to be able to connect someone to that information.

But I hope that there was something that I said today that you found insightful. Thank you.

Josh Good: Thank you so much Caprisca. James Butler serves as the project - federal project officer and will offer a few remarks before we give an overview of the question and answering - asking opportunity. James?

James Butler: Thank you so much, Josh and thank you so much to all of our speakers. In addition to the presentations that we've just heard, I just wanted to share one additional thought as we move towards the question and answer session and you guys are in the process of typing in your questions.

In the work that we do here in OFA to support TANF programs, it's worth remembering that our states are home to many faith based and community organizations, many of which serve TANF eligible families and individuals.

You can learn more about this project by checking out our (Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network) website under the tab TANF initiatives. You'll find that these faith based and community groups are able to offer important benefits for low income families.

A few of them are things such as access to large numbers of volunteers, including highly skilled professionals who serve as mentors, benefit from interfaith activity particularly interagency collaboration, unique capacity to help forge change in the lives of high risk individuals.

So as we think further about volunteering and how to successfully manage volunteer partnerships, I would encourage all of you and those of you who are representing TANF programs or other public agencies to consider partnerships with the faith based community organizations as one component in working with your volunteers.

That's all that I have for right now and we can go ahead and move on to the question and answer session. Thank you so much.

(Sarah): Hello, this is (Sarah) here and I'm just going to briefly describe how to type a question so that we can spend time answering the questions that you may have.

You will see on the top bar on your screen next to voice and video a Q&A bar that you can select. And in the - when you select that bar you will see type your question here.

And that's exactly where you will type your question and that will allow us to receive your question and then answer it.

Once you are done typing it's important that you click ask just so that you confirm your submission of that question.

Thank you. Our first question is do you include persons with disabilities as volunteers?

Georgia Mjartan: So this is Georgia.

Male: Please.

Georgia Mjartan: I would be happy to answer that, I gave one example but I think that question was from you (Don), I really appreciate that because people with disabilities are incredibly helpful and can contribute so much and I think sometimes they're our best volunteers because they find a lot of doors closing to them.

And so when we say oh man we could totally use your help, I think that that in itself is welcoming and one thing that I find with people with disabilities is that sometimes they have a more flexible schedule or more time.

We need volunteers during the daytime hours and we find that people with disabilities sometimes are more able to meet that need than people who maybe work a full time job.

And don't have the ability to serve during the day.

(Sarah): Someone else asked what about clients with CORI issues and CORI is C-O-R-I.

Georgia Mjartan: I'm not sure we know what that means.

Michael Laverty: Yeah I can't speak to CORI but I would like to - I missed the opportunity, sorry to add to what Georgia was saying about individuals with disabilities. One of the requirements for all of the AmeriCorps programs as well as SeniorCorps programs with the corporation is that they provide opportunities that would meet this audience's needs.

Georgia Mjartan: Well I guess I'll just add more kind of practical thing about that, is that while there are a lot of benefits you do have to - the reason I included that slide of not only can but also can't is it's really important to recognize what the can'ts are.

So for one of our volunteers who is autistic she can't participate in large group functions, she needed an office, she needed a private place where she could have the lights be darker because her eyes are very sensitive and noise really affects her.

So we were able to accommodate those things and you know I think does a volunteer normally get an office where they can turn off the lights and you know do we normally accommodate like that?

Well if the volunteer is going to provide years of full time service to your organization then the answer is yes, it's well worth accommodating and so I would just really encourage people that you know like I said in my slides, sometimes there are barriers.

But really work through those barriers and you might get the best volunteer you've ever had.

Michael Laverty: I would also add - this is Michael again, sorry to dominate, but each state has funds set aside for outreach to individuals with disabilities.

So when you go on our website and that's also where you would find other information about our programs, but you can also find on our website contact information for each ((inaudible)).

I am the state office director for Kansas and Missouri but we have a state office in almost every state and they can direct you to the different programs and more information about programs for individuals with disabilities.

Caprisca Robinson: And hi this is Caprisca, I'm not familiar with the C-O-R-I, CORI question.

(Sarah): We actually asked the person that posted that question to define CORI, and if we hear back from them what they mean by CORI we will definitely read that question again.

But for now we actually have some new questions.

Josh Good: So this next one may be a faith based question it sounds like for working with the faith community how do you approach people to be volunteers in a manner that helps people work with poverty and asks them to remain secular in that work?

How do you navigate the church/state dynamic when recruiting volunteers from the faith community?

Michael Laverty: Well this is Michael; I have a really good example of an AmeriCorps VISTA program in St. Louis. It is a faith based sponsor. It's South Grand Senior Ministries in St. Louis.

They came to us, it was also the program I used as the example that had a high quality of recruitment. They were in a church basement but they served from the church a area that surrounded the church that was highly populated with low income seniors.

These seniors were not able to repair their homes, needed transportation to get to and from basic appointments, the grocery store, the doctor's office, etcetera.

So they came to us with a plan that they had developed to address the needs of this community long term. One of the positions was a transportation coordinator, full time for individuals but each of these individuals attended church services to recruit volunteers from the pool pit.

Now they couldn't proselytize you know teach bible classes, lead prayer, they couldn't do those things. So it was one of the most innovative ways I've seen a program utilize federal resources while serving the faith community.

So from within their program these members knew you know you're going to be going to church on Sunday to recruit volunteers. Now they can't require them to go to church but if they drop by the church and you know jump up in front of the mic and describe what their volunteer opportunities are that met this organization's needs; however, most often the individuals that were interested in serving with this faith based organization also shared the similar faith. So it was easy for most of their members to participate in those types of activities but again they can't lead those activities that are addressing religious issues.

But the recipients of service throughout the community, and they couldn't exclude other low income individuals within a certain range of the church of any of the services they were happy to provide them.

So I hope that is helpful.

Georgia Mjartan: I really want to jump in too, this is Georgia. Our House we plug in about 55 different faith community members so we say congregations because they're not all churches, they're not all Christian so we call them congregations.

So we plug in 55 or so different congregations into service every year within Our House and most of those groups serve by serving meals at our house.

So we provide 77,000 meals a year and almost all of those are bought, prepared and served by congregations. And so for us the way that we handle that is just again kind of going back to that rubric, really understanding from them what do you want to get out of this?

And I'll say that there are some faith community members who have no intention, no desire of speaking about their religion to our clients and there are others that have said explicitly we want to come there and evangelize about the Lord Jesus Christ and are that explicit in their call.

And so we first kind of find out from them, where are you, what is your intention? And then we try to ask the question to them, you know if we set up these parameters will that meet your need?

And I would say that you know with just to use this as an example with an evangelical Christian church who had definitely a part of their mission was to do outreach in the name of Jesus to the people who were here, we were able to give them an opportunity while they served the lunch meal to basically put up a sign that said your meal is served by and then it listed their church.

And they left a box of bibles. They did not hand them out, they didn't pray before the meal, so it was there as a resource for people if they wanted it, if our clients wanted to reach out to them and ask them about their church, that was up to the clients.

And we were explicit with the volunteers about how that would work. The other thing that we do is like I said we have groups from all different kinds of religions so Catholics and Protestants, we also have the temple and the Jewish Federation who have a tradition of serving every Christmas.

And we were really intentional, there's only two Islamic centers, two mosques here in Little Rock and we were very intentional about reaching out to the Islamic community, to the Muslim community.

And we've recently been able to plug in the local Islamic center into serving as well. We even got a call from an organized group of atheists here who also felt welcome to serve in our organization.

So I think that that's a good example of how our uniform policies around that make all people, no matter what their faith is, feel welcome to serve and welcome to be served.

(Sarah): Great, thank you. Our next question is, how is worker's compensation insurance handled for volunteers?

Caprisca Robinson: Well this is Caprisca in fact with us we have workman's comp that's actually public.

So we just let them know that as long as the - whatever the schedule is for that TANF participant, it has to - if something actually does happen, it has to be one of that actual schedule.

So if their schedule is from Monday through Thursday and they're doing four hours per day and that's between 9:00 to 1:00 and something happens at 3:00 and that's not their scheduled time then workman's comp is not covered.

But we do have a workman's comp procedure, policy where they would send or fax whatever information that is concerning any participant as far as that.

But it has to be - it has to have occurred during that assigned hours and time that that participant is actually there.

Georgia Mjartan: And for us I've asked my insurance agent about this and our volunteers are not covered by our worker's comp but they are covered by our liability, our general liability insurance.

Michael Laverty: And if they are AmeriCorps VISTA members they are covered by something similar through a federal program that we administer.

So if there was an incident where your AmeriCorps VISTA member were serving, you would follow the proper procedures that you would learn about at supervisor's training to get in touch with our office.

And then we have a point of contact in our DC headquarters that handles all of those situations.

(Sarah): Okay great, thank you. This next question is regarding TANF work experience program - the TANF work experience program. This attendee is wondering do you inform your potential work sites that the participants are recipients of TANF or do you term the program as something else?

This specific attendee states that they have different views in their office and some use it as a selling point for their program with WOTC and other staff do not feel that they should share this information with the site.

Caprisca Robinson: Well we do share that they're TANF recipients, but in that's in the pre meeting in talking with them. But at the same time we're educating them that you know educating them about people on public assistance.

And not to have any myths, stigmas about people who are on assistance and that our TANF case load has grown by 50% and we're seeing a different characteristics of TANF, people have been on unemployment for a year, two years, and have exhausted that.

And now we're seeing a different face of people who have never been on assistance before, educated customers.

So we try to educate them in saying that don't stereotype somebody who's receiving TANF assistance, they could be - they're somebody who could be very educated.

And plus you know we wanted to educate them and let them know that because if there is an employment opportunity that we definitely want that agency to take advantage of that work opportunity that the WOTC credit.

So yes, we do let them know that, it has not been a problem but we do educate them and from time to time you will come across somebody who might be hesitant and that's when we might say you know let's start small.

Let's start off with something very small that's manageable to see how you - you know see how you like that and just educate them on the positives and everything. So yes, so we do influence them.

(Sarah): Thank you very much. This next question is, is the screening process for volunteers similar to that of mentors? How different are these volunteer services to that of traditional mentoring programs?

Michael Lavery: For VISTA members they're fingerprinted at the training. For my region the training is held in Albuquerque or Denver and we have staff dedicated to the process of fingerprinting while they're there on site.

So they go through an extensive background check. Additionally when you select the member and you submit their application to my office I or my team, someone on this team does NSOPR check which is free.

It's the national sex offender registry and it connects to all 50 states databases, so that's the first step is the NSOPR. Then the second step is the fingerprinting which does the extensive background.

If an assignment comes in that has a volunteer placed with a vulnerable population or close to that population prior to the fingerprint background check coming back the results then we ask that the VISTA member service be limited until we get those results.

But typically we get those rather quickly, within two or three weeks of the training so it's not an issue.

Georgia Mjartan: And for our organization one of the ways we're able to plug in so many volunteers and so many different volunteers is that we have different levels of screening.

So for every person who sets foot on our campus because we have so many vulnerable children here, every single person we do run that sex offender check on them, because like Michael mentioned it's free.

I'll also kind of mention with that, that that's one of the reasons why it is necessary, you can't have an organization - I guess you could but with the kind of people that we serve it's important to have some staff involvement.

So that screening and making sure that the checks and balances are put in place, that happens by staff. But like I mentioned I mean we have some folks who are on probation who you know may have a drug offense.

Obviously we're not going to put them in the room with our children, but they can work outside and clear the weeds off our fence line to serve along side our children or in our licensed child care center that's a much higher background check screening, FBI, criminal background, adult and child maltreatment and sex offender.

So just different levels for different needs. When we have 4000 different people serving meals in our kitchen, there's really no screening on that other than you know we make sure that they're trained enough to know the safety procedures in serving meals and wearing gloves and whatnot.

Caprisca Robinson:volunteer opportunities under the volunteer services program, potential volunteers are required to complete an application and go through Department of Children and Family Services background check.

(Sarah): Okay, thank you. This next question is what are some of the steps taken by the Illinois Department of Human Services or other service providers to ensure met TANF work experience participants do not exceed the amount of cash assistance they receive per month in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Please let me know if I should read that again because that was a rather long question.

Caprisca Robinson: Well I think I know maybe what they're referring to. I'm assuming maybe making sure that they're fine so the correct number of hours and that you're not violating their Fair Labor Standards Act.

Well our number one we use these TANF work experience, because our TANF has boded so large and we also have employment and training providers as well, we use multiple strategies.

So the one - so partnerships with work experience partners we refer TANF customers who usually only have to do one activity or core activity.

And so we use that as a strategy so we don't have to - they're not having to require to do a primary core and a secondary core. So that's one strategy that we use and any customers that they're referring, they're going to actually assign the customer, the TANF participant the number of hours.

So that's not something we expect the work experience partner to do. The office has more knowledge and experience of that. So when they refer the customer, they would actually put on the referral they let them know the number of hours that this person can only do per week so that we make sure that they don't exceed those number of hours.

I hope that answers that question.

(Sarah): Thank you very much. The next question is, in regards to VISTA could a state agency that administers TANF use VISTA volunteers to oversee and promote their volunteer program?

Michael Laverty: You can provided it's not displacing employment. So if you have a program that you don't have staff for, say an unfunded mandate or a DFR program that you want to implement state wide, a VISTA project would be ideal, especially when you're talking recipients of service or at the low income community.

You're providing them with resources that could help get them out of poverty.

(Sarah): Thank you. This next question is, in Illinois if a TA participant does not meet their hours of participation are they sanctioned?

If so do you have full family sanctions and I think by TA they intended TANF participants.

Caprisca Robinson: If a TANF participant does not do all of their hours, well one thing, one of the things that we as we meet with our partners, we let them know that we know on any real job that people have to be off.

So we want them to make up their hours, so if they have to be off and it's approved by the employer and they were scheduled for four hours, we want them to make up their hours within that time frame.

So that's the number one thing that we encourage, we - that's the first - our first strategy. But yes, someone stops attending for whatever reason then the employer needs to inform the TANF office so that they can do a reconciliation to try to get that TANF participant back in the office to determine if they have good cause.

And if a sanction is appropriate then the TANF worker would sanction them and we do have a full sanction, full level sanction.

(Sarah): Thank you very much. This next question is also for Illinois and it is, is there a concern with displacement of paid employees at factories or restaurants with volunteer placements?

And kind of as a follow up how - are there any strategies that you use to navigate this relationship with the employer?

Caprisca Robinson: Well the first part of the question is for, for profit businesses, we find out the total number of employees that they have there and first of all it is determined on the based number of employees that they have there.

So for every three employees we can only assume one TANF participant. But we want to make sure that we're not sending you more than the number of staff that you employ there. So - and the other thing is we shy away from people who have unions and so forth so that we don't get any type of issues with that.

So we shy away from any places that might have unions or so forth but then places or businesses that have employees, that's the first thing that we want to find out what's the total number of employees that you have there.

Because we don't want to be supplying you with more people than what you should have. And I think that was the first part of the question. What was the second part of the question?

(Sarah): The second part of the question was just if you had any strategies to navigate the relationship with the employer.

Caprisca Robinson: Oh, I think number one is first, sit down with them and the partnering TANF office that you would like to partner with. And first of all have the positives, have all the benefits that are going to be for that employer.

What are the benefits that they're gaining from them and making sure that you're getting also the win-wins that you want. You want it to be an engagement activity for yourself, you're trying to get self sufficiency for the customer employment.

So you have your - you have to have the positives presented to them so it's a win-win for them so they see it's an advantage for them.

At the same time kind of just have everything outlined of what the expectations are. The sort of things that you're going to need from them, they're getting somebody, they don't have to pay any costs, any wages so that's a benefit for them.

They're using this as a potential training tool, that's a benefit for them. But at the same time letting them know this is someone that's not going to be with you forever, and that we hope that you can hire them and if you cannot hire them that we do want to - the TANF participant will want to use those skills and knowledge and work experience that they obtained with you and transfer somewhere else.

But for the most part we've been finding that they - they're actually hiring our customers. We had a factory that - and this was the first time we partnered with a factory - it was a pretty large factory.

And I think within the first two or three weeks they hired five people and so I think it's just basically making sure the lines of communication is open and be clear on what the expectation is from both sides and then - so that they can actually see what the win-win all the way around is.

Georgia Mjartan: Can I actually add something to that? As a kind of on the employer side, we don't have the same program here in Arkansas with TANF participants but we do have a similar population who are served through an AARP job training program where elderly people or people over 55 are able to be placed.

Typically they're unskilled workers who are able to be placed at non-profit jobs so it's kind of the same type of population but specifically older people.

And one of the things that - and we've been a site for that, one of the things that I find is really important for me in wanting to plug those folks into our organization is knowing that they're - that we have some say on the screening side.

So being able to be reassured you know I'm sure that applies with the TANF participants too but as an employer being able to have some say, you know if we don't want to accept someone.

And also some recourse, so I mean I know with that program there were times when I had to basically fire a volunteer and knowing that that wouldn't forever jeopardize our relationship with the AARP program or in your case you know with TANF.

I'm sure that having that open line of communication as you said and also the recourse or the ability to have a say over who's serving within your organization, I think that's really important as well.

Caprisca Robinson: That's a good point and that is one of the things that we also talk about to let them know is they're not required to keep somebody.

They actually have a - depending on that partner they might most of them want to go through an interview process. And that's good for the TANF participant as well because that just gets them prepared.

So if it's somebody that does not pass that interview kind of process with that partner, then they're also going to let their TANF office know why. So that could be something that they can work on with them or actually maybe send them to one of our providers.

So yes, I'm glad you (brung) that up.

(Sarah): Thank you very much for those insightful questions and answers. Now I'm going to turn it over to Josh who's going to begin the conclusion of this webinar.

Josh Good: And with that we just simply want to thank all of you for your active participation in today's webinar, a particular thank you to our speakers.

Leadership at the Office of Family Assistance Lisa Washington Thomas and James Butler and Georgia Mjartan from Our House, Michael Laverty from the Corporation for National Community Service and Caprisca Randolph-Robinson from Illinois DHS.

By way of reminder you will be receiving a PDF version of all of today's slides and within five to seven business days you will be able to log on to the Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network Website and see the slides and transcript from today's conversation as well as a PDF of all the materials that we have been discussing today.

That website one more time is www.peerta.acf.hhs.gov.

Thank you again to all for your participation, and we look forward to following up as opportunities allow in the weeks ahead.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your participation. This does conclude today's conference.

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