



Legislation Text

File #: 20-124, **Version:** 1

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Human and Social Needs
AGENDA DATE: February 26, 2020
COUNCIL DISTRICT(S): All
DEPARTMENT: Office of Community Care
EXECUTIVE: Nadia Chandler-Hardy

SUBJECT

Authorize the **(1)** acceptance of a cost-share grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to provide four AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) members to perform volunteer services to strengthen and supplement efforts to eliminate poverty and poverty-related human, social and environmental problems in support of the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children Program for the period February 2, 2020 through April 24, 2021, with a one-year renewal option; and **(2)** execution of the cost-share agreement with CNCS and all terms, conditions, and documents required by the agreement - Financing: No cost consideration to the City

BACKGROUND

The CNCS's AmeriCorps VISTA is a program focused on bringing low-income individuals and communities out of poverty. Since 2014, multiple City of Dallas departments have participated in the AmeriCorps VISTA Program, with the first being the Mayor's 2016 GrowSouth Initiative. Dallas County has one of the highest child poverty rates with 73% of students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch, which is an indicator of children living in households 130% below the Federal poverty level. This is an area of unmet poverty-related community need in Dallas County because only 39% of the eligible population participates in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program.

The Office of Community Care (OCC) administers the Supplemental Nutrition Program for WIC, which provides nutritious food, nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, and referrals to health and social services. In Texas, populations that are eligible for WIC include pregnant or breastfeeding women, infants, families with children younger than five years old, all foster care children under the age of five years old, and single fathers of eligible infants and children, all of which must meet the income guidelines of 185% below the federal poverty level.

Participation rates in the WIC Program have been declining for the past decade until 2019. OCC and WIC have formed a partnership with Child Poverty Action Lab (CPAL), a nonprofit established as a result of former Mayor Rawlings' Task Force on Poverty, to identify the causes of decreasing participation levels in the WIC program. In doing so, OCC and CPAL identified that only 37% of the target population live within two miles of a clinic, and many lack vehicles and alternative forms of transit. Together, WIC and CPAL conducted research with WIC staff, families and leadership to better understand how potential clients access information about WIC, what factors lead to them participating in the program, what factors may serve as deterrents to participation, and what barriers to participation may exist. OCC and CPAL then developed a WIC Playbook with specific ideas to address the identified issues.

WIC will utilize AmeriCorps VISTA resources to reach and serve these populations, utilizing the WIC Playbook recommendations. VISTA members will identify neighborhoods that need improved clinic access, identify organizations in highly populated areas where clinics could be established, launch rotational mobile clinics in community centers and high-density residential housing complexes, identify community leaders that can spread WIC information, evaluate processes in person, and gather feedback from the community about where and how the clinics should be implemented and improved. This cost-share agreement between CNCS and the City of Dallas will have no cost to the City because CNCS pays the VISTAs their stipends directly and will then bill the cost-share to CPAL, who has agreed to pay the required portion.

PRIOR ACTION/REVIEW (COUNCIL, BOARDS, COMMISSIONS)

City Council will be briefed by memorandum regarding this matter on February 14, 2020.

FISCAL INFORMATION

No cost consideration to the City.