**Nominating for:** Best new program addressing a critical priority

**Nominated by:** Jillian Jayde Hastings, VISTA Program Coordinator (National)

**The Critical Priority:** Newcomer Immigrant and Promise Youth Support and Integration

Since its inception, the Y has been reaching out to underserved immigrant and youth communities to fill crucial social needs. From our founding in 1844 as a service organization for migrant youth, to hosting the first ESL class in America, having stations at Ellis and Angel Island directing newcomers to services, and raising funds for YMCA medical facilities and schools in over 115 countries around the world.

Today, the YMCA continues that tradition through targeted efforts to meet the critical social needs of immigrants and immigrant promise youth through volunteer programs, services focused on education (ESL, after-school programs, adult basic education, truancy intervention, college access and civic education) and economic opportunity (job training and placement). This work is directly influenced and strengthened by the work of our AmeriCorps VISTA members through our YMCA Newcomer Immigrant & Promise Youth National VISTA Project.

By allowing our VISTA’s to examine community through multiple lenses, YMCA leadership has been able to adapt and modify policies, practices, procedures and programs in ways that are more responsive to the new immigrant populations - including those who are settling in communities that have not been traditional gateway entry points.

Additionally, members have worked and continue to work to: create and expand volunteer systems; expand ESL programs and tutoring for students, parents and guardians; examine existing programs and services while also exploring tools and resources which will help staff capture program data and participant demographics; establish relationships, frameworks, and strategies which encourage additional philanthropic support of programs and services for newcomer/immigrant and promise youth; develop training models for YMCA staff and volunteers to advance capacity building in the areas of community bridge building, program management, and service delivery; create toolkits of services for newcomer/immigrant and promise youth; and expand outreach services to immigrants and promise youth for job training, skills development and placement.

Nationally in year one, over 600 volunteers have been recruited from their local communities, our members have raised over $45,000 in grants, donations and funding and they have provided capacity building services, aided in community assessments, and created partnerships with over 300 new local and national organizations.

Serving in 15 major cities and their surrounding areas, VISTA efforts have led to over 500 staff and community members to be trained in cultural competency, newcomer/immigrant engagement, language acquisition, mentoring and tutoring. Our members have also worked collectively to engage participants in over 14 different languages.

Our VISTA’s are working tirelessly every day in locals Ys to meet the crucial social needs of immigrant inclusion, engagement and support services, as well as to fill the economic and societal gaps that create risk for our communities’ youth. By helping to reduce poverty, strengthening program capacity, developing strategies for long-term sustainability and working to facilitate greater opportunities and reduce violence for promise youth and low-income communities, our members create greater access to social services improving the chances for educational and economic advancement for at least 164, 441 immigrants and promise youth.