The Wisconsin Association of Free and Charitable Clinics’ (WAFCC) AmeriCorps VISTA Programs should be considered for the best new VISTA program. Ana Karina Burton, WAFCC Standards Manager, writes this recommendation and can be reached at [wafccstandardsmanager@gmail.com](mailto:wafccstandardsmanager@gmail.com).

Beginning in July 2017, WAFCC’s AmeriCorps VISTA program started with five (6) Standards of Excellence VISTAs. These VISTAs were charged with helping their host-sites achieve WAFCC’s new Standards of Excellence. With 68 number of standards, this is no small feat. Currently, in all the host-clinics that our VISTAs are serving, these clinics have achieved the Bronze Seal of Excellence, and one clinic where one VISTA member is serving has achieve the Silver Seal. Many of their supervisors have stated they would not have achieved these standards so fast without the VISTAs. This is because most free clinics have less than 5 full time employees and rely on a volunteer model to sustain their clinic. I believe the free clinics are perfectly suited for VISTA members and allows for innovative practices.

A few months after WAFCC began its VISTA program they were awarded more VISTAs to address the Opioid Epidemic in Wisconsin. We were able to recruit host sites in two of the counties with some of the highest prescription rates in the state (see pic) This doubled the number of VISTAs enrolled with WAFCC. Together the Opioid VISTAs have educated 1,174 number of individuals about substance abuse through various community based events including community conversations and “Hidden in Plain Sight”. (Insert Pictures)

With the uninsured rate to increase in Wisconsin the need for Free and Charitable Clinics in Wisconsin will grow.

Innovative work: Our Standards of Excellence VISTAs work done is helping to tell the story of Free and Charitable Clinics, the patients these clinics serve, the services they provide, and the essential role they play in the Wisconsin Safety Net. Another innovative area that the VISTAs have focused on is improving, creating, and organizing the free clinics' policies and procedures. Having appropriate policies and procedures ensures the clinic is providing sustainable services of the highest quality.

There are processes in place where WAFCC monitors and manages the project performance. First, WAFCC has bi-weekly VISTA check-in call on Mondays where all the VISTAs participate and provide updates of their work and previously assigned tasks. Also, this check-in call provides an opportunity for the VISTAs to ask questions, share ideas, and obtain support. There are also monthly phone meetings with the host-site supervisors. In these calls, WAFCC discusses the VISTA projects' progress, updates, accomplishments, and questions or concerns the supervisors may have. WAFCC has emphasized the importance of communication. Other unique part of our program is the that the VISTAs dedicate a small percentage of their time to WAFCC. The collaborative agreement between the individual clinics and WAFCC has strengthened the bond between us. As such, these clinics with VISTA members feel more involved with the association. WAFCC also has created opportunities for the VISTAs members to get training, and work together for WAFCC events. For example, Our Opioid VISTAs attended the Wisconsin Public Health Association’s Annual Conference. This conference gave our VISTAs the opportunity to learn the newest research and evidence-based practices occurring in Wisconsin to improve our health. Another opportunity in working together was in the WAFCC Standards retreat where we discuss the current success and challenges with implementing the standards, the VISTAs also worked with their host-site supervisor in succession planning. They worked together in create the new VADs for the incoming VISTA members as well. In this retreat we also spent time developing support and training documents for our Standards and Opioid VISTA programs. We are always looking for professional development opportunities for our AmeriCorps VISTA members.

* The nomination should explain how the addition of member interventions/activities are addressing a critical need in the community.

Submit a narrative of up to 500 words that clearly and concisely describes the nominee’s best program design, enhancement, expansion, or experience and accomplishments as a member for the award category selected. Ideally, the narrative will include evidence of the nominee’s impact in the community or on the program or other local projects, as well as evidence to support the nominee’s work or service as innovative, a best practice and/or a highly compelling and motivating experience.

1. Each nomination should specify from the eligibility list the program with which it is affiliated. In addition, the narrative should address how the AmeriCorps member or program is addressing one of the award categories. Enter the award category and full name of the nominee in the Title field in the Submit Solution link.
2. Clearly identify the full name of the nominee, the AmeriCorps program affiliation, and the award category in the first sentence of the nomination narrative.
3. Provide the full name and email address of the nominator and the nominator’s affiliation with the nominee in the second sentence of the nomination. Note that nominations will not be considered complete or reviewed without the full name and contact information for the nominator.
4. Describe how the nominee exemplifies excellence in AmeriCorps service or programming. Consider these questions: what made the service excellent? what data can you provide to support the impact the member or program made?
5. Provide details that vividly illustrate the significance of the nominated member service/program. Details should clearly show how the nominated service goes above and beyond the excellent service that is expected from all AmeriCorps members and programs each year.

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A close up of a map

Description generated with high confidence