



Americorps VISTA Q3 Update

Earlier this summer, Indy Hunger Network welcomed their 2023-2024 cohort of AmeriCorps VISTAs, four of over 7,000 members of the national VISTA program who serve annually to support organizations who make sustainable change in areas that affect poverty.

This year's VISTA cohort at IHN includes SJ Benraiss, Johnette Grant, Marissa Sorini and Sam Sarvak. In addition to contributing to current projects at Indy Hunger Network, they will also work with St. Vincent de Paul-Indianapolis, Meals on Wheels of Central Indiana and CICOA Aging and In-Home Solutions.

"The VISTA program is solely dedicated to building capacity for organizations, so we've really seen it be beneficial in supporting all of our programs and partner programs," said Caleb Kulinski, Director of Advocacy and Partner Engagement at IHN. "We love what VISTAs can bring to the table: their dedication to eradicating poverty in the U.S. and their interest in getting involved in their local communities."

As part of the VISTA program, members are able to gain experience in a variety of areas, including grant writing, event coordination, piloting nutrition

and cooking classes, increasing access to SNAP and WIC, creating marketing plans and more. The cohort also meets biweekly to discuss projects, hear from guest presenters and learn more poverty alleviation.

Many IHN team members, including Kulinski, are former VISTAs. “I worked with our Cooking Matters program doing cooking nutrition classes,” he explained. “It was very beneficial for me to see the noticeable impact that we’re making in individuals’ lives and having a connection with them on a daily basis.”

Kulinski hopes that this year’s VISTAs will be able to use the program to better understand how to use their skills in their future professional experiences. “Oftentimes, this program acts as a stepping stone for a lot of individuals, whether they’re coming directly out of college or looking for a career change,” he said. “We want to help them figure out what their interests are in the professional space and where they can go from there.”