ABOUT US
Feeding Texas leads a unified effort for a hunger-free Texas. We feed over three million hungry Texans annually through a statewide network of food banks, lead the public discussion on hunger, and strengthen the anti-hunger movement through collaboration and capacity building. We maintain formal ties with local organizations in every Texas county as well as state and national partners.

PROGRAM SUMMARY
In 2014, Feeding Texas was named the “statewide intermediary” for food insecurity by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). In partnership with CNCS, Feeding Texas created the Client Empowerment Corps, a three-year program providing trained AmeriCorps*VISTA personnel to member food banks across the state. These VISTAs are implementing an innovative client-empowerment strategy focused on two impact areas:

1 Increasing client health and financial security. VISTAs have harnessed new research, resources and energy from Feeding America’s “Collaborating for Clients” project, as well as best practices from across the country, to assist food banks in building collaborations with outside partners. These partnerships are yielding a more integrated approach to meeting client needs in the areas of health and financial security. Some examples of our work in year one include:

- Developing and improving farmers markets to incorporate health education and services;
- Exploring partnerships with public health nurses, community health centers and diabetes associations to provide A1C testing, diabetes education, and referrals for diabetic food bank clients;
- Exploring formalized partnerships with hospitals/low-income clinics to include enhanced food insecurity screening of patients, potential bi-directional referral systems, and/or prescriptive produce projects;
- Exploring partnerships with physical fitness organizations to provide clients with classes and fitness activities;
- Partnering with UT-SSW students to document best practices in linking food banks to Community Health Assessment / CHIP implementation;
- Assisting in the development of relationships with workforce and job training programs;
• Developing a Food Scholarship program allowing health and financial security partners to utilize food as a resource and incentive for program completion;
• Implementing food bank-led health fairs;
• Facilitating food security trainings and presentations for community organizations;
• Representing the food bank at health coalition meetings; and
• Developing health-focused food bank internships

2. Raising client voices. Feeding Texas believes that to be the leader in the public discussion on hunger we must empower our clients, the true experts, to contribute their voices. For this program, Feeding Texas developed the tools and training for food banks to engage in a statewide client story-banking initiative. In year one, our VISTAs helped food banks design and implement this initiative locally, gathering over five hundred client stories and developing the foundation for client advisory councils.

NEXT STEPS
In year two, Feeding Texas VISTAs will continue to develop partnerships with health and financial service providers as well as continue contributing to the client story-bank. The focus of the second class of VISTAs will shift from assessment and initial implementation of these partnerships to program development and the evaluation of client outcomes. VISTAs will also take the next step in implementing client advisory councils at their food banks. In year three, the focus of the VISTA team will be on sustainability to ensure that the processes and partnerships that have been created are effective and well-resourced for the near future.