2016-2017 IU SPEA VISTA Program at CWC

About CWC
Safe water is a basic human right, not a privilege. Yet each year, more than one million Californians are exposed to unsafe drinking water from the taps in their homes and schools. The water crisis impacts low-income communities the most, making it harder for working families to get by. Though water problems exist statewide, they are concentrated in California’s agricultural communities, which are overwhelmingly Latino, typically high-poverty and lacking in political voice. Those most affected by the lack of safe water are also those least able to afford the extra cost of alternative water sources. Over the past ten years, Community Water Center has worked directly with thousands of local community members, approximately 90% of whom are Latino, with average median annual household incomes of $31,000 a year, which is less than 60% of the statewide average. Nearly every community resident is part of a farmworker family, and many are either monolingual Spanish or limited English speakers.

Community Water Center (CWC) acts as a catalyst for community-driven water solutions through organizing, education, and advocacy in California’s San Joaquin Valley. CWC employs three strategies to ensure all disadvantaged communities (DACs) have access to safe, clean and affordable water: 1) educate, organize and provide assistance to DACs facing local water challenges; 2) engage impacted DAC residents in regional solutions and water planning to ensure the needs of underserved communities are addressed; and 3) policy advocacy for systemic change to address the root causes of unsafe drinking water.

CWC’s current 2016 Campaigns include:

1) **Sustainable and Affordable Community Drinking Water Solutions** - driving long-term solutions for DACs lacking safe water, including consolidations and regional solutions that build economies of scale and advocating for new state funding to meet community drinking water needs

2) **Immediate Access to Safe Water** - advocating for local, regional, and statewide resources to ensure DACs without running water due to the current drought, or contaminated water, can access immediate safe, reliable, and affordable drinking water and connecting communities and residents to these resources

3) **Sustainable Groundwater Management** - ensuring the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 includes DAC drinking water interests and advocating to protect groundwater through sustainable local land-use policies

4) **Sustainable Agriculture** - advocating for agency actions at the local, regional, and state level to ensure farmers are using best management practices to reduce groundwater pollution by nitrates and pesticides

5) **Strong Legal Limit for 123 TCP** - fighting for the state of California to adopt the most health-protective legal limit for 123 Trichloropropane, a highly carcinogenic pesticide byproduct found disproportionately in groundwater in the Central Valley.
2016-17 Opportunities
Vista Fellow will have a chance to develop programs and resource to support CWC’s leadership development and capacity building work for local leaders. Vista Fellow will be placed in our Visalia office and have opportunities to travel around the Central Valley, as well as to Sacramento for meetings and other events.

Although not required, the ability to speak Spanish will ease the ability to communicate with many community partners and is highly recommended.

Overview of Proposed Responsibilities

● Work closely with diverse staff, community partners, and various organizational stakeholders to develop program and materials to support local leadership development and capacity building for low-income communities in the San Joaquin Valley to ensure access to safe, clean and affordable drinking water.

● Participate in staff meetings and program activities, including both local community organizing and statewide policy work to get overview and in-depth understanding of all program and organizational capacity areas.

● Develop materials for internal and external audiences, as appropriate, to support program and organizational activities.

Incentives:

● CWC will help the VISTA attend relevant conferences as requested
● Reimbursement on work related travel
● Housing stipend