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Executive Summary

Executive Summary:

United Way of Porter County is a nonprofit 501(c)3 corporation, serving Northwest Indiana for 55 years. Our mission is to improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of the community. We are proposing to recruit and place 300 RSVP volunteers in Lake, LaPorte and Starke Counties in Northwest Indiana. We are requesting \$105,000. We will address the following service categories: Education, Health and Nutrition, Veterans and Military Families, and Human Needs. The community needs addressed will be Pre-school-readiness; support to improve academic engagement; services to support veterans and their families and to engage veterans in community service; congregate meals to help older adults and individuals with disabilities live independently and have access to food resources; and increase access to preventive and primary healthcare for economically and medically underserved individuals. We will use standardized measures to assess school readiness, attendance and engagement in after-school activities, and number of veterans accessing healthcare and community services. We anticipate that 540 pre-school students will show improvements in social and emotional development and readiness for school; 360 veterans and their families will have received services; 2400 older adults and persons with disabilities will receive nutritious meals on a daily basis'. 5000 students will receive tutoring and mentoring; and 400 clients will receive assistance in learning independent daily living skills.

Strengthening Communities

Strengthening Communities and Getting Things Done:

RSVP volunteers will strengthen communities in Northwest Indiana by providing service activities in areas of demonstrated community need in the following focus areas: Education, Healthy Futures, Veterans and Military Families, and Economic Opportunity. The geographic area served covers Lake, LaPorte and Starke Counties in NW Indiana. The combined total populations of those counties is 610,432. One in every eight Hoosier lives in NW Indiana. We are a racially and culturally diverse region with 27% minority populations, 10.9% Hispanic or Latino, and 12 % speak English as a second language.

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Unemployment has been among the highest in the state, between 8-9%. Currently 109,883 residents are without healthcare. Graduation rates ranges from 35.3% in the urban core to 95% in the affluent suburbs. 39% of the children in grades 3rd to 10th did not pass the state ISTEP tests, failing to achieve mastery in math and basic language skills. The Census reports that 79,356 (13%) are below poverty level. Infant mortality rates are higher than the state average. The Center for Workforce Innovations and the Dept. of Labor Statistics show that in the 3-county area, the following figures represent the percentage of adults functioning below Literacy Level 2 (adults can perform tasks such as comparing, contrasting, or integrating pieces of information but not higher level reading and problem-solving skills, such as interpreting data on a table or chart--skills necessary to obtain a GED):

Lake County.....52%

LaPorte County.....46%

Starke County.....53%

253,461 residents are 45-64 years of age, 80,736 are 65+, and 7,385 are 85+. LaPorte County has the second largest senior population in the state of Indiana. Clearly, there is a large population of potential volunteers in our region. Our goal will be to recruit 300 volunteers who will share their skills and learn new ones as they strengthen their communities by providing:

- * tutoring and mentoring of students, thus increasing math and reading mastery;

- *delivering meals to the home-bound elderly and persons with disabilities, enabling them to live independently;

- *Providing housing-assistance to economically disadvantaged individuals and families, especially the homeless. Two of the counties have new 10-Year Plans to End Homelessness. There are many opportunities to volunteer as these plans are implemented:

- *Supporting veterans and their families at the Adam Benjamin Jr.VA Medical Center. We have the 8th Engineering National Guard unit in our region that is on its 3rd tour of duty in Afghanistan and recently lost four service personnel in a road-side bombing;

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*We are currently forming a COAD(Community Organizations Active in Disaster) in NWI, following the devastating floods that affected 18,000 families in 2008 and the tornadoes that hit Indiana this spring. During the floods, we mobilized over 3000 spontaneous volunteers to help in the clean-up and rehabilitation of homes. Through the COAD, we are partnering with other groups in the region to prepare for future disasters. Volunteers will be engaged in disaster preparedness, response and recovery and training.

All of these activities will have measurable outcomes and we will use the national outcome measures in these areas.

We have an Advisory group formed that is composed of representatives of nonprofit organizations and businesses from all 3 counties. They will be involved in the planning and implementation and monitoring of the RSVP program. United Way has strong community partnerships, that include nonprofit providers, faith-based groups, healthcare providers, educational institutions, media outlets, business and corporate leaders, governmental entities, and voluntary organizations. We have a history of mobilizing resources to meet critical needs--including volunteers, materials, and financial resources.

United Way plays a leadership role in many community coalitions, including the Homeless Coalition, the Veterans Services Coalition, the local COAD, Financial Stability Coalition, Race Relations Coalition, Success By 6 Initiative and the Service Learning Consortium with six area universities. Partner organizations are selected on the basis of services and programs provided, past performance, fiscal responsibility, and capacity to provide meaningful volunteer opportunities with supervisory support in our target areas. Roles and responsibilities are defined in a memorandum of understanding.

We will enhance the capacity of community organizations and institutions through various trainings, including Volunteer Management training, consisting of 5 modules: Planning, Recruitment, Retention,

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Supervision, and Orientation. We will add a sixth module: Integrating senior service into volunteer activities.

We will work with our partners to identify and create additional service activities for RSVP volunteers.

We will utilize local media, websites throughout all three counties, public presentations, and quarterly newsletters, reaching 6000+ residents in Northwest Indiana.

Recruitment and Development

Volunteer Recruitment and Development:

United Way will recruit RSVP volunteers from throughout the region through a variety of means:

Newspaper articles about the service opportunities and articles featuring RSVP volunteers in action;

radio and television public service announcements, web site recruitment through our website:

www.nwivolunteer.org. We will have a separate page on the website for RSVP and highlight volunteer opportunities specifically for senior volunteers. We will have an icon for RSVP on the United Way website and encourage all our stations to add that icon and link to their websites.

Potential RSVP volunteers will meet with the RSVP Coordinator to discuss their interests and passions and then be placed at stations that will utilize their skills. RSVP volunteers will have orientation training before station placement and then further training at their station. Stations will also have an orientation training, so that supervisors will understand the requirements of the program and the MOU's that they sign. We will provide Volunteer Management Training for station supervisors and project personnel, as well as interested potential stations. We will place 300 volunteers in challenging assignments where they will see tangible results, build new skills, develop leadership skills, and enhance the quality of life for themselves and the service participants. We will have a special outreach to Veterans and military families through our Veterans' Services Coalition, which includes service providers and military and veterans groups. We provide monthly civic reflections discussions with our AmeriCorps members. We will invite our RSVP volunteers to join in this rich discussion about the intrinsic value of community service. They will interact and share experiences with other national

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service members.

Because we are a diverse region, we will recruit people of diverse backgrounds and ethnicities to meet the needs of the various populations. Finally, we will recognize and celebrate our volunteers, to let them know how they have benefited our communities and nation and how much we appreciate their efforts. We will host volunteer recognition events and activities throughout the program year while keeping current and potential RSVP volunteers informed through a quarterly newsletter.

Program Management

Program Management:

United Way of Porter County (UWPC) has a 45-member Board of Directors, responsible for setting policy and providing fiscal and programmatic oversight of the organization. The RSVP program will be monitored by the Volunteer Development Advisory Committee, which is composed of community and business leaders from all the counties in NW Indiana.

We already have meaningful and productive relationships with many nonprofits and faith-based organizations in Lake, LaPorte and Starke Counties through our United Way Regional Volunteer Center. We have agency agreements in place to insure quality volunteer placements at those organizations. Through the RSVP program, we will be able to expand volunteer services that address community needs identified in section B..."Strengthening Communities." We have a proven record of managing multiple volunteer sites.

The RSVP Coordinator will conduct a on-site assessment of any potential RSVP station to insure that:

- *their services are within our focus areas
- *station supervisors completely understand their roles and responsibilities regarding volunteer supervision and reporting requirements

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- *develop a volunteer position description

- *provide relevant orientation and training

The RSVP Coordinator will visit each station at least twice a year to assess project performance, accomplishments and impact on the clients they serve.

The RSVP Coordinator responsibilities will include monthly reports that track volunteer hours, number of clients served, and performance outcomes.

United Way fiscal personnel will monitor expenses, both financial and in-kind, prepare financial reports as required for both CNCS and the United Way Board and RSVP Advisory Council to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of all resources.

United Way has capacity to secure additional resources to sustain and expand the program in the current and subsequent years. RSVP has the full support of the United Way Board of Directors, who value the impact that national service programs, such as our current AmeriCorps program, have on our community.

Organizational Capability

Organizational Capacity:

United Way of Porter County(UWPC) was incorporated in 1957. The first campaign raised \$70,000 for community services. In 2011, we raised \$1.8 million which supports education, financial stability, and healthcare services to over 70,000 people in Porter County. In our 55 years, we have raised and distributed \$70,768,883 for health and human services. We currently fund 37 nonprofit organizations. A 45 member volunteer Board of Directors sets policy and provides oversight. United Way of Porter County has a long and successful history of community service, fiscal responsibility, and community leadership. United Way funds and monitors a complex service system that reaches into all parts of the community. United Way conducts and prioritizes community needs assessments, develops the necessary resources to fund the services and community safety net, provides fiscal oversight and accountability, and evaluates program results.

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United Way was one of two United Ways in the state to receive a Lilly Endowment-funded competitive grant to conduct a community assessment using appreciative inquiry techniques. UWPC is the administrator for the FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter program. UWPC, with our two sister United Ways in Lake and LaPorte Counties, received a \$750,000 grant for a planning and community building project. Thirty-four partners joined in this initiative and a comprehensive regional epidemiological study was conducted looking at ten behavioral health issues. The collaborative partners decided to focus on childhood obesity and this project won a TrailBlazer Award from the Governor. We are presently involved in a second regional initiative, focusing on early childhood development, called Success By 6. UWPC is the fiscal agent for this Lilly-funded initiative. The work of United Way as a community-building leader has prepared it to manage the RSVP program. The administrative, fiscal and programmatic expertise is established and proven.

Multi-Site Program: UWPC is uniquely qualified to run a multi-site program. We have a proven record of volunteer recruitment and support. We operate the United Way Regional Volunteer Center(UWRVC), which serves Lake, Porter, LaPorte and Starke Counties....the service area of the RSVP grant. The Regional Volunteer Center Director began as an AmeriCorps member, so she understands the value of national service. We recruit volunteers throughout Northwest Indiana, using the web-based Volunteer Solutions software. The RSVP program will have high visibility on our website: www.nwivolunteer.org as well as the other counties' United Way websites. Currently, there are over 200 volunteer opportunities listed on the website, representing 111 agencies. 9,561 volunteers have been referred to agencies. In addition, we sponsor the annual Day of Caring in the region in August. Last year, we had 2200 volunteers participate. Tremendous impact was made through the efforts of corporate volunteers on the Community Day of Caring, and student volunteers from Purdue & Valparaiso Universities and high school youth on the Youth Day of Caring. The Regional Volunteer Center is also involved in Disaster Response. In 2008, we opened three Volunteer Reception Centers in

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the region during the devastating floods that affected 18,000 families. Over 3,000 volunteers were recruited and trained during the immediate aftermath of the flooding. Now we are part of the Disaster Preparedness and Recovery consortium for District 1, a 5-county area. UWPC is the fiscal agent for the state grant to establish a COAD for NW Indiana.

UWPC is the recipient of the Hoosier Corps/Hardest Hit Fund, funded by a U.S. Treasury Department Grant through the Indiana Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority. We are placing individuals, in danger of losing their homes to foreclosure, in volunteer activities in a 7-county area. (including the counties in the RSVP grant). Our priority areas for volunteer placement are the national priority areas of Economic Opportunity, Disaster Services, Education, Family Support Services, Healthy Futures, and Veterans and Military Families. We are requesting a three-year RSVP grant.

UWPC is also the recipient of an AmeriCorps grant for NW Indiana. We were awarded a competitive federal grant and are now in our 5th year of grant funding. We started with 10 members; and this past year, we have 46 members serving in schools and nonprofits in a 5 county area. Our members range in age from 19-72. We have Encore AmeriCorps(ages 55+) members serving as Career Advisors in area high schools. We have tutors/mentors in elementary and middle schools. We are part of the national outcome performance measures for education and economic opportunity. We have met or exceeded our outcome goals. We have met all the requirements for the program match also. We also sponsored 7 National AmeriCorps teams (NCCC), who came to NW Indiana to help rebuild and rehabilitate the flooded homes. We are committed to volunteerism and to national service.

Key staff involved in the RSVP program will be the President, who will be responsible for the overall administration of the program. The President has 35 years experience in nonprofit management. Reporting to the President will be the Director of the Regional Volunteer Center, who will supervise the

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fulltime RSVP Coordinator. This Director was an AmeriCorps member in 2002, so she has unique insight into the role of national service. She also supervised our RSVP program last year, when we were interim sponsors. Our Finance Director will monitor the fiscal reporting of this grant. We will hire a fulltime RSVP Coordinator, who will be responsible for the daily activities of the program including: station recruitment and selection; supervisor training; volunteer recruitment, orientation, training, and recognition; and program outcome and performance measures reporting. We will also work closely with our program officers at the Indiana state office of the Corporation for National and Community Service, as well as other program sites throughout the state.

United Way has the experience and the capacity to successfully manage this RSVP project. We have a strategic business plan that is updated annually, reports are presented to the Board twice a year, and every three years we do an internal self-assessment on the Standards of Excellence from United Way Worldwide. We are committed to continuous improvement and have consistently met all the requirements for membership with United Way Worldwide.

Other

Sponsorship Experience:

United Way of Porter County was asked to be the interim sponsor of the RSVP program in Lake, LaPorte and Starke Counties last year, when Catholic Charities relinquished the program. Our contract was for a six-month period from 3/1/11 to 8/31/11. While we were not allowed to expand the program during that time period, we were able to establish excellent relationships with the remaining volunteers and stations. We had 13 stations, 63 RSVP volunteers, who served 10,208 people. We believe that the RSVP program helps us deliver our mission of "mobilizing the caring power of the community."

At the end of the six-month period, we asked for a no-cost contract extension until 12/31/11, so that we could continue to provide services at no additional cost to CNCS. We had hoped that we could continue the program until the federal budget was determined and that there would be no disruption in the

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program. We are delighted that funds have been allocated so that the RSVP program can again be offered in Lake, LaPorte and Starke Counties. We believe that we have the expertise and the experience to administer a national service program successfully. Our goal is to engage 300 volunteers in RSVP service activities. We are also committed to the national outcome measures and will implement them this first year.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

none