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Executive Summary

An estimated 280 volunteers will serve through the Big Country RSVP program, with 104 serving in the Primary Focus Area, Healthy Futures. They will serve in two objectives under the Healthy Future Focus Area -- Aging in Place and Obesity and Food. They will: deliver food to the homebound and/or older adults and individuals with disabilities; provide telephone reassurance/companionship to homebound and/or older adults and individuals with disabilities; and serve in food banks and at food pantries. This service will be provided through 10 placement sites: Meals on Wheels Plus, Jones and Callahan County Home Delivered Meals, Food Bank of West Central Texas, Area Agency on Aging Telephone Reassurance, Abilene Baptist Social Ministries, Mesa Springs, and Clyde, Hawley and Jones Centers. At the end of the three-year grant period 200 homebound or older adults and individuals with disabilities will receive food, transportation or other services that allow them to live independently and 120 individuals will receive support, services, education and/or referrals to end long-term hunger. The CNCS federal investment of \$40,752 will be supplemented by \$45,573 of non-federal resources.

Strengthening Communities

The Big Country RSVP (BCRSVP) is located in Abilene, Texas in Taylor County. The BCRSVP serves Taylor, Jones and Callahan Counties. All three counties are in West Central Texas which is very rural with the exception of Taylor County (population 131,506) where the city of Abilene (population 117,063) is located. Jones County has a total population of 20,202 and Callahan County has 13,544 for a total population of 165,252. There are six small rural towns in the counties served with populations as noted: Merkel (2,614) - Taylor County; Hawley (630), Anson (2422), Stamford (3113) - Jones County; and Baird (1493), Clyde (3704) -- Callahan County. With the exception of Hawley the personal income falls 6% to 37% below the state average for Abilene and the other small towns. 2013 census projections for race and ethnicity of this area are 67% Anglo, 8% Black, 22% Hispanic and 2.7% other.

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The economy of the Big Country is fueled by ranching, diversified farming, oil and gas revenues, a military base and renewable energy (wind farms). In the late 20th Century, the economy was all about oil, agriculture, and military. While these continue to be very important to the economy of the area, the 1989 oil bust occurred and Abilene countered this occurrence by being the first city in Texas to adopt a half-cent sales tax to fund economic development. Since then, Abilene diversified its economic base by continuing to be a progressive, business-friendly city. Through economic development the Abilene economy has steadily improved as they have had to depend less on oil and natural gas and more on manufacturing, retail sales, health, high tech and service industries. Dyess Air Force Base has a definite impact on the economy of Abilene and the counties surrounding it. According to an article in the Abilene Reporter Newspaper on February 18, 2012, "Dyess Air Force Base annually has an estimated \$430 million economic impact on Abilene, according to a 2011 report from the Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University, with 5,519 government employees and a payroll of \$247 million. In addition, the base spends \$40.9 million each year for procurement and contracts, according to the report. Military Affairs Committee chair James Webster said that the base is a "huge economic driver" in Abilene. "It's the largest employer in the community if you count all the active duty and civil servants out there," he said. According to the latest data, from fiscal year 2010, only 1,163 out of 4,760 Dyess personnel lived on base. That put 3,597 living off-base. A large number of military retirees from various branches, most from the Air Force, live in the region - 3,510, according to the center's report. That amounts to a total of 15,511 military, dependents, civilian and retired personnel."

According to census data 18% of the population in Taylor, Jones and Callahan counties is sixty and older and numbers 29,188 persons. Of this number 10.6 % or 3,105 individuals are 85+. Seniors 60+ living below the poverty levels ranges from 9.2% in the rural areas to 16.6% in Taylor County.

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The Primary Focus Area for BCRSVP is the Healthy Futures Focus Area. Volunteer service activities include home delivered meals, service through food pantries and food banks and companionship/telephone reassurance.

(Healthy Futures - Home Delivered Meals) There is a need for Home Delivered Meals in the Big Country RSVP service area supported by data from numerous sources. The results of a Needs Assessment conducted by Area Agency on Aging of West Central Texas, which covers the Big Country RSVP service area, identified the top priority for those 60+ as the increasing need for Home Delivered Meals. The 2012 City of Abilene One-Year Action Plan for Housing and Community Development, under the goal for enhancing the quality of life for elderly citizens, had as a main objective to "Maintain and increase services to encourage independent living." Also according to the Meals on Association of Texas -- "In 2008, 8.9% of all Texas Seniors were food-insecure and at risk of hunger while the national average was only 5.7%. Only Mississippi, South Carolina, and Arkansas ranked below Texas." During the past fiscal year for September 1, 2011 to August 31, 2012 the Home Delivered Meals programs in Taylor, Jones and Callahan Counties served a combined total of 1,760 home bound older adults and persons with disabilities delivering a total of 282,415 meals. The Meals on Wheels Plus Program, which serves Abilene and surrounding rural areas of Taylor County, track service to veterans/veterans families. This past year they delivered meals to 129 veterans & 50 spouses/widows of veterans. Veteran related data is not currently being tracked in the rural areas but BCRSVP will work with the stations to identify the number of veterans being served through the Home Delivered Meals Programs in Jones and Callahan Counties.

As the older adult population continues to grow, so will the need for services to support independent living, including home delivered meals. According to the Home Delivered Meals Program staff the

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increase in the client population is only one of the challenges affecting the program. Both RSVP volunteers and community volunteers are an integral part of the Home Delivered Meals programs as they are the main avenue for delivering the meals. With the cost of gas and the downturn in the economy some volunteers can no longer afford to volunteer. Food costs are also on the rise adding another layer to the strain on the meals programs. According to Meals on Wheels of America, "As the cost of gas skyrockets, all Americans are paying top dollar to drive their vehicles, but it is the homebound seniors who rely on Meals On Wheels for their next meal that are struggling the most. Meals On Wheels programs and their volunteers are desperately working to continue to deliver meals despite the impact of the current gas crisis on their costs and operation." Recent findings show that the situation will only get worse if gas prices continue to rise. There is definitely a need for the volunteer services of BCRSVP volunteers to deliver meals to the homebound clients. Using their own vehicles and gas RSVP volunteers will deliver meals to the homebound clients, with a breakfast and week-end meal for those most in need. BCRSVP Volunteers will also provide a daily check on the well-being of the meal recipients, helping to obtain timely assistance in the case of a medical emergency. Many times, the volunteer is the only human contact the client has on a daily basis.

(Healthy Futures - Companionship) One of the more important social trends over the last several decades has been the demographic change that reflects the "graying of America." It has been estimated that one-quarter of those aged 65 and older live in areas defined as rural and that 20% of Americans over age 65 are homebound. In the three counties served by the Big Country RSVP there are 3,105 persons aged 65+. Many of these identified older adults' greatest social needs are social support/social ties. This is provided in a number of ways including visitations, companionship and telephone reassurance. The Output is H8 - Number of homebound or older adults and individuals with disabilities receiving food, transportation, or other services that allow them to live independently

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and the Outcome is H9 - Number of homebound or older adults and individuals with disabilities who reported having increased social ties/perceived social support.

(HEALTHY FUTURES - Food Pantries/Food Bank) According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates, Abilene has experienced a rise in the number of people living below the poverty level in the last decade.

18 percent of Abilene's population currently lives below poverty level, according to the 2005-2009 American Community Survey. According to the 2010 census that number has again increased to 20.8%. In 2000, that figure was 15.4 percent. The current estimates show Abilene's poverty rate is higher than the state rate of 16.8 percent. Estimates released today also reveal more families are coping with less cash. Census information from 2005-2009 show 13.5 percent of families living below the poverty level. In 2000, 11 percent of families lived in poverty. Callahan and Jones counties both mirror these statistics with poverty levels of 12% and 13.1% respectively.

Local need for community food banks - Jean Butler, coordinator for a church-run food pantry in Abilene, has seen a lot of people coming in for help lately. The food pantry is operated through the Methodist churches and Butler said there has been a tremendous increase in the number of people who need help. The rising numbers, and rising food costs, are making it increasingly difficult to serve those most in need.

RSVP volunteers will help stock pantry shelves, screen applicants as per agency requirements, and dispense food product to the clients. The output for this community need will be H11 - the number of individuals receiving support, services, education and/or referrals to alleviate long-term hunger.

Productivity, high performance, positive attitudes and good morale for volunteers result from an effective volunteer management system which the Big Country RSVP program has in place. To

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manage the RSVP volunteers and their stations as a highly effective means of addressing the needs BCRSVP has identified in the Primary Focus Area, a RSVP Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will be negotiated, signed and discussed with all agencies prior to placement of RSVP Volunteers. This document establishes working relationships and program requirements. It outlines the specific responsibilities and requirements for both the station and BCRSVP respectively and highlights mutual responsibilities. The MoU identifies the primary station staff person responsible for day-to-day supervision of RSVP volunteers, provisions for safety of the volunteers, assurances that the station will not discriminate against RSVP volunteers and will provide reasonable accommodation(s) for persons with disabilities. BCRSVP will work with the identified primary station staff person to discuss incorporating the abilities, experience, and needs of senior volunteers in their programs and operations. BCRSVP volunteers serving through these Healthy Future assignments will receive a background check by the agencies if required, receive orientation and training prior to serving followed by appropriate in-service training, a volunteer position description, supervision as required, continual communication, regular review and feedback, and recognition in various forms to show appreciation for their volunteer service.

The RSVP staff will work with station coordinators to ensure the volunteer assignments are appropriate and that the service activity will result in the outputs and outcomes in the Primary Focus Area - Healthy Futures. We will work together to determine the types of data needed to measure progress in achieving its accomplishments and impact goals. The RSVP staff will make sure that the resources required for the performance of the assignment are provided through follow-up with the volunteers and through site visits either by BCRSVP Staff or Advisory Council Members. The MoU may be amended at any time by mutual agreement. BCRSVP requires volunteer stations to notify them as soon as any circumstances arise which could affect or require changing the provisions of the MoU. RSVP staff will also share with the station coordinators the value that RSVP volunteers provide

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to their respective agencies: adding a compassionate, human touch to service in their organization; expanding the organization's reach into new communities; serving as highly credible messengers for the organization and increasing their capacity to serve and address community needs in addition to recruiting other community volunteers; and helping achieve outputs and outcomes related to the identified community need within the organization which they are serving to support the Healthy Futures Primary Focus Area.

Recruitment and Development

The high quality volunteer experience will begin with the volunteer station to ensure that a current Memorandum of Understanding is in place and that the agency personnel who will be working with the RSVP volunteers know their responsibilities and the importance of supporting the RSVP volunteer in service. Volunteer management and infrastructure begins in the RSVP office making sure that RSVP staff have the knowledge, training and tools to properly manage volunteers. The current RSVP director has managed the Big Country RSVP program for one year, however has been with the Concho Valley RSVP for 26+ years, 24+ years of that time as director. She now serves full time for both programs which is explained further under Organizational Capacity. She has provided training for her Program Assistant, as well as attending volunteer management training, RSVP area and state training and CNCS Virtual training. The experience for every RSVP volunteer begins with RSVP staff and/or Station Coordinators (RSVP's liaison with the agency) orienting them on the RSVP program and then completing the RSVP intake/application form which request them to list their skills, times available, and previous experience. Once this has been completed the RSVP staff discuss what volunteer positions are available that match the volunteers skills, times and education and then give them position descriptions for these opportunities. If a RSVP volunteer is new to Abilene and feels more comfortable having an RSVP staff member accompany them to a volunteer station for their first assignment then arrangements are made to either meet them or take them to the station, at which

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time they are introduced to staff, receive orientation at the facility and are provided with station training requirements and any paperwork or policies required for their volunteer service there. In rural counties RSVP staff work with station representatives to recruit and manage RSVP volunteers. This is followed by continual monitoring and communication, regular review and feedback and recognition of their service. Continual communication may take the form of direct contact, telephone calls, emails, or the RSVP newsletter. Monitoring includes follow-up with the volunteer to ensure their assignment meets their needs, abilities and skills and to make sure their service is rewarding. According to results from a survey that went out to all RSVP volunteers, and the personal positive feedback received by staff, the RSVP bi-monthly newsletter is the benefit they value the most. The newsletter is yet another way RSVP staff support the volunteers with recognition, new opportunities, activities of interest, station news and much more.

The RSVP staff contacts station coordinators bi-monthly for new volunteer opportunities which are then transmitted to volunteers via the RSVP newsletter, email and Volunteer Match. This offers existing volunteers the chance to use their skills in new areas, meet more volunteers with whom to share experiences and satisfy unmet needs they might have. RSVP staff and/or RSVP advisory council promptly and effectively respond to any RSVP volunteer emergencies and complaints. In addition to the training mentioned above, station personnel provide relevant training as required by the volunteer position at the agency where they are placed. As mentioned previously the MoU, which must be negotiated and signed prior to volunteer placement, serves as a guide to ensure a successful working relationship between RSVP and the stations. This MoU directs the specific responsibilities and requirements for both the station and RSVP and also mutual responsibilities shared by both. One of the station requirements is to implement orientation, in-service instruction or special training of RSVP volunteers as required by the agency. Strategies to engage a diverse group will begin by taking an informed, planned and strategic approach. Some of these strategies will come from the RSVP advisory

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council, a diverse group of decision makers who help shape opinion and direction within the Big Country RSVP program. BCRSVP has a 13-member diverse advisory council, representing businesses, media, government, education, churches, nonprofit agencies/RSVP stations, senior retirement and assisted living facilities, urban/rural representatives, and existing RSVP Volunteers, to help with recruiting diverse volunteers. Plans are to add additional members to the council to increase this diversity further. We continue to look for input, support and recruitment from the organizations and individuals who are already partners and are influential within the targeted diverse groups. The BCRSVP has a strong volunteer management system and procedures in place, allowing and working with anyone who expresses interest in volunteering to be placed into an assignment. We build upon the diversity that already exists related to a variety of ages (55 to 100+), education and economic levels, races, ethnicities and degrees of English proficiency to ensure an accurate reflection on the local communities. We use different avenues for diversity recruitment including all forms of media (print media, TV and radio) with whom we have built strong working relationships. There is on-going face-to-face type recruitment including onsite presentations, display booths and events sponsored by other organizations. Existing RSVP volunteers serve as our best recruitment tool and we will continue to look to them help recruit from a diverse population. We also look to recruit a diverse population from military organization retirees such as VFW, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Dyess AFB Retirees Activities Office and others. The BCRSVP is currently building on the volunteer opportunities being included on the Volunteer Match (online volunteer recruitment website with local opportunities and information) to build diverse recruitment efforts. We also use the RSVP newsletter, articles in church bulletins and retirement center newsletters, networking with community groups and letters to editor. There will also be an on-going strategic development of quality print materials about volunteer opportunities available through BCRSVP to support recruitment efforts. The marketing used will

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include the information about the value of the RSVP program to recruit new volunteers, while keeping current volunteers through the delivery of quality experiences. The marketing plan will be a simple one page document that specifically describes who we are, what we do, and who can benefit from our services (volunteers, agencies and the community at large).

Each year the BCRSVP staff, advisory council and the sponsoring agency host an Annual Awards and Recognition Lunch to honor all RSVP volunteers who have served during the past year. Each year the event has a theme, which encourages additional participation from the volunteers. All RSVP volunteers receive a Certificate of Appreciation for their service. President's Volunteer Service Awards are given to volunteers who have achieved a certain standard in their volunteer service with the Lifetime Award being 4000+ hours of service. Outstanding volunteers are recognized with a Plaque. Local dignitaries and elected officials willingly participate in recognizing the impact that RSVP volunteers have in the Big Country and the importance of the program to the communities. The mayor presents a proclamation both at a City Council Meeting prior to the event and again during the ceremony honoring the service of RSVP volunteers. The RSVP staff write, edit, print and assemble a Recognition program which lists all RSVP volunteers by name, lists those receiving Presidents' Service Awards and much more. This event is covered by the media and is supported through in-kind donations from many sources, including the BCRSVP Advisory Council.

RSVP volunteer achievements are also included and recognized in the RSVP newsletters and they receive expressions of thanks extended verbally and in writing. The RSVP staff, assisted by members of the RSVP Advisory Council, will nominate RSVP volunteers for other awards. These will include, but not limited to the Jefferson Award, Texas Governor's Volunteer Awards, and CNCS Spirit of Service Awards. In addition many of the agencies where RSVP Volunteers serve host their own awards, where both RSVP volunteers and the RSVP staff are included.

Developing and cultivating the leadership capacity of RSVP volunteers is one of the best ways to

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ensure a high quality volunteer experience, volunteer-driven program expansion, and sustainable services to the community. The flexibility of the RSVP program model allows local RSVP projects to develop assignments and strengthen the project and build volunteer station capacity, while strengthening the volunteers' leadership skills. For some volunteers, the best reward is public recognition; for others, it is more responsibility or the opportunity for training; and for others, the satisfaction of seeing their work pay off in their community. All of this will be taken into consideration when recognizing the volunteers.

Last, but certainly not least is evaluation. Evaluation is essential to maintaining a high quality volunteer program and to retain existing volunteers. Evaluation can provide BCRSVP with ways of measuring how the program is progressing, both on an individual level (the volunteer) and on the programmatic level. Evaluation helps determine what is and is not working in the program, improves the overall program by providing evidence of effectiveness and identification of weaknesses as well as strengths, and evaluation data can be used to strengthen the quality of the BCRSVP program and improve outcomes.

Evaluations have covered many topics/areas over the past years and included the RSVP volunteers, workstations, and the advisory council. Other evaluations included project management, resource development/diversity of funding, training programs, and impact of services.

The Corporation for National Service Texas State Program Specialist conducted a Compliance Monitoring Review of the Big Country RSVP program less than six months ago, on April 19-20, 2012. During the Compliance Monitoring she met with numerous RSVP volunteers and agency personnel. Her follow-up report stated, "From meeting with the RSVP volunteers, there is no question they are satisfied with their assignments and enjoy working in their volunteer stations, and the volunteer station supervisors depend and appreciate the RSVP volunteers who assist in their programs. There is also numerous support from the community at large." This statement supports the programs strong

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infrastructure supporting high quality volunteer experiences by the CNCS State Program Specialist.

Program Management

All BCRSVP volunteer stations must fit the requirement as defined in the RSVP Program Regulations: a public agency, secular or faith-based private non-profit agency or proprietary health care organization that accepts responsibility for assignment and supervision of RSVP volunteers. The RSVP director has recently rewritten the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which is negotiated with staff at stations which meet program requirements to ensure that prohibited volunteer activities (proselytizing, displacing paid workers and political engagement) are addressed along with, handicapped accessibility and volunteer safety. In addition RSVP staff maintain contact with station personnel through email, telephone calls and on-site visits to support what is outlined in the MoU and to observe RSVP volunteers in-action during their assignments. Not only are the station personnel aware of program requirements, but RSVP volunteers are as well. This occurs during orientation and training and all RSVP volunteers receive a program handbook that outlines very specific responsibilities. The handbook includes the local and national history and mission of the RSVP program, qualifications required to serve as a RSVP Volunteer, types of service opportunities, benefits, prohibited activities, grievance policy, listing of all agencies that have a signed MoU with RSVP and a copy of the Volunteer Insurance Service. Confidentiality is discussed with the volunteer and included as a condition of placement on the RSVP volunteer application.

The plan and infrastructure to address needs outside the Primary Focus Area will mirror those for the Primary Focus areas already discussed in Strengthening Communities. The goal is to develop volunteer workstations and assignments for the other Focus Areas and Community Need Area. Just as in the Primary Focus Area, the community need will be documented. RSVP volunteers will receive a background check by the agencies if required. They will also receive orientation and training prior to serving, a volunteer position description, supervision as required, continual communication, regular

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review and feedback, and recognition in various forms to show appreciation for their volunteer service. RSVP Staff will engage in dialogue with station personnel to discuss the priorities outlined in the MoU, making sure that RSVP volunteers are supported in their position and that the station staff will maintain documentation as needed to support outputs or help conduct surveys to document outcomes.

Four Priority Focus Areas outside of the Primary Area to be served by RSVP volunteers are O1- Number of economically disadvantaged individuals receiving financial literacy services through the AARP tax assistance program; O5-Number of economically disadvantaged individuals, including homeless individuals, receiving housing services through the Abilene Weatherization program providing various home weatherization services to low income elderly and disabled individuals; G3-3.16 Dollar value of cash resources leveraged by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants by garnering donations through a myriad of services for thirteen non-profit organizations; and G3-3.2 Number of community volunteers managed by CNCS-supported organizations or National Service Participants through United Way 211 - First Call for Help.

The BCRSVP recently began the process of focusing recruitment in areas where we have current work plans with Performance Measurements...so we have already been working to minimize disruption to volunteers. We also have been using attrition to maximize placement in Performance Areas. Prior to the beginning of the 2013-2016 grant period BCRSVP will host informational meetings to explain to all agencies and to RSVP volunteers the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) move to Priority Areas/Capacity Building, and why the focus of the program is changing. If any of these agencies have a current MoU, and no RSVP volunteers presently serving there, we will only renegotiate a new MoU if they have volunteer opportunities in the Focus Areas or Capacity Building. To prevent disruption, or to keep it to a minimum for the remaining RSVP Volunteers serving in

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Community Priorities, we will provide them opportunities to serve in Priority Focus Areas at other agencies or allow them to serve in the Community Need area if they are meeting a documented community need with outcomes. If after all the above has been considered and there still is the need to reduce the ratio of RSVP volunteers serving in the Community Needs area there will be a written method/policy for "graduating" volunteers. BCRSVP will consider the impact being made by the volunteers in terms of scope of service, in terms of type of service and in the number of hours served. RSVP volunteers who are currently on the RSVP roster but not serving on a regular basis or intensively in short-term assignments, such as at special events or projects, will be contacted about other placements. As volunteers are "graduated" and as appropriate, RSVP volunteers will be referred to other agencies.

Additionally graduation of volunteers and stations will be a major agenda item with members of the RSVP advisory council over the next six months. Their feedback will determine how the RSVP program moves forward as the changes are made and implemented to focus on key outcomes as required by the Serve America Act and CNCS. We will make every effort to move existing volunteers into a Focus Area, recruit new volunteers to serve in Focus Areas and thus try and keep the remainder of the RSVP volunteers in the Community Needs Category. While every effort will be made to keep disruption to a minimum a major change such as this may cause some negative response. In addition to minimizing the disruptions to volunteers and stations it will be very important to present the new RSVP model to the community in a proactive, positive manner. Additionally it may be difficult to explain to funders, elected officials and other community leaders why we are "graduating" volunteers, when there is such a community need for all volunteers willing to serve. Not a popular task, but a necessary one.

The RSVP staff includes data measurement as a requirement of the volunteer station in the negotiated MoU - "Supply statistical data as requested to assess volunteer impact on community needs." RSVP

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staff have been working with the Volunteer Stations since inception of Performance Measurement in the 1990's to begin tracking and reporting data needed to support project work plan outputs and outcomes. As this grant application is being prepared, the RSVP director is contacting agencies that have RSVP volunteers serving in Priority Areas, other Focus Areas and Capacity Building to determine targets, as well as how documentation to support outcome and outputs can be managed. The RSVP record management systems, already in place (Volunteer Reporter and Excel spread sheets) will have to be revised to track data as required for the new work plans. (Volunteer Reporter - program developers for Volunteer Reporter will have to come up with new software upgrades with the capability of tracking unduplicated volunteers across multiple Focus Areas and outputs/outcomes). Staff will meet with station coordinators, many of whom they are already working with on Performance Measures, to determine tools to use to track outputs and in some cases outcomes for the new National Performance Measures and Capacity Building outputs. If the BCRSVP is competitively successful it is the intention of the RSVP director to develop a concise document to send out to all agencies which will provide an overview of the new RSVP model and Priority Areas and then schedule one-on-one meetings to explain how their agency fits in the new system or to discuss how we can change/develop new volunteer positions which align with the measures. There will also be a letter with information sent to all RSVP volunteers and numerous information sessions held at the RSVP office inviting volunteer participation to explain the direction of the RSVP program with information available about all the opportunities available in the Priority Focus Areas.

The sponsor, West Texas Rehab Center (WTRC) was founded in 1953 and has been sponsoring RSVP programs since 1973 under the agency called ACTION, continuing into the 1990's when Senior Corps Programs were placed under the Corporation for National and Community Service. The present Big Country RSVP director, Dolores Schwertner, has been with RSVP since 1986, serving as director of the Concho Valley RSVP since 1988 and began serving as the director of the Big Country RSVP in October

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of 2011. (This dual role is explained under Organizational Capacity)

As director of the Concho Valley RSVP since June of 1988 Dolores Schwertner has received extensive training in nonprofit management, volunteer management, leadership, financial and programmatic management, performance tracking and outcome based evaluations and grant writing. She completed the National Service Leadership Institute in 2003 and the Strategic Management Program for Nonprofit Leaders held by the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service at the University of Texas at Austin in 2009. She has written, received and managed Federal, State and Local grants at all times during the past 24 years, including writing and receiving 6 Programs of National Significance (PNS) grants for the Concho Valley RSVP program through the Corporation for National Service and meeting all outcomes associated with these awards. One of the most recent PNS awards, to engage RSVP volunteers in Kids Eat FREE a summer feeding program for food-insecure children, was also chosen to receive a \$10,000 replication award by the Aging Network's Volunteer Collaborative. She also wrote and was selected as one of 17 RSVP programs from across the U.S to receive augmentation funding for a program with RSVP volunteers serving to support military families. This extensive training, grant writing experience and knowledge of National Service has already served her well in her role serving both programs as director and will be an asset for the future.

Working in tandem with WTRC the RSVP director keeps reports on all income and expenditures both cash and in-kind. In-kind donations are all documented and signed by both the donor and the RSVP director with this statement above the donor signature, "I certify that this in-kind contribution is not from another federal source." Separate accounts are maintained on all streams of funding and never co-mingled. The RSVP director codes monthly expenses to the correct category and account and then the WTRC accounting department issues all payments and also tracks all income and expenditures

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through their financial systems, which is audited annually. Cuff reports are then sent back to the RSVP director who verifies them against the records she has maintained. The RSVP director maintains an expense compared to budget spread sheet to track expenditures through the grant year and to manage resources month to month. Through financial policies, checks and balances and monthly reconciling of all accounts WTRC and BCRSVP manage financial and in-kind dollars efficiently and effectively.

Organizational Capability

As employees of the sponsoring agency, RSVP staff must follow all West Texas Rehab policies which are reviewed, revised and updated. Policies include but are not limited to: Accounting and Financial Management (accounts payable, purchasing/pcard, travel, donations, cell phones, and more); Administrative; HR; Departmental; and Emergency and Office Management. All policies are posted on the West Texas Rehab intranet and are easily accessible at all times. The RSVP director has the use of a purchasing card for supplies, travel, printing, recognition items and other programmatic needs. Long distance travel requires prior approval from the COO. Each month all purchases must be coded to the proper account and category with a description of purchases, have an attached receipt and be approved by the Chief Operating Officer before going to accounting. The RSVP director codes all expenses to the correct categories and accounts for payroll expenses and purchases. The Sponsors Accounting Department staff then pays all bills, reconciles all statements and then submits a cuff report to the RSVP director to reconcile to the data she maintains. Any discrepancies are discussed and reconciled. This allows for thorough management of all funding and informs the RSVP director on expenditures to budget each month. Through the use of the software program, Volunteer Reporter, RSVP staff track volunteer information, hours of service, service areas, performance data, volunteer station data, media, advisory council, mailing databases and more

The West Texas Rehab has not only been the sponsor of the Big Country RSVP (Abilene) since 1973,

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but has been the sponsor of the Concho Valley RSVP (San Angelo) since 1981. In Sept. 2011 the RSVP director in Abilene resigned. The Abilene program was already operating on a small stretched budget which had been magnified by the 20% across the board cut to all RSVP programs earlier that year. The Chief Operating Officer for WTRC, Steve Martin, serves both locations and when the Abilene RSVP director resigned he asked the Concho Valley RSVP director of 24 years (Dolores Schwertner) if she would serve as RSVP director for both the Concho Valley and Big Country RSVP. Knowing that the federal regulations for RSVP requires a project director to serve full-time, except as negotiated otherwise with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) the CNCS State Program Specialist was contacted about the possibility of Dolores Schwertner serving as project director for the two RSVP programs with the West Texas Rehab as sponsor. The situation of these two programs is very unique in that both RSVP programs share the same sponsor, same COO, same accounting and IT department, as well as being connected by networked phone and computer systems. Approval was received from CNCS, and Dolores Schwertner began serving as the project director for both the Big Country and Concho Valley RSVP in October of 2011. Serving as the RSVP director of two projects has not adversely affected the size, scope or quality of project operations. This was verified for the Big Country RSVP through a Compliance Monitoring Review on April 19-20, 2012 by the Texas State Program Specialist. In her report she stated, "The Big Country RSVP program was found to be in compliance with Senior Corps legal, regulatory and policy requirements. The Advisory Council is capable of assisting the sponsor to gather feedback and support program areas such as recruitment, recognition, and programming for impact, fundraising, public relations and setting long-term goals for the project. It is a great advantage for the Big Country RSVP to be seen in the local community as a capacity builder resources." Based on Federal funds available and discussion with CNCS staff she serves San Angelo at 65% time and Abilene 35%. This division of time and duties has worked exceptionally well as both programs are supported identically by the same HR and IT staff,

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accounting staff, COO, and CFO. As stated before, all computers and phone systems are networked so staff and files for both programs are easily accessible at all times. Having networked communication systems also allows for on-going communication and support between the RSVP director and the Program Assistants for both locations and allows for peer-to-peer support between the two Program Assistants. The Big Country RSVP program has a Program Assistant (Max Ann Bowlin) who has been with the program for two years and is well trained and knowledgeable on program operations. She has great volunteer management skills having served as the Volunteer Coordinator for the State Hospital in Big Spring Texas for seven years, prior to coming on staff at RSVP. She also served in a fundraising capacity with the State Hospital. She does a great job of managing day-to-day operations when the RSVP director is not in the office. The Big Country RSVP director and program assistant positions will be sustained through grant funds as budgeted in this grant application. Roles and job requirements are identified in written position descriptions and staff are evaluated against these job requirements annually. The RSVP director is building new collaborations, is learning about the community and meeting community leaders and is forging critical alliances to meet community needs. She is also retaining staffing at levels sufficient for the organizations to meet its goals and performance objectives within the confines of the budget and is encouraging decision making and internal collaboration among staff. Through Timeclock Manager all staff are required to log in daily and their time is approved by their respective supervisors every two weeks before going to payroll. The Timeclock Manager also allows the RSVP director to allocate her work time to either Concho Valley or Big Country RSVP at any time during a given day.

Many of the workplans with output and outcomes in the current RSVP grant are in the primary focus area or other focus areas and have been revised over time to better demonstrate community impact. This includes Meals on Wheels Plus, a Primary Focus Area workplan, which is the current work plan BCRSVP is required to meet Performance Measure targets for. As we move into the new National

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Performance Measures BCRSVP is positioned well with the current workplans and moving the existing Performance Measures into Priority or other Focus Areas. In addition to managing senior volunteers for 24+ years, the RSVP director has served as the Chairman of the local Area Agency on Aging Regional Advisory Council, the City of San Angelo Senior Services Board and represented both seniors and National Service as Vice Chair of both the Texas Commission for National and Community Service and then the Texas OneStar National Service Board. The BCRSVP Program Assistant serves on the Regional Advisory Council for the Area Agency on Aging in the Big Country and also on the Abilene Weatherization Board that manages both RSVP volunteers and community volunteers who provide weatherization for low-income elderly and the disabled.

The BCRSVP Program Assistant has a whole new computer system purchased this year and the computer used by the RSVP director is about three years old, but has been upgraded and works well. A new printer was purchased this year and is networked for both staff member to use. Technology is up-to-date with IT support from WTRC. The staff has access to in-kind support from the sponsor for office space, postage machine, break room, utilities and telephone system.

The Chief Operating Officer supervises the BCRSVP program and the RSVP director. The RSVP director meets regularly with the supervisor to discuss the budget, programmatic successes and challenges, and program management. This communication time has been enhanced as the RSVP Director and the COO carpool together to Abilene from San Angelo twice a week. Policies and personnel management is addressed in previous paragraphs.

The BCRSVP 13 member RSVP Advisory Council program input has already been substantiated in reference to diversity recruiting, recognition and veterans. The RSVP director provides a written report to council members at each bi-monthly meeting held in the West Texas Rehab Board Room. Each meeting has an agenda to guide the direction and meeting discussions. The Advisory Council is kept up-to-date and provides guidance and input on: funding strategies/fundraising,

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accomplishments and impacts being made by RSVP volunteers, administrative and program needs, assessment of community needs, recognition, and publicity.

The Compliance Monitoring Review follow-up letter (April 2012) by the State CNCS Program Officer stated, "Community Participation Mechanism: There are 13 members on the Advisory Council. I had the pleasure of meeting and interviewing 3 of them. I was very impressed with the commitment of the Council and the knowledge of the social needs of the community and older adults. There is a diverse composition that reflects the demographics of the service area. The Council is capable of assisting the sponsor to gather feedback and support program areas such as recruitment, recognition, and programming for impact, fundraising, public relations and setting long-term goals for the project." She also stated in the letter in regards to organizational and staff capacity, "Specifically, we reviewed your organization's (BCRSVP) compliance with Senior Corps legal, regulatory, and policy requirements applicable to:

- * Program Requirements/Compliance;
- * Performance Measurement and Legal Verification;
- * Fiscal Requirements/Compliance;
- * Sponsor/Staff Responsibilities; and
- * Volunteer/Community Support.

The Big Country RSVP program was found to be in compliance with Senior Corps legal, regulatory, and policy requirements.

Sponsor: Project Director Dolores Schwertner is 35 percent at the Abilene site. Timesheets show the allocation of the time spent at Abilene/San Angelo. There is one full time Volunteer Coordinator, Max Ann Bowlin. The RSVP Project Director and Volunteer Coordinator have the experience and qualifications to manage the day to day operations of the project. I was very impressed with the

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preparation for the site visit by providing an agenda for the volunteer station visits, meeting with the members of the Advisory Council and needed policies/fiscal documents."

The required federal share is matched by office space/IT/Accounting/telephone/postage/utilities and other in-kind support from the sponsor, in-kind donations for recognition, other grants as appropriate, fund raising through Bilbrey Tours, and State funds allocated by the Texas Legislature through the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services. The RSVP director currently has a proposal out to a number of interested entities to underwrite the cost of the RSVP newsletter - both printing and postage.

Other

N/A

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A