



## **Narratives**

### **Executive Summary**

Bucks County Area Agency on Aging (BCAAA) is the sponsoring organization for Bucks County RSVP. The agency's mission is to develop and implement comprehensive services to help persons age 60+ maintain independence in their homes. Priority consumers are those with the greatest needs and fewest resources. The 2013 RSVP grant request of \$74,942 will support 575 RSVP volunteers, currently working with 120 stations which are either non-profit or health care proprietary, throughout Bucks County. Stations include meal distribution sites, schools, hospice, cultural sites, and a variety of sites serving Bucks County residents ranging from children to older adults. The anticipated outcomes are to increase the health, safety, welfare, and educational needs of Bucks County residents. The primary focus area for Bucks County will be Healthy Futures. The service categories include: food security, benefits assistance, community gardens, health & mental health crisis intervention, mentoring, tutoring, community restoration, disaster preparation, adult education and literacy and nonprofit infrastructure development. RSVP volunteers will assist seniors by providing home delivered meals, providing health education, fraud information and insurance counseling. The CNCS federal investment of \$74,942 will be supplemented by \$212,003 in matching funds from the Bucks County Area Agency on Aging.

### **Strengthening Communities**

Bucks County is the fourth largest county by population in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, has a population of 621,241 (2010), and encompasses approximately 625 square miles. Located in the southeastern part of Pennsylvania, Bucks County includes three distinct regions; the southern end of the county, which borders Philadelphia, is mainly an urban, middle, and working class area while the central part of the county is suburban and more affluent. The northern part of the county is primarily rural, although it is experiencing rapid development of commuter communities serving Philadelphia, New York, and Allentown. Pennsylvania ranks 5th in the nation for residents 62 and older, according

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to the Pennsylvania State Data Center's report, *As Pennsylvania's Older Baby Boomers Turn 65*, and this number is expected to grow. In Bucks County, approximately 85,000 residents are over age 65, accounting for 14% of the total population.

Recent studies by Feeding America (2012) show that as many 1 in 8 Americans don't have access to enough food. Hunger affects people from all races; city and rural areas; and all ages. Hunger Free PA reports that hunger among older adults in Pennsylvania is growing. Per the US Census (2010) 17.71% of seniors are food insecure per Ziliak, J. P. & Gunderson, C. (2011) and 149,175 seniors live in poverty in Pennsylvania. The number of seniors in Bucks who are food insecure is approximately 16,107. Additionally, the Bucks County Opportunity Council reports that distribution of food through the County's 24 food pantries has increased by 29% since 2010 for seniors over age 60. This alarming increase is illustrated by the fact that, in 2010, seniors represented 12% of the total food pantry recipients; prior to 2010, seniors represented only 8% of total food pantry recipients.

Hunger among this population is especially troublesome because many seniors have unique nutritional needs due to medical conditions. A proper diet is essential to maintaining health and the ability to live independently. The Meals on Wheels Association of America reports that seniors who suffer from food insecurity are also more likely to have higher Activities of Daily Living (ADL) limitations, thus making it more difficult to prepare meals independently. Additionally, research has found food insecure seniors who participate in food assistance programs such as Home Delivered Meals have decreased signs of depression, improved dietary patterns and are less likely to be food insecure (Frongillo EA, Wolfe WS. Impact of participation in Home-Delivered Meals on nutrient intake, dietary patterns, and food insecurity of older persons), (York state. *J Nutr Elder*. 2010 Jul;29(3):293-310. PubMed PMID: 20711924).

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It is imperative that low income seniors have essential access to nutritious meals. For this reason, the Primary Focus Area of Healthy Futures has been selected by the Bucks County RSVP program (BCRSVP). BCRSVP volunteers provide food security and support through human contact through the Home Delivered Meals program, distributed from 14 sites throughout Bucks County. BCRSVP's focus is to ensure that homebound seniors in Bucks County low-income households have access to resources for food security and basic nutritional needs. BCRSVP volunteers meet this need by picking up hot or frozen meals at designated sites and delivering them to seniors throughout Bucks County. The population served is in need of meals based on low income status, lack of social supports and/or an inability to cook for themselves due to disability. Of the 133,000 home delivered meals in Bucks County in 2011, 30% (44,000) were delivered by BCRSVP volunteers. It is estimated that 1,500 seniors will receive home delivered meal services through this RSVP program during the 2013-2015 grant period to be provided by 100 volunteers at 14 stations.

BCRSVP recruits volunteers for the Home Delivered Meals by soliciting interest through community advertisements and referrals. Interested volunteers complete an application, are interviewed by the BCRSVP Coordinator, and are subsequently referred to the meal provision sites for training. Meal provision stations track volunteer activities and report volunteer hours, mileage, and meals served on a monthly basis to the BCRSVP Administrative Assistant. This information is entered into the Volunteer Reporter database for tracking of National Performance Measures.

Additional areas of focus under Healthy Futures include Project MEDS and APPRISE. Project MEDS (Medication Education Designed for Seniors) is an awareness project designed to train senior volunteers to give presentations on the abuse/misuse of alcohol and other drugs to senior groups. The

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Project MEDS for seniors is designed to help seniors get the information they need to take their medication appropriately. APPRISE assists seniors in accessing insurance information. Proactive information addressing both of these topics in Bucks County supports seniors in making informed decisions related to their health insurance and medication use that in turn supports their independence.

Project MEDS, in collaboration between the Bucks County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and the Bucks County Drug and Alcohol Commission, utilizes BCRSVP volunteers to provide presentations and disseminate information at community events to educate older Bucks County residents on becoming improved health care consumers. BCRSVP volunteers are trained to provide information to seniors and their caregivers about proper use and misuse of alcohol, prescription, and over-the-counter medications at presentations throughout the county. Consumers with questions are advised to ask their doctor or pharmacist to review their medicines, both prescription and over-the counter, to identify medicines that may cause side effects or interactions such as dizziness or drowsiness. Like the Home Delivered Meal program, Project MEDS directly provides services to assist seniors in maintaining independence and giving them the ability to continue residing in their homes. Nine volunteers currently serve in the Project MEDS program.

The APPRISE Program utilizes BCRSVP volunteers to provide insurance counseling and assists consumers in applying for benefit services such as Medicare, Social Security and LIS ( low income subsidy). APPRISE volunteers are based out of the AAA office and are available for office visits, in-home visits and telephone consultation. There are currently 16 BCRSVP APPRISE volunteers who counsel an average of 2,000 consumers per calendar year at 6 counseling sites located throughout the County. The CMS (Center for Medicare) provided APPRISE with a target number of 76 consumers

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to enroll into "extra help" benefits for 2011. APPRISE exceeded their target for "extra help" by serving an additional 280 consumers for a total of 356 consumers. These consumers were assisted with applying for benefit programs, such as LIS (low income subsidy) or "extra help" via Social Security, and MSP (Medicare Part B premium paid) via the Department of Public Welfare. The target number for "extra help" in 2012 is 91 and APPRISE already has completed work with 328 consumers through the end of June.

The BCRSVP also promotes efforts within the community to serve the needs of veterans and active-duty military and their families. According to US Census (2010), there are 44,252 veterans residing in Bucks County. The 2010 American Community Survey notes that 3,800 of them have a service-connected disability. The Bucks County Board of Commissioners extends services and benefits to veterans and their dependents through the support of the Bucks County Office of Veterans Affairs, which has three points of access throughout the county.

BCRSVP created the Veterans in Need program (VIN) in August, 2012 to utilize volunteers to provide education and assistance to veterans in accessing state and federal benefits. BCRSVP will track the number of veteran contacts and services obtained through the VIN program. As development of the group continues, more formalized tools to track data will be implemented with input from those currently serving the Bucks County veteran population. VIN will also support veterans' functions and special events by working with the sponsoring groups to determine what specific needs are to be addressed and mobilizing volunteers to assist. Additionally, VIN volunteer leaders and BCRSVP will coordinate with other veteran service organization, including Operation Stand Down, Bucks County Veterans Affairs, and the Bristol Senior Center to further determine the specific unmet needs of veterans in Bucks County and identify ways to address them. The VIN team will develop a resource

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base to provide information and support to veterans to be measured by number of contacts made and event volunteer support hours provided.

Stations including schools, nature centers, cultural sites, clubs, foundations, and senior centers will support community needs and focus areas outside of the CNCS healthy futures category. The anticipated outcomes are to increase the health, safety, welfare, and educational needs of Bucks County residents.

### **Recruitment and Development**

BCRSVP has multiple avenues by which to recruit new volunteers. These include public service announcements regarding volunteer opportunities and specific station needs as well as published stories highlighting volunteers and their contributions to the community. The BCRSVP program also benefits from the services of the Bucks County Public Information Department's strong connections and access to local media outlets. Information about the BCRSVP program is included in the quarterly AAA newsletter, which is distributed to approximately seven thousand people. In order to expand volunteer outreach via the internet, the BCRSVP posts volunteer opportunities on the following websites: United Way, Volunteer Match, Coming of Age, PA Senior Corp Association, Serve.gov, and Doylestown Alive. The Volunteer Coordinator also regularly speaks with community groups about the mission and benefits of RSVP in the community.

Interested potential volunteers access the BCRSVP through the above-mentioned methods and are scheduled for an in-person interview with the Volunteer Coordinator. Potential volunteers review the Volunteer Opportunities Book, available in electronic or hard-copy formats, and complete a Volunteer Application containing information specific to RSVP and CNCS requirements. The personal interview and application are used to ensure high quality volunteer assignments with opportunities that allow

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them to share their experiences, abilities and skills to improve their communities and themselves. Once a volunteer assignment is finalized, the Volunteer Coordinator notifies the station(s) to set up an orientation and receive training. Each station has different orientation/training requirements depending on the National Focus Area or other Community Identified Need associated with the activity. This information is recorded by BCRSVP staff in the Station Information Section of the Volunteer Reporter database. Upon completion of the application and volunteer placement, the Volunteer Coordinator enters the volunteer's information in the Volunteer Reporter database, sends BCRSVP timesheets to the station with new volunteer's name, and provides all information to the BCRSVP Administrative Assistant to create the volunteer's office file.

The BCRSVP staff and Advisory Council work with stations in the development of volunteer training and measurement tools. Additionally, the Volunteer Coordinator monitors and identifies stations that will be graduated to ensure the program continues to meet changing community needs while minimizing the disruption to volunteers. The RSVP Director is currently in the process of sharing updated performance measure information with each station via one-on-one meetings and follow-up email correspondence. This will ensure that each station is aware of the goals of RSVP, accurately measures and reports performance measures outputs and outcomes, and has access to the resources and tools to accurately track the station's accomplishments. The roles and responsibilities of each station and the BCRSVP are outlined in an executed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and are updated every three years or upon notification of a material change in the station's activities.

The BCRSVP embraces meeting the diverse cultural and ethnic needs of our community through the recruitment of volunteers reflective of the demographics throughout Bucks County. Statistics from the 2010 census indicate that 90.4% of the county population is Caucasian, 3.9% are African

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American, 4.1% are Asian, 4.4% are Latino and .3% are Native American. Specifically, amongst those 60 and over, approximately 5% are a part of a minority population. There has been significant continued growth of the populations that have immigrated from Russia and the Ukraine. This population has growing needs related to aging and limited proficiency in English among the older generation. To address the changing cultural landscape, the Bucks County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) created a Diversity Committee. This Committee is charged with enhancing outreach and building partnerships with ethnic and cultural communities to identify and address issues related to aging. BCRSVP utilizes this data in the ongoing development of its program design and volunteer recruitment efforts. This includes the development of BCRSVP promotional materials and applications in other languages and making these available online. BCRSVP currently has a volunteer who is fluent in Spanish, has access to Russian speaking AAA staff to assist with translation needs, and has access to language line. Language line is a service that provides: Interpretation (3-way communication between you, your customer or client) and translation of documents, websites and training materials.

The BCRSVP will also focus recruitment efforts to Veterans through collaboration with the Bucks County Veteran's Affairs Department and through the Veterans In Need (VIN) station. As previously mentioned, VIN is a volunteer-lead station that focuses on providing resources to veterans and supports recruitment of veterans as volunteers. In order to accommodate all potential volunteers, the BCRSVP offices and stations are ADA accessible, allowing access to those with disabilities.

The BCRSVP staff and Advisory Council regularly research trainings and speakers for presentations to benefit volunteers and stations. Trainings topics are determined based on volunteer and station feedback on surveys and from station visits. Presentations are offered at varied locations throughout

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the county to increase accessibility.

An annual recognition luncheon is held to recognize volunteer accomplishments every May.

Additionally, the commendable work of BCRSVP volunteers is recognized throughout the year in various ways: Outstanding volunteers are nominated for recognition to foundations such as Met Life and AARP; BCRSVP volunteer accomplishments are reported to local media outlets; and volunteer accomplishments are highlighted in the Area Agency on Aging quarterly newsletter. Each April, the Volunteer Coordinator sends out a personalized Thank You note to volunteers for National Volunteer Week.

In an effort to ensure the recognition efforts of the volunteers are successful, the Advisory Council and BCRSVP conducted a survey regarding recognition to a large sample of volunteers in June of 2012. The response from volunteers supported a move away from the large annual luncheon in favor of smaller, more intimate luncheons to recognize specific stations and exceptional volunteers at those locations. Volunteers also expressed interest in full-page newspaper ads to recognize volunteer contributions in the community. The AC is also exploring working with a local agency (The Moravian Tile Works) to develop a volunteer recognition tile as a potential additional type of recognition. In order to help fund recognition activities, the AC works to solicit funding from local/private sources and are exploring ways to increase public awareness and support for the program. One strongly held belief is the need to spend greater time cultivating the relationship with BCRSVP financial supporters. This includes keeping sponsors up to date with program accomplishments in an effort to ensure ongoing support and program sustainability.

### Program Management

BCRSVP works closely with each volunteer station to provide oversight and ensure compliance with

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RSVP program parameters. The BCRSVP pairs volunteers with each station in an effort to enhance the station organization's mission and to ensure a rewarding experience for the volunteer. Stations are selected based on established National Focus Areas and other identified community needs. Upon entry into the program, each station signs a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreeing to the partnership and outlining the roles and responsibilities of the station and the BCRSVP. The MOU includes specific CNCS and RSVP program regulations, applicable laws, and data collection/reporting requirements. Prohibited activities are also outlined in the MOU. Additionally, the BCRSVP handbook is available online with a link provided to all stations. Stations are also sent emails and letters notifying them of any changes in policy and program requirements.

In order to strengthen communication with the stations, the Advisory Council (AC) is focusing on individual and group station trainings to provide them with opportunities to meet one another and gain valuable knowledge. The AC also conducts surveys of the stations to determine the training topics most desired by the stations. BCRSVP staff is also in the process of working with the AC to schedule visits to each station over the course of the upcoming year to discuss performance measures, reporting of data, and to clarify the needs of the BCRSVP and the individual stations. These visits will be instrumental to ensuring program compliance and achievement of stated performance measure outcomes.

The BCRSVP works with eighty stations to provide volunteer services in identified community needs outside of the Primary Focus Area including education, environmental and disaster relief, and veteran's services. These stations sign an MOU prior to participating in the program. Volunteer service is documented via monthly timesheets provided to BCRSVP by each station. Outcomes are evaluated to determine effectiveness of the program in meeting the community needs including the

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collection of hours served by volunteers in these areas. One example of educational programming includes the Lunch Bunch Program. This program features volunteers who work with first through fifth grade students identified by school personnel to need additional adult support in their lives. These students may come from single parent homes, they may be identified as being at risk for not achieving their highest potential or they may need the additional support that family has not been able to provide.

Another community needs program that the BCRSVP partners with is the Gaming Addiction Prevention Program (GAPP) that will closely follow the Project MEDS format. BCRSVP GAPP volunteers will be trained to provide presentations and information to combat compulsive gambling among older adults throughout Bucks County. Although seniors might frequent casinos, they do not utilize available State addiction hotlines. The Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania reports that in 2011, only 20% of the 2,589 callers to the hotline were over age 55.

The BCRSVP and AC will utilize information from station visits and data reported to determine stations that will be graduated due to the station not aligning with newly established RSVP grant focus areas. Care will be taken to minimize disruption to volunteers throughout this graduation process. Volunteers associated with any graduated stations, as part of an incumbent grant, will be provided service opportunities through other service stations, or may continue to volunteer at the current location outside of the BCRSVP program if they choose. The majority of station's organizations have existing volunteer programs and BCRSVP staff will work with the organization to facilitate a smooth transition for the volunteers.

The Volunteer Coordinator is working with a list of volunteers (generated from Volunteer Reporter

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database) who are currently in non-RSVP related job assignments, under the specific CNCS requirements. The Volunteer Coordinator will contact each affected volunteer to set up a time to discuss the graduation of their current station or job and reinforce the value of their service. The Volunteer Coordinator will work with the volunteer to determine if they will be reassigned to a new focus area, capacity building activity or if they will be graduated from the program as necessary (as in the case of volunteers choosing to remain at a current, RSVP-graduated station). The BCRSVP staff will also work with stations where volunteers perform capacity building service activities such as recruiting and/or managing community volunteers. This will allow those stations to provide service activities under the Capacity Building national service measure even if the activity of the station does not otherwise support a national service measure.

To manage project resources and ensure accountability, the BCRSVP Director reviews expenses and resources on a monthly basis. Additionally, the RSVP Administrative Assistant collects and enters volunteer hours and mileage in Volunteer Reporter database monthly and reports these amounts to the AAA fiscal department for reimbursement. In-kind donations are tracked via station reports and are forwarded by the RSVP Administrative Assistant to the AAA fiscal staff monthly. Project resources and in-kind contributions are monitored by the AAA Fiscal Department and audited by the Bucks County Controller's office as part of the program's monthly financial review.

### **Organizational Capability**

The Bucks County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) has successfully implemented the BCRSVP program since 1973. The AAA, one of 52 in Pennsylvania, is a public agency designated by the Bucks County Commissioners in 1973 and is responsible for the planning and implementation of a variety of services and programs to assist older persons. The BCRSVP managed 707 volunteers at 120 stations, and provided 116,000 hours of volunteer service in 2011. The BCRSVP program is staffed by two full-time

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and one part time employee (full time, but only 76% dedicated to RSVP): the RSVP Director, RSVP Volunteer Coordinator and an Administrative Assistant. The Director of the AAA provides oversight of all program staff to ensure programmatic and fiscal oversight. AAA houses several of the RSVP programs in the primary focus area including APPRISE and Project MEDS.

The AAA has recently implemented several administrative changes in an attempt to reduce expenses without significantly affecting supports and services to older adults. The AAA's goal is to ensure program funding is utilized for developing and maintaining programs that provide necessary impact to the community, assisting older adults to maintain their independence and stay connected to the community, and assisting those with the greatest need and fewest resources.

The AAA has been the recipient of many federal and state-funded grants since its inception and has robust systems in place to ensure compliance with all programmatic regulations. The AAA and the BCRSVP program adhere to the established policies of the County of Bucks including fiscal, purchasing, and human resources.

BCRSVP financial records are strictly monitored by internal AAA staff and by the County Controller's office. The County of Bucks uses the Lawson financial system for fiscal, purchasing and human resource functions. This system allows BCRSVP expenses to be tracked separately from other AAA funds. As part of the County of Bucks, the AAA is subject to all County Human Resource policies and procedures. Agency personnel are also covered by an agreement with the Pennsylvania Social Services Union and Pennsylvania Civil Service regulations. The AAA is evaluated annually by the Pennsylvania Department of Aging and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

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The Bucks County Commissioners and the AAA are committed to providing continued financial and in-kind support to the BCRSVP program through the use of the Pennsylvania State Aging Block Grant and local funding from the County of Bucks. The County also employs a full-time Grant Program Coordinator who researches potential additional funding sources and provides technical assistance for grant application and administration activities as needed. The AAA provides office space, equipment, supplies and a portion of BCRSVP staff salaries and fringe benefits. The BCRSVP also has access to the Commissioner's Office of Public Information which provides valuable assistance in publicizing the BCRSVP program and acknowledging the accomplishments of the volunteers. The AAA provides a matching share of 74% of the total project costs, which exceeds the 30% federal matching requirement. The non federal share will be sustained through funding from the Pennsylvania State Aging Block Grant, local funding from the County of Bucks, BCRSVP fundraising efforts and in-kind contributions.

Najja Orr is the Director of the Area Agency on Aging and provides personnel and fiscal oversight of the BCRSVP Program. Before assuming his role as Director of the AAA, Mr. Orr served as the AAA Deputy for Administration and Finance, as an Aging Care Management Supervisor, and an Aging Care Manager. Mr. Orr represents the AAA on the Pennsylvania Department of Aging Diversity Advisory Council and is the Chair of the Bucks County Commissioners' Senior Task Force.

Ms. Richelle Marek is the BCRSVP Director. Prior to serving as BCRSVP Director, Ms. Marek was a Long Term Care Supervisor with AAA for four and a half years. Ms. Marek received a Masters in Human Services Administration and Gerontological Services from Saint Joseph's University, and holds a B.A. in Human Services from State University at Buffalo.

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The BCRSVP Director's role includes monitoring compliance of stations and volunteers with CNCS guidelines, building the volunteer base in focus areas, and identifying the successes and challenges of the program. The BCRSVP Director works with the Advisory Committee by providing RSVP information and guiding their activities to support the RSVP Mission. The BCRSVP Director is responsible for completing program reporting, monitoring data collection, providing fiscal oversight of all grant-funded expenses, and adhering to grant administration requirements. The BCRSVP Director also supervises the BCRSVP Volunteer Coordinator and Administrative Assistant and recruits new stations based on identified community needs and the Primary Focus Area. The BCRSVP Director position will be sustained through a combination of local funds from the County of Bucks, the Pennsylvania State Aging Block Grant, and from the RSVP program.

Lorraine Horvath has served as the Volunteer Coordinator for BCRSVP for 12 years. Ms. Horvath has an extensive background in working with seniors as a service coordinator and primary care provider. The Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for primary volunteer contact and recruitment. Ms. Horvath acts as a liaison between stations and volunteers by providing assistance with the preliminary application, interview and placement process. The Volunteer Coordinator also provides support and guidance to stations relating to volunteer's needs and RSVP data collection requirements in conjunction with the BCRSVP Project Director. The BCRSVP Volunteer Coordinator position will be sustained through a combination of local funds from the County of Bucks, the Pennsylvania State Aging Block Grant, and from the RSVP program.

Maureen Short has served as the BCRSVP Administrative Assistant for four years. The Administrative Assistant collects and enters volunteer hours and mileage in the Volunteer Reporter database on a monthly basis. The Administrative Assistant is responsible for tracking mileage reimbursement and

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in-kind donations. In-kind donations are reported to and tracked by the AAA fiscal staff for use in grant reporting. Ms. Short also manages the database reports, maintains files for new volunteers, insurance and station MOU's. The BCRSVP Administrative Assistant position will be sustained through a combination of local funds from the County of Bucks, the Pennsylvania State Aging Block Grant, and from the RSVP program.

The BCRSVP Advisory Council (AC) has ten members comprised of a diverse group of individuals including community members from business, station representatives and volunteers. New council members are vetted and nominated by the Advisory Council Leadership Committee and are invited to join after the AAA Director and BCRSVP Director review and the AC votes. The AC meets bi-monthly (6 times per year), and subcommittees meet during the alternating months. The Advisory Council annually evaluates the effectiveness of the BCRSVP from the perspective of participating stations and volunteers through the use of surveys. Examples of evaluations the AC conducts include tracking of performance measures and outcome achievement, surveys for recognition feedback, new volunteer feedback and exit surveys of volunteers that have left BCRSVP. Over the past several years BCRSVP has asked for feedback from: all volunteers, those volunteers who have been with BCRSVP for less than one year and all of BCRSVP stations. Survey results are reviewed with BCRSVP staff and AC members and improvements are made as necessary. Additionally, AC members will begin to conduct station visits with set questions in order to gain uniform information. Following station visits, members will report their findings to the AC and BCRSVP Director in order to gain insight into the performance of the station and to solicit feedback regarding BCRSVP's effectiveness and value as a collaborator.

### Other

Not applicable