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Executive Summary

Senior Programs of Santa Barbara, Inc., has been an RSVP sponsor for 35 years. In serving the greater Santa Barbara community, SPSB has a corps of nearly 500 senior volunteers and partnerships with 50 nonprofit organizations, schools and public agencies. SPSB is requesting a three-year grant of \$65,768 per year to address the number one need reported by local seniors: To live independently in their own homes for as long as possible. SPSB will be channeling the bulk of its efforts into CNCS's Healthy Futures Focus Area through meals, transportation and other supportive services for independent living. Most of the other RSVP volunteers will be assisting disaster services, aiding young children, and tackling an array of community priorities. SPSB will be relying on the solid experience and expertise of its partner organizations to address the program's research needs, with the ultimate goal of supporting the independent living hopes of local seniors while enhancing their overall quality of life.

Strengthening Communities

1. Community Served

The Santa Barbara coastal strip is home to 201,000 people, according to Census 2010. There are three population nodes -- Goleta, at the western end, with 30,000 residents; the city of Santa Barbara is the geographic, economic and cultural center, with 88,000 people; and Carpinteria, 20 miles east of Goleta, has 13,000 residents. Interspersed between these nodes reside about 70,000 people in suburban or semi-rural clusters.

Tourism is the largest industry, with hundreds of hotels, restaurants, wineries and attractions catering to more than 6 million visitors a year. Business service is the next largest employment cluster, including finances, consulting, administrative support and maintenance services.

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The largest local employers are UCSB, Cottage Hospital and local governments, making education, health care and government significant economic clusters, followed by construction, high-tech (mainly software), retail commerce, and charitable services (with more than 200 local nonprofit organizations).

Because of high unemployment and high living costs in Santa Barbara, the local poverty rate is a growing problem. The county recently reported that 16% of Santa Barbara County families live in poverty, which is a 35% increase since 2007. Homelessness is also a steadily growing problem, according to City of Santa Barbara reports.

Santa Barbara is preponderantly white (86%). Blacks, American Indians and Pacific Islanders combined make up barely 4% of the local population, and Asians another 4%. The largest ethnic group is Hispanics, about 40% of the residents. The age 65 and older population grew from 13% in 2000 to just over 14% in 2010; and people age 85+ were the fastest growing age cohort locally in both 2000 and 2010.

2. Local input

RSVP of Santa Barbara has an advisory council that provides guidance on the program's contact with local senior needs and concerns. In addition, recent local studies offer valuable insights into the needs of Santa Barbara seniors.

3. Community Partnerships

RSVP of Santa Barbara has been active and involved in the community for 35 years. Over that

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history, formal partnerships (with signed MOUs) have been established with more than 100 nonprofits, schools and public agencies. There are informal relationships with many more.

4. Public awareness

Like most RSVP programs, Santa Barbara RSVP regularly promotes public awareness through a website, newsletters, flyers, brochures, speeches, event exhibits, public service announcements and paid ads. In addition to these standard promotional efforts, Santa Barbara's RSVP program is fortunate to have extensive media impact through its executive director, who writes a newspaper column, edits a senior community newspaper and hosts a radio show. All these are effective for promoting RSVP's visibility in the community.

5. Diversity

RSVP's promotional efforts provide an open invitation and encouragement to all seniors to offer their time and talent to the community through volunteer service. Because of its group size, special effort is made to reach out to Hispanics, who make up 40% of the population. In particular, the RSVP director is Hispanic and speaks Spanish, and he is active in the Latino Elder coalition (LEON) of local nonprofits that serve the Hispanic community in Santa Barbara.

6. Mobilizing resources

RSVP is a well-recognized and valued participant in many community activities, events and meetings. This visible and respected community presence promotes RSVP's involvement with many organizations and facilitates RSVP's solicitation for participation and support.

7. Volunteer Community Participation

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With more than 200 nonprofits in Santa Barbara, there are always a variety of assignments for volunteers. Organizations have ongoing needs as well as special activities. So RSVP not only helps groups with their daily operations, it helps with their special events too. This expands the scope and value of seniors' involvement in the Santa Barbara community.

8. Capacity Building

Many organizations could not carry out their mission without the assistance of RSVP volunteers. Among the many organizations that rely on RSVP's support are, for example, HELP of Carpinteria, which provides rides for the elderly; the Center for Successful Aging, which provides counseling services; and the Brown Bag program, which provides nutritious food.

9. Integration

Santa Barbara's sizable retirement community has available many different fields of service opportunity, giving seniors an array of ways for them to play a vital role in the community. These areas of volunteer service include education, environmental and animal care, health services, arts and culture, feeding the hungry, and transportation -- and these are the service areas in which RSVP has traditionally placed local seniors.

Recruitment and Development

1. High Quality Experience

In all of its recruitment and promotional messages to the community and in its interactions with volunteers, Santa Barbara RSVP emphasizes the positive value of volunteer service, both for the community and the individual.

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Santa Barbara RSVP uses the "heart" as its iconic advertising symbol to convey this message. The idea is that community service should and does come from the heart. Volunteer service should never be perceived as a burden or a chore, but as an expression of the volunteer's unselfish desire to help others in need -- to give, not to receive.

The second facet of RSVP's positive message is that older adults must recognize that they have a great deal to offer the community. Their years of experience, their understanding of life, and their caring hearts are tremendous resources that our community desperately needs to solve its problems. Seniors should be proud of what they have to offer and never feel they are too old to be of value.

This positive message is at the core of everything Santa Barbara RSVP does, and so it is the corner stone of making community service a high quality experience while instilling a sense of pride and accomplishment within RSVP members.

2. Building a corps of volunteers

Santa Barbara RSVP employs a variety of avenues for reaching out to seniors, including print ads, editorial columns, regular radio announcements, displays at community events, speeches, a website and a monthly newsletter featuring volunteer opportunities.

When a prospective volunteer contacts the RSVP office, they are presented with a colorful brochure about RSVP, a description of service opportunities, and a factsheet that explains RSVP's volunteer insurance. Then they are interviewed by the RSVP Director.

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In this interview, the director explains the history and rationale of RSVP, why volunteer service is so worthwhile, and the many needs our community has. He also learns about the individual's interests and preferences and about their capabilities for doing volunteer service. Then he matches the individual to one or more suitable volunteer opportunities in the community, while describing the stations where the individual might volunteer. Finding the right match between the individual and the volunteer station is an essential feature of Santa Barbara RSVP's efforts.

Santa Barbara RSVP also reinforces the positive spirit and sense of belonging of RSVP members by staging two volunteer recognition lunches each year. The luncheons feature good food, music and fun, and also are an occasion for honoring the achievements of outstanding volunteers. These luncheons are a high point in the volunteers' experience, reinforcing their sense of appreciation for RSVP and their sense of pleasure and pride in being volunteers.

3. Training and experience

The training of the volunteers begins with the RSVP director's initial interview. The director provides them with a detailed understanding of RSVP's mission and guidelines, and he also describes the nature and responsibilities of their volunteer assignment.

The actual training of volunteers in their specific duties is, of course, conducted by the volunteer station. Therefore, the RSVP director meets with the directors and volunteer coordinators of these stations to explain the needs of prospective RSVP volunteers and also better understand each station's needs, goals and manner of operation. The meeting is also an opportunity for the RSVP director to ascertain the station's training procedures, safety and suitability for volunteers, accessibility for all

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volunteers, and possible volunteer expenses. This mutual understanding is codified in the memorandum of understanding that the RSVP office has with every volunteer station. The MOU with each agency is reviewed and renewed every three years.

Program Management

1. Developing stations

Since the national economic downturn, virtually all nonprofits and government agencies in Santa Barbara have cut staff and programs, which has increased their reliance on volunteer help. In response, RSVP's director regularly contacts current stations and prospective volunteer stations to discuss their changing needs. With a clearer understanding of their situation, RSVP can align its promotional efforts to what stations actually need.

It is this continual contact and feedback with community organizations and leaders that enables RSVP to find interesting, challenging and worthwhile volunteer opportunities that address immediate local needs.

2. Assessment

Determining the quality of the volunteer experience for RSVP members involves several questions. First is the value of the volunteer assignment for the senior themselves. RSVP has been proactive through its Advisory Council members in assessing this by regularly contacting volunteers to ask their opinion about their station and about RSVP's support. This ongoing assessment has met with unanimous appreciation by volunteers and has resulted in positive outcomes for volunteers.

A second assessment factor is the effectiveness of volunteer service in addressing key community needs. In this regard, RSVP has been guided by the recent United Way's POPI study and a brand new

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Adult & Aging Network (AAN) report. The POPI study emphasized two vital needs of local seniors: (a) "to stay independent and live safely in their homes as long as possible," and (b) "the availability of accessible, affordable and convenient transportation." The AAN study found a variety of senior needs, including: (a) insufficient mental health services; (b) a sharp increase in financial abuse of seniors; (c) high cost of nutritional food; and (d) a lack of public transportation for seniors. These findings of the POPI and AAN studies are a yardstick that this RSVP program will incorporate in its current work plans and will continue to rely on to assess the value of volunteer assignments.

Finally, a third assessment factor is the RSVP program's annual report on project accomplishments. Based on information from the volunteers and stations, RSVP has continually monitored its effectiveness and achievements year after year. According to CNCS guidelines and standards, Santa Barbara's RSVP has consistently achieved its goals.

3. Managing information and data to demonstrate impact.

For more than a decade, RSVP staff have been carefully documenting the impact of volunteers through the software program called Volunteer Reporter. The essential measurement factor has been hours of service, which RSVP gathers on a monthly basis from stations and volunteers. This enables RSVP to generate detailed reports about the scope and amount of community service provided by its volunteers across more than a dozen service categories. RSVP has added to this measure by obtaining reports and other feedback from station managers about the quality and impact of senior volunteers. Now, with the new performance measures instituted by CNCS, Santa Barbara's RSVP is poised to make even more in-depth determinations of the contributions and achievements of its senior

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volunteers.

4. Manage project resources to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources.

RSVP of Santa Barbara has a board of directors that has provided legal and fiscal governance for more than 35 years. This experience has proven RSVP's competence and responsibility in managing project resources.

Furthermore, the RSVP director periodically sits down with station managers to discuss RSVP's services as well as the station's current volunteer needs. The collaborative goal is to satisfy RSVP's requirements while helping stations accomplish their mission. This way, RSVP volunteers are assigned to activities that address station needs, which is more worthwhile and satisfying for both the station and the volunteers.

5. Securing Resources

About two-thirds of the funding for Santa Barbara's RSVP program comes from the CNCS grant. An additional 10% of support is generated through grants from local foundations. The remainder comes from a steady stream of rental income from office space owned by RSVP's sponsoring organization, Senior Programs of Santa Barbara. The space is one floor of an historic building in downtown Santa Barbara, of which SPSB is a one-third owner, along with two other nonprofit organizations. Since the RSVP program only needs two or three rooms for its operations, RSVP has converted its unused office space for lease by another nonprofit. This secure rental income means less dependency on foundations

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for a stream of income.

Organizational Capability

1. Experience

RSVP has operated under the auspices of Senior Programs of Santa Barbara since 1978, and it has always been located in downtown Santa Barbara. Some of the original board members are still serving, and they bring with them a continuity of history and experience of RSVP in Santa Barbara. In 2006 three new people joined the board, and all are baby boomers. In 2012 the RSVP Advisory Council was reconstituted with several new members who have worked with local seniors for many years. Finally, all members of the board and advisory council are long-time residents of Santa Barbara.

2. Key staff

The RSVP Executive Director is Frank Newton. He has a Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from UCLA. He has many years of experience as a nonprofit director, as he led Hispanic-serving nonprofit programs in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. He later was director of the Southwest Society on Aging. He also was a Cluster Director of CNCS Senior Programs under the Clinton administration.

In Santa Barbara, Dr. Newton has spent a dozen years working with local seniors, especially through his work with the media. He provides strong media impact for RSVP's efforts through his several media activities:

- * He writes a senior issues column in Santa Barbara's principal newspaper, which gives him substantial community visibility and credibility.

- * He edits a bi-monthly senior community newspaper, which features many news items promoting volunteer opportunities and the importance of volunteering.

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* He is now co-hosting a weekly senior affairs talk show on AM radio. He uses the show to promote and announce senior volunteer opportunities for RSVP.

3. Financial management systems and federal grant fund experience.

RSVP of Santa Barbara bases its accounting on QuickBooks, used for recording and reporting all financial activities. RSVP maintains separate bank accounts, requiring two signatures, to receive and expend federal funds. Financial review is conducted monthly by the board, while IRS and State reports are handled annually by a CPA firm. The program has extensive experience managing federal funds as it has been operating with federal funding for 35 years.

4. Experience with volunteers, seniors and impact-based programming.

In its 35 years of RSVP management, Santa Barbara's RSVP has recruited and worked with nearly 6,000 engaged volunteers. Over the years, through continual training and guidance, the Santa Barbara RSVP program has become highly skilled at managing senior volunteers and in partnering with the staff of volunteer stations. Furthermore, RSVP Santa Barbara has been implementing CNCS's impact-based program since the 1990s, keeping pace with CNCS's several iterations of volunteer performance measurement for nearly 20 years.

5. Agency's capacity

In 1988 RSVP of Santa Barbara partnered with two other nonprofits, Unity Shoppe and CALM, to buy a building in the heart of downtown Santa Barbara. This collaboration saves them from the whims of a landlord and allows for the sharing of building maintenance. Compared to other local nonprofits, overhead is low. And the building ownership offers a secure facility and work space.

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Each year, the Executive Director and board determine what the program's budget will be. The director must operate within this budget; and at the monthly board meeting, the Treasurer reviews the program's financial activity to ensure funds are managed properly. The board has always been generous and supportive in providing necessary equipment and supplies, making sure the office functions efficiently, safely, and with all the material resources needed to get the work done. And since the board directly oversees RSVP, the process of governance is much simpler, more responsive, and more streamlined than at large, multifaceted agencies where the RSVP project would be just one of many agency programs.

6. Self-assessment.

The board and the Advisory Council regularly work with the Executive Director to assess the quality and effectiveness of the RSVP program. Furthermore, as noted previously, the director regularly consults with volunteers and with station staff to determine whether the volunteers are performing satisfactorily and whether each station's mission is being aided by RSVP. This continual and multifaceted feedback and assessment helps ensure that RSVP is being managed properly and that RSVP's volunteers are indeed impacting Santa Barbara's vital community needs.

Other

Graduated Stations and Volunteers

In accord with the new CNCS framework of Focus Areas and Performance Measures, Santa Barbara RSVP has made a thoughtful assessment of all its volunteer stations. This review by the director, in collaboration with the Advisory Council, ascertained which stations do or do not align the new CNCS framework.

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Of the 45 stations, about one dozen fit the Focus Area paradigm, in particular the Healthy Futures area. They also happen to have the bulk of Santa Barbara RSVP's volunteers. This circumstance alone dramatically mitigates the "graduating" issues because the majority of RSVP members in Santa Barbara will be placed in the Healthy Futures focus area; and therefore they don't need to be graduated at all.

Of the three dozen stations that do not align with the new focus area paradigm, Santa Barbara RSVP was able to make another significant distinction. About two dozen stations are active, vital RSVP partners and about one dozen in recent years have become less engaged with RSVP. These latter have declined in RSVP involvement largely because of (a) the advancing age of the volunteers, with little new recruitment, or (b) staff changes that have led to new volunteer recruitment that aims more at younger rather than older volunteers.

The two dozen stations that are still vital RSVP partners have been assigned in the new work plan to the Community Priorities focus area. As a result, these RSVP stations don't need to be graduated.

The remaining one dozen stations, comprising about 100 volunteers, will need to be graduated. Fortunately, this does not pose a major disruption for Santa Barbara RSVP or the senior volunteers themselves because of the careful assessment already done by the RSVP staff and advisory council. First, nearly 75 of the 100 graduating volunteers belong to just four stations. These stations have established their own volunteer routines over the years, and so the seniors will continue their volunteer activities with or without RSVP. The remaining stations currently have no more than two RSVP volunteers, and their interest in continued RSVP involvement has diminished over the years. Therefore, the impact of RSVP graduation on these stations should be negligible.

Although it is unfortunate that 100 volunteers will be graduated from Santa Barbara RSVP, the reality is that it is the less involved, less interested stations that are being graduated. The upside is that Santa Barbara RSVP is tightening its membership to a more committed corps, resulting, if you will, in

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a leaner, more dynamic and impactful RSVP program. Thus, Santa Barbara anticipates that the graduation will not meaningfully disturb or disrupt its senior volunteers and result in a stronger RSVP program.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

n/a