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Executive Summary

400 RSVP volunteers will serve. 200 or 50% of these volunteers will serve in New Opportunities' RSVP's primary focus area to build a "Healthy Future" for the most vulnerable in our community by delivering Meals on Wheels, providing medical transportation, health education and money management services to frail elders and by distributing emergency food to low-income individuals and families. RSVP volunteers will also provide supportive services to veterans; tutor underachieving students; assist local non-profits to build their capacity to meet community needs; and aid economically disadvantaged individuals with job readiness through literacy and computer training and "dress for success" clothing distribution. RSVP volunteers will also assist individuals and families with limited income by providing free tax preparation assistance. These activities will be accomplished through a network of 31 volunteer stations in the Central Naugatuck Valley and Litchfield Hills/Northwest CT regions such as Meals on Wheels, soup kitchens/emergency food pantries, FISH, schools, Literacy Volunteers, veteran service organizations, Area Agency on Aging, senior centers and other local partners focused on meeting community needs.

At the end of the 3 year grant, the outcome of New Opportunities, Inc. RSVP activities in the Healthy Futures focus area will be measured by surveying recipients of services provided by 163 volunteers (40% of total unduplicated volunteers). It is anticipated that 210 (90%) of 230 homebound or older adults and individuals with disabilities who receive medical transportation, money management services and meal delivery will report having increased social ties/perceived social support. 350 individuals will receive emergency food from food banks, food pantries or soup kitchens. 60 individuals with chronic health conditions will participate in the "Live Well" health education program.

The CNCS federal investment of \$125,322 will be supplemented by \$54,690 in non-federal resources.

Strengthening Communities

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The region served by New Opportunities, Inc. (NOI) RSVP is very large and diverse, consisting of 1 urban core (Waterbury), 3 urban periphery (Torrington, Naugatuck, Winsted), 18 rural towns (Barkhamstead, Beacon Falls, Canaan, Colebrook, Cornwall, Goshen, Kent, Falls Village, Litchfield, Morris, Norfolk, North Canaan, Salisbury, Sharon, Thomaston, Warren and Bethlehem) and 14 suburban towns (Woodbury, Seymour, Ansonia, Wolcott, Watertown, Prospect, Cheshire, Derby, Middlebury, Harwinton, New Hartford, Southbury, Washington).

According to Census 2010, the poverty rate in Waterbury is 22.8%; 13.4% greater than the state rate of 9.4%. More than 14% of our region's elders have insufficient financial resources to adequately provide for their basic needs. According to the CT Voices for Children, more than 33% of Waterbury's children live in poverty, with 79.8% qualifying for Free/Reduced Price School Meals. The poverty rate of 11.3% in Torrington (the urban hub of Northwest CT region) also exceeds the state rate.

Unemployment in both urban centers also exceeds the state rate of 8.9% (Waterbury 13.9%/Torrington 10%).

More than 55,000 persons aged 65 and older live in our service area and represent diverse racial, ethnic and religious groups, income levels and living conditions. However, it has been well- documented by the CT Long-Term Care Needs Assessment that they share a common goal identical to the CNCS Healthy Futures focus area -- to "remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible".

CT's 2011-13 State Plan on Aging states that supports are needed to help at-risk elders with instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) including meal preparation, transportation and managing money. This Plan also found that low-income and minority elders were less likely to receive preventative health services.

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The United Way of Greater Waterbury's 2012 Community Needs Assessment reports that the number of residents in the region age 85+ grew 23.9% during the last 10 years. The United Way says that this trend "suggests the need to offer vital services for maintaining health and self-sufficiency among seniors".

The limited financial resources of a large percentage of our regions' unemployed, underemployed, disabled and elder residents, particularly those living in our urban centers, impedes access to health care, proper nutrition, transportation and other support services that are essential to maintaining independent living.

50% (200) of our pool of 400 volunteers will focus on activities that will positively impact health needs of the most vulnerable in our community. 10 volunteer stations will partner with RSVP to advance our mutual goals for a Healthy Future for our most vulnerable citizens. This will be accomplished through the following volunteer activities: medical transportation, meal delivery and money management assistance.

Transportation to critical medical appointments is very problematic for economically disadvantaged elders who cannot afford to own cars and for frail elders and disabled persons who do not drive. The lack of adequate "on-demand transportation" services needed by these at-risk individuals has been consistently cited in both State of CT and Western CT Area Agency planning documents for more than 10 years. Free transportation provided by RSVP volunteers allows low-income and disabled elders to maintain health and manage chronic and acute medical conditions through access to treatment and preventive care.

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The US Administration on Aging states that "adequate nutrition is essential for healthy aging, the prevention or delay of chronic disease and disease-related disabilities, and for improved quality of life. Yet poor nutrition is a major problem for older adults. Almost 90 percent have a nutrition-related chronic disease or condition such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, or osteoporosis. About 40 percent of community dwelling older adults as well as their caregivers have inadequate food and nutrient intake, which affects their health and ability to function independently". Proper, adequate nutrition delivered by RSVP volunteers through Meals on Wheels is an essential element in maintaining good health and managing chronic health conditions such as heart and kidney disease, hypertension and diabetes. RSVP volunteers who deliver meals also play an important role in establishing a social connection with isolated elders and checking on the status of homebound older adults and alerting our Meals on Wheels partner if additional assistance is needed.

Money management assistance is also a vital service provided by RSVP volunteers. Recipients of this service include frail, homebound older adults; individuals being reintegrated in the community from nursing homes through the Money Follows the Person Medicaid-waiver program; and persons having a disability that hinders capacity to manage personal finances. Independent living is jeopardized if payments for rent and utilities are tardy. Volunteers serving in the AARP Money Management Program operated by RSVP are trained, monitored and insured to assist elders and those with disabilities who are at-risk of excessive bank fees, utility shut-off, eviction or foreclosure. Monthly assistance by RSVP Money Management volunteers helps these vulnerable individuals to maintain financial stability and independent living.

The impact of these activities (medical transportation, meal delivery and money management) will be measured using an Independent Living Performance Measure Survey, adapted from the CNCS SCP

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survey. Data gathered from service recipients by our volunteer stations will be compiled by RSVP staff and reported to CNCS. It is anticipated that 95% of those receiving services will indicate increased social ties and/or perceived social support.

RSVP volunteers will increase access for low-income families to nutritious food by collecting, preparing and serving food at soup kitchens and food pantries. Stations will gather data to determine the level of food security of all household members after receiving emergency food assistance.

Finally RSVP volunteers will provide health education programs to elder and disabled persons through the nationally recognized Live Well Program developed by Stanford University. This model program is designed to empower and support individuals living with chronic illness to better manage their health conditions. RSVP Live Well facilitators are certified to lead 2.5 hour workshops over a 6 week period. Workshop topics include self-management of chronic health conditions, problem solving, fitness/exercise, pain management, communication, making treatment decisions, working with your health care provider/system, fatigue, nutrition, using your mind to manage symptoms, better breathing and future plans for health care. An evaluation of the Live Well Program has determined that participants improve healthful behaviors and health status and reduce hospitalizations. It is expected that this RSVP health coaching activity will positively impact 60 participants.

RSVP volunteers are an invaluable resource for our community. Our volunteers' activities will most certainly result in a "healthier future" for the many recipients of medical transportation, meal delivery, money management, emergency food and health coaching.

Recruitment and Development

As the designated Community Action Agency for the Greater Waterbury and Torrington regions, NOI

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is able to utilize its extensive connections with local grassroots community and faith-based organizations to recruit RSVP volunteers and engage community partners. In addition, volunteers are recruited through our Elder Services Division, which provides a broad range of services for older adults including nutrition services, benefits assistance and programming focused on health, fitness, lifelong learning and recreation.

NOI will continue to actively recruit and enroll volunteers who represent the diversity of our community. Our record of success is reflected in our current pool of volunteers which includes African-Americans, Caucasians, Hispanics and persons with disabilities. Expanded efforts to recruit veterans and military family members as volunteers will be facilitated through our new Veterans Outreach Program. NOI is committed to the development of a volunteer corps that reflects the makeup of our community.

Participation in RSVP affords our volunteers opportunities to directly impact the community in critical ways. Meaningful volunteer opportunities are accessible through RSVP because our community partners value the thorough vetting, training and support of volunteers provided by the program. In response to the changing focus of RSVP, NOI is concentrating on the further development of our relationships with community partners that offer high impact volunteer activities in the area of health promotion and independent living.

Volunteer service in our Healthy Futures initiatives will provide important opportunities for RSVP volunteers to develop their own talents while impacting critical community needs. RSVP volunteers have the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and build new skills through on-site training from station professionals. Money Management and Live Well volunteers are required to complete specific

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curricula for these programs prior to service. All volunteers providing service for frail elders and persons with disabilities will receive pre-service training in client confidentiality, establishing and maintaining boundaries, recognizing elder abuse, handling emergency situations and volunteer ethics. Stations are encouraged to hold regular volunteer meetings to build a sense of team, recognize volunteer achievements and to obtain input from those serving.

In addition to informal recognition from supervisors and professional staff at their volunteer stations, volunteers are formally recognized annually for their contributions to the community. Due to our large geographic area, a minimum of two recognition events will be held. During our recognitions, our volunteer station partners join New Opportunities and our Elder Services Advisory Council in reflecting on the impact of the RSVP volunteers' service.

A primary focus of the RSVP staff is volunteer recruitment, support and retention. An important aspect of volunteer retention is meeting the need of volunteers for personal growth. This is achieved by developing interesting and challenging service opportunities that will keep our volunteers engaged. In addition, volunteers are surveyed by RSVP to obtain feedback on the volunteers' experience and to gather information about the volunteers' goals for personal development through service.

Program staff will also be provided with opportunities to further develop skills and knowledge necessary for successful job performance. The Program Director participates in training provided by CNCS and participates in monthly meetings of the CT Association of CSSC Directors. New Opportunities, Inc. provides supervisory training each quarter and annual staff training. Training focuses on cultural competence, diversity training, customer service, community needs and resources, agency policies and procedures, team building, safety and emergency preparedness.

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Program Management

The focus of New Opportunities' RSVP during 2013-14 will be on recruiting and maintaining a diverse, dedicated and effective volunteer corps engaged with our community partners in Healthy Futures activities and on insuring that the impact of RSVP service is measured timely and accurately. RSVP staff will obtain the commitment of each volunteer station to insure that the RSVP Independent Living Performance Measure Survey is used to collect and measure data for each recipient of RSVP service.

NOI will also focus on our RSVP assignments that impact the CNCS strategic priority areas of Education, Economic Development and Veterans and Military Families.

60 (15%) unduplicated volunteers will be engaged in service in elementary schools, to improve the academic performance of students identified by their teachers as reading below grade level. These volunteers will work one-to-one with underachieving students in grades 1 to 3. Volunteer service activities will positively impact educational outcomes as measured by pre- and post-testing conducted by our partnering teaching professionals.

15 (3.5%) unduplicated volunteers will engage in activities designed to assist economically disadvantaged persons who need supportive services to better position themselves in this difficult job market. RSVP volunteers will tutor individuals in reading and computer skills and English as a second language (ESL). Volunteers will also participate in "dress for success" programs that outfit economically disadvantaged job seekers with professional attire. These activities prepare those who are unemployed or underemployed to better compete for liveable wage jobs. RSVP volunteers will also help economically disadvantaged individuals and families by assisting them with federal and state

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income tax return preparation through the AARP Foundation Tax Aide Program.

25 unduplicated volunteers (6%) will be veterans engaged in service to assist both elder veterans as well as veterans returning from active duty. These RSVP veteran volunteers will work with our VA Hospital, VSO's and VA Workforce Program to reach out to our community's veterans to assist them in accessing benefits and services provided to the military as well as those that are available to the general public. RSVP veteran volunteers will also participate in the VA "Good Neighbor Program", visiting isolated veterans on a regular basis to build social ties and solidarity. RSVP Veteran volunteers will also mentor younger veterans returning from active duty to facilitate training and/or employment.

RSVP staff will review all focus-area volunteer placements twice annually with station supervisors to insure that these RSVP volunteer assignments remain aligned with priority activities.

30 (7.5%) unduplicated volunteers will engage in Capacity Building activities that generate additional resources for economically disadvantaged persons. Partnering agencies include the Red Cross which engages our volunteers in local blood donation drives. Volunteers serve at community thrift shops which return all proceeds to local programs that meet basic community needs. RSVP Mail Team volunteers assist local non-profit organizations with the execution of development projects that produce revenue for local programs to meet community needs.

NOI RSVP has been realigning volunteers and program activities to high impact areas for several years, making it unnecessary to "graduate" stations to comply with new program guidelines. Fewer than 18% (70) of our volunteers will be assigned to "Community Needs" activities involving non-

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impact priorities. These stations and assignments have been retained because they involve important community institutions such as our hospitals and senior centers. These partners provide significant in-kind resources to RSVP as well as access to a pool of volunteers who potentially may become engaged in focus area activities in the future.

More than \$54,000 cash and in-kind contributions will be secured in 2013. Volunteer stations will contribute services valued at \$12,500 for volunteer transportation, meals, parking and recognition. The State of CT provides \$12,016 in funding to the NOI RSVP. Additionally, NOI will contribute \$20,000 in cash support as well as donated services valued at \$10,175 for program management and administrative support. NOI will continue to seek additional non-federal support for this important program.

Organizational Capability

Since 1964, New Opportunities, Inc. (NOI) has been the Community Action Agency for Waterbury and the surrounding communities of the Central Naugatuck Valley and for Torrington, Winchester and the surrounding towns in the Litchfield Hills/Northwest region. NOI has a successful track record of managing federal and state grants including Head Start, Older Americans Act programs and Corporation for National and Community Service programs.

NOI Elder Services Division is devoted to the development and implementation of programs with the purpose of assisting older adults to maintain independent living and providing opportunities for meaningful involvement in their communities through volunteerism. Last year, services were provided to more than 5,000 seniors.

Elder Services programs include: Senior Nutrition Services -- Congregate Meals, Meals on Wheels and

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Senior Dine; Comprehensive Outreach Program for Elders; CHORE Project for Elders; AARP Money Management Program, Voice Care Emergency Response System and BRASS a new partnership with the City of Waterbury and the CT Community Foundation to expand wellness, fitness, social, cultural and educational programs for Waterbury's elders.

In addition, NOI has sponsored the FGP since 1986; RSVP since 1975 and SCP 1986. In 2009, NOI also became the sponsor of RSVP of Northwest CT. CNCS program evaluations of New Opportunities' RSVP, SCP and FGP, have consistently been favorable.

Our Elder Services Advisory Council supports RSVP by providing community input, access to potential community partners and volunteers, assistance with public relations, guidance with new initiatives and annual program evaluation.

Mary-Kate Gill has 33 years experience in elder service program management, with 23 years experience as NOI's Director of Elder Services, and is responsible for the on-going monitoring of RSVP volunteer enrollment, outcome measurement, and the management of program resources. Melissa Zwang has directed RSVP since 1998 and has more than 13 years of additional administrative experience in human services management. Nancy Duetzmann, Associate Director has more than 27 years of experience in RSVP administration. The Program Director is based in the Waterbury RSVP office and the Associate Director works primarily in RSVP's Torrington office, enabling RSVP staff to keep in close contact with volunteers and community partners throughout our large geographic service area. All RSVP staff have clearly defined job descriptions and are provided with an employee handbook and training on agency policies and procedures.

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NOI has comprehensive policies and procedures governing all aspects of our operations including but not limited to personnel policies, purchasing procedures, customer bill of rights, affirmative action policy, code of ethics. Our organization is committed to continuous improvement and participates in an external evaluation of agency governance; operational management & organizational structure; planning and community involvement; information technology; human resources; and finance and budget conducted by the Northeast Institute for Quality Community Action.

NOI's CFO is responsible for the agency's financial management. Day-to-day financial operations are the responsibility of the Controller who works with the Director of Elder Service to monitor program financial activity and to prepare Federal Financial Reports. NOI utilizes the Blackbaud accounting system. Through this system each grant is assigned a unique code through which all expenses and revenue are tracked. Monthly reports are generated and monitored by the Fiscal Department. Independent audit firm, Blum, Shapiro, conducts an annual whole-agency audit and presents its report to the NOI Board of Directors at its Annual Meeting. NOI has implemented semi-annual internal audits to assess program progress, financial status and to provide opportunities to discuss additional program needs for support or resources.

The non-federal share of the RSVP budget is secured through contributions from our volunteer stations and through cash and in-kind services donated by NOI. Both NOI and our community partners are committed to maintaining and, if possible, increasing support for this valuable program.

Other

Not applicable

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

Not applicable