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Executive Summary

Attala County RSVP aims to maintain 200 unduplicated active volunteers in service. RSVP volunteers will partner with 19 sites to enhance their ability to better serve the community. The program has developed partnerships with the Kosciusko/Attala Development Corporation in operating the Welcome Center and working community events; the Kosciusko City Schools in tutoring and education; the Oprah Winfrey Boys and Girls Club in mentoring; the MS State Veterans Home in activities for veterans; the American Cancer Society in community fundraising; Montfort Jones Memorial Hospital, Attala County Nursing Center, and Atwood Personal Care Home in activities and companionship for the elderly; the Kosciusko Fire Department in checking on the elderly in their home; Helping Hands Ministry and the Lion's Club in distributing food and clothing, along with managing a thrift store; the Attala County Library by supporting the summer reading program; MSU Extension Services in multiple sewing projects; and the Nutrition Site in serving meals, management support, and fellowship.

The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. At the end of twelve months, poverty level individuals will have access to nutrition to help alleviate their household food shortage. By volunteers partnering through food service projects, organizations expect to increase access to an estimated 1200 people in Attala County. The Kosciusko Fire Department will help ten homebound/elderly citizens maintain their independence safely. The American Heart Association will be able to provide educational material to more citizens at risk of heart disease.

The RSVP started in Attala County, Mississippi in 1972. The City of Kosciusko has been the legal sponsor since 1974. The current proposed budget for the fiscal year is \$67,235 which is composed of \$27,836 in CNCS federal funds and supplemented by \$39,399 in local non-Federal matching funds (\$18000 City of Kosciusko, \$9220 Attala County Board of Supervisors, and \$12179 In-Kind).

Strengthening Communities

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RSVP is a viable resource to partnering organization who focus on the nutritional needs of citizens, access to care, and aging in place through their involvement in services focusing on Healthy Futures. According to the 2010 Census, the population in Attala County, Mississippi is 19,564, which consist of 57% white, 41% black, and 2% Hispanic. Senior adults, age 65 and older, comprise 17% of the population. A reported 24.9% (4872) of the population live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level. The unemployment rate for the County is reported to be at 11.8%. Federal programs such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), WIC (Women, Infants, and Children supplement program), and the National School Lunch Program are utilized throughout the County. The Department of Human Services reports there are 1,589 cases (which can include multiple people) participating in the SNAP program in Attala County. The County School District reports 80% (880) of the 1,100 enrolled students receive free or reduced meals where the City School District reports 68% (1645) of the 2,419 students receive the same. Over twenty years ago the Kosciusko Lion's Club, a civic organization focused on humanitarian service, saw there was a nutritional need of citizens in Attala County, especially during the holidays when they experienced additional expenses for their families. At that time 30% of the County's population fell below federal poverty guidelines. The need for food assistance has remained a serious issue for people living on a fixed income, unemployed, or homeless. Families with such limited resources must make hard choices about which bills to pay, what necessities to go without, etc. Nutritional assistance programs are indicative of the need that many families struggle to put food on the table.

The Mississippi State Department of Health reports cardiovascular diseases and stroke are the number one cause of death in Mississippi, accounting for 41% of all deaths in the state. Mississippi's CVD mortality is the highest in the nation. More Mississippians die each year from CVD than from all types of cancer, traffic injuries, suicides, and AIDS combined. A volunteer-driven organization, the American Heart Association, would not be able to accomplish its goals, fulfill its mission, and make a

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difference in the health of our communities without volunteers. The citizens of Attala County, especially those with limited access to healthcare, are at risk for developing heart related illnesses increasing their chances of sudden death. The AHA promotes educational material in nutrition, physical activity, weight management, stress management, and smoke cessation which decrease our chances of serious health issues.

The City of Kosciusko, population 7402 according to the 2010 Census, contains 1271 citizens 65 years and older. The Kosciusko Fire Department is concerned about senior citizens who live alone inside the City Limits and have no local family to check on them on a regular basis. For the past 20 years, they have tried to identify elderly citizens who need social support to allow the elderly independent living and remain in their homes safely. The Department has discovered early intervention strategies such as this one will provide needed companionship and may delay or prevent nursing home placement which is more costly than community-based services.

Helping Hands Ministry, the only local free food resource in Attala County, is prepared to assist families monthly with nutritional needs. The Ministry is approved to purchase food thorough the MS Food Network at a bulk rate, and adheres to the regulations used by the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). The Ministry is also a distribution center for the Wal-Mart-Fighting Hunger Together program where the Wal-Mart Foundation has committed through 2015 to stepping up efforts to help America reach a day when no individual has to go to bed hungry. The Lion's Club, an additional resource in providing food for citizens who struggle financially, is prepared to assist families once a year. RSVP volunteers will serve low-income individuals/families and others experiencing a hardship at the Helping Hands Ministry building. Volunteers will interview/council clients on a monthly basis that come to the Ministry in need of assistance. The volunteers will work in the food pantry receiving, sorting, and stocking food items from the MS Food Network, Wal-Mart Foundation, and donations. As volunteers interview clients and keep monthly records of each visit, they will re-

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evaluate the clients after twelve visits, per the Ministry's policy, to see if the client still qualifies for the Ministry's services. Clients will have to show proof of income, household size, and if eligible of receiving assistance through SNAP, Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), unemployment and income below poverty level, or if 60 years of age or older, per Ministry policy. Volunteers will participate in food drives throughout the community to help stock the food pantry. They will also work in the pantry preparing boxes of food with a three to four day supply, based on the number of people in the household. Volunteers will maintain records of clients served and picked up donations. The Ministry reports serving 850 to 1,000 clients each month, which is a 1.5% increase in contacts compared to 2011. The majority of the clients are seen on a recurring monthly basis, which attests to the fact that unemployment in Attala County affects so many households. RSVP volunteers will assist the non-profit organization, which staffs only one paid employee, by processing individual's needs of food to help alleviate food security for their clients. The Ministry is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 to 12 or 9 to 3 depending on the weather since the facility has limited heating and cooling.

In December each year, the Lion's Club delivers food to 240 needy families (single or multi-person households) during the Christmas holiday so families would not go hungry. Through their research they have found that families experience additional financial hardship this time of the year due additional holiday expenses and higher utility in the winter months. RSVP volunteers will work three hour shifts over the two weeks following Thanksgiving taking applications in person and over the phone at the RSVP office from individuals who are looking for nutritional assistance during the Christmas holiday. Application information inquires about the members in the household, ages, number working, who and how much assistance they receive through assistance programs, if they own or rent, etc. Each year approximately 350 applications are taken which Club members screen and review each application based on referrals, previous years' assistance, and current household

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situations.

Due to the majority of the Club members being employed, RSVP volunteers are needed to take applications from individuals in need of assistance through the non-profit organization.

RSVP volunteers are the primary resource for to these two organizations to be able to serve the community. Volunteers are recruited and trained by the director of these projects. Since Helping Hands is an on-going station, volunteers work weekly or monthly making them more familiar with the operation of the program. The same goes for the volunteers involved with the Lion's project, many are involved from year to year in interviewing applicants. Since volunteers work in teams, many times a newly trained volunteer will be placed with a more experienced volunteer, which is beneficial in asking and receiving enough pertinent information in helping the Lion members in making the most informed decisions.

As volunteers are recruited to conduct blood pressure screenings and distribute educational material provided by the AHA, individuals with previous health training skills will be primarily recruited. Since the community is centrally located in the state with the highest mortality rate due to heart disease and strokes, there is a need to encourage better health and promote a preventative lifestyle. Since Helping Hands Ministry serves the low income citizens in the community, it is a fact that the majority of these have limited insurance (Medicaid) benefits or none at all, making this a good location to provide free screenings and educational material. Through occasional screening to citizens who are without work, health insurance, and practice poor eating habits, early signs and symptoms of health related problems may be detected to promote preventative health issues. Volunteers will assess them, make referrals to medical attention if necessary, and provide them with educational material.

The Fire Chief has expressed a need for RSVP volunteers to assist the FD to call a list of homebound/elderly senior citizens on weekdays who will benefit from the social contact by regular telephone communication. The Department will check on the seniors on weekends and holidays to

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ensure there is daily contact with the individuals. If the seniors do not answer, the FD will make a visit to the residence to check on them and the situation. The Department has discovered early intervention strategies such as this one will provide needed companionship and may delay or prevent nursing home placement which is more costly than community-based services.

By collaborating with a variety of public supporters, RSVP will pursue partners who can offer additional resources and finances to address community needs. By partnering with a variety of community supports, RSVP will not only be able to contribute to the economically challenged, those with educational limitations, and citizens who come from different social and cultural backgrounds, but we will recruit volunteers who represent various backgrounds. By recruiting adults 55 and older, majority of who have retired, they will bring with them education, experience, and a diversity of social and cultural lifestyles. Over the past 40 years Attala County RSVP has created partnerships with organizations in order to design and implement volunteer strategies that best serve critical needs in the community while offering opportunities that interest the volunteers. As the RSVP staff and volunteers cultivate these relationships in the community, they work together for the common goal of making the community a better place to live, providing a resource for those in need, expanding the capability of non-profits, educating those less fortunate, and nurturing the elderly.

With Kosciusko accommodating one of the four MS State Veterans Homes built in the state, community support is event through donations and contributions printed weekly in the local newspaper. RSVP volunteers will be actively involved in entertainment events, parties, bingo, activities, and devotions to reduce the potential for residents to show signs of depression, isolation, hopelessness, and loneliness when being admitted to the facility. Planned activities take place at least once a week, occasionally more often. Staff will identify veterans whose quality of life would be enhanced through one-on-one contact such as friendly visiting, companionship, and social interaction with residents who may be more confined to their rooms or various areas of the facility. Volunteers

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will serve monthly over a twelve month period.

Recruitment and Development

RSVP staff will be active within the community through involvement on boards, committees, community events, member of organizations, attending functions, etc. The staff will have the opportunity to meet people and hear about needs the community has.

When an area of need is recognized in Attala County, or a partnership is made with an existing non-profit or community based organization needing volunteers, a Memorandum of Understanding is signed by both parties; Attala County RSVP and the partnering station. This MOU contains written provisions which guide the working relationship between both parties, and is renegotiated at least every three years. During this process, the RSVP Director will provide instructions to the station supervisor as to the responsibilities of each party according to the MOU. The MOU states Attala County RSVP will be responsible to recruit, interview, and enroll volunteers and refer them to the partnering stations; provide instruction to volunteers on reporting service hours; provide orientation on program policies to volunteer station staff prior to placement of volunteers; provide transportation expense for RSVP volunteers when requested and that incurred while performing an assignment, provided sufficient funds are available; and furnish volunteers with accident, personal liability, and excess automobile insurance coverage as secondary coverage as required by program policies. As a Volunteer Station, they will be responsible for implementing orientation, in-service, or special training of volunteers to the station; make final decisions on volunteer assignments; collect and validate volunteer reports to the RSVP office monthly; furnish needed materials required to complete assignments; not assign RSVP volunteers in a position which would displace an employee; provide statistical data on the service which reflects the impact on the community; provide volunteer supervision; and investigate, report, and provide for the safety of all RSVP volunteers.

Station supervisors will adhere to appropriate training through their employers, funders, or

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organizations according to their policies and procedures. RSVP staff will instruct station supervisors on the agreement of their MOU regarding completing required reports, creating volunteer assignments, and promoting RSVP. The RSVP Operations Handbook will be available as a reference guide as needed. Program staff and station supervisors will work closely to maintain a productive working relationship for both parties. RSVP staff will annually assess the involvement of the volunteers, the support of the stations, and the impact the stations provide on the community. RSVP will encourage all stations to routinely offer necessary training related to the duties of the station and support volunteers through leadership opportunities. By participating with goal oriented stations and experiencing vital roles in service, the desire of Attala County RSVP is to offer the volunteers with a high quality affiliation that will encourage community involvement and enhance a longer, healthier, and more fulfilling life-style for seniors. For many retirees they lack community involvement or a sense of being part of a team. By participating as a volunteer with RSVP it will give seniors not only the opportunity to learn more about their community, but be an indispensable part of addressing the needs of the community. As volunteers use their skills, work background, and past experiences to get involved in service, they will also have the opportunity to learn new skills essential to the needs of each station.

RSVP staff, volunteers, and supporters work together to recruit for RSVP to strengthen the capacity of community-based organizations. Attala County RSVP will work toward maintaining the enrollment of 200 active volunteers from the community as allowed in the current budget. Recruitment will be made through personal contacts, speaking engagements, word-of-mouth, newsletters, and local media. By working with and serving different aspects, social groups, and races throughout the county, the RSVP staff will pursue prospective volunteers from all backgrounds to represent the community. Partnering stations will be involved in referring potential volunteers to RSVP. They see the benefits of working closer with RSVP, because once the volunteers join RSVP and get involved,

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some are interested in serving at more than one station and this provides them with an additional source for recruiting. Over the years this has proven to show a 5% increase in recruitment for RSVP. Through the interview process and application information, the staff will learn about the prospects previous work and general interest. Involvement with RSVP will improve the quality of service opportunities for seniors while introducing potential volunteers to unknown needs in their own community. Volunteers will be introduced to service areas they express an interest in. RSVP will be aware of the goals of the Strategic Plan of the Corporation for National and Community Service and give attention to projects pertaining to education, healthy futures, and veterans. After orientation and on-site training with the supervisors, volunteers will be assigned to service to assure a high quality experience for the volunteers. Volunteers, who are actively involved in service, are the most valuable source of recruitment. Many are viewed by their peers as the foundation of the station which encourages support and promotes participation

The RSVP staff will host annual volunteer recognition events to show support to the volunteers, station supervisors, sponsoring agencies, and community partners for their involvement in the program. This is a time to recognize the participation and accomplishments they have achieved. The RSVP staff host annual events providing a meal, speaker or program, small gifts of appreciation, and door prizes, all depending on the current budget allowance and in-kind donations. City and County leaders are invited to attend these events, where they continually express their appreciation for the services the volunteers provide. All stations will be encouraged to recognize and show additional support to the volunteers at their events, in news articles, and with other sources of media for their involvement. RSVP will recognize the volunteers and partnering stations in the local media and newsletters with photos and articles. Recognition makes a positive impression and encourages retention among volunteers and partnering stations. Over the past year, Attala County RSVP has averaged an enrollment of 205 volunteers, an 85% retention rate in volunteers. The primary reason

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for withdrawing from the program has been related to a decline in health or death, with only 20% withdrawing based on lack of involvement. RSVP will work to provide programs pertaining to senior citizens - educational, topics of interest, services, activities -- that encourage the senior's wellbeing. RSVP will also acknowledge each volunteer on their birthday with a card, and other occasions throughout the year. The RSVP staff makes routine visits to the partnering stations each month not only to collect required reports and keep in contact the station supervisors, but to observe the volunteers in service and talk with them concerning the impact they are making. Due to the close proximity of the community, the RSVP staff is able to get to know each volunteer personally and makes routine phone calls to keep in touch with them. If a volunteer has changed interest in a project or their schedule has changed making it not possible to continue their assignment at a station, the RSVP staff will work with the volunteer to see if other arrangements can be made before the option of losing the volunteer happens.

As citizens settle down in Attala County and realize the area is home for them, many show an interest in being more involved in the community by giving back to the community and the people who live here. For many, they do not know how or where they can get involved, but through the support of RSVP, they develop a relationship that engages them in service. As volunteers are matched with a partnering station based on their interest, relationships will be developed to ensure the volunteer experiences a meaningful, rewarding appreciation for the services offered.

Program Management

RSVP will strive to provide a variety of meaningful assignments for volunteers through Volunteer Stations and community organizations designed to meet specific community needs. The RSVP staff will be involved in the community through events, club meetings, council meetings, etc that may address an opportunity for a partnership. RSVP will join efforts through a well-established network of programs with other non-profits to address community needs. RSVP will evaluate the objective of the

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project and volunteer involvement, the mission and goals of the station, and work with the station supervisor to create an appropriate volunteer assignment which would appeal to potential volunteers and achieve the needs of the community. RSVP will inform organizations of their purpose, and encourage organizing a partnership. In working with the supervisor, volunteer assignments will be established and monthly visits will be made by RSVP staff to monitor the joint venture. Any concerns with those involved will be addressed in order to make the partnership successful. Once needs are addressed and/or an existing organization request volunteer assistance, RSVP will create a partnership through the written agreement of an MOU. RSVP will work with supervisors to create a plan of action in order to address the need at hand. RSVP will visit monthly at the station or with the volunteers to insure that the volunteers are interested in their service and the placement is significant.

As the volunteers continue to serve the community, the program will assess future areas of service that comply with the CNCS Strategic Plan. The RSVP staff will work with potential stations who address areas of Healthy Futures, Veterans, and Education. Even though Attala County is centrally located in MS in a highly traveled area of tornadoes, no disaster preparedness program has been established. Emergency directors have met with City and County officials, community citizens, local emergency assistance programs, and with other national emergency program officials, but no disaster preparedness programs have been created in Attala County to date. The County being a small rural community also has no programs that focus on economic opportunity or environmental stewardship, partly due to limited resources available. There are several apartment complexes provided through Government Assistance Programming in Attala County but are operated through a Housing Authority with paid staff. RSVP staff will work with current volunteers who show an interest in and have the physical ability to move to stations that have the focus of the Strategic Plan and are more oriented with the future goals of the CNCS. RSVP will target its future volunteer recruitment efforts

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on activities that focus on the Strategic Plan and work toward graduating some of the existing stations that do not meet the new requirements. The RSVP staff will work with station supervisors to create a process of data collection to show that service is meeting the planned outcomes of the program.

Through monthly site visits using the detailed instruments drawn up for data collection, the program will be able to report the progress made at each station.

The Project Director will be responsible for reviewing and documenting all revenues and expenditures related to the project in accordance with the annual RSVP budget. The City Clerk will review and certify that all funds are being reasonably used on a monthly basis. The Project Sponsor will oversee the management of the project resources, both financial and in-kind, in accordance with RSVP regulations and the Notice of Grant Award (NGA). The Sponsor will supplement the Corporation for National and Community Service grant for at least the minimal amount of match required but to the fullest extent possible. In order to sustain and expand the project, the Project Sponsor will accept any additional support the RSVP Program secures as financial and in-kind support from other local government sources and the non-profit community. The City of Kosciusko will designate all signers on all RSVP accounts, which require two signatures, currently the Mayor and City Clerk, and the City Clerk will oversee RSVP funds. The Sponsor and Project Director will maintain a recording system to permit the orderly collection, storage, and retrieval of financial expenditures and revenues, as well as volunteer hours and station accomplishments. The RSVP Director will complete all required Corporation for National and Community Service quarterly and annual reports to meet all compliance requirements.

Organizational Capability

The City of Kosciusko has sponsored the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program in Attala County, Mississippi since 1974. As Project Sponsor, the City of Kosciusko will secure financial and in-kind support from the City and County government to assure that the project has adequate personnel,

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facilities, equipment, and needed supplies. The RSVP program will be acknowledged as a department of the City and its employees accordingly. All monthly expenses will be approved and recorded at the monthly City Board Meetings.

The RSVP project has two (2) employees which adhere to written job descriptions pertaining to the operation of RSVP. The Project Director is the principal full-time staff person accountable for RSVP. For the past eleven years the Director has attended yearly CNCS training events, participated as a Mentor in the Peer Mentoring Program for new directors, and participated in various training opportunities on-line. The Director is very involved in community events and uses the opportunities to network with numerous organizations and learn about community needs. Through public engagements and speaking events, the Director uses the opportunity to recruit volunteers with from all backgrounds. Under the direction of the Sponsor, the Director has full-time responsibility for effective development and operation of the program. The Director will adhere to the CNCS approved grant and reporting requirement, and perform related work as required. The Advisory Council will consult and assist in developing policies and procedures for the program. The Director will supervise staff and volunteers to carry out program functions as appropriate. The Director will provide orientation to program policies to each volunteer upon recruitment, and work with the Station Supervisors who will provide orientation and in-service instruction to each station. In accordance to the approved CNCS budget, the Director will monitor all monthly expenditures and maintain up-to-date records and reports accordingly. The Director will develop adequate forms and record-keeping methods of volunteers, stations, and activities. Each month the Director and/or staff will visit volunteer stations to maintain a working relationship with organizations and financial supporting agencies. The staff will conduct periodic recognition events yearly to honor the volunteers.

The second employee is an Administrative Assistant for the Project Director. This has been a full time

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position, but due to budget cuts, will become a part-time position for the new fiscal year. The current employee has three years of experience working with volunteers and many years working in an office setting. This employee is responsible for all data entry and is heavily involved in retaining volunteers. Through her work with active RSVP volunteers, she encourages recruitment and has developed a trusting relationship the volunteers. The Assistant will have good communication skills to correspond with the volunteers and keep their best interest in mind. The Assistant will have a working knowledge of computers, data entry for tracking volunteer service and completing CNCS required reports; maintain up-to-date volunteer files and timesheets; and assist the Director in recruiting, training, and placing volunteers with service to match their interest and abilities. The Assistant will follow all policies required by the Sponsor and CNCS. The RSVP program is managed as a Department of the City of Kosciusko therefore both employees are governed by the City's personnel policies which define salaries, paid leave, staff travel reimbursement, and holidays. Full-time employees are eligible for all fringe benefits per the City's policy. The Employee Handbook was last amended and approved by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen in 2010.

Each month the RSVP Director will post all expenditures and revenues in a QuickBook program against the approved budget which creates checks accordingly. With all revenues and expenses posted, the QB program is set to create a monthly Expense Report which is also used to verify accuracy when completing required quarterly and semi-annual fiscal reports required by CNCS and DPM. All checks and documentation are presented to the City Clerk for approval at monthly board meetings. Checks are approved and signed by the Mayor and City Clerk. The RSVP budget is an itemized line of the City's budget and is therefore in accordance with Government Auditing Standards, audited on an annual basis as a department of the City of Kosciusko. The City of Kosciusko will designate all signers on all RSVP accounts, which require two signatures, currently the Mayor and City Clerk, and the City Clerk will oversee RSVP funds. The RSVP Director will do all drawdowns

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through the Department of Payment System, and is responsible for completing all required financial reports. All financial documentation for the program is kept on file at the RSVP office and made available to the City upon request. The current budget proposal reflects non-federal support of 58.5%. The City is committed to supporting the RSVP program in 2013 by budgeting \$18000 toward personnel and fringe, travel, supplies, equipment, and recognition. The Attala County Board of Supervisors have provided the office space, utilities, all maintenance, and upkeep of the property, in addition to providing all cleaning and paper supplies necessary, which is documented as in-kind support to the program. The current budget proposal reflects the Supervisors commitment to support the personnel and fringe expenses by \$9220 in 2013. All monthly expenses are approved by the Board of Supervisors and paid through the Chancery Clerk's office. The Equipment and office supplies are budgeted for each year and maintained by the RSVP staff. Budgeted purchases are made by the RSVP Director. All equipment is recorded as fixed assets with the City inventory.

In Accordance with CNCS policy, RSVP will document impact made on the community through volunteer service. Through the agreement of the current MOU, the Director will work with the supervisor to collect information necessary to document the amount of service provided, the task achieved, and the number affected by the project. The supervisors will complete necessary reports monthly and yearly with statistics necessary to document all service. Each month, the Director and/or Assistant will visit each station to collect volunteer hours and information on service provided. RSVP has been a successful volunteer program in Attala County for the past 40 years. They have been partnering with projects for at least 24 years in regards to assisting organizations serve low-income individuals with food for their families. Volunteer retention proves senior citizens committed to service through RSVP find satisfaction and fulfillment in their service. Partnering organizations report that RSVP volunteers make it possible for them to continue to serve the community and impact lives in a positive way.

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RSVP Advisory Council members will be recruited from all areas of the community and represent an interest in the community and the seniors. The Council will meet quarterly to support the program according to program policy. The Director will keep the Council updated on changes and issues to the program and the volunteers. The RSVP Operations Handbook will be available as a reference guide as needed. The Council will bring input from the community and work to see what areas RSVP could be involved. A yearly review will assess progress made and improvements necessary to strengthen the program.

Other

N/A

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A