



## Narratives

### Executive Summary

Name of Legal Entity: Department of Human Services, Virgin Islands

Organization & Mission: The Department of Human Services, a Public

Agency of the Government of the Virgin Islands', core mission is to provide social services that enhance the quality of life for individuals and families with diverse needs.

Number of RSVP Volunteers Proposed: 102

Amount Requested: \$29,777

Services Categories to be Addressed: Disaster Preparation, Elementary

Education, At-Risk Ecosystems Improvement, Community Revitalization/ Improvement, Hospital and Clinical Support Services including Rehabilitation, Food Security, Other/Health Nutrition and Senior Center Programs (Non-Residential)

Community Needs to be Addressed: Emergency Preparedness, Early Childhood Education, Environmental Preservation Support, Counseling & Public Service, Community Health Service, Homeless & Shelter Program, Residential Long-term Care, Assisted Living Support Services, and Senior Center Support Services

Research-Based Methods to Address Project Needs: Seniors interactively engaged through human contact promotes vibrancy, slows the onset of debilitating illnesses, and studies show that volunteers live longer.

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Projects Anticipated Outcomes: The contributions of Senior Volunteers will produce positive results and enhance their quality of life, and the lives they touch.

### Strengthening Communities

The U.S. Virgin Islands' (USVI) RSVP has been administered under the auspices of the Division of Senior Citizens Affairs for the past 41 years, providing services throughout the islands of St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas. The 2010 Census records the total population in the Virgin Islands at 107,340, which represents a decrease of 1,272 persons. For the same period however, the Census also records the number of persons 60 years of age and older totaled 23,423, an increase of 9,549 since 2000.

Of the 23,423 Virgin Islanders 60 years and over, 12,630 reside on St. Croix, 9,496 on St. Thomas, and 1,297 on St. John. "By the year 2025, it is projected that persons age 50 and older will comprise forty-three percent of the Virgin Islands' population, while twenty-three percent of the population will consist of persons 65 years and older." Consequently, increasing demands on, and for services and programs to the elderly remain a growing concern.

Further, as studies indicate that depression continues to affect large portions of the senior population within the United States, the Virgin Islands finds itself with few quality social support systems to provide for the emotional or personal needs of its seniors. Many live alone and some are fairly isolated from the larger community.

In response to the increasing needs of the elderly population, four senior centers are in operation throughout the territory, serving over 252 seniors. At these centers, RSVP volunteers assist in providing the seniors social, educational, health, recreational and other related support services.

Poverty levels are at approximately 32%, at the same time the homeless and mentally ill population

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has increased. On a weekly basis up to 300 needy, homeless and some mentally ill persons seek assistance from organizations such as the Salvation Army to receive nutritional and other basic need supports. The Salvation Army maintains a food and clothing distribution center and depends on volunteer assistance to meet the needs of the homeless and needy within our community. RSVP volunteers play an integral role in providing assistance with record keeping and distribution of food and clothing support to these organizations.

As the organization and agency charged with maintaining disaster preparedness throughout the territory, both the American Red Cross along with the VI Department of Human Services rely on volunteer support to organize their operations. RSVP volunteers assist the Red Cross with presentations on community and emergency preparedness, clerical work such as filing, answering the telephone, stocking supplies needed in a disaster, and to ensure appropriate inventory in the event of a disaster, and regular maintenance of the Red Cross Center.

Finally, in an effort to bring greater awareness to the community of the invaluable contributions retired seniors can make to organizations, the RSVP program has an active Advisory Council consisting of a retired banker, a Job Coach Specialist, the Field Supervisor of the Foster Grandparent Program, a clergyman, and other public servants, along with an RSVP Volunteer who interact with other organizations within the community as advocates for the RSVP program. They conduct the annual program evaluation, interviewing volunteers and Station Supervisors to ascertain any problems and determine redress. The Council meets on a quarterly basis and also participate in planning the Annual Recognition Ceremonies.

RSVP presently has a total of 102 active volunteers, 12 Hispanic, 20 Caucasian and 70 African-American. These volunteers interact regularly at their volunteer sites, monthly meetings, recognition

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ceremonies, and /or other functions hosted by the Department of Human Services.

To maintain public awareness of RSVP program services, flyers will be printed in English and Spanish and distributed via the staff, the Advisory Council and volunteers at churches, malls, offices and other public areas.

### Recruitment and Development

Volunteers have been placed at 25 volunteer stations throughout the Territory: 12 on St. Thomas, 1 on St. John, and 12 on St. Croix. RSVP volunteers are being recruited through newspaper ads, word of mouth, descriptive flyers and brochures sent to churches and the annual agricultural and health fairs, the AARP office, television interviews on local channels, and outreach activities in the local malls in the St. Thomas/St. John District and on St. Croix.

Special efforts have and are being made to encourage baby boomers, those currently on the program to share their RSVP experiences with their peers. This recruitment method has shown some progress and we have enrolled eight new baby boomer volunteers during the 2012-2013 period.

During the Month of May 2011, the Division of Senior Citizens Affairs held a Cultural Day on each island. Volunteers and other seniors in the community participated and were encouraged to take advantage of all the program opportunities available to seniors, including the RSVP program.

Volunteers are placed in stations that will utilize their current skills and talents and special consideration for those who wish to explore new activities and new skills. For example, placement of volunteers at sites to learn and participate in arts and crafts, to learn to use the computer and other electronic devices, and participate in dance lessons and exercise sessions. New volunteers receive orientation at their volunteer stations and the Station Supervisor will train on the assigned tasks.

RSVP program staff perform site visits and provide operational manual and flyers, program updates, and technical assistance on a regular basis to Station Supervisors.

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RSVP has targeted its recruitment efforts in support of these following priority areas:

- School Readiness and Success: Pre-K through Elementary
- Environmental Stewardship
- Healthy Futures: Access to Care
- Increasing Food Security
- Promoting Senior Health within Congregate & Long-term Care Facilities
- Reducing Isolation, Loneliness and/or Depression among Seniors
- Disaster Assistance
- Monitoring and Management of Health Issues
- Capacity Building

### Program Management

Since its inception in 1987, the Department of Human Services, through the Division of Senior Citizens Affairs has operated several programs which directly benefit the elderly, persons with disabilities, and children with special needs. The programs listed below are administered by the Department which administers a total annual budget of approximately \$82,811,664 of these funds \$32,034,996 comes from federal sources.

(I) The RSVP program has maintained over 100 volunteers annually. Volunteers are recruited by the Director who is stationed on St. Croix and the Community Service Worker on St. Thomas, along with assistance from center leaders, and at times, other volunteers. Reimbursement checks are processed monthly and approved for payment by the DHS Fiscal Administrative office. Effective October 2010, a new electronic payment process has been implemented and all checks are being processed through

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the Government of the Virgin Islands ERP (financial system) and the Department of Finance will mail checks directly to the volunteers. This new process has facilitated more timely payments.

(II) The Foster Grandparent Program currently has 78 foster grandparents who work on a one-to-one basis with children with special needs. Approximately 234 children are assisted with social, mental, physical, and academic activities for FY 2012

(III) Two 24-hours supervised home care facilities for the frail and elderly in 2012 with a total census of 134.

(IV) The Nutrition Program for the elderly provides approximately 258,047 meals annually to about 1,517 elderly and disabled adults for FY 2012.

(V) Four senior centers, due to the merging of two centers on the island of St. Thomas and two on St. Croix, currently provide socio-recreational activities for 257 senior citizens in 2012.

(VI) Homemakers Program provides personal care and chore services for 361 homebound elderly persons and disabled adults annually.

(VII) Pharmaceutical subsidies to 1,279 low income persons 60 years and older including Medicare Part D beneficiaries.

(VIII) Information and Referral services issued at least 4589 I.D. cards during FY 2011 to elderly persons who received discounts on purchases from various business establishments throughout the

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territory.

(IX) Adult Protective Services provides services to seniors and persons needing counseling, referrals, specialized assistance, protection from abuse, neglect and/or financial exploitation. A total of 521 seniors received services under this program during fiscal year 2011.

(x) The needs of children and youth are addressed through the Division of Children and Family Assistance, whose mission is to strengthen families with a focus on intervention, abuse neglect and juvenile delinquency and early childhood development and prevention.

(xi) The Department of Human Services provides support primarily to individuals and families through its Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP) formerly the Food Stamp Program.

The Fiscal and Administrative Office, manages all federal and local dollars granted and appropriated to the Agency. Satisfactory administrative and programmatic audits have been received over the years.

### **Organizational Capability**

The RSVP operate under the Division of Senior Citizens Affairs, whose mission is to prevent isolation among the elderly, minimize the need for institutionalization, and advocate for community awareness and responsiveness to the needs of the elderly. Its strategic objectives are to support long term care and community based services, support caregivers, engage older adults, and promote safety and security of older adults and persons with disabilities.

The Department of Human Services provides the staffing, physical space, office equipment, furnishings and other tools for RSVP's administrative operations. The RSVP Program Director

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submits an annual report outlining the program's performance and accomplishments during each fiscal year. A statistical report is prepared on a monthly basis indicating the number of volunteer participation during the month with demographic profile of the number of males and females.

### Project Staff

Mrs. Mary A. Weekes-Pamphile is the Project Director. She is supervised by the Administrator of the Division of Senior Citizens Affairs who conducts an annual performance evaluation of the Project Director. Mrs. Weekes-Pamphile has directed the program since April 1998. She has 28 ½ years of experience working with the senior population within the Division of Senior Citizens Affairs and the wider Virgin Islands community, as well as with the former Commission on Aging.

As Director, Mrs. Weekes-Pamphile conducts monthly meetings and site visits on all three islands, St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix, and coordinates and conducts training activities for the RSVP volunteers. She prepares the annual grant application and other reports for the project. She plans and executes recognition activities for the volunteers.

Mrs. Weekes-Pamphile coordinates meetings of the Advisory Council and supervises the day-to-day operations of the program. Though stationed on the island of St. Croix, she travels to the St. Thomas/St. John district to provide site visits and supervision. The Territory is comprised of four non contiguous islands separated by the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea with inter-island travel accessible only by air and sea transportation.

Ms. Angela Smithen was assigned to the RSVP Program starting June 7, 2010, replacing the Community Service Worker that retired in December 2009. Ms. Smithen works with the program on

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St. Thomas and will assist with clerical assignments, processing time sheets, purchase orders, filing and other related duties. She does site visits and participates in monthly meetings and training activities.

Ms. Smithen assists in the recruiting of volunteers on St. Thomas and St. John. An annual evaluation of Ms. Smithen will be done by the Project Director. It is our hope that the number of volunteers will continue to increase with the active participation of the new staff member.

### Other

Baby Boomers are encouraged to volunteer with the RSVP Program, and thus far, the program acquired eight new "boomer" volunteers within the Fiscal Year 2012. These boomers were encouraged to join the program by the active volunteers who shared their positive experiences of being on the program.

The Division of Senior Citizens Affairs held two Cultural Days during the month of May, a month proclaimed as Senior Citizens Month, to promote the senior services programs including the RSVP program. Seniors in attendance were well informed on the programs and the benefits.

Although the program receives many inquiries, some are still unable to volunteer because of their financial needs and many are seeking more monetary compensation.

However, we continue to provide information about the program and we encourage current RSVP "boomers" to share the program with their friends and families. RSVP volunteerism is promoted as a rewarding and positive experience and an opportunity to interact with others in the community.

The volunteer stations are being maintained by the ongoing process of recruiting more members. The program is committed to continue this effort so that the program may continue to impact the community and the volunteers who serve in the program. Members who are presently on the

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program are happy, love the work, and look forward to being with the program for a very long time. They especially enjoyed their Annual Recognition Ceremony which was held during the month of June, 2012, in an elegant setting, where they receive praise and a certificate of recognition and gifts.

### **PNS Amendment (if applicable)**

N/A