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Executive Summary

Coahoma Opportunities, Incorporated a community-action agency, aims to assist low-income citizens in becoming self sufficient and sustainable. Serving the rural Mississippi Delta region for decades, our agency is governed by a Board of Directors whose primary responsibility is planning the direction and defining the future of the Agency. The Board delegates to the Executive Director the major responsibility and the authority (derived from the Board) of selecting the specific means to achieve the goals that have been determined.

Coahoma Opportunities, Incorporated Retired Senior Volunteer Program is requesting the Federal Share of 33,713 dollars to continue to provide services to Coahoma County. Resources provided through this competitive process enables Coahoma Opportunities, Incorporated to further serve Coahoma County, supporting retired seniors in their efforts to aid the community and its citizens in maintaining a meaningful quality of life. Coahoma Opportunities Incorporated Retired Senior Volunteer Program has five focal points. They are School Readiness, Head Start Early Childhood Education, Tutoring and Children Elementary Literacy, Veterans and Families, Health Education and Other Health Nutrition. Coahoma Opportunities, Incorporated Retired Senior Volunteer Program is continuously working to fulfill the mission of Corporation for National and Community Services by providing quality and timely services to the residents of Coahoma County. Some of the services include tutoring youth and adults, providing transportation for seniors, without transportation and offering senior companionship for seniors who are home-bound. Coahoma Opportunities Incorporated Retired Senior Volunteer Program, through its many partnerships, provides outreach. Our longstanding relationships with churches, agencies and community organizations have allowed us to become widely recognized throughout the community for the work we do with retired seniors. Recruitment fairs are hosted throughout the community to make prospective members aware of the

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program. The projects of the Coahoma Opportunities, Incorporated Retired Senior Volunteer Program are led by our participants who fully engages their skills, knowledge and expertise which strengthen our community and make Coahoma County more livable for its residents.

Strengthening Communities

The Mississippi Delta region is home to the blues, arts, culture and unfortunately poverty. With 48% of Coahoma County living in poverty, Coahoma Opportunities, Incorporated has, for many decades provided resources to improve the quality of life of the community and its citizens. As the nation experienced a downturn in the economy, the impact felt by the Mississippi Delta was enormous. Many of our citizens, including the elderly, have felt the stagnation and experienced the lack of job opportunities which had been available to our citizenry. Inasmuch as this has caused undue stress to many hardship to many it is even more unfortunate that a lack of job opportunities serves as the root cause of the escalation in criminal activities. Our seniors and elders are most vulnerable in a crime-infested community, and our efforts are to keep them safe and with a sense of security. In spite of these obstacles and on going barriers, our agency has established successful and meaningful collaboration working affiliation with the community, local education agencies, childcare facilities, the community college, major industries, businesses, police department and other programs to provide an engaging experience for our seniors and volunteers, as we seek to address societal ills.

RSVP is aimed at seniors fifty-five and older who have a desire to maintain their skills and further enhance their lives by actively participating as volunteers in strategic positions in the community. We recognize many of our volunteers and seniors as the pillars in the community. Their knowledge, skill sets, passion and expertise serve as strong links within the community that keep us positioned to remain viable. Many of our partners provide numerous options for others in the community to be recipients of this storehouse of knowledge and expertise such as:

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Head Start Preparedness, Tutoring, Community- Based Health Education, and Health and Nutrition. Serving a population of approximately 65% of African Americans, 24% Caucasians and 11% of other races, the program, publicly advertises for all citizens to join the program, regardless of color, race, ethnicity, or sociol-economic status. The program is designed to appeal to anyone who wants to continue offering something, such as a skill, motivation, and a smile to the community that will positively touch or enhance the lives of others. The Retired Senior Volunteer Program provides outreach through various sources, such as churches, agencies, and other community organizations. Members of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program are seen as positive role models in the community and looked upon favorably, which enhances our ability to recruit others who are like minded and servants in their own rights.

Recruitment fairs are hosted throughout the community to make prospective members aware of what the program involves. The advisory council provides direction to the program and encompasses a varied, diverse mixture of members who make suggestions, give ideas and inform the program of needs and concerns in their community. The program seeks to maintain individuals from each of the small communities in Coahoma County to ensure that information and data that are pertinent to the concerns and problems in those neighborhoods are shared. This also helps to establish awareness of the program in each of the communities represented. There is a continuous effort to identify additional organizations and institutions within the community that can benefit from the expertise of our volunteers or even provide them with more advanced or new skills. Each agency will be reviewed and explored to reap the maximum potential for both entities. The Coahoma Opportunities Retired Senior Vounteer Program has been serving Coahoma County over 35 years and has developed a strong valuable working relationship with programs and businesses in Coahoma County, serving

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65% (African Americans) and 24%(Caucasians) and 11% other races . Coahoma Opportunities, Incorporated Retired Senior Vounteer Program is aimed at seniors fifty five or older who desire to give back to the community through volunteer services. The Program focuses on five major workplans: Head Start Preparedness, Tutoring, Other Opportunity Priorities and Other. The partnerships of Coahoma Opportunities Retired Senior Volunteer Program are based on an unique characterization of people, demographics, strengths, needs and economics. RSVP is in partnership with the following programs and a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) has been signed with each:

1. COI Head Start
2. COI Community Service Block Grant Programs
3. Coahoma County Sheriff Department/TRIAD
4. Clarksdale Police Department
5. SLA Jones Activity Center
6. Federation Towers, Housing for Elderly and Disable
7. Coahoma County Chamber of Commerce
8. Yarber's Produce
9. Isles of Capri Entertainment
10. Wal-Mart Department Store
11. Weiners Cardiovascular Clinic
12. New Jersalem M.B. Church.

Coahoma Opportunities Head Start Program and RSVP have been in partnership for 36 years. Volunteers work with the Head Start staff to help enhance the children motor development and language skills. This helps children make a better transition from Head Start to the Public School

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System. Coahoma Opportunities LIHEAP Program uses RSVP volunteers to do minor repairs on the seniors, homes that do not meet the building codes. With this effort, more funds can be used to assist Coahoma County citizens and help seniors with utilities bills.

Coahoma County Sheriff Department and Clarksdale Police Department have a partnership through our Safety grant. Volunteers are trained by law-enforcement on major safety issues that concern seniors. SLA Jones Activity Center, Federation Towers and New Jerusalem M.B. Church serve as a multi-purpose site where computer classes and workshops are held. Coahoma County Chamber of Commerce serves as a resource location for literature to educate seniors moving to Coahoma County about RSVP and the benefits of staying active, along with healthy tips. Yarber Produce supplies RSVP volunteers with discounts on vegetables and fruits for different events. RSVP partners with Isles of Capri Entertainment and Wal-Mart to ensure that RSVP meet its monetary match each year. This, in turn, helps seniors to focus more on volunteer service. Weiners Cardiovascular Clinic also provides RSVP with a yearly monetary contribution. Dr. Weiner's Clinic also does two (2) yearly workshops on maintaining healthy heart and staying active.

Recruitment and Development

Recruitment for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program is an on- going process. Recruitment stations are set up at local businesses, hospitals, schools, Chamber of Commerce, and other locations throughout the community. Each volunteer is provided with information about the RSVP program. This enables them to share information with others about the program. Before volunteers are placed, the sponsors will have signed a memorandum of understanding for the volunteer stations and a written description of assignment. The leadership of RSVP conducts a two (2)-hour orientation session for new volunteers. The Advisory Council provides on-going development by holding monthly training sessions, workshops, and seminars to inform volunteers of changes in operations of the

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program. Coahoma Opportunities, Incorporated Retired Senior Volunteer Program has a very strong Advisory Council which meets monthly and as holds a strategic planning meeting annually. The workshops that are conducted are designed to help our volunteer council and site managers with any new and/or additional information from the Corporation for National and Community Services. The RSVP Program will continue to develop a variety of opportunities for community services for older people willing to share their lifetime experiences, abilities, and skills for the betterment of the community and themselves.

There are fourteen (14) volunteer sites where volunteers are being supported by an on-site manager who is selected by the Advisory Council and Program Director. The site managers ensure that volunteer assignments are consistent with the interests and abilities of the volunteer and the needs of the community. RSVP site managers are required to keep a written as well as computer count on all volunteer hours. These hours are recorded daily to site supervisors and a monthly reports to the program director. All volunteer hours are recorded and then placed in volunteer folders and the computer. RSVP has several Recognition Programs in which we are able to honor volunteers for their contributions to the community. Volunteers who serve the most hours for the year receive an overnight stay at the local casino and recognition by the Board of Mayor and Commissioners and Coahoma County Board of Superivors. We also have activities during Older American month. We also host an Annual Fun Day and a Senior Safety Fair every six (6) months for volunteers.

Program Management

The Retired Senior Volunteer Program is managed by Coahoma Opportunities, Incorporated Board of Directors, Retired Senior Volunteer Program Director, and the Advisory Council. Each month, the RSVP Director and the Advisory Council host workshops designed to ensure that the skills of volunteers and participants are maintained and enhanced. Additionally, the workshops are designed

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to keep participants abreast of program developments and changes. This assists volunteers in better serving the community as a whole. There are twelve (12) sites where volunteers are supported by site managers that are selected by the Advisory Council. The site managers ensure that the assignments provided to volunteers are consistent with their interests and abilities as well as the needs of the community served. Data and time sheets are collected monthly from site managers at each volunteer station, calculated and recorded into volunteer and computer files.

All functions of general accounting and accounts payable are under the responsibility of the Accounting Manager. Coahoma Opportunities, Incorporated employs the basic principles of accounting. The software used for accounting in record keeping Grant Management System (GMS). Coahoma Opportunities, Incorporated RSVP receives a Safety Grant from the Leadership Council on Aging in support of our senior safety efforts. We receive yearly contributions to support our in-kind from Coahoma County Board of Supervisors, Clarksdale Mayor and Board of Commissioners, Weiners Cardiovascular Clinic, Aaron E. Henry Health Clinic, Wal-Mart, Isle of Capri, and Coahoma Opportunities, Inc. Head Start Program.

Organizational Capability

The Accounting Manager of Coahoma Opportunities, Incorporated has, over forty years of experience in accounting and record keeping, having received a B.S. Degree in Accounting and a Master's Degree in Business Administration. The Accounting Manager is responsible to the Executive Director. All functions of general accounting and accounts payable are under the responsibility of the Accounting Manager. Coahoma Opportunities, Incorporated uses the accrual basis of accounting. Grant Management System (GMS) software is utilized for accounting and record keeping. This program is specifically written for non-profit agencies and is the acceptable accounting practice of the Federal and State Funding agencies. Financial statements are prepared monthly. Even though Coahoma

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Opportunities, Incorporated is a multi-funded organization, all monies are accounted for separately and independently of other funding sources. A separate bank account is established for RSVP.

Coahoma Opportunities, Incorporated is covered under a blanket position bond with AmFed Insurance Company, in the amount of \$100,000.00 on each bonded employee and board member.

This amount has been determined to be sufficient in light of the Agency's on-going operation and its past experiences. At the direction of our Executive Director, the RSVP Director is responsible for providing: *Administrative oversight of RSVP by developing and implementing policies and generating required reports.

*Maintaining program quality by planning annual program goals and objectives designed to meet critical community needs while offering opportunities for elders to maintain their self esteem and usefulness through out their community.

*Overseeing program activities and volunteer stations by providing leadership, information, and consultation. Mediating concerns or conflicts which may arise in the program. *Coordinating and monitoring RSVP assignments, in-service training, supervisory arrangement, and other activities in coordinating with appropriate volunteer station staff.

*Making periodic visits to volunteer stations to monitor the effectiveness of the RSVP volunteers with their assignments and progress toward achieving expecting outcomes and impact of their assignments.

*Developing positive public relations and communications by providing informational programs to interested groups and organizations.

*Preparing newsletters and media materials serving on community boards, councils and committees and hosting volunteer recognition events.

*Maintaining professional knowledge and skills by attending relevant workshops, training and conferences

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*Recruiting, orientating, placing and scheduling for assignment of RSVP volunteers.

*Incorporating, program for impact principles in program development, volunteer placement, and project assessment *Developing and maintaining close coordination with volunteer stations

*Working closely with RSVP Community Advisory Council, soliciting their advice and assistance on matter affecting project operation.

*Performing other projects related duties as assigned.

Other

Coahoma Opportunities, Incorporated Retired Senior Volunteer Program, in partnership with Coahoma County Sheriff Department, is in its 8th year of receiving a safety grant through the Leadership on Aging. This grant is used to aid RSVP and the Sheriff Department with free safety material, such as smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and safety information for seniors. Coahoma Opportunities, Incorporated also has a strong partnership with the Coahoma County Chamber of Commerce.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

None