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Executive Summary

The Dawes and Sioux County Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is well established with a twenty-six year history of providing high quality volunteer opportunities that meet important community needs. The RSVP central office is located in Chadron, NE and a satellite office which serves the City of Crawford and Sioux County is located twenty-three miles to the west in Crawford, NE. The Dawes and Sioux County RSVP have an estimated 256 volunteers that serve their communities. They serve children, home-bound seniors, and the community at large by providing services that allow organizations to operate fully. These services include food collection and distribution, transportation, mentoring, companionship, tutoring, staffing libraries and museums. This is just a sample of the services provided through a network of approximately fifty-six volunteer stations. Volunteer stations are located throughout the service area from schools, hospitals, nursing home facilities, art centers, museums, libraries and faith-based organizations. We have targeted Healthy Futures as our Primary Focus area, specifically 'Aging in Place' and 'Obesity and Food'. The percent of people living below poverty level in the state of Nebraska (2006-2010) is 11.8%, in Sioux County it is 9.4%; and in Dawes County that number jumps to 28%. Additionally the population 65 years and over is 22% for Sioux County and 16.4% for Dawes County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Recent discussions with RSVP volunteers that manage local food banks reveal that more people, especially young families with children are utilizing these crucial resources. The CNCS federal investment of \$83,778 will be supplemented by the required 30% match from NCAP, local and other in-kind donations or grants. At the end of the 12-month reporting period, the anticipated outcomes in the areas of 'Aging in Place' will show an increase in volunteers serving meals and providing companionship and a greater number of elders reporting increased social ties and/or the ability to remain in their home. The anticipated outcomes for 'Obesity and Food' will show a greater number of individuals reporting increased food security for their families as a result of increased RSVP volunteer

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activities and training.

Strengthening Communities

The service areas of Dawes and Sioux counties are rural and primarily agricultural. A mild winter, followed by a long hot summer resulted in severe drought conditions. The fire season was exceptionally harsh this year with approximately 165,000 acres burned in our service area. "Echoes of 2006, when 68,000 acres in Dawes and Sioux counties were torched, were on everyone's mind" (Remmp, 2012). Conversations with RSVP volunteers during monthly Coffee Socials brought to light the cost to ranchers and farmers. Dora Hale, 92 pointed out that the loss of fence posts alone represents thousands of dollars to struggling farmers and ranchers. Unemployment in our service area is 3.6% for Sioux County and 3.8% for Dawes County. Our Primary Focus Area is Healthy Futures, specifically targeting 'Aging in Place' and 'Obesity and Food'. The following data was collected from the U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts for Dawes and Sioux counties. Dawes County has 1,396 square miles of land and a population of 9,196. The population density is 6.5 per square mile. The racial makeup of the area is 90.2% White, 1.8% Black or African-American, 3.8% Native American, 1.2% Asian, .1% Pacific Islander, 3.7% of the population is Hispanic or Latino and 2.5% reporting two or more races. Sioux County has an estimated population of 1,336 spread over 2,066 square miles with a .6 persons per square mile. The racial makeup is 97.8% White, .6% Native American, .1% Asian, 0% Pacific Islander, 4.1%Hispanic or Latino and .1% Black. The percentage of population over 65 for Dawes and Sioux Counties is 16.4% and 22% respectively. Of this population, 9.8% (Dawes) and 7.5% (Sioux) are below poverty. The Nebraska Senior Service Corp Association State Report for 2011 states that "An average 88% of clients receiving services stated that they were able to delay long-term care because of the assistance of volunteers." RSVP Volunteers help at area food pantries, food co-ops and congregate meal sites; their duties include some or all of the following: setting tables, dishing up and serving meals, meal delivery to the homes of seniors or clients with disabilities, purchase, pick-up, sort,

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and distribute food packages. They also assist with distribution and delivery of food to qualifying clients identified by the Aging Office of Western Nebraska through the Meals-on-Wheels program. For many of these clients the RSVP volunteer may be their only daily contact which is essential for their well-being, and social support.

This service activity is in alignment with the output identified in H8 as the number of homebound or older adults and individuals receiving services that allow one to live independently. Feeding America (2012) reports that "The number of older adults is projected to increase by 36% over the next decade and continue to rise in the following decade." A more telling number of the vulnerability of our service area is the percent of population ages 18 to 64 that are below poverty. Dawes and Sioux counties are 21.4% and 13.8%, ranking 3rd and 15th respectively in the state. These people are the parents of children and our future elder citizens. These numbers indicate that approximately 20-30% of our service area population is below poverty level. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2012) there are 2,439 children in Dawes County under the age of 19 and 314 in Sioux county. Of those 17 and under in Dawes County, 24% are in poverty (2009) while 12% of those under 17 are in poverty in Sioux County. "Hunger in America 2010 is extremely detailed, drawing on data from more than 61,000 interviews with clients and surveys of 37,000 feeding agencies. The report shows that hunger is increasing at an alarming rate in the United States" (Feeding America, 2012). The updating of the project narratives reflects that there is an increase in the aging population as well as more families moving into poverty in our service area. This combined with the economic damages of the recent fires indicates that food security will continue to be an issue. There are several food pantries in the area, two housed at local churches, one administered by NCAP. Volunteers collect surplus food, organize food drives, manage volunteers in the packaging and distribution of emergency food. These service activities align with H10 the number of individuals receiving emergency food from food banks, food pantries, or other nonprofit organization. As the new Senior Volunteer Services Director, I bring

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a Masters degree in organizational management with an emphasis in human services. I recently completed a two year graduate assistant position in the education department of Chadron State College facilitating The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) process. This requires implementing and aligning curriculum with federal and state standards, data collection, assessment of data and program changes based on data. Immediately upon beginning my position as the Senior Volunteer Services Director, I accessed the Virtual Conference, the Knowledge Network and the Online Learning Center. I attended the Nebraska Senior Service Corps Association (NESSCA) training in Kearney, NE on September 25-26th. This training included Q&A with State representatives as well as review of the Senior Corp Guide for Quality Assurance and Compliance Monitoring and National Days of Service. This training and networking experience laid an important foundation of understanding the Corporation's Strategic Plan. NCAP RSVP will align our stations and opportunities to best serve the goals of the Corporation. All current stations and opportunities will be evaluated on the ability to increase the impact of national service on community needs, such that participants find satisfaction, and meaning while maximizing the value to grantees, partners and participants. NCAP RSVP uses Volunteer Reporter, however this system is not being maximized. This is an area that I will seek guidance from my assigned peer mentor. I look forward to learning how to improve and grow the program. Recent collaborations with the Chadron Small Business Development Center (SBDC) may be an avenue to grow our service to veterans and military families. The director, Dr. Tim Donahue is an active veteran who also mentors at the VA Hospital in Hot Springs, SD. He has begun a small business development course targeting veterans. Discussions include utilizing RSVP veteran volunteers as mentors or instructors. Additionally the previous director Wayne Anderson (Master Chief, 30 year Navy veteran) is now the Chadron City Manager. This is a valuable relationship in the continued support and expansion of our Senior Corps Programs. Initial assessment of the current project indicates that Volunteer Reporter is underutilized as a data collection system; past surveys

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have been counted by hand. There will be an assessment of current data collection instruments and the program will adopt those made available through the Knowledge Network, for example the Senior Corps Independent Living Performance Measure Survey.

Recruitment and Development

Our project will maximize the use of Volunteer Reporter to collect data on the experiences, abilities and skills of our volunteers and generate reports that allow us to create the types of high quality volunteer opportunities to improve volunteer communities and themselves. The value of a new director is the ability to see the program with fresh eyes. Having spent the past two years on teacher education accreditation; performance measures, impact and assessment are a familiar language. The Corporation for National and Community Service has simplified the assessment process by establishing focus areas with specified outputs and outcomes. The Virtual Conference provided excellent explanations of the need for valid and reliable data and how this data will be combined to tell a national story of volunteer impact on communities. In alignment with goal four of the strategic plan, fortify management operations and sustain responsive and accountable organizations; NCAP RSVP will improve data input into Volunteer Reporter and will utilize reports to identify gaps in service. For example, 165,000 acres burned in the fires that began Labor Day weekend, clearly there is a need for Environmental Stewardship and Disaster Services. A review of the available volunteer surveys and improved data entry of volunteer skills will allow for better sorting of volunteers. Again this allows for assessment of program weaknesses; for example, what skills sets need to be developed to meet the environmental and disaster services for our area? This affects other program decisions, such as who to target and how to recruit, development of training classes and materials. Current training is provided during orientation and periodic in-service instructions where required. Future plans include hosting specific training sessions based on volunteer interest and community needs. For example, NCAP is a community action agency and CAN (Community Action Network) conducts

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annual community assessments. There is a wide spread need for financial literacy throughout community populations, including kids/teens, college students, pre-marriage financial planning, single-parent, etc. RSVP volunteers with specialized financial skills can be recruited to mentor/educate individuals in financial literacy is an area for exploration and volunteer development. The current FGP manager has been with the Senior Services program for three years. Her knowledge of the community, the volunteers and stations is invaluable to the continuity of the project. But she too will retire one day and without a data collection system to help collect her knowledge, identifying the specific volunteer traits would take much longer. She knows almost all 350 volunteers on the roster. As the new director, this is my eighth week almost to the day. I have attended two policy council meetings at each location, Chadron and Crawford. I will have hosted four coffee socials, two in each location and we participated in the Second Annual Senior Living Expo where we recruited a new RSVP volunteer and had several serious inquiries into the Foster Grandparent program. In this time, our volunteers have helped prepare the newsletter and our currently calling from our Chadron office recruiting for the Salvation Army Bell Ringing campaign. Many volunteers personally drop their time sheets in the office and I am learning their stories. I have met volunteers in motorized scooters, on crutches, with age-related disabilities and developmental delays. One of our Advisory Council members is losing her sight. She was a registered nurse for many years and now she is the president of the Visually Impaired Persons, V.I.Ps program and organizes training for the community, she is 86. Our plan to recruit volunteers from all races, ethnicities, sexual orientation, and degrees of English, as well as veterans and military families is to continue to model the following required statement:

Non-Discrimination

For purposes of this paragraph, any program, project, or activity to which Corporation-supported volunteers are assigned is deemed to be receiving Federal financial assistance.

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(1) A sponsor or sponsor employee may not discriminate against an RSVP volunteer, or with respect to any activity or program, on the basis of race; color; national origin, including limited English proficiency; sex; age; religion; or political affiliation; or on the basis of disability, if the volunteer with a disability is qualified to serve.

(2) Sponsors are required to take affirmative action to overcome the effects of prior discrimination. Even in the absence of prior discrimination, a sponsor may take affirmative action to overcome conditions which resulted in limited participation.

We are a diverse group. People of diverse backgrounds are brought together through intentional planning; college students are mentored by seniors, volunteers assist with a mentoring/reading/English program for the Job Corps international student population. A recent volunteer survey indicated that in excess of 80% of our volunteers felt that their participation in the program has enriched their lives changing it for the better.

I have familiarized myself with Volunteer Match and look forward to utilizing technology to promote high impact volunteer opportunities, as well as continue to increase visibility of Senior Corp programs. "Volunteers recruiting volunteers" has always been the best way to recruit. I observed at the coffee social that if one volunteered to embroider tea towels for the Pine Bough Bazaar, then someone else would pipe up with, "Well then I'll make pillow cases." They are competitive and inspiring. We also make use of newspaper columns, news articles, local radio morning show, program newsletter and recruitment posters. We attend local events such as the Senior Living Expo, Pine Bough Bazaar, Fur Trade Days, community meetings (Dawes County Strategic Planning Committee, 40 Assets) and service organization meetings. RSVP volunteers' captain and coordinate bell ringers for the Salvation Army every holiday season. In this way, RSVP volunteers are ambassadors of the RSVP program. When a known volunteer calls someone and asks for 'help' or 'can you do this for me' it is a personal invitation to volunteer.

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Many volunteers will tell you they don't do it for the recognition, some even claiming that is why they do not turn in time sheets. A local volunteer that manages a food pantry told me, "Don't call me. Every time someone new starts in that office, they try to call me." So I asked, "May I ask why you do not want to be on the RSVP roster when you do so much?" She answered, "Our government is spread so thin. This is the work of churches, I think. Church members should be doing this work, not the government. I don't want to be a part of the burden." This is an interesting perception and one to be challenged with education and good recruiting. Current volunteers are recognized at an annual appreciation banquet, through newspaper articles, coverage of volunteer events in our bi-monthly news letter and during discussions at our monthly coffee socials and most importantly with a verbal or written "Thank You." Each of these recognition methods highlights what our volunteers are doing; they bring attention to the difference volunteers make in the community. Retention is achieved when volunteers are placed in service activities that allow them to use their experiences and skills to enhance their communities and their lives. The RSVP project director is responsible to ensure that volunteers and station supervisors have clear expectations of each other. This is achieved through orientation, MOU explanation, and site monitoring. RSVP signage acknowledges the station and the volunteer.

Program Management

In developing and managing new stations, a close screening is conducted ensuring that non-profit and public organizations meet the guidelines as established by the Corporation for National & Community Service, and that they accept the responsibility for assignment and supervision of volunteers. As outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), specific stations submit a yearly impact statement and agree to provide data through direct client surveys or other acceptable data collection methods, which emphasizes high quality programming. Volunteer opportunities are developed in accordance with community needs which are identified through local needs assessments, volunteer surveys, and requests for services from local sites and stations. Program information and data is

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submitted to the Chadron and Crawford RSVP Offices by volunteers on time sheets which provide information on where they worked, what type of work they did, how many hours they gave and how many people were impacted. This information is recorded utilizing the Volunteer Reporter Program which is user friendly and produces information formats that are compatible with reports required by the Corporation for National & Community Service. Additionally, the information is readily available and can easily be formatted to provide concrete impact facts and figures for the program, its volunteers and the effect of RSVP activities within the community. Based on the recent training with NESSCA and review of the Senior Corp Guide for Quality Assurance and Compliance Monitoring, I have a clear understanding of mandatory program requirements, the applicable Code of Federal Regulations and OMB Circulars. It is from this basis of understanding that I will assess the program and continue to make improvements.

As current volunteers drop by the office and in the course of monthly coffee socials and Advisory Council meetings, recent discussions have focused on an increasing need for senior companion services, including transportation. Western Community Health Resources and the local Catholic Church collaborated to host the second annual Senior Living Expo. NCAP Senior Volunteer Services Program was in attendance. We educated visitors and vendors on RSVP and FGP programs, signed up new volunteers, and networked with the Aging Office of Western Nebraska, Ponderosa Pines Assisted Living, the Housing Authority, and Western Community Health Resources (Commodity Supplemental Food Program and Nebraska Respite Network).

The use of data may reveal that some stations do not meet the criteria set forth in the grant requirements. If it is not possible to develop new opportunities within the station to meet the Corporation's strategic goals, then the Project Director will meet with both the station supervisor and the volunteer and explain the program guidelines. The station will be thanked and recognized through an 'Honorary Graduation Ceremony' and presented a Diploma of Service. A letter will be issued to

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both the station and the volunteer and the volunteer will be offered other opportunities. Continued improvement of the data input and use of reports available in Volunteer Reporter will allow the project to identify volunteers/stations by skill, focus area, assign objectives, track survey responses, assess impact. The following is a list of the current monitoring tools and schedule of collection. The project director will align data collection tools with those recommended by the Corporation.

RSVP Monitoring Tools

- * Memorandum of Understanding Monitor - MOUs are required to be renewed every three years; the renewal dates are monitored through the Volunteer Reporter Program. On the first of each month a "Memorandum of Understanding Status Report" is run which identifies stations with MOU renewals due.

- * Program Self Assessment Survey -- Survey is completed annually by SVS Director and Program Managers at the end of the grant cycle.

- * Advisory Council Self Assessment -- Survey completed by Council Members in July of each year.

- * RSVP Volunteer Satisfaction Survey -- Survey sent out during March of each year to collect data for PPR.

- * RSVP Volunteer Station Survey -- Survey sent out during March of each year to collect data for PPR.

The Fiscal Department of Northwest Community Action Partnership (the sponsoring agency) handles the record keeping and accounts payable and monitors the budget to make sure payment requests are for allowable expenses. Requests over \$500 must be approved by the Fiscal Department, the Board of Directors and the Executive Director before it can be paid. The checks are then signed by the Treasurer of the Board of Directors and the Executive Director. When project staff turns in time sheets, they go through a similar process. The Program Director has a monthly budget meeting with the Fiscal Director and the Executive Director. The program secures resources through strong community

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support throughout the service area from in-kind donations of meals, space, services, health screenings and gifts for volunteers. A Booster Club was developed and is a source of cash donations to the program (\$4,000 last year) which significantly helped to sustain the project while operating on reduced funding as a result of federal budget cuts. Additionally, the McGraw-Hill partnership is thriving and the publishing company continues to provide children's and educational books as an in-kind donation to the program; this contribution has exceeded \$40,000 for each of the last three years. These books are then given away to children in our service area to encourage reading. The projects budget also allocates a sufficient amount of unrestricted funds for the Project Directors time spent on fundraising and non-federal grant development; this time is specifically accounted for as a line item on bi-weekly time sheets.

Organizational Capability

The Dawes and Sioux County Retired and Senior Volunteer Program is sponsored by the Northwest Community Action Partnership (NCAP) whose central office is in Chadron Nebraska. NCAP is a nonprofit organization incorporated with the State of Nebraska on August 12, 1965. Programs include: Community Services (Homeless Relief, Food Pantry, Soup Kitchen, Emergency Assistance [for rent, mortgage, food, utilities and lodging], Sheridan County Transportation and After School Program), Head Start/Early Head Start, Housing/Weatherization, and Senior Volunteer Services (RSVP & FGP). The mission of NCAP is to "Help low-income families and individuals improve the quality of their lives and attain self-sufficiency." The service area for NCAP covers the five northern and northwest counties in Nebraska which are: Box Butte, Sioux, Dawes, Sheridan and Cherry Counties. The NCAP RSVP has been an active entity since 1986. The Senior Volunteer Services (SVS) Program Director is Leslie Caswell; a recent masters graduate of Chadron State College, active parent and community member for the past three years. Leslie has an extensive background in community service, volunteer management, assessment and marketing. Judy Hawthorne, the FGP/RSVP Administrative Assistant

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has been with the program for three years. She is a local rancher and business woman with experience in non-profit management and volunteer recruitment having previously worked with Every Woman Matters and Ponderosa Pines Senior Living. Amy Richardson, Interim Agency Executive Director, has 16 years of NCAP experience, and is the Early Head Start/Head Start Director. Amy reviews and approves all reports and grants for the agency; she also provides overall management and fiscal stewardship for the agency. The NCAP Fiscal Director, Betsy Diehl, has 15 years of experience in accounting and non-profit organizations. Fiscal record keeping and accounts payable are handled by the NCAP Fiscal Office, and subject to monthly budget meetings, and compliance with their fiscal policies and procedures. NCAP's Fiscal Office has managed funds for agency programs for 45 years and has had no audit findings in the last five years. Today those programs include Head Start, Early Head Start, Community Services, Weatherization and the Senior Corps Programs. Last year the funds managed by this office exceeded \$3.9 million funding. NCAP currently has 11 volunteers serving as its Board of Director which is subdivided into five committees (Resource Development, Personnel, Planning and By-Laws, Finance and the Executive) that govern NCAP's fiscal statements, budgets, accounting, personnel/fiscal policies and procedures; they also conduct an annual fiscal internal audit and fraud/risk assessment annually. Additionally, they serve to provide connections to community resources and assist in agency's strategic planning process. The duties and responsibilities of staff and administrators are well defined through agency job descriptions; supervisors are responsible to conduct annual evaluations on their staff, as well as wage comparability surveys and self-assessments in order to keep improving staff, programs and services. Agency personnel and fiscal policies and procedures manuals are given out to each employee and followed implicitly; they are reviewed annually and amended to reflect changes in regulations. The personnel and fiscal policies are progressively approved by Program Directors, the Policy Council and finally the Board of Directors. The Fiscal Department monitors all agency programs to ensure compliance with

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OMB Circulars A-110, A-122 and A-133 and all additional grant requirements and regulations.

Self-assessment and evaluation of the program is an important aspect of keeping it vital and effective; this is a primary function of the RSVP Advisory Council. The council is made up of nine individuals who are a representative cross section of the population with members from each community. The Advisory Council conducts an annual self-assessment which is then reviewed, evaluated and compared with information gathered from the Volunteer Station Impact Survey and the Volunteer Satisfaction Survey. The combination of these three inputs gives a good picture of how the program is working and where we need to make improvements. This assessment, information gathering and evaluation have taken place at the end of the grant year. However, the goal is through more thorough use of Volunteer Reporter, a monthly assessment of station activity, volunteer hours, individuals impacted, improved training, and increased station, and service activity opportunities can be monitored. This will allow for better project adjustments to meet primary focus areas and other community priority targets and outcomes.

The program secures resources through strong community support throughout the service area from in-kind donations of meals, space, services, health screenings and gifts for volunteers. Local share amounts to \$6000 per year of unrestricted funds and has remained consistent for three years. The City Council ensured ongoing support for programs receiving Keno funds, of which RSVP receives approximates \$2400 per year. A Booster Club was developed and is a source of cash donations to the program (\$4,000 last year) which significantly helped to sustain the project while operating on reduced funding as a result of federal budget cuts. This program will be expanded. Additionally, the McGraw-Hill partnership is thriving and the publishing company continues to provide children's and educational books as an in-kind donation to the program; this contribution has exceeded \$40,000 for each of the last three years. These books are then given away to children in our service area to encourage reading. The projects budget also allocates a sufficient amount of unrestricted funds for the

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Project Directors time spent on fundraising and non-federal grant development; this time is specifically accounted for as a line item on bi-weekly time sheets.

Other

Not Applicable

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

PNS Amendment: Not Required