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Executive Summary

RSVP of Southwestern Connecticut serves 8 towns in lower Fairfield County; Norwalk, New Canaan, Greenwich, Westport, Weston, Wilton, Darien and Stamford. 255 Volunteers will serve seniors, children, and veterans in this region.

The primary focus area is Healthy Futures. Activities include transportation for seniors and veterans to medical appointments, telephone reassurance to frail seniors at risk for falls and social isolation, emergency food distributions through food pantries and senior health education programs.

In other focus areas the education activities address improving literacy levels for children at the preschool and K-12 levels. These include reading to pre school children at the NEON Child Development Program, tutoring and mentoring in school and community afterschool programs, and city wide book distributions for children in Norwalk. Economic and financial literacy programs include GED, and Vita Tax preparation. Capacity building includes service at Red Cross blood drives and securing of donations for programs and families in need.

A network of 38 stations covering all services areas of SW CT serve as sites for activities in all focus areas. Organizations volunteers serve include The Norwalk Senior Services Coordinating Council, Food Pantries serving Norwalk, Stamford and Surrounding areas, the Southwest Area on Aging, Westport, Weston and Wilton Departments of Human Services and Norwalk Reads.

At the end of the performance period, at least 3500 adults and 1500 children will be reached. The CNCS federal investment of \$59,814 will be supplemented by \$29,792 of non-federal resources.

Strengthening Communities

Norwalk Economic Opportunity Now, Inc. RSVP's sponsoring agency (NEON) is one of the twelve Community Action Agencies designated by the State of Connecticut to provide community

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development and emergency assistance services to economically disadvantaged persons.

RSVP of Southwestern CT serves eight towns in lower Fairfield County, State of Connecticut. These are Greenwich, Stamford, Darien, New Canaan, Norwalk, Wilton, Weston, and Westport. The total Males in this Catchment area is 170,650. The total males over 55 are 36,256. The total Females is 182,906. The total females over 55 are 46,515. The total over 55 population (M and F) is 23.41%. Research indicates that 85% of seniors prefer to age in place and remain in their own homes

The minority population of African-Americans and Hispanics is concentrated in Norwalk and Stamford. The surrounding towns have less than 2% minority. Norwalk's poverty rate is significantly higher than the other municipalities in the area. However there are increasingly large numbers of older women in the wealthier areas "who are living on the edge" falling short of economic security each year.

The percent of adults 65 years and older living in poverty in this catchment area is .79%. Looking at the elderly population in Norwalk, they will have a 12% significant increase between 2000-2014; the most significant increase will be among those 85 and over. Additionally, sixty-four percent (64%) of the elderly population have incomes less than 80% of the median household incomes and of those 41% are extremely low income. The data source for this material is the NEON community needs assessment which draws on the 2010 census material, demographic material ,realtor reports and other relevant sources.

The Map the Meal Gap 2012 for the 4th Congressional District which is the area served by RSVP of SW Connecticut documents Food Insecurity rate 13.6% Estimated number of food insecure

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individuals 96,500. Incomes within the food insecure populations: % below SNAP threshold of 185% poverty 35%, % above Snap threshold of 185% poverty 65%. Map the Meal Gaps food insecurity rates are determined using data from the 2001-2010 Current Population Survey on individuals in food insecure households and data from the 2010 American Community Survey on medial households incomes, unemployment rates, poverty rates and face and ethnic demographics.

To meet these community needs, RSVP has chosen Healthy Futures as its primary focus. 43% of RSVP volunteers (110) will be placed in activities in this primary focus area.

RSVP has the infrastructure in place to manage RSVP volunteers and their stations to address the needs in Healthy Futures. RSVP partners with a number of organizations and agencies, which in addition to assessing the needs of their target population also provide worksites/stations where activities are held to address this need. Memorandums of Agreement are signed with each of these stations. These include the Westport and Weston Departments of Human Services, The Norwalk Senior Services Coordinating Council, Christian Community Action Food Pantry serving Norwalk, Person to Person Food Pantries serving Stamford and surrounding towns, Wilton Department of Human Services Food Pantry and the Southwest Area on Aging, which trains and coordinates the Health Education "Live Well program" in SW CT. Following are the specific activities that will take place.

The RSVP Medical transportation program serves the towns Westport and Weston. People ages 55-74 are 20% (5093) in Westport and 17% (1684) in Weston. On average men have seven and women ten years of life expectancy after their advisable driving age. The Departments of Human Service in Westport and Weston have identified transportation as a central issue for seniors. RSVP volunteers

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provide rides to medical appointments for seniors who register for the program with the Department of Human Services. We anticipate that at least 100 seniors will be served by the program and at least 50 will report that the program has increased their social support needs as well as helping them remain independent by securing rides to needed medical appointments.

The American Community Survey released September 2012 found that 15.1% of Norwalk residents are living below the federal poverty level. Norwalk's Senior Services Coordinating Council is dedicated to making it possible for these low income and moderate income seniors to be independent in their own homes. This Norwalk Council--the Senior Umbrella--has determined that many of the elderly clients they serve, who live alone, are at risk for falls and social isolation. Our telephone reassurance program targets these elder adults in the Norwalk area providing increased social support for those at risk of isolation and falls. Volunteers will document calls to at least 30 seniors and initiate any necessary emergency action according to prescribed procedures.

RSVP Volunteers serving at the food pantries in SW CT provide needed emergency food for the elderly in Norwalk, Wilton, Stamford, Darien and surrounding areas. Volunteers distribute food to eligible families during the hours that the pantry is open and help shelve food during deliveries. Volunteers are scheduled in 3-4 hours shifts at least once a week. The anticipated number of people receiving emergency food, based on 2011 figures is 3500.

Our Health Education program targeting seniors in Southwest Connecticut will enable them to manage chronic disease. Currently 80% of older adults are living with at least one chronic condition and 50% have at least two chronic conditions. The Live Well program is a chronic disease Self-management program for older adults who have any of the major chronic conditions

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such as heart disease, cancer or stroke. Trained RSVP volunteers will conduct workshops for seniors two and half hours once a week for six weeks in community settings in the towns of SW CT.

It is anticipated that at least 3500 seniors will be reached through the programs in the primary area of Healthy Futures . Outcomes will be documented in the Medical Transportation program and the Telephone Reassurance program. At least 70 seniors in these activities will report that they have received additional social support..

Another focus areas which RSVP of SW CT will address is education.

Programs will include literacy programs for children in preschool head start programs and city wide book distributions for children at risk in the Norwalk area. Community education programs K-12 will include tutoring at public and private schools and tutoring and mentoring at community sites in the SW Region.

The Kennedy Center identifies gaps in transportation and provides transportation solutions for the South West CT region. www.thekennedycenterinc.org The Southwest Regional Mobility Project in conjunction with the CT. Department of transportation and planning organizations has determined there is a need for veterans in the urbanized areas of Stamford and Norwalk to access transportation for personal needs such as shopping and visits to appointments in the area.

www.knowhowtogoCT.org .. RSVP will assist with the recruiting of volunteer drivers and will provide insurance for RSVP volunteer drivers once they are recruited.

Recruitment and Development

A variety of approaches are used to recruit volunteers and provide them with an experience that will maximize their talents and interests while making a meaningful contribution to the community.

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A key approach is personal contact. High Quality RSVP opportunities are developed with and presented to appropriate target groups in the community representing diverse groups in the community. These include the Norwalk Senior Services Coordinating Council, the Westport Commission on Senior Services, The Westport Coordinating Committee for Senior Services, , The South West Area Aging Advisory Council , P.I.E.S The Stamford Partnership in Elderly Services, The Norwalk and Stamford DOVIA Chapters (Directors of Volunteer Agencies) , and The Food , Fuel and Shelter Council of Norwalk.

Local chapters of the AARP, senior centers and groups specific to Southwestern Connecticut such as the YMCA's Y' men s are also a source for volunteer recruitment. Contact is made through attendance at Chamber of Commerce events and health fairs targeting senior groups. We will also be working with The Kennedy Center's mobility management project which provides coordination and marketing of transportation options to veterans.

Current volunteers are encouraged to share with their friends the opportunities available and the satisfaction of working with RSVP .Our volunteer handbook has been redesigned and streamlined. We have also developed a handbook for our volunteer stations which outlines their responsibilities.

In addition, a variety of media outlets are used. Press releases of volunteer activities are sent to the local press on a regular basis. Feature stories and photos highlighting RSVP opportunities are also submitted. In addition to the local press, information on RSVP activities are inserted when ever possible in local newsletters, such as the Interfaith Council bulletins and senior center newsletters.

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In recent years the Internet is also a source for recruitment. RSVP is listed on a number of sites including Volunteer Match.org., Idealist.org, ,volunteer solutions.org., mentor.org. and serve.gov. All inquiries are followed up by a personal contact. We also have our own website www.rsvpswct.org, which is regularly updated and is linked to other programs in the area.

Once a volunteer expresses an interest in a particular program, a personal interview is conducted. Every effort is made to match an individual's skill and interest with an appropriate placement in the community.

Training and Technical Assistance

Volunteer Training varies according to the level of technical assistance required. It is usually conducted onsite by the agency where the activity takes place . It may also be conducted in partnership with RSVP staff. The level and length of the training varies according to programmatic needs. For example the training for the RSVP volunteer workshop leaders in the Health Education "Live Well " program is a four day intensive conducted by the SW Area Agency on Aging. A training on the use of the internet calendar used by the dispatchers in the RSVP Medical Transpiration program is conducted by RSVP staff and may be concluded in an afternoon. The Commission on Culture and Tourism provides one on- one training on site for tourism counselors and offers tours for volunteers to state attractions to familiarize them with tourism attractions in Connecticut.

Volunteers reading to pre-school children at the NEON Child Development Program are provided with an extensive orientation by NEON staff which includes information on providing meaningful literacy enrichment activities for preschoolers. An annual follow up session is held to share methods for increasing effectiveness of the service.

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The RSVP project Director ensures that RSVP staff is given appropriate training. Depending upon the available finances, staff attends training sessions, conferences and periodic workshops pertinent to their positions such as aging issues, computer training, legal issues and forums on recruitment and retention of volunteers.

Recognition

Volunteers are recognized for their efforts. Due to recent budget constraints, this past year all volunteers serving a minimum of 20 hours received an individual personalized certificate accompanied by a gift card to a local establishment. Several small events were held to honor volunteers locally.

In addition volunteers are nominated for and honored by other community organizations for their service. This year our lead volunteer dispatcher from the RSVP Medical Transportation program was recognized for her outstanding contributions by the Volunteer Action Center of Coastal Fairfield County at the Annual Volunteer Recognition Reception.

Program Management

Under the general direction of the chief executive office of NEON, , The RSVP Project Director has responsibility for the development and day to day operation of RSVP of SWCT in coordination with the sponsor, NEON, Inc. and the RSVP Advisory Council.

The Outreach Coordinator in our Central Office in addition to the recruitment of senior volunteers through outreach activities including public speaking, marketing and community networking, provides intake, support and placement of volunteers in community service organizations. The Outreach Coordinator in Wilton in addition to recruitment is also responsible for follow-up and

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support of the volunteers in Wilton., documenting their hours and responding to needs in the Wilton community. The RSVP Advisory council, consisting of representative community members, is available for assistance with program design and evaluation.

Special attention will be directed to working with organizations that will enable volunteer stations to meet needs in the other focus areas of education, economic and financial literacy and capacity building. RSVP is a member of the steering committee of Norwalk Reads which includes members of the Norwalk Housing Authority, Kiwanis, Norwalk Libraries and Innovative Kids. Together the committee plans and develops Educational programs in Norwalk. RSVP is also a member of Norwalk ACTSs a broad based organization addressing educational needs in the community. In addition RSVP works closely with our sponsor NEON to recruit volunteers for the NEON Child Development Program, Vita Tax Preparation and Norwalk Works GED and ESL programs.

All worksites which request RSVP volunteers are required to complete a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) , a brief Impact Statement, and a volunteer job description which are on file in our offices. Each volunteer is interviewed and recommended to a placement that will take into consideration their past experience, and interest. Volunteers are supervised at worksites by the station contact who is informed of what is needed to comply with RSVP requirements. A volunteer station handbook has been developed which clearly outlines all station responsibilities. Volunteers are trained by the worksites as needed. In some instances, an orientation or additional training may be provided as appropriate by the RSVP staff.

Periodic visits are made to volunteer's stations and RSVP outreach coordinators are in regular contact with the station managers. Feedback is solicited from the station manager and also by the volunteers

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to insure that the placement is a meaningful one for them. This is particularly important with a new assignment. When needed, appropriate suggestions are made to the station coordinator of ways to improve the organization of volunteer participation.

Graduating volunteer Stations

We have decided to "outsource" our longstanding mailing team volunteers. Many of the community agencies (stations) that we work with periodically request the service of these volunteers to complete mailings for their programs. We will no longer be coordinating the requests for these mailings from our office. We have informed these volunteers by letter that many of these agencies are still interested in having volunteers continue to help them when they have a large mailing. We will be providing these agencies with a list of all the volunteers that they may contact directly for this service. We have asked the RSVP volunteers to let us know if they do not wish to be on the list which will be given to a few selected agencies. We have gently reminded these volunteers that we always have many different volunteer opportunities available at RSVP to serve the community and if interested to call our office.

We will also be reducing the number of RSVP volunteers in our program with the CT Commission on Culture and Tourism. Due to major planned renovations, this program has moved from its location in at the Welcome Center in Darien CT to a temporary facility in Fairfield. CT. Many of the present volunteers have elected not to continue with the program at its new location.

Process for assessing project performance and management of information and data to demonstrate performance measurement of the project and its volunteers.

To ensure ongoing program accountability and measurement of National Performance Measure

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outputs and outcomes, all data from volunteer service is entered and stored in our Data Base, The Volunteer Reporter. This includes the number of volunteers recruited for a project, the hours served and depending on the particular project the out put and or outcome of performance measures for that project. The type of specific output data collected reported depends on the project. Specific surveys are used to demonstrate outcome. For example the RSVP medical transportation program keeps records of all medical appointments reached. For this program an individual RSVP Medical Transportation Survey of program participants is conducted annually to ascertain the quality and impact of the program and the perceived additional social support. Attendance records of educational programs, and tracking of program activities are kept and reported by classroom teachers or an appropriate designated person at each community site.

A volunteer survey is used to determine the satisfaction of the volunteers and the perceived value of their volunteer experience.

System for managing project resources, both financial and in-kind to ensure accountability and effect use of available resources.

Monthly Budget Reports of Expenses for all RSVP Grants are reported to the RSVP program by the NEON finance department. All budget requests for Supplies, Printing, Travel Reimbursement, Training, and other project resources are reviewed by the RSVP project Director for approval before they are submitted to the finance department of our sponsor. These are then subject to final approved by the finance department before any checks are issued. Travel expenditures are matched with individual signatures of the volunteers hours driven and sign-off by the station supervisor before they

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are approved.

It is the project director's responsibility to ensure that all expenditures are in line with project goals and objectives for the year.

Donations which are received from organizations and individuals who recognize the value of our contribution to the community are recorded and accounted for.

Grants are applied for to supplement the federal funding received from the corporation. We also receive some funding from local governments. We report project progress to the town of Wilton which reviews this annual data and to date has included RSVP in its annual town budget to supplement the salary of our Wilton Outreach Coordinator. A grant is also received from The Town of Norwalk. This is applied for and progress is reported through our sponsorship's application to the Town Government. In kind contributions from our sponsor also help support the project. We have applied for and received a grant from the Connecticut Light and Power to support our Knitting program.

Organizational Capability

NEON's mission is to reduce the conditions of poverty and to help low-income families and residents to become self-sufficient through the delivery of direct program services and advocacy at the state, federal and community level. NEON provides a comprehensive human service environment for economically vulnerable and at-risk families. NEON is a 12 million dollar agency which typically serves over 12,000 area residents each year .It provides needed services and programs to ages 3- 65. Seventy-three percent of the families that NEON serves are at or below the poverty level. A community needs assessment is conducted every three years with yearly updates. NEON provides coordination of resources within both the public and private service delivery systems. Services are

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provided under the oversight of a Board of Director's: one third elected from the target communities that are served by NEON, one third from the private sector and one third from the public sector. The RSVP Director reports to the NEON Board to review programs, challenges, and budgetary issues.

The program is fully staffed as determined by the contract. Teri Klein, Project Director an MPH from Yale School of Public Health, has 17 years of prior administrative experience with the CT. State Department of Health Services. She works closely with NEON's Chief Financial Officer, Norma Brown, Chief Program officer, Mary Mann, Chief Operating Officer, Chiquita Stephenson, and Interim President and CEO, Patricia Wilson Pheanious. All have extensive experience in the field. RSVP 's two outreach Coordinators Nancy Pratt, and Del Overby have over 20 years of combined experience. NEON's Chief Financial Officer monitors all expenditures, transactions, procurement and payroll procures in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. Program finance and grant compliance is audited as part of an independent agency audit. The 2010 audit has been completed and is on file within the finance department as is the 2009 and earlier audits. Fiscal policies and procedures are in place relating to petty cash, dual signature checking purchase orders and check requests. Hours worked are recorded through an electronic system .Donations to the agency are documented. Purchase order requisitions are approved by the director and the finance department. Invoices for all purchases are paid by the finance department. Costs are allocated in accordance with budget approvals. Staff and training hours are dictated by the appropriate grant and monitored for compliance.

NEON has been the recipient of federally funded programs for a number of decades (RSVP, ACF Head Start, Community Development Block Grant, and State pass-through grants such as Social Services Block Grants, Community Services Block Grants, and TFA Occupational Skills). NEON has in place

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fiscal internal controls to ensure the proper expenditure of Federal funds and a financial monitoring system to oversee, review, and authorize income/expenses for each contract. NEON financial staff (i.e., accountants) is each assigned to specific Projects (contract budgets) to analyze, monitor, and to work with appropriate Director/Supervisor to maintain proper management of awarded funds. Darice Herne, senior accountant is assigned to work with RSVP. There are separate accounting records for each of the 3 different cost centers. Fiscal reports are submitted in a timely manner.

The agency has the capacity through diverse funding to maintain a number of facilities, adequate supplies and equipment for all its programs and services. The Finance Department has in place approved policies and procedures for all program expenditures, including travel. All NEON programs are monitored each year by the Director of Administrative Services., Jackie Lovegren. The monitoring tool, which includes findings and corrective action plans if needed, is signed by the Chief of Staff, Chief Program Officer, Director of Administrative Services, and Chief Financial Officer. There is a system for Self Assessments of all agencies within NEON which is conducted regularly.

Every three years NEON participates in an agency self-evaluation which is reviewed by an external agency. Corrective Action plans are developed for improvement for each area and are monitored by Director of Administrative Services, the Chief Financial Officer , the Chief Program Officer and the Chief of Staff.

Transparency in the use of non-federal funds and annual reports of program effectiveness are used to sustain continuation of these funds.

Other

NA

PNS Amendment (if applicable)