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Executive Summary

Senior Resources of Freeborn County is applying to sponsor Southern Tri-County RSVP, Retired Senior Volunteer Program. The original goal of Senior Resources, to provide seniors with services other than housing, has evolved 'to provide services to seniors and other persons of need that assist in their ability to be independent, active and a participating member of their community'. Some of these services include Family Caregiver Network, Guardianship Services, Ride/Chore Services and Senior Advocacy.

Senior Resources of Freeborn County requests \$24,207 to work with 492 volunteers in Tri-County RSVP. It includes Freeborn, Faribault and Martin Minnesota Counties.

The primary focus area will be Healthy Futures with service categories will include food distribution, transportation services, tax consulting and tutoring, health education and elementary child literacy. These efforts focus on our need for healthy futures for independently living seniors and accessible economic opportunities.

Trained RSVP volunteers will incorporate education via the Simply Good Eating Program, Bone Builders, AARP Tax Aide Guides and Minnesota Reading Corps tutoring strategies. Outcomes for recipients and volunteers will show more socialization, better quality of life through improved food choices reducing obesity, increased exercise to strengthen bones/reduce falls and accuracy in tax payments.

Strengthening Communities

Located on Minnesota's Southern border, Freeborn, Faribault and Martin Tri-Counties have 66,648 residents in 2,131 square miles. It's a transition area of modest business centers of 300 to 18,000 residents. Major employers are food or grain processors, commodity transportation and medical services supported by two intersecting interstate systems. School districts are key employers in these prairie towns serving large farms with fewer, smaller families. Our unemployment rate is 5.9%. More

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than a third of the population is over age 55; two-thirds of those are in the 55 - 64 age group.

2010 census data shows 9.8% of Tri-County households over age 65 are below poverty level; median household income is \$10,487 less than the state average. Over 83% of the population is White with rapid growth in Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Asian and African populations. Ten percent of the 60+ population is ethnically diverse; the total population has decreased by 4.5 %.

In each county, The United Way, Chambers of Commerce and local medical centers all include Senior Resources as an asset for referral of older residents and families. These organizations partnered with Senior Resources/RSVP in a Community Needs Assessment completed August-September 2012.

Members of the Senior Resources Board reflect our area including: retired farmers, educators, elementary school principal, business owners, an insurance agency employee, AARP Tax Volunteer, RNs, care facility manager, church employee and representatives from the Southern Tri-County RSVP Advisory Council. The RSVP Advisory Council, directed to guide and evaluate RSVP programs, includes a diversity of interests, gender and ages from the three counties.

Negotiated station agreements outlining the tasks of each community partner, Senior Resources and RSVP projects ensure relationship roles and responsibilities. Criteria for these selections include mutually served populations, ability to respond to community need coordinating services and clear communication systems.

Marketing and news releases via all media report impacts of projects in the communities. Weekly news columns highlight RSVP efforts needing volunteers. We partner in the Annual Martin Luther King Day Breakfast highlighting volunteer opportunities. A Volunteer Fair per county celebrates volunteers across all agencies and invites increased public participation. Partner agencies provide letters of support.

Ethnic diversity is a priority in services we provide and in our staff, Senior Resources Board, the RSVP Advisory Council and station volunteers. Partnerships with Southeast Minnesota Area Agency on

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Aging, local Community Action Agencies and Head Start increase our capacity to reach Hispanic and other culturally diverse populations.

Senior Resources of Freeborn County, the sponsoring agency, is recognized for quality guidance and services. Support from local governments, Chambers of Commerce, United Way and other benevolent groups grow. RSVP volunteers will serve at elementary schools, the National Vitality Center, food shelves, ride services and tax aide programs. These provide highly visible volunteer opportunities requiring specific skills. Events honoring National Guard, volunteer firefighters and first responders will be community wide.

Senior Resources/RSVP provides training for volunteer managers, Senior Servers Network/CLOVE discussions and workshops for support and expectations of volunteers. Many agencies depend on RSVP members including Ride Services, Respite, Family Caregivers, Tax Aide Services and all food shelves. Successful single event projects, Martin Luther King Breakfast, Cancer Bike-a-thon and Rendezvous School Days, rely heavily on RSVP. A Family Services Collaborative Facilitator illustrates RSVP value: "We are able to reach many, many more families and youth because of our partnership. We are so appreciative of the time and effort Southern Tri-County RSVP dedicates to this initiative."

Recruitment and Development

The volunteer's experience is supported through pre-post interview and survey of interests, reference to past work positions and station manager training processes. Job descriptions are clarified regularly for volunteers to determine what they are asked to do, how to do it and the time involved. Volunteer discussions and special events build their increased awareness of the importance of volunteering for life satisfaction, the benefits to their health and to their communities. Senior residents and agencies in the Tri-County Area value the community and personal benefits of volunteering.

The Southern Tri-County volunteer corps has grown steadily. Much of that growth can be attributed to word of mouth, media releases and staff recruitment of volunteers. The recently completed 2012

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Community Assessment was designed and distributed by RSVP Advisory Council volunteers. Issues highlighted in the survey alerted non-enrolled RSVP respondents to new volunteer opportunities. RSVP members are provided with talking points and encouraged to share the results of their efforts as they contribute to the website and social media. We have a leadership role in annual Volunteer Recognition and Martin Luther King Day events which highlight volunteer opportunities within our communities.

Project staff visit stations to determine what is involved in activities and to advise station managers on safety considerations and tasks volunteers are interested in doing. Volunteers are encouraged to specify activities they like and dislike so they can be assigned to appropriate tasks. During the year volunteers are thanked for their efforts with the quarterly newsletter, annual RSVP recognition event, Volunteer/Leadership workshop with business rewards and separate recognition events at their stations. Most volunteers request commitments focused on family centered activities or those providing scheduling that connects them with familiar acquaintances.

Good relationships with station managers and the media assure positive attitudes toward volunteer participation. Outreach through speaking opportunities at service clubs, church groups, media visibility and basic social networking improves recruitment. Volunteers respond well to recognition through nominations for awards, personal hand written thank you notes and various special events. Newsletters remind members of their part in RSVP and help to retain current members. Volunteers are always encouraged to and do recruit others to participate as volunteers. An invitation to volunteer can open a door previously unknown for increasing socialization and well-being for senior residents. Specific task training for volunteers is identified as the responsibility of the stations, but RSVP staff participate in orientation sessions and help stations to be aware of important issues via CLOVE discussions. Annual station site visits underscore the relationship with RSVP, the station's needs and access to current documentation processes.

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All staff participate actively in local and state associations for volunteer administration and technical assistance. Training for staff includes participation in workshops and conferences, networking with other Senior Corps staff and study of appropriate materials. Advisory Council members are invited to participate in trainings when appropriate.

Program Management

As agencies realize the benefits from skilled, retired and senior volunteers, they turn more often to Southern Tri-County RSVP to ensure that their projects' efforts are successful. Continued collaboration and a reputation for helpfulness have expanded the integration of Senior Resources services into their communities.

The Community Assessment project incorporated questions pertinent to all local funding agencies as we work to dedicate our combined resources to tackle issues across the area. Review of this data informs this Senior Corps RSVP grant, is shared among the partner organizations and compared to their previous surveys.

The general public in three counties, Faribault, Martin and Freeborn, responded to either the online or paper/pencil surveys totaling 191 responses. In a brief summary:

The top 3 focus areas in priority order -- education; economic opportunity tied with senior citizens; healthy futures

The Education top issues--on-time graduation; literacy; bullying

Top Economic Opportunity issues---hunger programs/community dining; retraining/adult literacy

Key Senior Citizen issues --- social activity and social services support; elder abuse

The Healthy Futures issues--- physical activities for all ages tied with senior social service programs; medical access/transportation

They prefer to get volunteer information from friends or neighbors then via newspaper and email.

This profile shows that volunteers prefer to do as much as they can and they would talk to friends and

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family about their volunteer experiences.

This compares favorably with the Albert Lea citizen survey completed in March 2012 showing that 95% had provided help to a friend or neighbor in the previous year; volunteering was higher than the national benchmark. 'Opportunities to volunteer' was marked as excellent/good by 74%. One of the least popular activities was participating in a recreation program or activity.

Training provided by Minnesota Association of Volunteer Administrators is secured to increase skills of stations' volunteer managers and RSVP staff particularly in building relationships with 'boomer' volunteers and immigrant communities.

Managing the program for quality is an ongoing priority with Senior Resources and the Southern Tri-County RSVP. Needs of the stations' volunteer assignments are identified through discussion with the station, the Advisory Council and community focus groups. Goals for projects are collaboratively set with measurable targets to be reviewed semi-annually.

These placements contribute to marketing, data gathering /tabulation and recruitment tasks. Grants supporting specific projects of Senior Resources / RSVP have continued from local philanthropic foundations, major industries and Wal-Mart. These include Bone Builders equipment and reading tutor gift books. In addition, Senior Resources supports Senior Advocacy, Guardianship Services, Family Caregiver Network, Ride Services, Chore Services, and AARP Tax Aide Services through administrative, fiscal, space, clerical, internet and phone services.

Informal in-kind agreements are negotiated to provide office spaces in Faribault and Martin Counties. These include work space, communications, marketing office equipment use and storage. New funds will be recruited on a per-capita basis with the Joint Powers Public Health Department.

Survey, attendance logs and focus group reports provide impact data. It is gathered by trained volunteers reviewed by both STC-RSVP and the stations to guide the project to successful outcomes. Data is held in hard copy with electronic tally and summarizations.

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Inventory of project materials and equipment is regularly updated and kept in STCRSVP computers. RSVP Advisory Council completes the annual review.

Organizational Capability

Senior Resources, SR, has successfully administered programs and Title III funds for senior clients in various stages and needs for 33 years. This includes transportation, chore services, advocacy, family caregiver support, guardianship and volunteerism. Each program of the SR is unique in task while united in purpose.

SR Executive Director, Annette Petersen's new position, provides daily administrative support for the agency, departments and staff. Annette has been in the Senior Resources Agency for fifteen years.

Programs that receive Title III federal funds also receive direct support from the host agency through program review, assessments and workshops. Overall financial management of the agency is the responsibility of the SR Executive Director supported by bookkeeping services. The Director reports the agency's federal, state and local financial position monthly to the Finance Committee of the Board ultimately the entire Board for monthly approval.

Tri-County RSVP, directed by Patricia Stumme, has primary responsibility for Freeborn County and supervision for Faribault and Martin Counties. Pat, in her third year with RSVP, brings to the program more than 30 years of experience in family services, informal adult education and volunteer management. Newly hired independent contractors, Marge Krugler and Carol Soma assist Southern Tri-County RSVP projects in Martin and Faribault Counties respectively.

Administrative Assistant, Marilyn Borland, contributes as receptionist for RSVP and has been with SR for six and a half years

SR maintains financial data on a computerized, fully integrated accounting system. The fiscal year of the agency runs January 1 to December 31. In December the Board of Directors adopts the official fiscal budget. Within five months of the fiscal year close, an independent auditing firm audits the SR

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financial records. Findings of the audit are reported to the Board; a copy is given to each funding agency, organization or governmental unit. No audit findings were reported in the past eight years . SR is organized under the Internal Revenue Code, Section 501(C)3 as a non-profit organization . Charitable donations from contributors are tax deductible.

Client records are maintained separately within each program area. Hard copies of clientele information are kept confidential and in secured, safekeeping facilities.

Daily financial activities such as deposits, writing checks and computerized posting are assigned to the agency's bookkeeper, Diane Schewe. Program managers are responsible for their own program's budgets.

Ten volunteer members of the SR Board of Directors is the governing board with two members sitting on the RSVP Advisory Council.

Project assessments are completed on all of the programs of SR through established criteria for individual programs. This includes evaluations of service delivery, plans for objectives, rationale and outcomes as well as inputs, activities and outputs using indicators from various data sources, surveys and questionnaires.

Volunteer Handbook revisions are updated bi-annually. Changes are published in the program newsletters, announced at the Annual Recognition Events and made available on the SR website.

The SR employee manual is reviewed regularly and approved by the Board. All aspects of office management, purchasing procedures, adequate equipment / supplies, adequate secure space, handling of staff expenses and travel policies are reviewed annually as program needs change.

With ongoing evaluations and reporting of programs within SR and projects of Southern Tri-County RSVP, accountability and self-assessment are continuous. Improvements in best practices come from listening and attending to suggestions and needs of our clientele. As a living organization, improvements have continued to keep SR a strong, viable agency and superb sponsor for Tri-County

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RSVP.

Other

Could find no guidance for this in either the NOFO or the NOFA.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

None at this time.