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Executive Summary

Part II -- Section A. Executive Summary: An estimated 600 unduplicated volunteers will serve. They will assist in one of the following areas: Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures or Veterans & Military Families by performing but not limited to one of the following service activities: emergency preparedness, free tax preparation for income eligible taxpayers, youth literacy tutors, migratory bird counters, senior dining/congregate dining workers, hospice volunteers. The types of populations they serve or will serve are focused on but not limited to: seniors, veterans, disabled, single parent households all found within 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. This network of service will be accomplished through fifty one approved and compliant RSVP sites in partnership but not limited to: the Salvation Army, American Red Cross, IRS, MN Dept. of Revenue, two MN school districts, MN Department of Natural Resources, MN Board on Aging, Land of the Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging, Nutrition Services Incorporated from each county & the Elder Network. The primary focus area of this project is Economic Opportunity. At the end of the 12-month performance period, 650 economically disadvantaged individuals will have received financial literacy services, 14 economically disadvantaged individuals, including homeless individuals, transitioned into safe, healthy, affordable housing. The minimum CNCS federal investment of \$55,066 will be supplemented by \$30,186 non-federal resources.

Strengthening Communities

Part II -- Section B. Strengthening Communities Describe the community you serve. West Central MN Communities Action, Inc.'s (WCMCA) Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) serves five Minnesota counties in the west central part of the state which are the following: Douglas, Grant, Pope, Stevens and Traverse. The following statistics are according to the U.S. Census Bureau: State and County Quick Facts which is data derived from Population Estimates, American Community Survey, Census of Population and Housing, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, State and

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County Housing Unit Estimates, County Business Patterns, Non-employer Statistics, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits, and the Consolidated Federal Funds Report which was last revised on Friday, December 23, 2011, this five county area unfortunately exceeds the percentage of persons below Minnesota's state poverty level with an average of 11.2% while in comparison with the state's 10.9%. The average of this five county area median value of owner-occupied housing units from 2005-2009 of \$119,420 is almost half that of the state's average which is \$207,000. Of the tax returns prepared by RSVP volunteers at WCMCA, the AGI (Adjusted Gross Income) of \$14,560 for the tax season of 2011 was well below 100% of the federal poverty guidelines. The great recession that our country currently faces is demonstrated clearly by statistics from rural west central Minnesota when looking closely at the median household income. In the five county service area that WCMCA's RSVP program is located in, the average median household income is \$45,979 while the state's average is \$55,621 - a ten thousand dollar difference. The local rural economy presents significant challenges due to lack of employment opportunities as well as under employment in this area of the state. Demographically, WCMCA's service area has the highest percentage of persons sixty-five (65) years and over in the state of Minnesota. That five county average is 21.2% in comparison with the state's average of 12.9%. This point alone commands that attention of elected officials and their platforms. For instance, there are 10,138 veterans in the five county area. Keeping in mind that only one community in this five county area is considered or defined by the US Census Bureau as a micropolitan; Alexandria, Minnesota. The percentage of female vs. males is evenly divided at 50.2% on average while the number of white persons serves the majority of racial diversity at 96.2% of persons living in the five county area. Geographically, WCMCA's five county service area covers a land area of 2,993 square miles. This terrain is known as the "Lakes Country" as a result of glaciers as well as "America's farmland". Rolling hills, native prairie grasses, lakes, rivers, streams and hardwood trees are plentiful. Major ground transportation corridors are I-

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94, State Hwy. 55 & 59. Predominant ground travel is done by county highways. Major airports are located three hours south-east at Minneapolis/St. Paul International airport or two hours north-west at Fargo-Hector International. WCMCA has been defined as a food desert which means the closest location to buy competitively priced, fresh produce may be up to 100 miles round trip. Safe and affordable housing is extremely limited. Medical specialists are referred often to the Twin Cities metro area or the Mayo clinic in Rochester which is 3-5 hours in travel time. Urgent care or instant clinics do not exist and rather people are seen either by appointment or at the emergency room which poses multiple challenges. WCMCA's RSVP program has two work plans that surround hunger and nutrition. Proper nutrition of seniors leads to a healthy lifestyle, thus less need for medical attention. In an area of the state where medical services are already limited, eating right aids in a growing community need. WCMCA's RSVP program offers congregate dining, food distributions, a food commodity assistance and help at five local food shelf sites to combat hunger and poor diet. Congregate dining is five days a week, food distributions are episodic, the commodity program is monthly and the food shelf sites are open weekly. RSVP volunteers assist in all aspects of the day to day operations and are making an impact in communities in west central Minnesota.

Describe the ways in which RSVP volunteers and their stations are managed as a highly effective means to address the identified community need(s) in the Primary Focus Area. Currently, WCMCA's RSVP program has a sixteen member RSVP Advisory Board. These members are evenly represented from each of the five county service areas with diverse qualifications to make a balanced and strong venue for local input into program design and evaluation for the RSVP program. An elected County Commissioner serves on the RSVP board from each of the five counties which assist in providing "front line" information as decisions are made and consensus are built. In tandem with the RSVP Advisory Board, are fifty-one site coordinators that contact the RSVP Director as needed but do meet annually to discuss program design and evaluation. A successful relationship between the West

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Central MN Community Action Board of Directors and staff started back in 1973 and continues today. In fact, some of the RSVP board members also serve on the WCMCA board so effective communication can and does exist between the program and its sponsor. This approach is deliberate as the Board chair from the RSVP advisory council reports back to the WCMCA Board of Directors as its strategic liaison. This promotes positive communication and a steadfast and strong working relationship. WCMCA Board of Directors are in a tripartite format in which one third are low income elected members, one third from community representatives and lastly one third from elected officials. Approximately two thirds of WCMCA board members that comprise the one-third low income are considered over 55 years of age. According to a study completed by Dr. Ken Root in 2010, his findings were the following: "From the section on Rating General Needs in the questionnaire sent to clients and general population residents, employment, transportation, housing, and financial / legal issues, and health were the dominant ranked client needs. Within general topical areas, specific needs were identified, including training or education for desired work, work clothing and / or tools, financial help for prescriptions, good health insurance, and financial support to pay for car repairs. While the need categories of area low-income respondents have remained the same over several years, the ranking has changed and employment is presently the number one need for low-income area residents in the WCMCA area. The comparison of data from low-income residents with the general population shows great variation in income, whether or not a respondent has health insurance, and whether one owns or rents their housing. Lower-income residents are simply much closer to the margin than the general population, and need assistance". His research has facilitated bringing local input into the RSVP program design and has served as an excellent evaluation tool. Recruiting actively engaged and civically minded board members are critical and it's very important to recruit RSVP Advisory Board members from a broad cross-section of the population in terms of geography, economics, race, religious preference, sexual orientation, education, gender, hobbies, interests and ethnicity. Each

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member should be selected from among the most highly-engaged community leaders and program participants in the region. This goal to engage board members civically and to involve them in making decisions has a proven and successful history. WCMCA's RSVP program engages its RSVP Advisory Board members by asking advice, seeking out community support on projects, joining partnerships and bridging the relationship between other non-profit agencies. In our current program, WCMCA's strong ties and relationships with community based organizations and resources have been invaluable in mobilizing volunteers and resources to make an impact in the communities that we serve. WCMCA was selected and recognized this past summer 2012, through the Minnesota Association of Volunteer Administration as an "innovative volunteer management program" through which it will serve as a pilot project for capturing and engaging "higher functioning roles" of volunteers. This project will concentrate on WCMCA's Primary Focus Area of Economic Opportunity.

Describe the service activities in the Primary Focus Area that lead to National Performance measure outputs and outcomes. One form of a primary focus area service activity would be that RSVP volunteers will assist economically disadvantaged individuals, including homeless individuals, transitioned into safe, healthy, affordable housing through the Douglas County Habitat for Humanity volunteer program. Another option for RSVP volunteers is to be a certified free tax preparer and quality reviewer through the WCMCA free tax preparation program. Between these two programs it is projected that 154 RSVP volunteers will assist a minimum of 674 economically disadvantaged individuals in the poorest of the poor communities that WCMCA serves. West Central MN Communities Action, Inc.'s mission statement is "West Central Minnesota Communities Action, Inc., a resource agency, is dedicated to reducing the effects of poverty and helping people to achieve self-sufficiency, and improving the quality of rural life". WCMCA is about helping people, changing lives. The relationship between the RSVP program and the community is that they recognize it's under the WCMCA umbrella which has an outstanding positive reputation not only with the participants that

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come through the front door seeking help, but also with other community partners.

Connect the following three major elements in the Primary Focus Area, so that the service activities address the need, and result in the anticipated outputs and/or outcomes:

1. The community needs identified,
2. The service activities that will be carried out by RSVP volunteers
3. The anticipated output(s) or outcomes(s)

According to Dr. Ken Root's community needs assessment and the average adjusted gross income of the 2011 WCMCA free tax preparation season, families are struggling. The Free Tax Preparation program helps taxpayers claim earned incomes credits and refunds. Dr. Root's study also identified that affordable housing in west central Minnesota is extremely challenging to find and obtain as a result of the great recession and other factors. The service activities that will be carried out by RSVP volunteers will be IRS certified tax preparers and quality reviewers, greeters and screeners as well as Habitat for Humanity house builders, mentors and organizers. The anticipated outcome is that 14 people will be placed into a safe and affordable home and that 650 taxpayers will have a federal/state/property tax return filed through the Free Tax Preparation program at WCMCA. The Free Tax Preparation program and Habitat for Humanity will track the number of veteran volunteers and the number of veterans served by RSVP volunteers. Plans are underway to seek a new partnership through the Veterans Affairs offices located in each county to promote outreach efforts to reach veterans as a target market for these two programs mentioned above as a primary focus area.

Recruitment and Development

Part II -- Section C. Recruitment and Development Describe your plan and infrastructure to create high quality volunteer assignments with opportunities such as building skills, developing leadership potential, reflecting on the meaning of service, and enhancing the quality of the volunteer's own lives.

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WCMCA assures a high quality experience for RSVP volunteers in the Minnesota counties of Douglas, Grant, Pope, Stevens and Traverse by providing opportunities to develop new skills, leadership potential, and enhance the quality of life for both volunteers and their respected communities. A primary goal of this program is to help volunteers achieve a real sense of accomplishment. We want volunteers to be constantly learning, growing in their lives and volunteer positions. The program will be results-oriented and results-driven. Meeting goals and quality assurance standards is a priority. Under WCMCA's leadership, the program will move away from stagnant, "busy work" types of assignments, and instead, place volunteers in areas where they can significantly change people's lives and actually see the difference they are making in their communities. RSVP volunteering has been seen more as project based with short and long term goals. Volunteers will be encouraged to take part in project implementation, training, measurement and project outcomes, thus having a sense of "owning" the project. Using innovative and impact-based work plans, WCMCA will ensure that participants have a vital and meaningful volunteer experience and voice. By focusing on projects that are deemed significant and essential by the community, volunteers will gain a strong sense of the value and meaning of their service. RSVP volunteers will also be encouraged to apply for the area Leadership Academy through the West Central Initiative. RSVP volunteers will also have the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of service through MLK Day, the 9/11 Remembrance and Renewal event and Make a Difference Day to name a few examples. Volunteering fills a need for purpose, responsibility and contributing to the greater good. The therapeutic benefits of volunteering enhance any individual's life thus making the day a little brighter. This RSVP program is mission driven to help families escape poverty. WCMCA also was recently selected as being an "Innovative Volunteer Program" by the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration and will be serving as a resource for that organization for how to engage higher functioning volunteers into leadership roles. Harnessing the time and talent of baby boomers that have just entered the retirement phase of their

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life is the primary focus or target market. WCMCA is very excited about this recognition and opportunity to continue to grow this high quality volunteer program. Others in the state will be looking to how WCMCA figured it out and will serve as a resource to others. Volunteers are interested in being a part of something that is well received vs. a program that is struggling and WCMCA signs its name with excellence. RSVP volunteers are offered a high level of training and are consistently learning new things with real day applications. RSVP volunteers help shape the type of skills they wish to build upon and reflect on the meaning of service through the RSVP Advisory Board and RSVP site planning groups.

Describe your plan and infrastructure to ensure RSVP volunteers receive the training needed to be effective in their assignments. RSVP volunteers receive in-depth site specific training from the RSVP site coordinator which includes the immediate who, where, what, how questions that are discussed and answered. RSVP Site Coordinators in turn receive annual training from the RSVP Director of which RSVP Site Coordinators may choose to attend one of three offerings that are spread out in the five county service area so RSVP members would only need to drive a maximum of half an hour to get to. At that training, RSVP Site Coordinators enjoy fellowship, are reviewed on required paperwork; discuss federal and state news/changes/updates such as the RSVP Performance Measure Requirements and other current topics. The RSVP Director participated and will participate in federal conference calls, virtual/state conferences and networking to remain updated on the RSVP program. Training is also discussed at the RSVP Advisory Board meetings to make sure current offerings are appropriate and offered at good times for RSVP volunteers to attend. For example, more when there isn't snow/ice on the roads.

Describe your plan and infrastructure to recruit a volunteer pool reflective of the demographics of the geographic communities served. As applicable, include plans to recruit and place individuals of all

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racess, ethnicities, and degrees of English language proficiency. At this time, there are 564 WCMCA RSVP volunteers within the five county areas that are reflective of the area. Even though this area's demographics are nearly 100% white, Scandinavian, Christian, rural, heterosexual, high school educated, farming background, this agency and RSVP program practices an inclusive environment where as all are welcome regardless of race, ethnicities, age, sexual orientation, education, religious beliefs, geographical area, hobbies and so on. The images and public relations products embrace an inclusive atmosphere. Language and images are important in recruiting. WCMCA does have RSVP volunteers that are illiterate and sensitivity to that topic is practiced. Opportunities for literacy development have been offered in tandem with reshaping how training is offered. Everyone has a gift and it's up to the RSVP Director to figure out how to eave that gift into a purpose filled volunteer opportunity. A volunteer opportunity where the RSVP program embraces, appreciates, understands and actively seeks diversity is critical to accomplishing its mission and purpose. Volunteer recruitment will not be to simply recruit as many as possible. Volunteers will be matched with volunteer openings based on community need. The same philosophy will be with RSVP station sites. Station sites will be encouraged to accept new volunteers based on skill & desire, not just fulfilling another volunteer slot. Volunteer recruitment will focus on skill based volunteering; challenging roles and simply customizing volunteer roles that reflect individual needs. WCMCA has the proven ability to recruit and mobilize volunteers. More importantly, those volunteers tend to be younger (closer to 55 years of age), more highly skilled, and actively seeking impact-based positions. WCMCA has the experience, capacity, and expertise to harness the vast resources of the Baby Boomer generation and to foster their engagement in the community.

Describe your plan and infrastructure to recruit veterans and military family members as RSVP volunteers. The WCMCA RSVP Advisory Board has recently had a great deal of conversations surrounding how to increase the number of veterans as volunteers and veterans and their family

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members being served by the RSVP program. Currently, WCMCA tracks the number of veteran volunteers and the number of veterans and their families that are served. The plan is to seek out relationships and new partnerships with the area's VFW, Legions and Lions groups since they predominantly have veterans in the area as members. Sharing the purpose/mission statement of the RSVP program with these new potential partners and how they could fit into the program so both parties are mutually benefited is important in the recruitment process. A great deal of veterans currently are being served through the free tax preparation and senior dining or congregate meals of the RSVP program to name a few. A subgroup or ad hoc committee has been discussed at the RSVP Advisory Board meetings to focus on recruiting this population in greater depth. Tailoring marketing materials are currently under way. Veterans also serve on the RSVP Advisory Board. This population is of highest interest and focus.

Describe your plan and infrastructure to recruit RSVP volunteers with disabilities, including individuals with age-related disabilities. All activities can be modified. This program focuses more on the ability of an individual and what they can offer through their time and talent rather than on what they can't do. Volunteer opportunities are adapted at the site level and then communicated to the RSVP Director. Training is offered to each site coordinator at the annual update meeting for additional support if requested. Creating a welcoming environment where all are appreciated and respected goes a long way in the country. Volunteerism looks a little different out here, public transportation is extremely limited so the predominant way that RSVP volunteers come to volunteer is through their own vehicles. Having opportunities that are available during the day when it's light out and offered more so when there isn't ice or snow on the roads is a deal breaker. This is an area that WCMCA has area to grow and improve upon.

Describe your plan and infrastructure to retain and recognize the RSVP volunteers. Retention:

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WCMCA will offer a wide variety of volunteer opportunities and experiences to reach and engage a diverse population. Flexibility is a key component in allowing senior volunteers to find their niche while providing a high quality experience. Volunteer retention can be accomplished by offering a choice between long term and short term assignments; seasonal and year round opportunities; and positions with many regular hours versus those with few, less frequent hours. Meaningful assignments are another critical component in the retention of volunteers. Assignments will be relevant and designed to suit a volunteer corps of active, energetic individuals in their early retirement years and beyond. Ensuring an organized and well thought out RSVP program that delivers on follow through, accompanied with timely and appropriate recognition will assist with retention efforts. Timely and precise recognition with well supervised and supported site coordinators will also be critical in the retention of RSVP volunteers. Recognition: Recognition activities will include recognizing individual accomplishments, personal progress and direct project impact that volunteers participated in. Each year the RSVP program tries to look for new ways to recognize volunteers while maintaining a fairly strict budget. Annually the RSVP program has a booth at the local county fair to provide outreach for the RSVP program. This past summer each volunteer received a free meal certificate to the 4-H food stand. Postcards encouraged volunteers to stop by the booth at the county fair and get to know one another. Over 250 volunteers stopped out to local fairs. It was a huge success. This recognition was supported by the local funding from each county and the proceeds went right back into the county for youth volunteers developing their leadership skills. This recognition served as a way of saying "thanks" for all you do and encouraged seniors to get out and support county activities. This type of recognition is also attractive to new volunteers that shy away from the old method of recognition that focused on hours and number of years volunteered. WCMCA encourages on-going training to all staff at many different levels. Staffs in all departments are able to participate in trainings, seminars, workshops and events at surrounding Universities, colleges, area non-profits,

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leadership organizations and beyond. Annually, the sponsor engages staff in an all-staff event that focus on training issues surrounding racism, sexism, ethical procedures, conduct, policies, community awareness and more. The sponsor recognizes the opportunity to grow through education and training. These trainings have informed WCMCA's RSVP programming through a heightened sense of cultural sensitivity. Creating a better understanding and an increased level of awareness provides a more welcoming and embracing environment for RSVP volunteers to feel more successful in their commitment to improving the five county service area and those communities respectively. Families and their needs are never static and have ever changing needs and through the work of the RSVP program. This learning helps shape WCMCA's RSVP work plans and goals. As a member of the MN Senior Corp., we annually benefit from training that target seniors, sponsors, MN State and National issues. These trainings are critical to stay connected and informed through a statewide network that is invaluable. Volunteer training among RSVP volunteers is highly skilled and is offered to all volunteers if the training is needed and/ or available. This year in West Central RSVP volunteers received extensive training through the IRS and MN Dept. of Revenue for the VITA tax clinic project. This training was intense and demanding of RSVP volunteers. Working with the IRS software is challenging and can create obstacles for anyone. The end result was that 19 RSVP volunteers worked with the tax clinic this season and 8 completed the IRS training to become preparers and reviewers. Station site visits are conducted by the RSVP director annually. During that time, volunteer orientation, RSVP Policies and Procedures, and volunteer reporting issues are addressed. Annual update meetings for all RSVP site coordinators are held as well in three different locations to accommodate the vast geographical area and people's schedules. Birthday and holiday cards are also sent out to all RSVP volunteers in a timely and appropriate fashion.

Program Management

Part II -- Section D. Program Management Describe how your plan and infrastructure will ensure

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management of volunteer stations will be in compliance with RSVP program regulations and applicable laws. WCMCA was just found in compliance with RSVP program regulations and applicable laws as of January of 2012. The compliance visit was very helpful, insightful and welcomed. Mark Cullen was WCMCA's compliance monitor and his feedback was great. WCMCA maintains that "gold star" standard as described by Mark, by the RSVP Director actively participating in any training offered through the Corporation for National & Community Service or the MN RSVP State Association. Best practices and policies are in place for the volunteer, the site coordinator and the RSVP Director to follow and exceed.

Describe your plan and infrastructure to develop capacity to recruit and manage volunteer stations that address specified unmet community needs outside the Primary Focus Area. In rural west central Minnesota, staying connected is critical to the success of any program. It is very easy to feel isolated and thus a primary goal of WCMCA's RSVP program is to let our RSVP sites know that they are just an e-mail, phone call or in person visit away. Creating a strong relationship with the site coordinators strengthens the RSVP program through their interconnectedness with the RSVP volunteer.

Maintaining this good connection with the community is the only way to address its true needs.

Monthly, the RSVP program is in touch with each and every site and annually a new update meeting for site coordinators is held to address any concerns, suggestions or comments. Performing a community assessment will play a critical role in determining how volunteers can make a stronger impact in the west central area. That assessment is performed by Dr. Ken Root every other year. There are key issues that many communities have shown as vitally important. Some of these needs are reflected in the current work plans. Many rural MN communities show concern for basic needs such as adequate housing, supply of food and commodities, safety, health, nutrition and transportation all which are outside of WCMCA's primary focus area. Volunteers are asked during enrollment what interests they have and are given a list of possible volunteer placements in their community.

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Volunteers are offered training and are able to visit stations to see if this opportunity would be right for them. RSVP placement is encouraged at work stations that show impact and address community need.

Describe your plan and infrastructure to responsibly graduate volunteer stations to meet changing community needs to minimize disruptions to current volunteers where possible. The plan may include reassigning volunteers at the state to capacity building assignments. WCMCA's RSVP Advisory Board has had and continues to have discussion surround the community needs assessment performed by Dr. Ken Root in conjunction with the Corporation's RSVP Performance Measure Requirements and Strategic Priorities. This information has led to an understanding of the direction that the RSVP movement is headed and the goal utter and complete transparency. The Performance Measure Requirements has been easily conveyed and serves as the foundation that all sites need to fall within. The RSVP Director in tandem with the RSVP Board Chair have discussed and collectively as a board continue to explore ways that graduated sites may become involved in a different RSVP site to continue to lead with experience in their communities. A letter will be sent to each volunteer of any graduated site for how to be reassigned to a different volunteer opportunity. This transference is projected to be completed by June of 2013. Currently, only a few sites may be considered out of the new scope. Extreme sensitivity on this topic is required and a well communicated plan over a short amount of time will assist the graduation of said sites.

Describe your plan and infrastructure to assure National Performance Measure outcomes and outputs are measured and collected. First an understanding had to be communicated to the RSVP Board and then it's Site Coordinators for what the new National Performance Measure is and looked like and then how it applied to WCMCA's RSVP program. Then those outcomes and outputs are tied to the work plans and surveys are conducted to each site tracking data and impact.

Describe your plan and infrastructure to manage project resources, both financial and in-kind, to

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ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources. WCMCA's fiscal and RSVP departments have expertise in managing project resources, both financial and in-kind, to ensure accountability as well as efficient and effective use of available resources. WCMCA manages an annual budget of approx. \$8.2 million. Monthly meetings with the Fiscal Director and the RSVP Director are performed at which time the budget is evaluated and discussed. The RSVP Director has access to view income statements for each project that she oversees and can at a moment's notice see the current up to date bottom line. These budgets are reconciled and updated monthly by the fiscal department. All transactions are coded and tagged to the appropriate project with the federal RSVP program having its own project number separate from all others funding streams such as state or local funding for the RSVP program. Any timesheet also reflects the appropriate projects and documents if time was charged into the federal RSVP program. The RSVP & Fiscal departments maintain a joint project resources inventory list in which annually all resources are updated and verified that they are accounted for and in good working condition. RSVP volunteer mileage reimbursements continue to be done quarterly. The RSVP volunteer signs their name and records their time and mileage for which then the site coordinator verifies, signs and mails to the WCMCA RSVP office. Next the RSVP Director verifies, signs and ensures accurate and timely data entry into Volunteer Reporter. Then the RSVP Director will extract the data quarterly and submit to the fiscal department to cut checks. The WCMCA RSVP program best practice is that checks need to hit a \$30 threshold or be at the conclusion of the grant cycle for a payout to be done as a wise use of resources. Again, original signatures are required for all whenever it comes to anything related to money. The RSVP Director submits a "New Vendor" form for each and every new RSVP volunteer wishing to receive mileage reimbursement and ensures its accuracy. The WCMCA RSVP program now does web purchasing which has assisted in cutting down on expenses through this new paperless model. All site coordinators have received training and updated forms as it relates to any in-kind donation. An "In-

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kind Contribution Form" has been supplied to all site coordinators with emphasis on making sure that it was NOT obtained with or supported by federal funds. In-kind donations also adhere to the OMB Circular A-110.

Organizational Capability

Part II -- Section E. Organizational Capability Describe your organization's experience in the proposed program area. WCMCA began the RSVP program in 1973, twenty years in advance of the Corporation for National & Community Service being formed. It is a result however of an ACTION grant that was authorized by the federal Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973. At that time period, ACTION and the Commission on National and Community Service merged which today is considered the Corporation for National and Community Service. Through those changes one thing remains the same; WCMCA's RSVP program continues to serve as a beacon for Americans in west central Minnesota to engage in citizenship by providing impact and evidence-based volunteer opportunities. These opportunities have varied over time, but the passion of older Americans that mobilize into service for our country endures. WCMCA started out with fifty two (52) RSVP volunteers at twenty two (22) active RSVP sites in 1973 and now in 2012, there are six hundred forty nine (649) RSVP volunteers at forty eight (48) active RSVP sites. WCMCA has completed and complied with past federal monitoring visit/audits. Within the past year, WCMCA's RSVP program completed and was found compliant with its federal monitor, Mark Cullen. Through that compliance visit, great dialogue happened, good ideas were shared and positive suggestions were made on how to mobilize and build capacity of volunteers in service. This visit will without a doubt strengthen WCMCA's RSVP program. This RSVP program will continually be learning, improving and evolving to be well positioned for future funding and or political challenges. It was a very positive compliance visit and WCMCA feels that it has a most positive relationship with its State Program Specialist. The RSVP program utilizes the Volunteer Reporter database for all tracking and has experience in extracting data to formulate

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needed reports. Systemic practices and policies are in place as it relates to money, volunteer and site handbooks, articles of incorporation and by-laws for the RSVP board and programmatic practices based off of 40 years of experience from WCMCA serving as the sponsor for the RSVP program in west central Minnesota. Describe key staff positions responsible for program management, background and experience of these staff members and/or plans to select and support additional staff. Key staff positions responsible for program management are Executive Director Steve Nagle, Finance Director Carol Boyer, and RSVP Director, Heather Thormodson. Steve Nagle, has a MS degree in Public and Human Services Administration. He has over 33 years of non-profit administrative experience, 18 of those years as executive director. Steve serves on several state and region-wide advisory boards and has been the recipient of numerous honors and awards for his work and accomplishments. Carol Boyer, has a BS degree in accounting and has worked in the non-profit finance/accounting field for over 28 years. She has served as WCMCA's finance director for 17 years. Carol has extensive experience and training in computer hardware/software and its application for non-profit operation. She is experienced in supervising staff and monitoring fiscal and program outcomes. Heather Thormodson, has a MS degree in Experiential Education and 16 years of experience in volunteer management. She is a Volunteer Resources & Leadership trainer for the Minnesota Association of Volunteer Administrators (MAVA) and sits on committees for MAVA as needed. Heather has also created and developed training topics on Rural Volunteerism which have been delivered at the Minnesota Council of Non-Profits and the MAVA conferences respectively in 2011. There are no plans at this time to select and support additional staff. Since 1965, WCMCA has successfully managed a complex mix of federal, state, local, and private funding. The agency's automated data management system, updated in 2011, is state-of-the-art. It effectively tracks data relating to multiple programs and the more than 6,000 households served each year. WCMCA has delivered services, managed budgets, and established policy for 45 years. The agency is recognized as a

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leader in innovative programming, dynamic leadership, and quality service delivery. WCMCA has received three Best Practices awards in recent years from the Univ. of MN and the MN Community Action Partnership for programs that are largely staffed by RSVP volunteers: FAIM (operated by WCMCA statewide), Group Work Camp, and Family Economic Success (in conjunction with West Central Initiative). Black Baud Financial Edge is the software that WCMCA uses as its fiscal management system. Sponsorship of this RSVP program has been steady, both internally at WCMCA and locally in the surrounding communities. RSVP has received county funding from all five counties since 1999. Programming has focused on meaningful volunteer opportunities addressing community needs and rural Minnesota life. WCMCA involvement with seniors has many entry points such as: program participants, staff members, RSVP volunteers, board members, advisory members and consultants. Seniors interface with all aspects of this agency and serve as a strong sounding board and/or guide for the agency's success. It's easy to demonstrate the success through quantitative data but WCMCA strives and excels at qualitative support as well. That can be easily found through a recent survey that asked WCMCA RSVP volunteers if they were satisfied with their assignments and with the project operations in general. 100% indicated yes they were satisfied with 100% return rate from all WCMCA RSVP approved sites. Again, this coming year a survey that is reflective to the work plans will be given as a tool to track and record the success of the WCMCA RSVP program and clearly demonstrate and document its impact and evidence based programming. West Central MN Communities Action, Inc. owns a 10,000 square foot facility in Elbow Lake, MN. The RSVP program director has an office space that is shared with a part-time Experience Works staff member. The RSVP program also has the ability to utilize other available work space when needed in Elbow Lake or in Alexandria at the United Way office and the MN Work Force Center. Temporary work stations are often used for RSVP volunteers. There is a workroom in Elbow Lake accompanied by outside storage sheds. This space can accommodate RSVP Board meetings if desired, and has accommodated RSVP

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meetings, recognition and training events. WCMCA provides technology support and office support with their administrative staff. The RSVP Director is encouraged to attend trainings, meetings and community events that positively reflect the views of the RSVP program. WCMCA also identifies equipment needs and supplies that can benefit the RSVP program. WCMCA has a full time HR director that assists staff and addresses all employment benefits and concerns. One of the benefits of the sponsor is paid time off and other fringe benefits. The RSVP director reports directly to the Executive Director. The RSVP Director oversees one staff from Experience Works. Newer to the RSVP program is web purchasing that WCMCA is currently implementing agency-wide which is mirrored with purchasing procedures and fiscal policies. Clearly defined roles for the RSVP Director are outline in the job description as are other key staff's with regards to the RSVP program at WCMCA. A seventy five paged employee handbook dictates internal policies as well as a 92 paged fiscal policy handbook that includes a travel policy for WCMCA staff is address. The WCMCA's twenty paged RSVP volunteer & site handbooks capture the travel policy followed by the mileage reimbursement policy that was updated December of 2011. WCMCA's RSVP procedure for self-assessment and evaluation towards continuous improvement will have a different approach than what has been done in the past for the upcoming years. It will include an annual survey tool that will be tailored to each site as it anchors itself into the WCMCA's RSVP work plans. This survey will also be used for progress reporting to the Corporations for National & Community Service as well as the RSVP & WCMCA boards respectively. An annual performance review of program staff is conducted with identified goals and objectives. This performance management policy will also aid in identifying short six month goals and long range yearly goals with relation to the RSVP program's success and areas for improvement. Monthly reviews of RSVP projects completed, meetings attended and works in progress are reported to the WCMCA board with similar reports given to the RSVP board on a quarterly basis. The RSVP Board chair reports monthly to the WCMCA board of directors communicating progress made on program

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goals and activities. RSVP site coordinators and RSVP volunteers are surveyed annually to determine program success through an assessment survey tool that is reflective to the prescribed work plans. Annually, WCMCA's board conducts review of all program's successes and develop steps towards continuous improvement. Dr. Ken Root's study serves as a foundational cornerstone to identification of community needs that this survey is measured against. The WCMCA board is currently reviewing the evaluation process in conjunction with forming long term strategic goals for the agency and its programs individually. State and County funding have seen a slight increase thus making the non-federal share sustainable.

Other

Part II Section F. Other (Not required, but wishing to share above and beyond.)

Approved RSVP sites make an impact in our communities by meeting basic needs such as food, clothing, transportation, literacy and more. These community needs are just that . . . driven from the community by RSVP volunteers standing up and stating "Something should be done about this."

WCMCA works closely with many state departments as well for which just recently, was recognized with the Commissioner's Circle of Excellence Award surrounding the food support outreach efforts.

The letters, WCMCA, mean a great deal to the five county and surrounding area for which the RSVP program benefits greatly. This relationship has a shared vision of making a positive and sustainable impact in the five county service area. Partnerships that work with the RSVP program and WCMCA as a sponsor have an interest in the community and strive to engage families toward self-sufficient lives. Together WCMCA and the RSVP program do this in part by partnering with other agencies that want to show community impact. As an example, the VITA free tax preparation sites in Douglas and Grant County are a project that involved several community partnerships from the United Way of Douglas and Pope Counties, Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota, MN Children's Defense, MN Legal Services, the IRS, Tastefully Simple Corporation, the Otto Bremer Foundation, MN

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Department of Revenue, AccountAbility MN, local utility companies and several more. The shared vision is to offer free tax preparation service with financial literacy information and referrals for low income families and individuals to public benefits. Defining the roles of each partner is done at the beginning through clear communication and identification of resources. Basically, it's neighbors helping neighbors. Provide information about how you will build public awareness of and support for the program within the community. The RSVP program at WCMCA will build public awareness and support by local media outreach with radio, newspapers, marketing campaigns, local TV channels, agency brochures at each county fair, trade shows and through other agency program referrals and public speaking. Robust communication through e-mail, phone, in person and mail contact with strong follow up will aid in building and maintaining a positive working relationship with RSVP site coordinators. The RSVP Director serves on appropriate committees, task forces, etc. to increase program visibility and accessibility in the five county region including the Land of the Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging.

WCMCA is an agency that encourages diversity among its staff, its programs and its partnerships. As an agency, WCMCA is an equal opportunity employer and will not discriminate against anyone on the basis of age, race, religion, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, physical or mental handicap, marital status, sexual orientation, military status or status as a public assistance recipient in any employment decisions. Within the RSVP program participation is encouraged within all ethnic backgrounds and information is offered to RSVP stations to address inclusivity. The sponsor incorporates training in annual staff events that address the issue of diversity.

WCMCA's RSVP program will be using the community stakeholder survey by the National Senior Corp. This tool will be given to all members of the RSVP Advisory Board with a follow up discussion to strategize a short and long range plan. This tool will also be distributed to the site coordinators for their input as it applies to WCMCA's RSVP program. This survey will assess how well RSVP is meeting

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the needs of the community and identify future sites/projects that will be impact-based. Ascertaining potential partners with resources will help shape strategies and work plans. This area is also highly known for neighbors helping neighbors informally. A great deal of projects develop by sitting around a kitchen table just simply "coming up with a plan". It is important to recognize the historical culture of the area and blend that with a contemporary way of how to mobilize resources in west central rural Minnesota. Each of the County Commissioners that serve on the RSVP board are active RSVP volunteers in their communities as well. They are important stakeholders and highly effective contributors. WCMCA agency Executive Director meets with all five county boards in December and January to summarize agency's progress the preceding year and plans for the coming year. The RSVP Director and/or the Executive Director also meet in person with all county boards when funding requests are considered. The RSVP Director also sits on the Land of the Dancing Sky Area on Aging Agency Advisory Board and is developing a positive and healthy relationship with the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Aging and Adult Services Division/Minnesota Board on Aging State Program Administrator to achieve a connectedness for west central Minnesota to offices in St. Paul, Minnesota. Expansion of the RSVP project is a result of the community needs assessment performed by Dr. Ken Root and again having folks "come to the table to come up with a plan". Again, it's a blend of a contemporary approach married to a traditional way of getting things done out here in the country. The RSVP Director envisions new RSVP sites that are in alignment with the Corporation for National & Community Service's 2011 Corporation-wide Strategic Initiatives and the RSVP Performance Measure Requirements while ensuring existing RSVP sites fit into that model or are graduated from the program as well.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

Not requested.