

SUMMARY REVIEWER COMMENTS

2013 RSVP Competition

Legal Applicant: South Alabama Regional Planning Commission

Applicant ID: 13SR144424

Project Name: Escambia County RSVP

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from only the external reviewer on the blended panel. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

External Reviewer's Summary Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant provided information on the community needs and priorities to address unmet needs. For example, the applicant provides community needs assessment information collected from the target geographic areas from both seniors and service providers.

The applicant presents relevant demographic rates on population age, disabilities, and health risks and cites information on childhood obesity in the target area. This information is clearly connected to the applicant's Primary Focus Area of Healthy Futures.

The applicant has a plan to recruit, retain and recognize volunteers. Key features of the plan include, recruitment through existing networks (Volunteer Match, AARP, and Area Agency on Aging), development of job descriptions, presentations, a newsletter and volunteer fairs; retention by providing fulfilling opportunities that match volunteers interests, sending cards of caring, monthly contacts and annual meetings; and recognition of RSVP volunteers through annual events and special events hosted by the volunteer stations. An extra feature is an annual survey taken by RSVP volunteers to track skill building and volunteer placement satisfaction.

The applicant indicated there are also plans to survey the volunteer stations to gauge impact and quality of placements.

The applicant clearly explains their approach to ensure effective volunteer management and compliance with RSVP regulations. Key features include: provision of RSVP volunteer orientation, use of a RSVP handbook, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with volunteer stations, and utilization of the RSVP Project Self-Assessment tool.

The applicant provides clear information on securing in-kind and cash funds to sustain efforts which include receipt and management of cash funds from state and federal funding and non-federal grants. They have a proven track record of successful fundraising (Healthy Community, Healthy Children grant) and a clear organizational structure that includes roles and responsibilities.

Weaknesses:

The applicant provides good information on serving veterans by providing transportation, but did not delve into addressing the special needs and issues of veterans.

The applicant provided a profile of volunteers, but did not provide many details on recruiting volunteers from the RSVP pool in the selection criteria. For example they did not address details on how the RSVP volunteers from the Indian tribe would be recruited and encouraged to get involved.

The applicant stated there is a minimal need to graduate volunteer stations, but the applicant does not provide specifics in terms of what stations have already been graduated and how many volunteers were impacted.

The applicant's proposed budget shows that CNCS funds will be dedicated to salary and fringe benefits. However, there is not a breakdown of fringe benefit expenses and there is a lack of budget narrative on the "grantee share" to thoroughly assess if the remainder of the budget is reasonable and allowable. In addition, expenses for recruitment and transportation are not clearly addressed. For example, the work plan references support from the Sheriff's department to cover transportation and this is not reflected in the budget narrative.

The applicant indicated that they are an incumbent grantee, but they do not clearly explain how the staffing will support their 81 volunteers, which appears to represent 76 current volunteers and 5 new volunteers. More detail was needed on duties, allocation of time, and expectations for staffing in the new RSVP grant to thoroughly assess this section.