

Narratives

Executive Summary

This grant application for Northeast Iowa RSVP will cover 275 volunteers serving at 47 non-profit agencies. Some of their Focus area activities will include Healthy Futures, Education, Economic Opportunity, Disaster Services, Veterans and Military Families along with other Community Priorities.

The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. At the end of the three year grant, 36% of the unduplicated volunteers will be serving under Healthy Futures, 36% will be serving in other focus areas and 27% will be serving under Other Community Priorities. The CNCS federal investment of \$37,346.00 will be supplemented by \$49,846 or 57% of the budget.

Strengthening Communities

The community:

The rural counties of Allamakee, Howard and Winneshiek make up the service area for Northeast Iowa RSVP. The area covers 1,822 square miles with an average of 25 people per square mile. The counties border the States of Wisconsin and Minnesota with twenty small towns located within the area. MapQuest tells us that it would take 2 1/2 hours to travel from one end of the service area to the other. The 2010 Census reflects that the population for the tri-county area is 44,952.

The RSVP office is located in the center of the service area in Decorah (Winneshiek County) The city of Decorah has almost 20% of the service area population and is the county seat for Winneshiek County which has 47% of the service area population. Winneshiek County is a rural community depending on agriculture but it is also home to Luther College and Northeast Iowa Community College. Howard County boasts rich, flat, farmland and has 21% of the tri-county population.

Allamakee County is located along the Mississippi River with many small 'river towns' and is home to 32% of the total service area population.

Diversity

Allamakee County has become known for the diversity it brings to Northeast Iowa due to immigrants who migrated to Postville to find employment. The 2009 Census estimates the tri-county area has the following percentages of persons who are listed as white, not Hispanic: Allamakee County 89.4%; Howard County 97.9%; Winneshiek County 96.8%. Diversity in Northeast Iowa comes in the form, of education, employment and differences in the cultural background of the communities. For instance, Howard County boasts family origination from Czechoslovakia; Winneshiek County Norway and Allamakee County Ireland and many places in-between.

Age

Narratives

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), the median age for Allamakee County is 43.9, Howard is 42.1 and Winneshiek is 39.9; the median age for the tri-counties is 41.9. Iowa's median age is 38 and the nation is 37. The Census bureau further states that Allamakee County has 20.2% of their population who are age 65 and older; Howard County is 19.5% and Winneshiek County is 17.3% or 18.9 for the tri-county area. This compares to person's age 65 plus in Iowa at 15.3% and 12.9% nationwide. NE IA RSVP reflects this with 22% of their volunteers being baby boomer age (55-65). Winneshiek County recently received national attention for being 2nd in the Nation for longevity for women (84 years). This is reflected in the ages of our volunteers with 9% of our volunteers being age 85 plus.

Education

The educational level for persons age 25 & older is as follows: Less than high school diploma: Allamakee: 18.6%, Howard: 20.7 and Winneshiek: 15.9% High school diploma: Allamakee: 44.3%, Howard: 43% and Winneshiek: 37.3% Less than 4 years of college: Allamakee: 22.7%, Howard 23.7%, Winneshiek 26.3% Four or more years of college: Allamakee: 14.4%, Howard: 12.6%, and Winneshiek 20.5%. The difference in educational levels reflects the fact that Winneshiek County is home to both Luther College and Northeast Iowa Community College.

Employment

Wholesale and retail trade; health services; and manufacturing & farming are the region's top industries. The unemployment rate for Allamakee County is at 5.7% Howard County's unemployment rate is currently at 4.3% and the unemployment rate in Winneshiek County is at 4%. Iowa's state-wide unemployment rate is 4.6%.

Economic

The Department of Agriculture (2011) reports the median household income in the tri-county area is as follows: Allamakee County is \$39,670 with 15.1% of the individuals living below the poverty level; Howard County is \$45,450 with 12.3% living below the poverty level; Winneshiek County is 49,148 with 10.7% of the individuals living below the poverty level. This compares to a median Iowa household income of \$49,545 with 12.7% of individual Iowans living below the poverty level.

The average for students who qualify for free and reduced lunches in the State of Iowa is at 40.3%. In Northeast Iowa, the percentages range from 25.8% in Decorah Schools; 28.2% in South Winneshiek Schools; 31.8% in North Winneshiek; 47% in Howard Winneshiek and 50.7% in Allamakee Schools to the highest in Postville Schools at 74.5%.

Primary Focus Area

Narratives

Northeast Iowa RSVP has chosen Healthy Futures as their primary focus area. This grant reflects that 36% of our unduplicated volunteers will be serving in the Healthy Futures area. They will be helping to feed the hungry and provide companionship for seniors so that they may age in place as well as assisting with obesity and food needs. When looking at the needs under Healthy Futures, we depend on the expertise of the stations we work with in determining the needs that their agency has identified and is striving to fill.

Documenting the Needs

Northeast Iowa Community Action indicates in their 2012 annual report, that they served 2,064 low income households (8,121 individuals) in our tri-county service area. They gave out emergency funds totaling \$87,066.76 to 351 households. Although NE IA Community Action is helping many individuals; they cannot do it all and that is why the community food pantries and the food backpack program are important in alleviating hunger in Northeast Iowa. With 12.7% of the tri-county population living below the poverty line and the percentage of students qualifying for free & reduced lunches ranging from 25.8% to 74.5%, the Healthy Futures Focus area is a natural for this service area.

Northeast Iowa Agency on Aging has expertise in helping the elderly stay in their own home. In their 2012 annual report, they state that "persons age 85 and older compromise the largest growing segment of their service area population". One of their identified goals is to "enable older Iowans to remain in their own homes with high quality of life for as long as possible through the provision of home & community based services." They are seeking help with delivering of noon meals to their clients 5 days a week throughout the year. Another objective is "to educate consumers about the benefits of eating healthy foods, regular physical and mental exercise". The Matter of Balance Program will encourage the elderly to develop confidence in being able to get regular exercise without fear of falling and the Vera Harris Large Print program will provide mental stimulation for the elderly who enjoy reading. With 19% of the service area population being age 65 plus and the high number of people age 85 plus, this is also a documented need in our area.

The Northeast Iowa Food Bank located in Waterloo estimates that 1 in 8 individuals living in their service area which includes Allamakee, Howard and Winneshiek County go to bed hungry each night. They further state that at least 40,000 Northeast Iowa residents including nearly 16,000 children and almost 4,000 seniors receive emergency food assistance each year from the Northeast Iowa Food Bank and its member agencies. Three of those member agencies or food pantries are located in NE IA RSVP service area.

Narratives

A study completed by the Feeding American's Map the Meal Gap finds that many food insecure individuals do not qualify for federal nutrition programs and must rely on charitable food assistance, suggesting that complementary programs and strategies are necessary to reach food insecure individuals at different income levels. These strategies in Northeast Iowa include the Allamakee County Food Shelf, The Food Pantry at 1st Lutheran and the Postville Food Pantry. RSVP volunteers will be serving at these three food pantries.

In Allamakee County, it is estimated that 12.4% of the county population is food insecure which is about 1,780 people. The Allamakee County Food Shelf gave out 3,390 food packages during the last year. The Postville Food Pantry gave out 3,423 food packages. This means that 6,813 food packages were given out to the hungry last year in Allamakee County. Both food pantries are open once a week and run by volunteers who are mostly RSVP volunteers.

In Howard County, it is estimated that 11.4% of the population is food insecure which is about 1,100 people. A mobile food pantry comes to Cresco, the Howard County seat, once a month from the Northeast Iowa Food Bank, supplemented by a Northeast Iowa Community Action food pantry. RSVP volunteers are not involved with the monthly mobile food pantry as church members are filling the volunteer needs and staff members handle the NE IA Community Action food pantry.

In Winneshiek County, 10.9% of the population is food insecure which is about 2,300 people. The Food Pantry at 1st Lutheran Church which is open daily gave out close to 10,000 food packages last year. This food pantry is also run by volunteers with most of them being RSVP volunteers. The interesting thing about the food pantry in Winneshiek County is that it draws people from all three service area counties along with people from Minnesota since Decorah is located so close to the Minnesota state line.

RSVP volunteers will also be involved in the Northeast Iowa Food Bank's BackPack program. The backpack program answers this question: "If the only meals some children eat are at school, what do they eat when they are not in school?" The goal of the BackPack Program is to send children in need home from school each weekend with foods that are shelf-stable, kid-friendly and healthy. The foods are easily prepared and consumed when parents are working and can't prepare meals for their children, or when there simply isn't enough food at home for the children to eat. This program ensures that children come to school alert and ready to learn. Studies have shown that students perform better in school when they eat three balanced meals each day.

The State of Iowa is in a 3 way tie for the first place ranking as having the largest percentage of persons age 85 and older (tied with Rhode Island and North Dakota) and has the fourth highest

Narratives

percentage of persons age 75 and older. The Des Moines Register states that Iowa ranks second in the country for the number of nursing home residents per 1,000 people age 65 or older. They further site that Iowa spends two-thirds of its Medicaid dollars on institutional care.

Medicaid Director Jennifer Vermeer of The Iowa Department of Human Services estimates that "Over the next 20 years, the number of Iowans who will need long term care will increase dramatically and many will turn to Medicaid for help. Facility care will continue to play an essential role but we know that we often can deliver high levels of care in the place most people would prefer -- in their own homes," Vermeer said

Northeast Iowa RSVP will be working with Northeast Iowa Agency on Aging to ensure that steps are taken to help Iowa's elderly live in their own home as long as possible. One of the ways NE IA RSVP will be doing this is by conducting Matter of Balance Classes to help older adults overcome their fear of falling. The coping strategies taught in these classes will help to reduce the fear of falling enabling the elderly person to overcome concerns about falling, leading to their remaining active and independent.

According to the Lighthouse National Survey on Vision Loss, 24% of people with impaired vision age 45 and older report that a vision problem caused at least some difficulty managing daily household tasks. Another 18% reported some difficulty getting to places outside the home because of their vision problems, and 38% reported at least some interference with their leisure activities like reading. Visual impairment is one of the four most significant contributors to the loss of independence among older Americans. The number of Americans at risk for age related eye diseases is increasing as the baby boomer generation ages. Prevent Blindness America and The National Eye Institute's "Vision Problems in the U.S." publication says that Iowa has the second highest prevalence of vision impairment and blindness in the United States for persons age 40 and older. Iowa also has a large elderly population. Nationally, more than 2/3 of visually impaired adults are over age 65.

One of the things NE IA RSVP volunteers will be doing to help with maintaining and improving leisure activities for the sight impaired elderly is to work with the Decorah Public Library Vera Harris Large Print program. Large print books provide senior citizens an opportunity to continue their enjoyment of reading while helping to build and maintain vocabulary, providing mental stimulation, encouraging reading comprehension and improving reading enjoyment. NE IA RSVP has been working with the Vera Harris Large Print Library to distribute over 18,000 large print books to 150 small libraries across the State of Iowa. Large print books are expensive and many of the small libraries across the state do not have a budget for an assortment of large print books and there fore the

Narratives

elderly, sight impaired people in those small communities are not receiving the benefits of mental stimulation that reading can provide for the elderly. In a recent survey by the Vera Harris Large Print Library with 58% of those surveyed being age 75 and older, 91% of the respondents indicated that the availability of large print books improved their quality of life. RSVP volunteers will continue to work with the Vera Harris Large Print program to provide books that will increase leisure activities and mental stimulation for the visually impaired elderly.

Iowa is #1 in the country in the percent of nursing facility residents who are paying for their nursing facility care through private resources. A comprehensive network of community-based services will enable more of these Iowans (as well as Iowans receiving public assistance) to remain in their homes longer, thereby diverting expensive, premature institutionalization. (Data Set Active Resident Information Report, Baltimore, MD: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.)

The American Journal of Clinic Nutrition states that for the rapidly growing elderly population, the achievement and maintenance of good nutritional status is critical to health and functioning. An inadequate dietary intake, with associated imbalances of needed nutrients and energy from food, can increase the vulnerability of the elderly to adverse health outcomes. These include a diminished immune response, longer hospital stays and increased likelihood of hospital readmission, impairment in physical and cognitive function leading to premature institutionalization. Iowa Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System reports generated from 2002-2007 show a 26.9% decline in the percent of Iowans over age 65 that eat 5 or more portions of fruits and vegetables per day. Pursuing mechanisms to increase older Iowans access to and awareness of nutritious meals and health promotion options will further the goal of helping older adults to stay active and healthy and living in their own homes. In the Northeast Iowa service area 18.6% or 8,381 people are age 65 and older. Of those individuals 65 and older, 62% are considered the most vulnerable at age 75 and older; with 18% of that population or 1,501 people age 85 or older. NE IA RSVP will be working with Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging to deliver meals to the home-bound in Allamakee, Howard and Winneshiek Counties to help the remaining aging population stay in their own home longer.

The Healthy Futures Focus area has a goal of increasing senior's ability to stay in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible. NE IA RSVP will have 32 unduplicated volunteers involved with Aging in Place through the home delivered meals program and the Vera Harris Large Print program for the visually impaired.

The Healthy Futures Focus area has a goal of working to alleviate long-term hunger and a total of 68 unduplicated volunteers will be working with three food pantries to alleviate hunger.

Narratives

A total of 100 or 36% of the unduplicated volunteers will be serving in the Healthy Futures area.

Data Collection

Northeast Iowa RSVP has been collecting data for the RSVP program since it started, twelve years ago. All stations agree to providing the necessary data when signing on as a RSVP station. The RSVP Director has been overseeing the collection of data for ten years and will work with the stations to collect the necessary output & outcome data. In some cases, this information will be collected through specially designed time sheets where the supervisor provides data for the month which is then recorded by the RSVP Director in an excel worksheet. In other instances, the information will be collected through an end of the grant year report completed by the station representative and compiled on an excel worksheet. In other instances, the information will be collected through a survey of clients which is also recorded on an excel worksheet by the RSVP Director.

Thirty-four percent of the unduplicated volunteers will be serving in focus areas that have results tied to outcomes that will require the additional collection of data. The Healthy Futures priority areas which will entail the Food Backpack Program, Home Delivered Meals and Food Pantries will all provide outcome information based on client surveys. These surveys will be distributed to the clients by the stations, who will forward the completed survey to the RSVP office who will then enter the data into an excel worksheet to finalize the data. The outcome for the Community Connections before and after school program will measure improved school attendance and that information will be provided to RSVP by the administration at the schools. RSVP staff utilize both excel worksheets and the Volunteer Reporter program for managing data.

Veterans

Currently 43 or 16% of our RSVP volunteers have identified themselves as Veterans. We have only been asking if potential volunteers are Veterans for the past year and have had only one volunteer update during that time, so there are probably more, we just don't know about them. Those Veterans are serving in a variety of different workplans, including Healthy Future focus areas.

RSVP has been working with the newly established Decorah VA Clinic for one year. We currently have 16 volunteers who are taking turns serving at the VA Clinic 2 hours a day, 5 days a week. Seven more RSVP volunteers are going through orientation and training to help with this endeavor. The volunteers greet the Veterans when they arrive, offer them coffee, water and tell them where the lab and restrooms are located. If time allows, the volunteers will sit down and visit with the Veteran. This has been a successful endeavor with over 1,000 Veterans served in the last grant year.

Currently, seven Veterans are serving with the Thunder Rode Therapeutic Horse Riding program.

Narratives

They serve during the spring and summer assisting handicapped individuals to gain the benefits from horse riding. This allows them to get to know the horses, become experienced with helping handicapped riders mount and dismount the horses and engage in other activities around the horses. In the fall, this group travels to Iowa City with their horses so that they can offer a trail ride to Veterans with disabilities during the National TEE (Training, Exposure and Experience) Tournament which is designed to demonstrate that having a disability need not be an obstacle to an active, rewarding life.

For the past two years, Northeast Iowa RSVP has worked with the Iowa's Bravest program to collect Christmas cards for Iowa soldiers who are stationed outside of the United States. The first year we collected 75 Christmas cards and last year collected 765 Christmas cards! This collection takes place in October when many of the stores do not have Christmas cards for sale, so many of the cards are homemade - the best kind! All Christmas cards must be reviewed by volunteers to make sure the message is appropriate and are then sent to Waterloo, Iowa where they are put in with care packages for the soldiers. We anticipate continuing this service project throughout this 3 year grant period. Veterans are leaders and are involved in a variety of volunteer activities such as coordinating the Allamakee County Food Shelf, distributing food to the hungry, preserving a one room school house, leading the income tax services in the tri-county area, visiting other Veterans in nursing homes, delivering meals to the home-bound, building the Habitat House, distributing large print books to the visually impaired, serving on a disaster action team and much more. All of the work-plan activities serve Veterans including these activities where Veterans are involved serving other Veterans along with the general population.

Recruitment and Development

The Mission

Northeast Iowa RSVP has a mission of "Engaging persons age 55 and older in volunteer service to meet critical community needs; and to provide a high quality experience that will enrich the lives of volunteers."

Creating High Quality Volunteer Assignments

RSVP strives to create high quality volunteer opportunities that will attract a variety of volunteers who come to the program with differences in nationality, sexual preferences, age, employment and life skills, education, physical limitations, language experiences and life style choices. Opportunities in this application are designed to fit the needs of our diverse volunteer population and will cover Healthy Futures as the primary focus area as well as Education, Veterans and Military Families, Economic

Narratives

Opportunities, Disaster Services and Capacity Building. Northeast Iowa RSVP will also include Community Priority opportunities like visiting nursing home residents, assisting in museums, walking school bus drivers, distributing seed packets to non-profits for community garden's across the United States, establishing and maintaining a prairie, Genealogy and Historical research and SAIF (Seniors Against Investment Fraud) presentations. This variety in assignments will allow volunteers to choose an experience that will fill a critical need in the community while providing stimulation and enrichment to the volunteer.

Recruitment & Placement

A high quality volunteer assignment begins with the recruitment of volunteers. This happens on many levels whether it is through volunteer stations, newspaper articles, radio announcements, flyers, instant access & church bulletin announcements, newsletters, emails or the RSVP web page. Our best recruiters are satisfied RSVP volunteers, stations and people who are served by RSVP.

After receiving some background on the RSVP program, potential volunteers are asked to complete an application and volunteer interest survey, giving staff the opportunity to learn more about the individual and their interests and skills. This information along with visiting with the new volunteer will help in the placement of the volunteer based on the skills and interests of the volunteers along with the needs of the community.

RSVP volunteers are given a handbook for the program which covers things such as the RSVP mission statement, information on CNCS and other funding sources, an introduction to staff and the advisory council, volunteer stations and opportunities, Rights and Responsibilities of an RSVP volunteer, confidentiality, volunteer policies and an overview of the paperwork required for involvement with the RSVP program.

RSVP strives to place volunteers at an assignment that is close to their home so that they do not incur expensive travel expenses. Most assignments are within a mile or two of the volunteer's home. Due to budget restraints, RSVP does not reimburse volunteers for mileage expenses.

Building New Skills:

Volunteers have vast opportunities to build new skills through their service with RSVP. Literacy skills are built by serving in schools, libraries and nursing homes. Cultures are explored by English as Second Language tutoring or working with immigrants at the food pantry or leading citizenship classes. Local history is researched at the Genealogical/Historical library while helping people explore their family/community roots. Volunteers work to preserve the past for future generations by serving

Narratives

at local museums and a one room school. Volunteers share their life experiences with youth by leading school groups in churning butter, doing morning chores, carpentry work and baking bread at a museum. Volunteers can learn about horsemanship as they work with the Thunder Rode therapeutic horse riding program for mentally and physically handicapped individuals. Volunteers can learn beginning computer skills at the Decorah Library which is the program sponsor and then utilize those newly learned skills at a volunteer station such as the local nursing home where they help residents stay in touch with family through email.

Volunteers learn about preparing for disasters by assisting with blood drives and taking part in drills and taking part in training for the disaster action team. Volunteers learn about tax preparation as they become trained and certified to provide income tax assistance to low income and elderly. Through involvement in their community, volunteers learn that their life skills and talents can make a difference but also that there are ample opportunities to explore new skills to help people in their community. One volunteer expressed her appreciation of being able to learn new skills as she struggled to understand the Excel program for setting up income tax appointments: "This is so good for me to learn something new and be challenged in my computer skills!"

Leadership:

Volunteers have the opportunity to develop and utilize their leadership skills at their volunteer stations and also by serving on non-profit advisory boards or committees as they work to identify community needs, set goals, and recruit other volunteers to fill needs. Potential volunteers and current volunteers are also seeing their skills and interest make a difference as they work to keep the elderly in their own home by delivering meals to the homebound or as they launch a campaign to educate employers and tax payers about the Earned Income Credit for the low income.

Reflection:

Volunteers regularly reflect on the meaning of their service as they identify and meet needs in their community. The Northeast Iowa RSVP newsletter, news releases and special recognition events highlight ways volunteers are making a difference in their community. Volunteers are often thanked for their services by the people they serve and the stations where they serve. Northeast Iowa RSVP staff regularly reflect back to volunteers the differences they are making through RSVP newsletters, newspaper articles and at appreciation events.

Enhancing Volunteer Quality of Life:

Enhancing the quality of a volunteer's life happens naturally as they make new friends, benefit from interactions with others and feel pride in the contributions they are making to individuals at their

Narratives

volunteer site. Through development of new skills and the use of their talents and life skills, volunteers will expand their horizons with new endeavors in their retirement years.

Training

Once the staff and volunteer have identified a possible volunteer assignment, the work station representative is contacted to meet with the volunteer to discuss the opportunity further. Both the station and the volunteer have the right to decline an opportunity if it does not seem like a good fit. The station will provide the volunteer with basic orientation like where to 'hang their hat' and detailed training specific for the volunteer position. For instance, under Healthy Futures where a volunteer is working at a food pantry, they will learn about the regulations, client paperwork, stocking shelves, distributing food and any other details that are important for the assignment. If a volunteer is delivering meals to the homebound, they will meet with the coordinator for the program to be given basic guidelines and well-being checks of the homebound person as well as directions on what to do if they have concerns or a client does not answer the door. Then they will accompany an experienced volunteer to learn the route and details such as whether to knock or just walk in and where the client would like the meal placed. The food backpack volunteers will learn about the regulations of the program, how much food to pack and how to discreetly deliver the backpack to the school each Friday. The Disaster Action Team will receive training through the American Red Cross and/or the Winneshiek County Public Health or Emergency Management. Blood drive volunteers will receive training on their specific assignment before they begin and will be paired with seasoned blood drive volunteers. Individual teachers will provide guidance and instruction on what they would like the volunteers to be doing with the children along with information on handling behavioral issues. Volunteers at the Decorah VA Clinic will receive initial training at the Iowa City VA Center, followed by more in-depth training at the Decorah VA Center. The Walking School Bus Driver will receive an assigned route and instructions from the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness representative on guidelines for 'driving' the bus and ensuring the safety of the children. The tax preparers will go through a 5 day in-depth training and on-line exercises before certifying to become a tax preparer and be matched with an experienced preparer when serving clients.

The orientation and training of a volunteer is discussed with the station manager at the time they sign the memorandum and reminded when they complete a yearly survey which mirrors back requirements of the memorandum such as training of volunteers.

Once new volunteers are engaged in an assignment, RSVP staff will check with them to see how it is going. RSVP staff also makes contacts with the volunteer on birthdays and in a yearly survey to see if

Narratives

they are satisfied with their assignment or have any new interests in volunteering at another location.

Volunteers engaged in RSVP service have the opportunity to engage at a variety of different locations to fit their interests and skills. This accommodates the diversities of our community where differences are not based on the color of a person's skin but many other factors. The 2000 Census shows that 97% of the population in Northeast Iowa is white. Our personal knowledge tells us that the majority of the 3% of the population which is not white are below the age of 40 and this is reflected by our volunteers in that only two volunteers reports themselves as being of a racial group other than white.

Demographics

Just like Northeast Iowa, our volunteers come from diverse backgrounds and are serving people of diverse backgrounds. Diversity in Northeast Iowa is not measured by the color of skin but rather a lot of other attributes that makes for a unique community.

Iowa has the distinction of having the oldest person in the nation at 115! Just like the median age for people in Northeast Iowa is 42; they actually range in age from birth to 104. Our volunteers also range in age from 55 to 100 with an average age of 72. The younger Baby Boomers make up 22% of the volunteer base but 9% of the volunteers are age 85 plus reflecting Winneshiek County's recognition as being second in the nation for women over age 85. These volunteers are working side by side despite what may be a 30-40 year difference in their age, serving people of diverse ages. NE Ia RSVP will recruit ages 55 and older and work with the potential volunteers to ensure that the assignment is working for his or her age group. This is one of the reasons we will keep working with nursing homes.

Our oldest volunteer is 100, lives in her own home and travels to a local nursing home each week to play cards with the residents.

Education in Northeast Iowa ranges from graduates of elementary school only to people with college doctorates. This is also reflected in our volunteers, some did not attend high school; 21% graduated from high school, 4% graduated from a community college and another 46% graduated from college and beyond. These volunteers with diverse educational backgrounds are brought together to serve people of diverse educational backgrounds while distributing food to the hungry, visiting people in nursing homes and working with children in schools. Once again all working side by side despite their educational differences. RSVP will recruit volunteers of all educational levels and work to develop volunteer assignments that work with the different levels from elementary graduate to the volunteers with their master degrees.

We also see diversity in the life & career skills of volunteers with occupations ranging from farmers,

Narratives

homemakers, restaurant workers, factory workers, and caregiver occupations to elementary and high school teachers, college professors and business owners. The lifetime career choices are also reflected in the 'need to work' as some RSVP volunteers have taken an early retirement at age 55 and other volunteers are still working part-time at age 80. These volunteers are also brought together as they serve side by side at the 47 different nonprofit agencies despite their diversity in career choices. RSVP will recruit volunteers from all walks of life, encouraging them to decide if they want to do something they have always done through volunteering or if they want to be challenged through trying something totally new and different.

Diversities in the Northeast Iowa service area include differences in education, economics, and physical well-being, cognitive ability, gender, career differences and ethnicity. People of differing diverse backgrounds are brought together to serve as volunteers for the stations served by RSVP all with one goal -- making Northeast Iowa a great place to live!

Veterans

RSVP recruits Veterans & family members by working with the Decorah VA Clinic, Winneshiek County VA office and working with volunteers who are active in the various Veteran groups in the area. This past June, a nursing home was seeking a group of Veterans to help with a Flag Day event for the Veterans at their nursing home. We were able to recruit volunteers who are Veterans to help as well as one Veteran volunteer when called, took it a step further to get his local Veteran's unit to assist with the event.

Volunteers with disabilities

RSVP is committed to working with volunteers with disabilities and makes the following statement on their volunteer application: "Northeast Iowa RSVP provides reasonable accommodations for qualified candidates upon request." Once aware of their needs, RSVP will work to find an assignment that will accommodate their limitations. The volunteer has the opportunity to determine if the assignment is a good fit for them by reviewing the job description and visiting the station. Included in the Memorandum of Understanding which the RSVP station signs is the following statement: "The Volunteer Station will maintain the programs and activities to which RSVP volunteers are assigned accessible to persons with disabilities (including but not limited to persons with mobility, hearing, vision, mental and cognitive impairments or addictions and diseases). The station will provide reasonable accommodations to allow persons with disabilities to participate in programs and activities." This statement is also included in our volunteer policies so that volunteers are aware of our willingness to accommodate their needs.

Narratives

Recognizing Volunteers

NE IA RSVP holds an appreciation brunch in the fall to honor active RSVP volunteers. This event brings a majority of the volunteers together to celebrate their accomplishments and their activities in the community. Volunteers enjoy meeting other volunteers and are always amazed at the number of people who are RSVP Volunteers and actively making a difference in their community.

Volunteers are also thanked during Senior Corps week with newspaper articles that highlight the difference that RSVP volunteers are making. RSVP staff recognizes and thanks volunteers on their birthday with a call of congratulations and thanks for their services. NEI RSVP plans to recognize volunteers in the quarterly newsletter and in articles in the newspapers about the program throughout the year.

Retaining Volunteers

The retention of the volunteer starts at the beginning when a person first commits to becoming a volunteer. NE IA RSVP is a strong program which attracts and retains volunteers. It is also a flexible program which is willing to work with a volunteer's schedule and changing interests, including accommodating snow birds. The program also believes it is important to tell the story of what RSVP volunteers are doing in this community which leads to a sense of pride in being a RSVP volunteer. This is demonstrated by a simple check of the volunteers years of service. The program began almost 12 years ago with 20 volunteers having served ten or more years, 47 volunteers serving 8 or more years and another 54 of the volunteers serving 5 or more years. This reflects 40% of our volunteers who have served 5 years plus with the Northeast Iowa RSVP Volunteer Program!

Program Management

Management of Northeast Iowa RSVP

Northeast Iowa RSVP has been sponsored by the Decorah Public Library since 2001, starting with zero volunteers and zero stations. The current RSVP Director has been with the program since 2003, working first as a part-time volunteer coordinator and assuming the director role a year later. She has taken advantage of resources and training's provided by CNCS to develop a strong program that meets the regulations and guidelines outlined for a RSVP program. She is also an active member of the Iowa Association of RSVP Directors, attending meetings and training's of the association, including retreats where RSVP directors from across the state share best practices. During the time the director has served, she has gone through 4 compliance visits, one a week after she started with changes needing to be implemented, a second three years later with more updates and changes, one three years ago with no findings and one this spring with a couple of minor, readily fixed findings.

Narratives

This director has developed a policy booklet which covers the current regulations for the local program and is updated as changes by CNCS and the RSVP program regulations are implemented. The director has also developed and regularly updates a volunteer & station handbook to help with presenting the program to new stations and volunteers. The director has developed numerous forms and work plan surveys to address the needs of the program, including tailoring time sheets to collect data for specific work plans.

Stations

Management and development of the RSVP volunteer stations begins by meeting with an agency to confirm their nonprofit status and their identified volunteer needs and ensuring that volunteers will not be engaging in prohibited activities. Requests are evaluated to ensure that volunteer services will fill unmet needs and do not displace a paid employee while offering a beneficial and rewarding experience for the volunteer. If these requirements are met, the director will review the station handbook with the station providing background, goals and requirements of the program.

A three year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be entered into with the agency which outlines the requirements for stations and services provided by NEI RSVP. The outcomes and measurement tools will be discussed along with reviewing the policies for RSVP volunteers with the station so that they are aware of RSVP expectations and regulations for the volunteer.

Prohibited activities are addressed in the station handbook, volunteer policies and the memorandum of understanding signed by the station. Job descriptions will be developed for the volunteer based on a volunteer request form completed by the station which gives name and contact information for the station supervisor along with volunteer position duties, physical requirements, time frame and benefits of the position.

Overseeing Volunteer Stations

Once a station is established and volunteers are in place, NEI RSVP will make contacts with the stations to stay informed of needs and concerns and offer assistance or changes if needed. Northeast Iowa RSVP will conduct a yearly assessment of the stations to make sure they are following the guidelines set out in the memorandum, reminding the station of prohibited services and to discover if there are issues or new needs to be addressed.

RSVP collects monthly time sheets from all stations, making contacts if they haven't turned in a time sheet by the 5th of the month. The director reviews the time sheet, making sure that the station supervisor has signed the time sheet and looks for changes from month to month to ensure that volunteers are performing their assigned duties under an approved job description. RSVP staff will

Narratives

also visit with volunteers on their birthday to see how things are going with their volunteer assignment and make sure that their service is still needed and acceptable. Volunteers also complete an annual survey which gives them the opportunity to express their concerns or changing interests and would help identify if a volunteer is engaging in prohibited activities.

Meeting changing community needs

NE IA RSVP will work with stations and other key people in the community to identify and ensure that changing community needs are being met. If a station is no longer needing volunteers, or if we cannot find volunteers for the identified need, RSVP staff will visit with the station supervisor to determine the best way to handle the situation. If a station wishes to withdraw from involvement with the RSVP program, the staff will visit with volunteers to let them know the changes and encourage them to serve in another location.

Graduating Stations

At the present time, we do not have any plans to graduate volunteers or stations and will continue to offer the same opportunities to the current volunteers. We will be working with volunteers who serve with cultural heritage activities or nursing homes to gradually interest and involve them in other activities to ensure that the community priority numbers stay below the 30% requirement. We also anticipate that natural attrition will eliminate some of the positions at our local nursing homes as many of the volunteers who serve there are over age 85 and we will carefully recruit new volunteers for the positions to stay under the 30% requirement. However, we will stay open to other opportunities at our nursing homes like developing a Veteran's group or spouse of Veteran's group. We will also be conscientious of taking on new volunteer requests for needs that would fall under community priorities. We will continue to uphold the established integrity of the program while addressing the 30% community needs requirement.

Track Record with Healthy Futures Activities

RSVP has worked with the three food pantries for an extended period of time. The Food Pantry at 1st Lutheran church has been working with RSVP since 2003, the Allamakee County Food Shelf since 2010 and the Postville Food Pantry since 2007. All three food pantries have distributed and collected RSVP surveys during that time and will be doing so for this grant. We will be measuring increased food security through a survey of clients.

RSVP volunteers have worked to deliver meals to the homebound since 2005 and Northeast Iowa Agency on Aging has distributed and collected surveys and will continue to do so for this grant. We will be measuring increased social support for those that receive assistance.

Narratives

The backpack program in Decorah has been fully operational for two years with RSVP helping with start-up plans. Surveys were sent out this last school year, with a low return rate which undoubtedly has something to do with the survey going home in a backpack. We will be working with the station to determine a better way to distribute surveys. We will be measuring increased food security. In addition to the Healthy Future's focus area we will be working with the Community Connections 21st Century Learning Center under the Education focus area and will be working with the staff to measure improved school attendance.

Program Compliance

RSVP staff and sponsor will continue to work with the Iowa CNCS state office to ensure that all federal regulations are met. This will include taking advantage of training's, webinars as well as utilizing the Knowledge Network offered by CNCS and will be familiar with the RSVP operational handbook. They will also re-view future compliance documents to determine that the current program is following all required activities.

Advisory Council

NE IA RSVP has established a nine member advisory council with members representing the three counties served by the program. Members also represent key agencies in the community such as the Decorah VA Clinic, Northeast Iowa Community Action and Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging. Members are also have backgrounds in business, education, finances and experience working with the elderly. The council assists in assessing community needs, advocates for RSVP in their community and suggests ways for increased visibility in the community. The council meets formally 4 times a year and at other times to lend support for special activities like the annual appreciation brunch.

RSVP volunteers placed in stations covered under MOU

It is the policy of the RSVP program to only place volunteers in agencies with an active memorandum of understanding which is re-negotiated every three years.

Volunteers eligible to serve in RSVP

All RSVP volunteers are age 55 and older. Volunteers are asked to provide their birth date on the required volunteer application with their age reflected on the Volunteer Reporter data base. If a younger volunteer is interested in a specific area, they are given the contact information for the station and encouraged to contact the station themselves.

Organizational Capability

The sustainability and capacity of the RSVP program is directly tied to its sponsor, the Decorah Public Library (DPL). The Decorah Public Library is a department of the City of Decorah. The mayor

Narratives

appoints a nine member Decorah Public Library Board of Trustees which governs the library according to City Code 2.20 Library Board. As per Bylaws for the Decorah Public Library Board of Trustees, Article III, they have been given authority to direct and control all affairs of the library. The Decorah Library Board determines the policies and procedures for the library including the evaluation and revision of programs or policies. The DPL Board of Trustees hires an executive director who is responsible for the management of all library programs, including RSVP.

The DPL Executive Director is Lorraine Borowski who has been with the library for twenty-four years. She provides oversight over all library programming including the RSVP program. She meets with the RSVP Director on a regular basis to discuss program issues and is readily available to the RSVP staff for consultation and guidance. The DPL Director reviews program & financial reports compiled by the RSVP Director and calls down federal funds on a regular basis. The DPL Director reports to the library board on the RSVP program activities at their monthly board meeting. She also annually updates the Decorah City Council about the outcomes of the RSVP program. The RSVP Director has also been asked to report to both the DPL Board of Trustees and the Decorah City Council to keep them updated on all aspects of the RSVP program.

Past grant experiences

DPL has successfully administered nearly one million dollars of grant funds with management and reporting completed by the Director and the Decorah Public Library Board of Trustees. Past grants managed by the Decorah Public Library include a 3 year Dept. of Education Community Technology grant, bricks & motor grants for a new addition to the library, State of Iowa and the Institute for Museum & Library Services LSTA grant to distribute large print books to small libraries across the State of Iowa. The library has also received grants through the RJ McElroy Foundation and several local and state foundations. All grants have required efficient management of funds, outcome documentation and reporting of those outcomes to the funders.

Sound Programmatic and Fiscal Oversight

Program management is set up by the City of Decorah and the Decorah Public Library with the OMB Circular A-87 Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments utilized to ensure that the program meets the statutes and regulations for the federal program.

The Decorah City Clerk maintains income and expense records for the RSVP program and all other library programming. Financial accounts of Decorah Public Library (which includes RSVP) are audited annually under the City of Decorah audit. Payment of RSVP related expenses and payroll along with depositing of income for the program are all handled through the Decorah Public Library

Narratives

under the City of Decorah designated accounts.

Office Space, Equipment

Northeast Iowa RSVP office is located in the Decorah Public Library with in-kind space provided by the library. The Decorah Public Library is dedicated to providing on-site RSVP office space, large group meeting space and providing equipment necessary for the successful operations of the RSVP program. In recent years, RSVP has been able to obtain grants from the Winneshiek County Community Foundation through the sponsorship of the Decorah Public Library enabling the purchase of two new computers, copy machine & printer, filing cabinets and a desk unit for the RSVP Director. The Decorah Library has provided other used office furniture as needed by the RSVP program.

Income

The NEI RSVP Director will meet with the DPL Director annually or as needed to determine funding sources for RSVP which will address the financial needs necessary for maintaining and expanding the program without jeopardizing library funding sources. The NEI RSVP Director will research and apply for grants and awards to maintain and supplement the RSVP budget. This will include but is not limited to County Supervisors, Community Foundations, United Way, private donors and foundations. The NEI RSVP Director will also research and solicit both cash and in-kind donations for identified program needs.

Unless a direct deposit, the income for the NE IA RSVP program comes directly to the RSVP program at the library. The RSVP Director makes copies for her records, documents the income, source, etc. and deposits it into the Decorah Public Library, City of Decorah bank account using the account number that has been assigned to RSVP so that the income goes into the RSVP account. A copy of the deposit slip documenting the source of the income is passed on to the Decorah Public Library Director who documents for her records and passes it on to the city clerk for proper posting. The Decorah Public Library Director issues a receipt to the RSVP Director for the deposits of income.

Expenses

The RSVP director is responsible for ordering budgeted supplies and all other budgeted operational expenses. The RSVP Director will consult with the library director and/or technology person before ordering computers and office equipment. Items that are purchased for the RSVP program are invoiced directly to RSVP. Upon receipt of the invoice, the RSVP Director reviews the invoice for accuracy, signs and dates the invoice and assigns the RSVP expense number to the invoice. The invoice is then given to the Decorah Public Library Director for approval and forwarded to the library board for approval. Once approved by the library board representative, it is then forwarded to the

Narratives

Decorah City Council for review and approval before being paid by the city clerk. The City of Decorah pays all invoices by check prepared by the Deputy City Clerk and signed by the City Clerk. Copies of invoices and checks are kept on file at the city hall with a statement of monthly transactions issued to the library director and passed on to the RSVP Director for review. The RSVP Director keeps copies of all invoices with the RSVP files for the grant year.

Recordkeeping

In addition to the records maintained by city hall, the DPL and RSVP Directors maintain separate records of RSVP finances as a check and balance. The RSVP director keeps track of all income, expenses and in-kind in a Quick Books for Non-profits accounting system. She double checks this information with the information maintained by the city clerk for accuracy. These records are compared quarterly to the information provided by the Decorah City Clerk and before the call down of federal funds.

The Volunteer Reporter is used for recording of volunteer & station information as well as recording of volunteer hours and generating reports required for documentation of program activities.

In-kind

All in-kind donations are documented through an RSVP in-kind form which records the date of the in-kind donation, donor, and value of donations and is signed by the donor and RSVP Director. The RSVP Director solicits in-kind donations as needed and maintains records for all donations. This includes the in-kind donation of the Decorah Public Library, staff, space and utilities.

Manage capital assets

The RSVP program does not have facilities to maintain. Management of equipment and supplies are mentioned earlier in this document. All supplies purchased for RSVP use are kept in the RSVP office for RSVP use only.

Inventory

An inventory record of all RSVP equipment and assets is maintained by the RSVP Director with all equipment tagged and tracked as being the property of the RSVP program under the Decorah Public Library and the City of Decorah. The Decorah Library technology staff person also maintains a list of equipment and this is compared annually with RSVP records for accuracy. To date, no federal funds have been used to purchase equipment.

Staff Positions

All RSVP staff positions are under the direction and guidance of the Decorah Public Library Director and follow the City of Decorah employment policies.

Narratives

Lorraine Borowski is the full-time DPL Director, providing guidance, support and financial management for the RSVP program on an in-kind basis. She has been at the library for 24 years with a vast array of experience managing and supervising staff and grant programs. She is available for consultation on a daily basis, if needed. Her services are an in-kind donation to the program.

Kathy Barloon is the full-time RSVP Director and is responsible for program management and oversight and has been with the program for ten years. She has 20 plus years of experience in establishing and managing non-profit programs, writing and managing grants and the required reporting associated with those grants. Her previous and continuing experience with area non-profit agencies contributes to a good working relationship with those agencies and is valuable in identifying community needs. Her position is 95% RSVP Director and 5% fundraising with her salary paid by the RSVP Program.

Mark Ruen, is the full-time Technology Administrator and has been with the Decorah Public Library for 12 years and devotes 10% of his time as in-kind support for the RSVP program. He is responsible for all computer related activities at the library including maintenance of RSVP computers, downloading of programs, internet services and supports RSVP staff in computer related needs. Her service is an in-kind donation to the RSVP program.

The 20 hour per week Volunteer Coordinator retired in December of 2012 and was not replaced due to sequestration and budget concerns. The latest State of Iowa budget brought in an increase in state funding starting July 1, 2013. A new volunteer coordinator has been hired and will start August 26, 2013. Her name is Kim Toussaint, she will bring to the program strong organizational skills and immense volunteer experience. Kim comes highly recommended with past experiences showing a proven ability to work in challenging and varied situations as well as being a proactive problem solver.

Northeast Iowa RSVP is excited to welcome her to the program at 14 hours per week. Kim will work to match volunteers to identified station needs, oversee collection of time sheets and record volunteer hours on the Volunteer Reporter. Her position is paid through the RSVP program.

Through the endeavors of these four staff persons along with the support of the Decorah Public Library and the City of Decorah, the Northeast Iowa RSVP Program will continue to be a strong, viable program in Northeast Iowa!

Other

N/A

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

Narratives

N/A