

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Mid Florida Community Services, Inc., (MFCS) is a 501c3 organization located in Brooksville, Florida. The mission of MFCS is to partner in the creation of a society in which low-income people are supported in their efforts to become self-sufficient and where vulnerable populations achieve their full potential. MFCS is committed to improving the quality of life for all generations.

MFCS is requesting \$45,884 to support the activities of 192 proposed RSVP volunteers. The CNCS federal investment will be supplemented by \$32,930 in non-federal resources for a total budget of \$78,814.

RSVP's primary focus area is Healthy Futures including, Aging In Place and Obesity and Food. Service activities include "Meals on Wheels" deliveries and telephone reassurance to homebound seniors, transportation for the blind and visually impaired to/from independent living classes, center-based respite care for those with Alzheimer's and other memory loss illnesses, and emergency food distribution to individuals and families in need. RSVP will utilize a variety of methods to determine the effectiveness of its service activities including, Activity and Attendance Logs, Surveys, Station Reports, and other information gathered from key stakeholders. At the end of the three-year grant term, 116 homebound or older adults and individuals with disabilities will report having increased social ties/perceived social support; 16 caregivers of homebound or older adults and individuals with disabilities will report having increased social ties/perceived social support; and, 630 individuals will report increased food security for themselves and their families as a result of food distribution services.

RSVP's other focus areas are: Education - School Readiness and K-12 Success; Economic Opportunity - Financial Literacy; Veterans and Military Families; and, Environmental Stewardship. Outcomes will be measured in Education, and at the end of the three-year grant term, 60 students will report improved academic performance in literacy and/or math.

The overall impact expected from these programs is to provide volunteers meaningful opportunities to improve the quality of life for the people we serve. An annual self-assessment, with key stakeholder input, will be conducted to ensure the effectiveness of services to the intended recipients and to the community.

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## Strengthening Communities

### Community Description:

Hernando County is located on the west central coast of Florida and covers an area of 478 square miles. It is bordered on the west by the Gulf of Mexico, on the east by Sumter County, to the north by Citrus County and to the south by Pasco County. Hernando County is part of the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater Metropolitan Statistical Area and often referred to as the Tampa Bay Area. Hernando County is centrally located for air, rail and interstate travel.

In 2005, Hernando County was the 35th fastest growing county in the country. From the census of 2000 to the census of 2010, the population increased 32.1%. From 2010 to 2012, there was only a .4% increase. The Hernando County School District also reported it was down 900 students from the fall of 2010 to the current school year, most notably in the elementary and K-8 schools. These are signs that the county continues to feel the impact of the economic downturn. Most of the 173,181 population of the county is concentrated in Spring Hill and Brooksville, with Spring Hill having the largest projected growth pattern through 2015. The outlying areas of Hernando Beach, Istachatta, Masaryktown, Ridge Manor and Weeki Wachee are small, rural, close knit communities.

As in other areas of the country, the lack of marked improvement in the economy including, stagnant wages, unemployment and underemployment, remain obstacles for families within the community. According to Realty/Trac, Hernando County ranked 4th in the state for the number of mortgage foreclosures last year, with 1 in 25 houses facing foreclosure filing. The county's housing market also went from a high of 3,850 housing completions in 2006-2007 to 156 in 2012-2013, a 96% drop. Florida also has the largest number of sinkholes in the U.S. The city of Spring Hill in Hernando County has the largest number of verified sinkholes. Sadly, many homes "sit unrepaired, decimating property values and draining millions of dollars in tax revenue from local governments already hard hit by the recession." Insurance losses have meant higher premiums for policyholders and "as the number of claims has soared, the value of Hernando homes and businesses has plunged." (Tampa Bay Times, January 2012)

The median household income in 2011 was \$42,700 with the mean income \$22,540. These income figures are 16% and 11% respectively, lower than the state. After 4 years of double-digit

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unemployment rates beginning in November 2008 and ending in October 2012, Hernando County's unemployment rate is now 8.9%, compared to 6.8% for the state and 7.1% for the country. For many, employment outside of the county has become a necessity, increasing their travel time to and from work as well as their overall cost of commuting. Hernando County continues to show a very slow climb out of the economic downturn.

Hernando County is home to a Wal-Mart Distribution Center in Ridge Manor. The Airport Industrial Park, located near the Hernando County Airport, houses 60 aviation, manufacturing and distribution businesses, down from more than 100 businesses just a few years ago. Although 86% of Hernando County residents are high school graduates, only 16.2% have a Bachelor's degree or higher. This latter figure is 9.8% lower than the state average. Employment in Hernando County has shifted from the construction, service and retail industries to education and health services, hospitality, professional and business services, public administration, and trade, transportation and utilities.

Community Needs and Service Activities Leading to National Performance Measures:

The demographic trend in Hernando is toward an aging population. According to a recent Economic Development Study, the projected median age in 2015 is: US 37.4, Florida 40.5 and Hernando County 56.94. In 2025 it will be 38.2, 40.45 and 60.44, respectively. The median age has been significantly higher than state and national averages since 1980. The largest population gains are expected in the 65+ age category, increasing from 32% in 2000, to 36% in 2015 and 42% in 2025.

With age come social and nutritional challenges as many homebound seniors don't have the means or will to eat properly. The lack of proper nutrition and social ties places them at greater risk for disease and/or disability. Mid Florida Community Services, Inc. (MFCS), provides Meals on Wheels (MOW) to homebound seniors. Through MOW deliveries, clients remain healthier because nutritional and social support needs are being met. Medical research shows that "the healthier people are, the more likely they are to remain living in their homes". Volunteer drivers are assigned to regular routes so that social ties and trust are developed and maintained. For those homebound seniors who are unable to afford or access food for their beloved pets, MOW drivers also deliver cat and/or dog food through "Pets on Wheels". For many, having and caring for a pet is what keeps them getting up each morning, and in turn, living independently longer.

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For those homebound seniors needing additional support, MFCS also provides Telephone Reassurance. Daily phone calls are made to reassure them they are not alone, helping to ward off feelings of isolation and loneliness. Supervisors are alerted to issues of concern so that follow-up can be made. Daily contact increases their perception of social support and in turn, allows them to live independently longer.

Similarly, to increase social ties and perceived social support of those who are visually impaired or blind, volunteers provide transportation to those attending independent living classes. Through Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind, training sessions are offered to assist clients function independently by mastering typical life skills including, safe meal preparation, safe traveling and using assistive devices and technology. There are 5,665 people in Hernando County who suffer from some form of visual impairment. Of those, 930 are considered legally blind. As many as 70% are unemployed. Classes maximize the vision clients have left and build self-confidence in the use of their newly acquired skills. The primary goal is to improve their quality of life through independent living. Volunteer drivers come to know each individual, creating a level of consistency, trust and social support for the client.

Latest estimates from the Department of Elder Affairs' 2012 Florida County Profiles indicates there are 6,053 probable cases of Alzheimer's, with another 3,869 age 65+ having a cognitive impairment in Hernando County. Catholic Charities provides center-based respite care for those with Alzheimer's or other memory loss illnesses allowing the caregiver much-needed relief from the rigors of providing 24/7 care for their loved ones. Respite helps to maintain clients in their homes and communities by affording the caregiver the opportunity to take care of themselves and their personal needs. This in turn, helps to delay nursing home placement. Caregivers are ensured a better quality of life as they're provided the necessary supportive services to continue caring for their loved one at home.

Given Hernando County's slow climb out of the economic downturn, families experiencing unemployment, underemployment, stagnant wages and homelessness rely on emergency food assistance from DayStar Life Center. According to Feeding America Hunger and Poverty Statistics, Hernando County's food insecurity rate is 15.7%, or 26,970 people. 64% are below 200% of the poverty level and 36% are above that threshold. At this very critical time in their lives, services allow

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families to improve their food security while they continue to get back on their feet. The average number of times households returned to DayStar in 2013 was 2.5, reflecting their intended purpose of emergency food assistance.

Through the Hernando County School District, volunteers tutor elementary grade students in Title I schools in reading and math, giving children a better opportunity for success in the classroom, and ultimately throughout their school experience. Hernando County has 7 Title I Elementary Schools. It's widely accepted that high poverty schools tend to have lower levels of reading success as poverty causes home-life disruptions that make it harder for children to prepare and excel in school. Volunteers also tutor/mentor economically disadvantaged high school students in schools with the lowest graduation rates (Hernando and Central High Schools). Through our partnership with Communities in Schools, resources, services, parents and volunteers come together to meet student's needs so that they can concentrate on learning, stay in school and graduate.

Other educational learning opportunities for children include: participating in after-school programs in music and the arts (Hernando Youth Orchestra and Kids Helping Kids); a summer nature camp instilling the importance of conservation and the protection of our environment (Wekiva Youth Camp); and, a Title I school project planting and maintaining school gardens (Moton Elementary School). Participation in these activities helps to build teamwork and self-discipline, which has a fundamental impact on school work, leading to National Performance Measures.

Service activities in Other Focus Areas also lead to National Performance Measures. Trained and certified by the IRS through VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance), volunteer tax preparers assist low-moderate income families by preparing and electronically filing tax returns under the guidance of a volunteer site supervisor. All eligible tax credits are pursued to maximize the benefit due to the client to improve their financial status and that of their family. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) "encourages work, reduces poverty, helps families meet basic needs, improves children's achievement in school, and likely increases their earnings as adults...the CTC, a related tax credit designed to help offset the cost of raising children, also plays a pivotal role in helping low-income families". (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities).

Volunteers work with young mothers who are facing the challenges of pregnancy and parenting to

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assist them in making positive parenting decisions for themselves and their children (Catholic Charities' Foundations of Life and The Life Center of Hernando). Others work to supervise court-ordered visitation between children and their parents or other family members (Family Visitation Center of Hernando). These activities help to ensure the safety and welfare of the children in our community.

Environmental stewardship volunteers work to clean, maintain and improve some of our public lands for the use and benefit of everyone in our community. Of particular concern is the number of invasive plant species growing in our community and the need to remove and replace them with Florida-friendly species. Local volunteer groups are also being called upon by local county and city governments to assist with environmental restoration, protection and enhancement of wild life habitats, as well as education of the public (Brooksville Garden Club, Spring Hill Garden Club and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission).

Volunteers also address Other Community Needs by collecting food for a "Back Pack" program to feed children over the weekend (Brooksville Garden Club), providing meal site assistance at congregate meal sites throughout the county to provide nutritious meals and socialization to seniors (Mid Florida Community Services), supporting our public libraries, providing assistance with Food Stamp applications (ACCESS), working in a thrift shop to support Habitat homes, and maintaining a memorial garden at a historical museum and landscaping newly completed Habitat homes (Brooksville Garden Club).

Service to Veterans and/or Military Families:

RSVP is providing services to military families in Other Focus Areas. RSVP initiated contact with the Florida National Guard, Family Assistance Center Specialist, to learn more about the needs of the families of our Brooksville based Aviation Regiments. Currently, more than 50 members of the Black Hawk helicopter unit are deployed to Kosovo in support of peace keeping operations. The RSVP Advisory Council recruited volunteers to meet identified needs of these families, as well as those who will come after. Since National Guard or Reserve units "often live far removed from the built-in resources and support systems that are provided to active component families who live on, or near, a military base...Guard and Reserve families often do not know what to expect when a deployment

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occurs, nor do they always know where to go for assistance if and when it is needed". (National Council on Family Relations, "Military Families: What We Know and What We Don't Know"). Local needs have been identified by the FRG (Family Readiness Group), and service activities are in response those needs. The first project was a successful school supply drive for 45 military children to offset the cost of supplies to families who are struggling financially. The next projects may include holiday food drives, supply drives for infants and young children, holiday drives for teenagers, an "on-call" handyman service, and other projects as identified.

A volunteer also provides supportive services at the Department of Veteran Services, and outreach will be conducted to encourage veterans and military families to avail themselves of our VITA program.

### **Data Collection:**

RSVP of Hernando County currently uses Volunteer Reporter, 6.1, to enter data for volunteers, hours of service, stations, job placements, etc. This software system captures the data elements necessary for CNCS reporting requirements. All other data collection to measure outputs and outcomes is the responsibility of the Project Coordinator. The Memorandum of Understanding executed by each Volunteer Station requires compliance with data collection for impact measures. The Coordinator works directly with each Station Manager to ensure that measurement tools are in place and data collection is completed at regular intervals, or as needed. The Coordinator then reviews and analyzes the data for reporting purposes. The Coordinator periodically reviews the data collection system for continuous quality improvement and seeks the input of station managers, volunteers and other key stakeholders.

### **Recruitment and Development**

#### **Quality of Volunteer Assignments:**

Recruitment activities will include, but not be limited to, on-going newspaper and community newsletter publications, the county broadcasting network, speaking engagements at various service clubs, organizations and businesses, networking at chamber of commerce and other social networking functions, targeting 55+ adult communities, registration with VolunteerMatch and other web-based networks, and quarterly RSVP Newsletters.

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As part of the registration process, volunteers are asked to identify their skills and interests to ensure a placement which will allow them to share their experiences, abilities and skills to improve our community and themselves through service. Additionally, through the realignment of the RSVP program to meet national performance measures, volunteer assignments have become more specific to particular focus areas, objectives, service activities and outcomes. As a result, volunteers are providing targeted services which are more clearly defined and measurable, allowing the volunteer to further witness the impact of their efforts on the intended recipient. Quality assignments allow the volunteer to utilize their existing skills, develop new skills and friendships, and feel a sense of personal fulfillment.

Training for each job description is required of the volunteer stations and is part of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) executed annually. Additionally, volunteer stations are asked to report on their training programs on the Annual Volunteer Station Survey. This allows RSVP the opportunity to ensure a training program is in place and available to the volunteers. As a system of checks and balances, volunteers are asked whether they received training from their volunteer stations on their Annual Volunteer Survey. The better the volunteers understand their assignments, the better qualified they will be to perform their duties. When volunteers feel assured and comfortable in their assignments, they will be able to perform at peak levels for a longer time period.

### Demographics:

According to the latest FL Census Statistics for Hernando County, 4.8% of the population is under 5 years, 19.5% is under 18 years and 26.1% is over 65 years, with the balance between 18 and 65. 91.1% of the residents are White, 5.6% are Black, .4% are American Indian and Alaska Native, 1.2% are Asian, .1% are Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 1.6% report 2 or more races, 10.6% are of Hispanic or Latino Origin, and 81.6% are White and not Hispanic. In 2011, there were 22,936 Veterans living in Hernando County. RSVP of Hernando County volunteers reflect our community as follows: of the 98% of registered volunteers who indicated their race/ethnicity, 94% are white, .04% are Black, .01% are Hispanic or Latino, and .005% are Asian. 32% are Veterans and 12% are disabled. We continue to seek opportunities to recruit volunteers from all walks of life within our community.

### Volunteer Retention and Recognition:

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To ensure volunteers continue to offer their services, it's important to initially place the individual in the most appropriate setting, carefully matching their skills and interests with the needs of the volunteer station. With proper job training and fulfilling work experiences, a satisfied volunteer will remain with the program and encourage others to join as well.

Volunteers are essential to the stations they become a part of. Their impact on individuals, families and the community at-large must be shared and celebrated. RSVP will hold at least annually, a recognition event in honor of the volunteers and their service to others. Plaques denoting milestones (years and/or hours of service), RSVP gifts, donated door prizes and a catered meal will be provided. Accomplishments will be shared and sent to local media for publication. RSVP will also recognize its volunteers in each quarterly newsletter, through birthday and anniversary cards, and at other strategic time periods during the year such as Senior Corp Week.

### **Program Management**

Management of RSVP Stations:

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is prepared and signed by the project sponsor and volunteer station. The MOU identifies the project requirements, working relationships, mutual responsibilities and prohibited activities. RSVP makes site visits to the volunteer stations to evaluate the quality of the volunteer experience, training, supervision, recognition, safety and other factors such as prohibited activities. RSVP will openly communicate with the volunteer stations on an on-going basis, or as needed by telephone, e-mail and/or letter. Annual station and volunteer evaluations also aid in determining where stations may be having some difficulties and need some technical assistance.

Volunteer Service Activities:

An honest, frank discussion about the national performance measures with the volunteer station at the outset of any volunteer placements helps to alleviate any miscommunication about assignments. Volunteers have job descriptions outlining their job responsibilities at each volunteer station. These are reviewed carefully before placement to ensure the connection between the placement and the national performance measures. The more educated the volunteer force is about their focus areas,

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objectives, service activities and outcomes the more they will help to reinforce the intended placement.

Volunteer monthly time sheets will also be submitted for each job description to ensure the correctness of the volunteer placement and assignment. Volunteers also complete an Annual Volunteer Survey that specifically asks them to identify their volunteer assignment(s). Additionally, volunteers will be assisting in data collection for performance measures which align with specific service activities. This too, will help to ensure compliance with placement and assignment.

### Meeting Changing Community Needs:

RSVP of Hernando County underwent a realignment of its programming in 2013 in an effort to transition to the national performance measures by 2014. This was done with on-going guidance from our state office. 18 volunteer stations were graduated along with 158 volunteers. RSVP initially identified the stations which seemed appropriate for graduation, but contacted each with the national measures in hand to ask how we could work together to align their program. In most instances, it was clear that an alignment could not be made. A follow-up letter was sent identifying the non-alignment, and the station was graduated along with the volunteers in placement. All volunteers were given the option of remaining with RSVP, but they had to choose a new placement, or one in addition to the graduating station. RSVP also held its Annual Recognition Luncheon at the close of the contract year allowing all of the volunteers who were graduating the opportunity to come and be recognized by RSVP and their peers for their valuable service to others and to their community. Since there were no identified repercussions about the manner in which this was handled, as RSVP continues to strengthen its programming under the national measures, it will approach station and volunteer graduations from the same vantage point.

### Measuring Performance in the Primary Focus Area:

"Meals on Wheels" and Telephone Reassurance programs have been offered to the community by the sponsor since 1989. State and local funding sources require program and fiscal accountability including, performance measurement and client satisfaction. Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind has been providing services for almost 20 years in Hernando County. They are a contractor for the state's Division of Blind Services to provide vision rehabilitation services. Again, state and local funding sources require program and fiscal accountability including, performance measurement and

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client satisfaction. Center-based Respite Care has been provided to Alzheimer's and other memory loss clients by Catholic Charities for more than 18 years. Local funding sources require program and fiscal accountability as does the Council on Accreditation (COA), their national accrediting body. DayStar has been in operation for 30 years providing emergency food assistance to those in need. DayStar's data collection system has progressed light years since its inception. Volunteers now have access to an information technology system with which to enter client data, allowing them to run reports to measure performance. This resulted in great part from DayStar's decision to pursue grant funding to enhance their program services. The Hernando County School District must meet state mandates for student testing and performance measures. Pre and post tests are administered by teachers to gauge improvements in academic performance. All of these programs have been an integral part of RSVP under the current sponsor since 2005. These organizations are ready, willing and able to provide performance measurement data as requested by RSVP.

Compliance with RSVP Federal Regulations:

To ensure local input into the RSVP program design and evaluation, RSVP has an Advisory Council of 9 members, 5 of whom are men and 4 women; 8 are retirees and 1 is employed; and, 3 are RSVP volunteers. Of particular interest is that 2 members were volunteers with graduating stations and chose to remain on the Advisory Council. Members are from local government (County Commissioner), education, airline industry, management, sales, medical field and military. All members are Caucasian. Efforts will continue to provide a more diverse base of volunteer members. A self-assessment of the project is conducted annually to evaluate the effectiveness of program activities making an impact in the community. Recommendations become part of future planning and are used for program improvement.

No volunteer is ever placed at a volunteer station without a fully executed MOU in place. Volunteer eligibility is determined at the time of registration. If the volunteer is ineligible, s/he is referred.

### **Organizational Capability**

Sound Programmatic and Fiscal Oversight:

MFCS is a private, non-profit corporation serving a six county area in west central Florida. Since its inception in 1968, the agency has served the poor, the elderly and those with disabilities. This has been

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accomplished through the administration of targeted grants and increased awareness and responsiveness of the community to their needs. MFCS corporate structure has allowed its service delivery area to steadily grow throughout the years and has an annual budget exceeding 27 million dollars, with reserves of more than 1.8 million. Funding is provided to MFCS through more than 80 federal, state and local grants and contracts. With the current management structure, the agency has been able to maintain an administrative rate below 5% over the last 12 years. MFCS has successfully operated RSVP of Lake and Sumter Counties since 1989 and RSVP of Hernando County since 2005. MFCS was a recipient of CNCS funds for the Seniors in Schools Initiative for 5 years and was successful in sustaining that project for 2 additional years. Senior Services programming, including Older Americans Act Title III and Community Care for the Elderly, have been provided by MFCS in Hernando County since 1981.

MFCS has a centralized Finance Department with a computerized accounting system designed to accommodate fund accounting for a wide range of contracts. The staff is cross trained and attends training to remain current with state and federal grants management requirements. The annual audit is conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards; Government Auditing Standards as issued by the Comptroller General of the United States; the provisions set forth in OMB Circular 1-33, "Audits of State and Local Governments and other Non-profit Organizations" and the Florida Single Audit Act. The annual audits are conducted by an independent audit firm.

### Staff Positions:

Programmatic and fiscal oversight, as well as day-to-day operational support for RSVP is provided by the Project Coordinator, the Senior Services Director and a Finance Officer for MFCS. A full-time Project Coordinator is employed 50% to oversee the day to day operation of RSVP of Hernando County and 50% to oversee RSVP of Lake and Sumter Counties. Although staff time is recorded electronically, the Project Coordinator tracks time in each program on a separate Time Sheet to ensure equal time in each program. The present Coordinator of 1 year is a former Social Worker, Attorney, Family and County Court Mediator and Senior Administrator. An administrative assistant works with the Coordinator to carry out the daily functions of the job and provide clerical support, including data entry. The present assistant has been with RSVP for 8 years. The Job Descriptions are written to ensure that all program requirements are met. Both of these positions are fully funded through the

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RSVP budget.

The MFCS Senior Service Director assists in the preparation of grants, written reports, development of fund raising activities and community awareness activities. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Services and has 18 year's experience administering state and federally funded programs for seniors, as well as volunteer programs. The Senior Services Director and Project Coordinator meet on a regular basis to ensure operational support of the program. The Finance Officer directly involved with RSVP has 18 year's experience with RSVP financial requirements and works under a CPA. The Finance Officer and Project Coordinator meet monthly to ensure financial support of the program. The Senior Services Director and Finance Officer are not funded by RSVP.

Organizational Capacity:

Comprehensive policies and procedures ensure compliance with program requirements, accountability, and efficient and effective use of available resources. Over the years of operation, management has developed manuals for operations, finance and personnel, along with individual program protocols. Policies and financial procedures in particular, are approved by the Governing Board and various funding sources.

All of the facilities used by the agency are owned by the agency and operated and maintained by a fully staffed maintenance crew. This allows the agency to keep costs low and provides flexibility to make changes for the future needs of programs. Space is provided to RSVP adjacent to the central administrative office. In addition to offices, RSVP has a large conference room and storage room for program and office supplies. The space lends itself to programming (VITA and ACCESS site), volunteer station needs (orientation and training site), as well as volunteer work space. Office furniture and equipment are provided by MFCS and supplies are included in the RSVP budget.

Organizational Infrastructure:

The Executive Director has 40 year's experience with this agency, the Chief Financial Officer has 30 year's experience in administering all areas of finance, and the Director of Programs and Operations has 27 years of related experience. All have extensive experience in managing federal funds. The

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Governing Board also oversees RSVP to ensure quality service provision within our community.

### Other

N/A

### PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A