

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Located in St. Cloud, Minnesota, the City of St. Cloud-Greater St. Cloud Area Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) serves central Minnesota communities located in Benton, Sherburne and Stearns counties. The city of St. Cloud is a rapidly growing core city within central Minnesota, located just 65 miles northwest of Minneapolis-St. Paul, and is considered one of the State's larger metropolitan areas. It has also been reported as one of the State's fastest growing metro areas with an overall growth rate of 13.6% since the 2000 census. Five individual cities make up the St. Cloud metropolitan area: St. Cloud, Sartell, Sauk Rapids, Waite Park, and St. Joseph.

The mission of the City of St. Cloud is to provide quality cost effective public services. The Greater St. Cloud Area Retired and Senior Volunteer Program expects to contribute to this mission by serving an estimate 1,092 senior volunteers that connects them with targeted community need, in a cost effective manner. Volunteers will serve in the areas of education, economic opportunity, veterans and military families, disaster services, environmental stewardship and capacity building. The primary focus area of this project is healthy futures -- aging in place, obesity and food and access to care. These three areas demonstrate the greatest need on our local community. Providing volunteer services in these three areas will strengthen our community and the partnerships we have with agencies who address these community needs. At the end of the three-year grant, the program expects to have met all outputs and outcomes projected in the Healthy Futures - Access to Care (117 RSVP volunteers will have provided information on health program to 20,200 people; Healthy Futures -- Obesity and Food (165 RSVP volunteers will have helped increase food security for 19,244 people; and Healthy Futures Aging in Place (275 RSVP volunteer will have provided services to enable 838 older adults to remain living independently). The project expects to improve the lives of people of all ages by addressing pressing community needs through partnerships with human service, government and licensed health care agencies. RSVP will work closely with community partners to track performance measurement outcomes through surveys and statistics gathered from the agencies benefitting from services of RSVP volunteers.

The CNCS federal investment of \$113,812 will be supplemented by approximately \$315,894 in funding from the Minnesota Board on Aging; Cities of St. Cloud, Sartell, Sauk Rapids, St. Joseph, Waite Park, Elk River, Stearns, Benton and Sherburne Counties and United Ways of Sherburne County and Central Minnesota.

## Strengthening Communities

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Describe the community and demonstrate that the community needs identified in the Primary Focus Area exist in the geographic service area.

According to the 2010 Census, St. Cloud is the third largest city in the State in terms of population, ranking only behind Minneapolis-St. Paul and Duluth-Superior. Within our tri-county service area, the total population is 276,980 (U.S. Census, 2010). It should be noted that the area has experienced tremendous growth in the senior population, some of which can be credited to the excellent health care available within the community. As the baby boomer population grows, this figure will continue to increase as adults over the age of 65 will outnumber any other age group in the United States.

According to the 2010 census, the group of seniors over 65 grew faster than most younger populations at a rate of 15.1% to 40.3 million or 12.9% of the total population.

The following table shows the breakdown by county of the number of seniors over age 55; the number of seniors serving through RSVP; and the percentage of seniors involved in the program. Overall this program currently serves 5.98% of the total eligible persons over age 65 in the service area whereas the state average is 2.67%.

| County    | Persons over age 65 | RSVP Volunteers | Percentage |
|-----------|---------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Benton    | 3,765               | 292             | 7.76%      |
| Sherburne | 4,584               | 331             | 7.22%      |
| Stearns   | 14,661              | 752             | 5.13%      |
| Totals    | 23,010              | 1,375           | 5.98%      |

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (2010) reported that people living in Stearns and Benton counties had a per capita individual income of about \$35,868 per year. Based on the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2005-2009 Data, the average social security payment for seniors over 65 living in Stearns County is reported at \$14,761 annually while the Minnesota average earnings is \$15,441.

Demonstrate the community need identified in the Primary Focus Area and describe how the service activities in the Primary Focus Area lead to National Performance Measures outputs or outcomes.

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The Greater St. Cloud Area RSVP will address the following primary focus areas.

Healthy Futures: Access to Care - In Sherburne, Benton and Stearns Counties a 75% increase is projected in the number of residents aged 65+ from 2005 to the year 2020. Further, studies have shown that older adults overwhelmingly prefer to "age in place" in their existing homes and communities. According to the Minnesota Department of Human Services' "A Blueprint for 2010," nearly 80% of Minnesotans over 50 surveyed said they had no plans to move, which would indicate that they are planning to remain in their current housing for some time until a crisis or major change occurs. A significant proportion of those surveyed indicated that they needed some type of assistance to stay in their home, which could include socialization, safety, nutritional services, home health care, housekeeping, companionship as well as mental and physical stimulation.

RSVP volunteers will provide opportunities for older adults to engage in one-on-one and/or group socialization, deliver meals or groceries to older adults to address their nutritional needs; provide home and yard chore as well as safety services such as raking, house cleaning and home safety assessment; and provide transportation and companionship to older adults. By providing these services it is believed that older adults will be able to remain living independently in their own home for a longer period of time.

Healthy Futures - Obesity and Food: Hunger has doubled in Minnesota in the past five years. The effects of hunger can cause health and developmental issues from low birth weight to teen suicide to senior diabetes (Hunger-Free Minnesota). A recent study, released by Feeding America in March 2011, quantifies the reality of hunger in Minnesota: One in 10 Minnesotans, 583,000 of our neighbors, miss an average of 10 meals a month. In addition to the finding that there was an annual shortfall of 100 million meals, other study highlights include: 52 percent of Minnesotans who are food-insecure do not qualify for federal nutrition programs and must rely on charitable emergency food programs to meet their meal needs. Benton County has 4,900 (12.4%) food-insecure residents and Stearns County has 17,330 (11.9%) food-insecure residents (information from Map the Meal Gap: Preliminary Findings. Feeding America, 2011).

RSVP volunteers will assist local food shelves to make emergency food available to clients in need by sorting donations, stocking shelves, and completing client intake. By helping individuals and families

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meet their food security needs, they will be able to live healthier, more productive lives.

Healthy Futures -- Access to Care: Quality of life in Minnesota is intrinsically tied to the health of its inhabitants. Individually, robust health makes people feel good physically and mentally, bolsters an optimistic outlook and extends life expectancy. Collectively, we all benefit when our citizens are strong and healthy. Access to quality health information can lead residents to services needed to live a healthy life.

RSVP volunteers will assist residents with accessing quality health care by distributing health care information to community members, answering client questions, staffing health care displays and through health insurance counseling.

Describe your plan and infrastructure to support data collection and ensure National Performance Measures outcomes and outputs are measured, collected and managed.

In order to ensure RSVP volunteers are contributing to meeting performance measurement outcomes, the Greater St. Cloud Area RSVP has worked closely with human service agencies on program design and evaluation. RSVP has built partnerships with local human service agencies over the last 40 years which integrate senior volunteers into services they provide to clients. RSVP collaborates with more than 252 human service agencies through a Partner Agreement and requires agencies to provide performance measurement data on a semi-annual basis. The information will be collected and managed by the RSVP staff. Our partnerships and partner agreement updates provide an opportunity for input into design, measurement and evaluation of RSVP performance measures based on the needs of the organizations and meeting their clients' needs. Performance Measurement Statements include specific examples of how outputs and outcomes will be measured. These are based on conversations with agency representatives and measuring the intended outputs/outcomes desired.

In addition, the RSVP staff attends more than 15 community advisory council and coalition meetings monthly, which are the pulse of what is happening in the community. Through these community meetings RSVP staff becomes aware of new agencies and programs and can determine how volunteers can assist with the delivery of services in National Performance Measurement areas.

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Describe any activity in service to veterans and/or military families as part of service in the Primary Focus Area, Other Focus Area or Capacity Building.

The Greater St. Cloud Area RSVP works closely with our local Veteran's Administration Health Care System as an Other Focus Area. Annually, we provide approximately 45 on-going volunteers who in 2012 served 4,679 hours. RSVP volunteers provide direct services to veterans as activity assistants, drivers, escorts, hospice support, friendly visitors and through pet therapy. In addition, RSVP volunteers provide indirect services in the Dietetic Office, Medical Center, Pharmacy and Wheelchair Repair Center. Special one-time events such as the Big Band Dance and Sweetheart Dinner offer volunteer the opportunities to enhance the lives of veterans and their families as well as the community as a whole. Cards of encouragement are made by volunteers and sent to deployed members of the military showing support for their service to our country. Contacts have been made with our local Warrior to Citizen group and the Veterans' Service Coordinators in Stearns, Benton and Sherburne counties. They are aware of RSVP's interest in providing service to their clients.

### **Recruitment and Development**

RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT:

Describe your plan and infrastructure to create high quality volunteer assignments with opportunities such as sharing their experiences, abilities and skills to improve communities and themselves through service to their communities.

The Greater St. Cloud Area RSVP has always prided itself on being able to provide high quality, meaningful volunteer opportunities for volunteers. We have Partner Agreements with more than 200 human service agencies allowing for a large variety of volunteer opportunities. We work closely with agencies, assessing community needs and responding as promptly as we can with a force of volunteers to assist with those needs. We assist task force organizations with grassroots efforts to strengthen our community through the use of volunteers. RSVP volunteers are recruited for positions based on their interest in building new skills, developing their leadership potential and enhancing their own lives. For example, some RSVP volunteers have the opportunity to strengthen their public speaking skills as falls prevention community presenters. Falls prevention community presenters share information about the falls prevention program and benefits of home safety assessments. In addition, our RSVP Advisory

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Council has the opportunity to develop their leadership skills through service on our Council and standing committees. At times, they are asked to contact local government leaders to inform them about the benefits of RSVP to assist them in making sound funding decisions.

RSVP has shown an ability to adapt over the years to the changing needs and desires of our community and the senior volunteers by providing a wide variety of volunteer options through many agency partners. Our program's success with recruiting for special community projects has made us a local leader within the volunteer field for agencies looking to fill intensive, short-term needs. These opportunities also meet the needs of the seniors, especially baby boomers, looking for flexibility and variety in their volunteer experiences. Flexible volunteer assignments are an asset to this program and RSVP staff are working with agency partners to develop a better way to track the impact of these short-term assignments. In addition to intensive, short-term positions, RSVP volunteers are encouraged to choose on-going volunteer assignments. No matter which type of volunteer opportunity they choose, volunteers are given the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of their service through follow up calls made after short-term assignments and annually on a volunteer's birthday.

Three years ago, the St. Cloud Area RSVP completed a two-year research project with the National Council on Aging which tracked RSVP volunteers serving in professional or leadership type assignments. Information was gathered about the number of volunteers serving in such assignments, the number of hours served and the cost to support those volunteers in order to calculate the rate of return from eight non-profit agencies who utilize volunteers to meet their mission. A compilation of eight quarterly reports was made available to our program in September 2010. According to Edward Goldstein from the National Council on Aging, "The Greater St. Cloud Area RSVP's average ROI (return on investment) over the period of the pilot was well above that of the overall pilot population: 1100% compared to 792% - a truly stellar performance."

Additionally, with the assistance of a St. Cloud State University Social Work graduate student, we conducted our own study which statistically proves that participating in RSVP has improved our volunteer's life satisfaction.

Greater St. Cloud Area RSVP volunteers largely report that their quality of life has improved since

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enrolling with the program. Over 80% indicated a positive effect, while none reported that their lives are worse and 2 in 10 felt that their has been no change in their quality of life after enrolling with RSVP. Those who have been with the program the longest where most likely to rate their quality of life as "a lot better." In addition, nearly 3 in 4 RSVP volunteers (72%) related their volunteer service to a positive change in the quality of their life. Further, 11% of volunteers cited RSVP as completely responsible. Those most likely to give RSVP complete credit have been enrolled with the program for 10+ years.

Our program strives to make the best possible match between the skills and interests of the volunteer with the needs in the community. The Greater St. Cloud Area RSVP's vision is: "To be a bridge between those who need and those who give."

Describe your plan and infrastructure to ensure RSVP volunteers receive training needed to be highly effective means to addressing identified community needs in both the Primary Focus Area and in Other Focus Areas or Capacity Building.

All new RSVP volunteers are enrolled in a one-on-one setting either in the community or at the RSVP office. A placement meeting is arranged by the RSVP Program Coordinators with the Agency Supervisor to discuss the job description and determine initially if the assignment is a good fit for both parties. When possible, a personal placement meeting with an RSVP staff member and agency volunteer coordinator is arranged. After the placement, there are follow up calls to assess the appropriateness of the assignment, birthday calls and recognition events in place to support their efforts.

Agency Site Supervisors receive an orientation to RSVP and program operations prior to the placement of RSVP volunteers at their agency. Refresher training is offered during the annual Partner Agreement renewal. During the annual Partner Agreement update, RSVP staff and agency partners assess needs and update program information including agency eligibility status and safety plans for volunteers. Also, we communicate our federal requirements through regular emails and newsletters. RSVP staff also serves on many networking committees such as the Aging Network, St. Cloud Area Human Services Council, and St. Cloud Area Volunteer Coordinators and provides technical assistance to station supervisors through those venues as well by informing them of any program changes or new initiatives RSVP is currently working on. Three of the RSVP staff members are certified

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Minnesota Association of Volunteer Administrators (MAVA) Volunteer Resource Leadership trainers who train volunteer managers from across the state on effective volunteer management practices.

Due to the large number and variety of volunteer assignments available through RSVP, we have included as part of our Partner Agreement that it is the responsibility of the station supervisor of the agency to train the volunteer to the policies, procedures of the agency and the specifics of their volunteer assignment. Examples of concrete training include: Volunteers serving in distribution of health information assignments are given a thorough orientation to the resources available to clients; Volunteers serving with food support receive training not only on how to determine the amount of food distributed, but also training on sensitivity issues when dealing with persons who are economically disadvantaged; and in the local school district there is a training that all district volunteers attend which teaches them school policies and also how to work with students and specific reading and math tips.

In addition, RSVP ensures the safety of all volunteers through the written safety policy which is included in the agency file and updated annually.

The RSVP staff participates in as many trainings and workshops as possible given our limited funding. The staff has attended the St. Cloud Area Volunteer Coordinator trainings on "Volunteerism in Immigrant Populations", "The Baby Boomer Generation" and "Service Learning." The staff also attends trainings by the St. Cloud Area Human Service Council, Minnesota Association of Volunteer Administrators (MAVA) and Minnesota Senior Corps Association. Information gleaned from these trainings is passed on to our agency partners for their personal training as deemed appropriate.

Annually newly appointed RSVP Advisory Council members receive a thorough orientation to RSVP's history, mission, philosophy, funding sources, bylaws, policies, agency partners and standing committees prior to attending their first meeting. The rights and responsibilities of an Advisory Council member and City of St. Cloud Ethics Policy are all reviewed at the initial orientation.

Describe the demographics of the community served and plans to recruit a volunteer pool reflective of the community served. (Diverse races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, English proficiency; Veterans and Military families as RSVP volunteers and RSVP volunteers with disabilities).

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The City of St. Cloud has a high Caucasian population (94%), with a small percentage (2%) of black and African American individuals. Although the City of St. Cloud is highly populated with white older adults, RSVP diligently works to recruit seniors from other ethnic/cultural backgrounds. RSVP does work closely with Whitney Senior Center on attracting persons of color who are age-eligible for the program. Our program also recruits RSVP volunteers who work with a variety of community organizations who serve a high percentage of culturally diverse individuals in the community. Those agencies include Hands Across the World, Catholic Charities La Cruz Community, Lutheran Social Services Refugee Resettlement and Central MN Adult Basic Education and English Language Learners. RSVP helps bring together people of diverse backgrounds since many RSVP volunteers serve children of diverse backgrounds including age, ethnicity, income level, ability, etc. through youth serving agencies.

The RSVP Staff stays current on diversity issues and trends by attending trainings such as the "Volunteerism in Immigrant Populations," Minnesota Stand Down (a fair for veterans to gather information and visit with agency personnel) and other opportunities available in the community.

The Greater St. Cloud Area RSVP builds its pool of senior volunteers by recruiting, enrolling, placing, following up and recognizing volunteers. RSVP volunteers are recruited in a variety of ways. The majority of our volunteers come to us at the recommendation of current RSVP volunteers. Hence the formalized volunteer referral program called "Ask A Friend," which encourages and recognizes RSVP volunteers who refer people they know to the program. In addition, we write many newspaper articles which often includes a menu of volunteer opportunities; the Life Span cable television program (produced through the City of St. Cloud media department) which airs at least twice weekly on the government access channel and highlights volunteer opportunities at the end of each program; displays at local fairs show pictures of volunteers in their assignments; and radio spots and speaking engagements highlight the program and its benefits to seniors and the community. In addition, our co-location at Whitney Senior Center since December 2008 has been extremely helpful in recruiting volunteers to the program and has dramatically increased the visibility of the program

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

RSVP works very hard to retain volunteers once they have enrolled with the program. The RSVP staff

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maintains close contact with our volunteers even after placement at community agencies through follow up calls about two weeks following a new placement, annual birthday calls and inactive follow ups made after three months of inactivity. In addition, volunteers serving in special community projects for the first time are called by project staff, interns or office volunteers to find out how the assignment went for them and receive feedback on the experience. This is a way to have volunteers reflect on the meaning of their service, the value of the assignment and any changes which need to be made in the future. Telephone contact with the staff in addition to thorough training of site supervisors all contributes to the high retention rate we experience with our volunteers. Our program has one volunteer who has been with the program for 31 years; 40 volunteers between 21 and 27 years; 265 volunteers with 11 to 20 years of service and 999 volunteers with between one and ten years of service. As a program we take great pride in getting to know our volunteers on a personal level and continue to maintain contact with them even after a placement has been made.

RSVP serves as a resource to help address the needs of existing and new volunteer stations and forge relationships with site staff which results in RSV's having positive volunteer experiences. According to the RSVP Life Satisfaction study completed in 2009, RSVP volunteers indicated satisfaction with their volunteer assignment and indicated they have positive connections with their agency supervisors. Approximately 79% of the volunteers rated their satisfaction as "definite." Much the same as with volunteer assignments, those who have been involved with RSVP the longest were the least likely to report any dissatisfaction with their volunteer supervisor.

RSVP recognizes the importance of recognizing volunteers for their efforts. For the last 39 years we have held an annual recognition event for all active volunteers of the program which included a meal and entertainment financially supported by community donations. This year, we offered a "Menu of Volunteer Recognition" (Similar to the Menu of Volunteer Opportunities we provide. Volunteers could choose from one of three options: 1.) Attend an Ice Cream Social (Held in two locations) 2.) Attend a Rox baseball game (complimentary reserved seat ticket) 3.) Receive a free piece of pie from Perkins Restaurant. More than 50 percent of our volunteers responded to one of the options compared to 36% attending the annual banquet the year before. 171 RSVP volunteers selected the Ice Cream Social; 37 attended the Rox baseball game; and 395 enjoyed a piece of Perkins pie. We will continue to offer a variety of volunteer recognition opportunities in the future to meet the varying interests of our volunteers.

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RSVP also conducts special outreach recognitions for those volunteers who serve in RSVP's signature programs such as the RSVP Woodblock Project, Warm Fuzzies, Reader's Theatres (three programs) as well as our office volunteers and volunteer drivers. RSVP volunteers are featured in United Way brochures and videos; photos on our community display; pictures of volunteers in action in our Annual Report; and they attend speaking engagements and displays with staff. Following an RSVP sponsored volunteer assignment RSVP staff makes personal thank you calls to the volunteers or sends hand written thank you notes to those volunteers involved. It is a policy of our RSVP Advisory Council that we do not nominate any of our volunteers for awards, but often we write a letter of support for the nomination sponsored by one of our partner agencies. In addition, as part of the Partner Agreement, we encourage our agencies to do formal or informal volunteer recognition for their volunteers. For those volunteers reaching significant milestones (ie. An RSVP volunteer who has reached 30 years of service and still volunteers at a food service site weekly) we write an article for the local newspaper and feature their accomplishments. Information regarding RSVP and volunteering is provided in the Whitney Senior Center Tour and Orientation Sessions held each Monday.

### **Program Management**

Describe your plan and infrastructure to ensure management of volunteer stations in compliance with RSVP program regulations, such as preventing or identifying prohibited activities.

RSVP staff members are very visible in the community and serve on a variety of human service advisory councils. RSVP volunteers are often seen as the first option to address a particular community need. New RSVP stations are required to sign a Partner Agreement, provide a written safety plan and document their status as an eligible agency for RSVP. A written job description is used to determine the appropriateness and meaningfulness of the volunteer assignment. Job descriptions are one method of identifying prohibited activities prior to a volunteer starting in a particular role. RSVP staff meet with established site staff at least once a year to review the Partner Agreement, review job descriptions, discuss training, supervision, recognition, feedback and general support of volunteers placed at their site. The Partner Agreement contains information relating to the prohibited activities of RSVP. By signing the Partner Agreement the agency agrees to abide by all the items contained in the Partner Agreement. In addition, during the Partner Agreement update, performance measurement data is collected and discussed as to how volunteer assignments at a particular agency are impacting community needs and how and when the performance measurement data will be collected. New site supervisors receive an individual orientation to RSVP policies and regulations and

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on-going technical assistance is provided to existing managers as needed. New site supervisors are encouraged to join the St. Cloud Area Volunteer Coordinators (SCAVC) to gather more educational information on volunteer management and have a networking outlet. The RSVP Program Coordinator and Director currently serve on the National Volunteer Week committee to recognize volunteers and promote volunteerism in the community.

Describe your plan and infrastructure to develop and/or oversee volunteer stations to ensure that volunteers are performing their assigned service activities.

We work with our stations to give us feedback about the service we are providing and about the success of the partnerships we have with them. Partner Agreements are reviewed on an annual basis including discussion about volunteers serving in their assignment and a review of the job descriptions listed for that agency. The RSVP staff discusses with site supervisors the possibility of expanded roles for RSV's, which will be more challenging and provide leadership opportunities. Follow up calls and birthday calls placed to volunteer also provide insight into whether or not volunteers are performing the duties they were originally assigned.

Describe your plan and infrastructure to meet changing community needs to include minimizing disruption to current volunteers as applicable and/or graduating stations as necessary.

RSVP volunteers have been assigned to one particular assignment regardless of the number of assignments they serve in. Our program will continue to respond to community needs as they arise, focusing specifically on the national priority areas. Volunteers who currently do not serve in priority areas will be given the opportunity to change their assignment to one of the priority areas or will be placed in the Other Community Priority area. Our goal is to maintain the current RSVP membership and increase volunteers serving in the priority areas. In terms of graduating stations when necessary, we will meet with site staff to explain changes to RSVP and encourage them to find volunteer opportunities within their agency which fall into the priority areas.

Describe your organization's track record in the Primary Focus Area, to include, if applicable, measuring performance in the Primary Focus Area.

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The Greater St. Cloud Area RSVP has had long standing partnerships with many of the human service agencies which fall into the Healthy Futures focus area. Agencies whose mission is to serve the aging population, address food security issues and access to health care have always been a strong service area for our volunteers. We continuously work with these agencies on analyzing their changing needs and how volunteers can be of service. As a program, we collect, organize and analyze information and data provided by our community partners in order to demonstrate the impact of the volunteers. The RSVP Volunteer Reporter recordkeeping system is used to track volunteers, hours of service and statistical data. Performance Measurement surveys are designed by staff with input from agency partners. In some cases, the agency designs the survey themselves which is used (ie. Catholic Charities home delivered meals survey measures the services provided). Data is also gathered through timesheets including statistical data, surveys from agencies and clients and follow up calls to volunteers and agencies. Information is stored in the RSVP Reporter so measureable results can be tabulated and reported in the Performance Measurement work plans. The information gathered is used to determine if RSVP volunteers truly are making an impact on the community, agency clients and making progress towards addressing a community need.

Describe your plan and infrastructure to ensure the project is in compliance with the RSVP federal regulations to include establishing an RSVP Advisory Council ensuring RSVP volunteers are placed in stations that have signed the MOU, and ensuring all volunteers are eligible to serve in RSVP.

### Federal Regulations:

The Greater St. Cloud Area RSVP has been in existence for 40 years under the sponsorship of the City of St. Cloud. The program is part of the Aging Services Department of the City of St. Cloud. All of the programs within the Aging Services Department work in compliment to provide community leadership to promote successful aging in place. The RSVP Director stays informed of CNCS regulation changes and modifies the program accordingly. As new regulations are passed down, those changes are communicated with RSVP staff, Advisory Council, Station representatives and volunteers. We use e-mail, mail and newsletters to inform our stakeholders of programmatic or regulation changes. The 21 member RSVP Advisory Council is instrumental in guiding the staff in how best to deal with and communicate changes. The Advisory Council represents RSVP volunteers, stations representatives and funding source representatives. They are the ambassadors for RSVP and work to strengthen the program in the community and enhance its image The RSVP Advisory Council is

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essential in helping raise funds for the annual RSVP recognition event, fundraisers and volunteer mileage reimbursement. They assist with soliciting service organizations, local businesses and banking institutions for event donations. One Advisory council member and his wife provide all of the refreshments for all Advisory Council meetings at no cost to the program. Many Advisory Council members serve on recognition and fundraising committees and help plan and orchestrate the RSVP Style Show, which is RSVP's main fundraising event.

### **MOU's:**

Memorandum of Understanding (Partner Agreements) are reviewed on an annual basis by the RSVP Program Coordinators. Any new regulation or policy changes for RSVP are reviewed at that time even though they already received information regarding any changes when the change originally occurred. We also track MOU dates in the RSVP Reporter so we can run reports to ensure all stations are in compliance.

### **Volunteer Eligibility:**

RSVP volunteers fill out an enrollment form which asks for their birth date and driver's license so their age can be verified.

## **Organizational Capability**

### **ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY:**

Describe your plan and infrastructure to provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight (both financial and in-kind) and day to day operational support to ensure compliance with RSVP program requirements (statutes, regulations, and applicable OMB circulars) and to ensure accountability and efficient effective use of available resources.

Responsibility for fiscal management lies with the City of St. Cloud Finance Department, which is audited annually. The City of St. Cloud's Finance Department has managed the Corporation grants since 1973 for both RSVP and VISTA including a \$51,000 RSVP Program of National Significance grant in 2001 and another PNS \$29,702 grant in 2010. The City is also responsible for managing support for RSVP from all other city, county and United Way sources.

All accounting is done on the city's 400 computer system, which is used by all city departments. The City of St. Cloud manages many federal grants, not only for RSVP, but also for the St. Cloud Fire and

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Police Departments, Water, Information Technology and Planning departments to name a few. They follow all generally accepted accounting principles and procedures and recommendations and have not had any negative audit findings. All purchase orders require the signature of the division head (RSVP Director) and Aging Services Department Head. The RSVP Director receives a monthly manager's report and year to date printouts of all program revenue and expenses. The RSVP staff is constantly securing additional in-kind and financial resources through grants and assistance from community partners who see the benefit of supporting RSVP and the volunteers. City leaders are kept well informed of decisions to pursue additional funding.

All income (financial and in-kind) have a receipt which corresponds with the deposit number and can be easily tracked according to date, source, check number or cash amount received, who deposited the money and what deposit number it was. All in-kind donations from our agency partners and other organizations are receipted and recorded on an excel spreadsheet. The Greater St. Cloud Area RSVP sends written requests for funding each year to the cities of St. Cloud, Waite Park, Sauk Rapids, Sartell, St. Joseph, St. Joseph Township, Elk River, Stearns, Benton and Sherburne Counties as well as United Way of Central Minnesota and Sherburne County Area United Way. All city and county budget requests are based on their percent of population of RSVP volunteers residing in their community regardless of where they provide service. Each entity is assessed administrative and volunteer support costs based on their volunteer percentage as well as receiving that same percentage of credit from our federal and state funding. We write these renewable grants every year to sustain program funding. Unfortunately not all funders can fully support the program in their area, so additional funds through the Stearns Electric Association, Great River Energy and other businesses, service organizations and foundations are solicited to make up the budget shortfall.. Local government aid cuts have dramatically impacted our funding sources making project expansion impossible without new funding sources. However, with a small grants from CentraCare Health Foundation (\$8,000); Medica Foundation (\$10,000); Otto Bremer (\$9,300) and a Program of National Significance grant (\$29,702) through the Corporation for National and Community Service we were able to start a much needed Falls Prevention program in our service area.

The RSVP Advisory Council assists with one annual event fundraiser which is the RSVP Style Show. They are involved with planning, organizing and gathering necessary resources for the events. In addition, they also assist with securing Coborns and Cashwise brat sale locations throughout the

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summer.

Clearly define staff positions, identification of current staff assigned to the project and how these positions ensure the accomplishment of the program objectives.

The RSVP staff is strong in longevity. The RSVP Director, Lisa J. Braun, has been with the program for over 26 years, serving in all capacities including Secretary, Program Coordinator and Director. The Director is responsible for overall program management, administration, grants management and public awareness of the program. The RSVP Sherburne County Coordinator, Charlotte Strei, has 23 years of experience with RSVP. The RSVP Program Coordinator, Jennifer Wucherer, started as an intern with the program, and has been on board as a staff member for 13 years. Both Program Coordinators are responsible for the volunteer management of the program including working with all agency partners and RSVP volunteers. The RSVP Special Projects Coordinator, Jackelyn Bekius, is a full-time employee who was hired a year and a half ago and is assigned to timesheet management, limited financial management and special projects such as the Falls Prevention and Reader's Theater.

The entire staff works as a team to ensure we are meeting the needs of the community, our volunteers and working towards performance measurement outcomes. At an annual staff inservice all office forms and performance measures are reviewed for progress and changes made accordingly to achieve the desired outcomes.

Demonstrate organizational capacity to:

Develop and implement internal policies and operating procedures to provide governance and manage risk, such as accounting, personnel management and purchasing.

The City's Human Resources Department is responsible for all personnel issues except or day to day supervision and evaluation of staff. All salary and benefits, hiring and termination and grievances are dealt with in the Human Resources Department.

The St. Cloud City Council and City Administrator oversee the Aging Services Department. Laura Hood is the Aging Services Department Director is directly responsible for oversight of the Department programs including the RSVP program. We receive financial support from the City Finance

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department including funding, data processing, information technology, check processing and overall fiscal management. RSVP follows all of the City of St. Cloud purchasing and accounting procedures; personnel policies; and all City Administrative Orders including travel policies.

Manage capital assets such as facilities, equipment and supplies.

Adequate facilities:

The RSVP office is located at Whitney Center. While we do pay a small share of maintenance expenses for the space, we do receive in-kind supervision and management, snow removal, mowing, garbage removal and painting of our office space at no cost to the program. Whitney Center houses a recreational facility and senior center. This gives staff access to the senior population on a daily basis.

Equipment:

The City of St. Cloud approves all equipment purchases through its City Council. As part of the Aging Services Department, RSVP is included on the rotation schedule for upgrades technology along with all City departments. Equipment inventories are kept on file in the finance department.

Supplies/Purchasing procedures:

Supplies purchased for the program must be approved the City department heads. All invoices for purchases are sign by the RSVP Director, Aging Services Director and forwarded to the finance department for payment.

Demonstrate organizational infrastructure in the areas of robust financial management capacity and systems and past experience in managing federal grants.

Financial management capacity:

Grant Dollars:

The Falls Prevention Program called "Trips, Slips and Broken Hips -- Catching Seniors Before they Fall" is a Program of National Significance through the Corporation for National and Community Service. The falls prevention program also received an \$8,000 grant through CentraCare Health Foundation; \$10,000 in 2012 from the Medica Foundation; and \$9,300 from the Bremer Foundation in 2013. The Central Minnesota Council on Aging printed 30,000 third sheet flyers at no cost to the

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program and mailed them to all of the senior programs in the tri-county area. Falls Prevention Coalition members as well as KNSI and WJON radio stations and Government channel 19 have provided in-kind promotion of the program.

Stearns and Benton County Community Emergency Response Team(CERT) was also a CNCS Program of National Significance program. CERT received on-going funding from Homeland Security through Stearns and Benton County Emergency Management Departments until December 2013 when the funds were cut from the State Department of Homeland Security. Stearns County Emergency Management provides trainers for the basic training at no cost. St. Cloud, Sartell and Sauk Rapids Fire Departments and the Sartell Police Chief also assist with basic and refresher training courses. Stearns and Benton County Emergency Management staff continue to serve on the RSVP Advisory Council as representatives of the CERT program.

The Greater St. Cloud Area RSVP receives funding from the cities of St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, Sartell, St. Joseph, Waite Park, Elk River, Stearns, Benton and Sherburne counties. These geographic areas are asked to pay their fair share of the program costs based on the percentage of RSVP volunteers residing in their area. Additional dollars from two local United Ways and fundraising dollars make up any shortfalls.

Past experience:

The City of St. Cloud, the local sponsor of RSVP, has been named one of the most livable cities in the world by Livecom for several years, in part because of the services and amenities it provides to its residents including the opportunity to be involved with the City through civic engagement.

The City of St. Cloud is concerned about quality of life issues and effectively delivers services to meet the needs of its residents and the surrounding area. The City of St. Cloud has been the sponsor of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program since 1973, providing financial, in-kind and program management support. The support and visibility of the City has enhanced the growth of the program over its 40 year existence.

In July of 2007, the City created the Department of Aging Services. The Department of Aging includes RSVP and Whitney Senior Center, which is a nationally recognized senior center, also funded by the

## **Narratives**

City. RSVP is now co-located with Whitney Senior Center offering one stop for services for seniors.

Overall, RSVP has an excellent track record and reputation for successfully managing volunteer programs involving seniors based on a performance measurement model. In fact, RSVP's success in managing volunteers was so evident that both Stearns and Benton County Emergency Management Departments collaborated with RSVP to administer their Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) on their behalf more than ten years ago. In addition, the St. Cloud Fire Department and the Central Minnesota Home Safety and Falls Prevention Coalition approached RSVP about the need for a Falls Prevention program and asked RSVP to be the lead agency managing the volunteers and clients and serving as the fiscal host for the program.

RSVP has a strong track record of continuing to meet performance measures and exhibiting impact-based programming. Our continual program growth highlights our success in managing and involving senior volunteers in their community. Currently we have partnership agreements with over 200 human service agencies providing RSVP volunteers with many opportunities to have a variety of meaningful, impact-based assignments.

The RSVP Director has over sixteen years of direct experience in grant management on local, state, and federal and private foundation grants. Furthermore, the Program Director has a track record of timely reporting of progress, impact, and financial management as required or requested by the funding entities.

### **Other**

Not Applicable at this time.

### **PNS Amendment (if applicable)**

Not applicable at this time.