

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

An estimated 130 RSVP volunteers will serve. Some of their activities will include cooking, packaging, and delivering Freezer Meals to homebound very rural clients, delivering Meals on Wheels and grocery shopping for homebound seniors, and assisting with commodity and food bank distribution. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures.

At the end of the three-year grant, homebound clients receiving meal delivery under the Healthy Futures Focas Area will report that they feel they have increased social support. Clients receiving monthly commodities or assistance from the food pantry will report that they feel they have increased food security.

Finally, RSVP will meet community priorities by assisting local non-profit organizations in providing additional services to their clients as a direct result of our volunteer support. The CNCS federal investment of \$22,266 will be supplemented by \$63,675 from Butler County match and other local support dollars.

## Strengthening Communities

Based on a 2010 United Way of the Plains survey of the counties, Sedgwick, Butler, Harvey, Reno, and Sumner, the primary need in our community is food assistance and the secondary need is meal delivery for homebound seniors/disabled. In combination, these two needs prove particularly challenging in our community.

Butler County is the largest county in Kansas with a land area of 1,427.85 square miles, situated on the west edge of the Flinthills and the east side of the city of Wichita. The vast majority of land in the Flinthills is privately owned, and stewardship has been passed down for several generations. What was an impediment to early pioneers has been the thing that saved the last tallgrass region: rock under about 6 inches of soil, unplowable and suited only for grazing. The cowboy on a horse is still a necessary commodity to manage cattle on the Bluestem grass. Wichita lies within what is called the Arkansas River lowlands, so it is not part of the Flinthills. Butler County is largely a rural county with little racial diversity. The population of persons over the age of 65 is 13.3 percent, many of whom still live in a rural setting maintaining a family farm homestead.

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There are also 12 rural communities in Butler County. One such rural community, Latham, does not have many of the available resources that most of us take for granted. Latham has no restaurant, gas station, grocery store, or senior center/Good Neighbor Nutrition Site. Latham is 10 miles from the nearest gas station, 20 miles from the nearest restaurant or Good Neighbor Nutrition site, and 30 miles from the nearest grocery store.

The two Meals on Wheels programs in Butler County, Augusta and El Dorado, deliver meals to homebound elderly within the city limits of each respective community. They do not, however, deliver to rural areas in need of such a service. In 1999, after numerous calls requesting meal delivery to rural areas, the Butler County Department on Aging wrote a PNS grant to start our signature program in Butler County, called Freezer Meals, to meet the needs of the homebound elderly still living in isolated rural sections of the county with little to no resources.

The Freezer Meal program, as indicated by the 2010 United Way Survey, is still a need in 2013, as in 1999, when the Butler County Department on Aging (DoA) first sought to provide assistance. RSVP volunteers are still assisting in the Freezer Meal program to provide the needed resource to elderly persons who wish to age in place. The client cost for the Freezer Meals is \$1.75 per meal, and scholarships are available for those who cannot afford the meals. For \$52.50 per month a senior can remain in their family home and maintain independence while aging in place. The alternative might well be nursing home placement, which on average would cost nearly \$5,000.00 per month.

The service activities in our Healthy Futures Primary Focus Area that lead to national Performance Measure outputs or outcomes include:

Food Delivery --Volunteers delivering meals through the Meals on Wheels program, cooking, packaging, and delivering meals through the Freezer Meal program to very rural homebound seniors, and grocery shopping for clients in the Shopping for Seniors program will help increase the social support of the homebound client served.

Providing Services -- Volunteers will serve individuals and families through Food Pantries and the Supplemental Commodity Food Program to increase access to nutritious food and as a result individuals will have increased food security for themselves and their household.

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Both the Freezer Meal and the Shopping for Seniors Programs are exclusively supported by RSVP volunteers. Both are programs developed by the RSVP sponsor agency to meet a unique need in the very rural community of Butler County. As mentioned previously, several of the smaller communities in Butler County lack available resources such as grocery stores, restaurants, or even gas stations, leaving the frail elderly very vulnerable. Volunteers assist with delivery of food and groceries as well as provide a social support for homebound seniors who wish to age in place.

Butler County RSVP has worked with partnering workstations in the area of the Healthy Futures since 2000. Food Delivery through our signature Freezer Meal program is the foundation of Butler County RSVP. It is a model that has been replicated in other rural communities in Kansas, and it is a program that was used as part of the CNCS Congressional Justification Report in 2013. The RSVP program tracks the number of clients served and conducts annual surveys to monitor the outcome and the impact the program is having on the client. The survey results allow staff to monitor the successes of the programs and the impact on the clients. It provides the means to measure social support and whether the client has an increase in food security by having received the CNCS supported service.

The Department on Aging tracks the number of Freezer Meals produced and delivered each week. Those numbers are reported to the RSVP Coordinator and Director. The Director compiles the numbers for the Annual Progress Reports due to CNCS. The Meals on Wheels, Shopping for Seniors, Commodity, and 12 Basket programs all have very similar tracking systems in place.

Several years ago, Butler County RSVP began tracking veterans serving veterans activities. We now have a count of the number of veteran volunteers who serve with RSVP, and we ask our volunteers to submit all activities they are involved in that directly serve other veterans. We have also been asking our food delivery clients if they are a veteran on the annual survey. Butler County does not have any "formal" military programs or military installations within its service area, and while the number of veterans serving other veterans isn't included in a developed veterans work plan, Butler County RSVP sees the value in service to and for our veterans. We will track the service and at such time that a specific program can be developed we will do so. In the meantime numbers of veterans serving veterans will be reported on the annual Progress Report.

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## Recruitment and Development

Butler County RSVP offers a variety of opportunities for volunteers to serve the community. Volunteer stations are chosen based on community need and the national focus areas. As well, priority is given to the assignments at each station as it relates to the volunteer. The RSVP program seeks opportunities that will allow the volunteer to use their experience, build new skills, develop leadership, and enhance the quality of their lives.

Community needs are identified by annual community needs assessments, national focus areas outlined in the CNCS strategic plan, and needs identified through in-depth community studies conducted by the United Way of the Plains every three years. Some are identified by the sponsor agency, Butler County Department on Aging, through requests for service made to the Dept. Recruitment of volunteers to meet these needs has been on-going since 2000. Matches are made with a joint emphasis on providing quality community service and enhancing the lives of senior volunteers.

The enrollment process educates members about RSVP policies, provides meaningful matches, and maintains a connection throughout their service. Staff work one-on-one with prospective RSVP volunteers to identify their goals, interests, talents, and qualifications and guide seniors to positions that utilize their unique experiences, talents, and interests. Each volunteer station trains its volunteers to perform their tasks according to the volunteer assignment description.

The RSVP office is exploring a partnership with Leadership Butler to provide leadership enhancing workshops. Elder Abuse, Exploitation, and Neglect seminars are offered annually to volunteers and workstation staff free of charge. An annual Senior Resource Fair is open to all volunteers to serve and gather information from vendors that pertain to all aging aspects. Trainings for board leadership are offered to advisory council members through electronic communications.

In this very rural county, food insecurity and isolation are the biggest need identified and fall into the primary focus area, Healthy Futures. Other community priorities such as delivering library books to rural communities, manning phones at the local safe house, and working with young women in crisis pregnancies are identified needs in the local community and will be part of a community priorities work plan.

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Diversity in Butler County is not like the "typical" diversity you might find in a more urban community. Figures from [quickfacts.census.gov](https://quickfacts.census.gov) indicate that 88.9 percent of persons living in Butler County are Caucasian. The diversity in Butler County is between those persons living in rural Butler County vs. those living in town. There are twelve towns in Butler County and only one of those with a population over 10,000. RSVP has enrolled volunteers from each community, However placement of those volunteers does not always occur within the community in which they live. Butler County RSVP has focused its efforts on partnering with a variety of stations to meet the diverse interests of the volunteers who may wish to enroll in the program. Bringing those from the rural areas into the larger communities has allowed the two diverse populations to work closely together whether it's at the local senior center leading exercise classes, delivering Meals on Wheels to elderly persons, or serving at the local women's safe house -- it's everyone working together for the common good.

At the present time there are no racial diverse groups or meetings in Butler County, nor are there any identified needs for services to meet any particular racial group at this time, it is something that RSVP takes very seriously. RSVP is conscious of the ever changing dynamics of our population, and Butler County. RSVP will have an in-tune radar toward future developments in which we need to be ready to take the lead or lend a hand.

Butler County RSVP has several veteran volunteers and some of those veterans are actively serving other veterans. RSVP staff tracks this information and reports the number of veterans serving veterans on our annual progress report. RSVP adheres to all ADA requirements and workstations complete annual accessibility checklists. RSVP staff can easily place volunteers with disabilities. There are even volunteer opportunities for the homebound who still want to contribute to community needs.

Since 2004, Butler County RSVP has continued to see an increase in the number of recruited volunteers, an average of 32 per year. Speakers bureau, senior and volunteer fairs, newsletters, newspaper articles, and most importantly word of mouth are all ways we recruit volunteers. In an effort to reach the baby boomers retirement packets that include information about the RSVP program and possible volunteer opportunities are given to local companies to give to their retiring employees.

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The RSVP program has a good core group of active volunteers serving in Butler County. Several factors ensure good retention numbers: providing quarterly training, an annual recognition, and volunteer benefits such as mileage reimbursement and excess liability insurance. Butler County RSVP has maintained approximately 130 volunteers in its program. Each year some volunteers age out of the program but with the recruitment efforts in place has been able to maintain a 95 percent retention rate.

Volunteers are recognized annually. Butler County RSVP has been innovative in recognition with "recognition trips" rather than the traditional awards banquet. This type of recognition is possible with the current size of the program. Finding a central location in such a large rural county to hold an awards banquet has proven difficult. With the success of the "trips" among volunteers, it has become a tradition. In 2006, volunteers were treated to a progressive lunch/tour of the Flinthills. In 2007, volunteers enjoyed a night at Wyldewood Cellars with wine and cheese tasting, and a mystery dinner. In 2008, volunteers were treated to an evening at Mosley Street Melodrama in Old Town. In 2009, a Zoo Day and catered picnic were on tap for volunteers. In 2010, it was an old-fashioned picnic and play, in 2011, a historic rock bridge tour and lunch, and 2013, Prairie Rose Chuckwagon dinner and show. Reviews have been very positive, and the volunteers look forward to the non-traditional recognition.

### **Program Management**

Butler County RSVP operates under a strict set of policies and procedures. Staff prides themselves on keeping abreast of regulations and changes that might affect the program. The project director serves on the National Association of RSVP Directors Board with annual trips to Washington DC to meet with Senior Corps staff at CNCS, where she not only shares ideas from the field but is made aware of programmatic and financial changes that projects in the field should be aware of. The project director participates in annual trainings offered by CNCS and has served as a peer mentor for new directors.

Butler County RSVP maintains policies and procedures which guide the program. Regulations that govern workstations and volunteer placements are spelled out in the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the workstation supervisor and the RSVP Director. Volunteer Reporter, the volunteer database, alerts staff when MOU's are ready for renewal. Each workstation is required to maintain an up-to-date Memorandum of Understanding with the RSVP program every three years. To ensure safety at each station and to update any volunteer duty changes, which might be needed, the project

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director conducts annual site visits. The RSVP program includes each workstation and volunteer in project work plans.

Workstations are chosen based on compiled information gathered from community assessments collected annually and are conducted by various means. In 2007, partnering with Butler Community College and their AmeriCorps VISTA, the community assessments took place through community round table discussions. Every three years the United Way of the Plains conducts a tri-county needs assessment/survey, and Butler County RSVP conducts an annual assessment of its workstation directors and other community non-profits. All of the above-mentioned assessment tools are used by the RSVP staff and Advisory Council to develop workstations. New workstations are developed when community needs change. RSVP staff enroll new volunteers to meet the needs and/or encourage current volunteers to take on additional volunteer duties when applicable. The Healthy Futures Focus Areas is an area that Butler County RSVP has had volunteers serving in since its inception. With the growing number of seniors over age 65 increasing at such a rapid rate across the United States and in Kansas, our meal delivery and shopping for seniors programs will undoubtedly remain a primary need and therefore a primary focus area for RSVP volunteers. Most RSVP volunteers currently serve in the area of meal delivery and many serve in multiple capacities therefore disruption to volunteers will be very minimal if at all. Some workstations have been graduated already through non-renewal of the MOU so that Butler County RSVP would align with the Corporations Strategic Plan. Any other stations that need to be graduated will be minimal as most partnering workstations fall into the Healthy Future Focus Area and or community needs.

Annual surveys are gathered from all workstation directors, volunteers, and clients of agencies in which volunteers are assigned. Annual station visits are conducted by project staff to ensure safety measures and RSVP federal regulations are being followed for the protection of the volunteers and to go over the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding between the RSVP project and the workstation. All is an effort to assess the quality of workstations and the project as a whole. Enrollment forms are required from all potential volunteers. Age requirements, self-declaration, and background checks when required, all are part of the enrollment process to ensure that volunteers are eligible to serve with the RSVP program. Butler County RSVP's Advisory Council is a 15 member council charged with planning and guidance in an advisory capacity of the RSVP program. The council meets quarterly and participates in an annual planning session which sets parameters for the

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upcoming year. The council sets goals for the program and evaluates the program annually.

### Organizational Capability

Financial and program management of the program are both done by the RSVP program director with oversight from the sponsor director. Official financial records are managed and maintained at the county courthouse and are used to reconcile with the "cuff" records maintained in the RSVP office on a quarterly basis. The Butler County Department on Aging manages eleven other grants and has done so for the past twenty plus years. All of the grant programs are impact based and involve senior services. The CNCS federal investment of \$22,266 is supplemented by \$63,675 from Butler County match and other local support dollars.

The DoA has been part of Butler County since 1989. Since its inception the mission of the DoA has been "to link older adults with the services they need to ensure a continuum of care." Beginning in 1997, the DoA realized the need for volunteers to help meet the needs of the elderly in Butler County as well as other community needs. RSVP was formed and volunteers were recruited. Managing volunteers and impact-based programming have both been a part of RSVP and the DoA's regulations from the beginning with the first DoA grant award. Butler County Dept. on Aging and RSVP have operated in such a manner with each step.

The RSVP program staff consists of a full-time program director (40% dedicated to RSVP, 55% dedicated to FGP, and 5% in other which includes grant writing for both programs) and a part-time volunteer coordinator. The part-time position is funded with United Way funds and matching county dollars. The program director has 13 years of experience working with senior volunteers, 16 years in the aging field, and nearly 30 years of administrative background. The program director is the key staff person responsible for program management, grant renewal, financial reporting and progress reporting for the grant. The volunteer coordinator, under the supervision of the program director and sponsor director, enters time and mileage, is responsible for newsletter publication and assists with recognition events, as well as other tasks assigned by the program director. Continued funding for the volunteer coordinator will be an on-going part of the project and leveraging additional funding to bring this position to full time status will be explored in the future.

As a county department, the RSVP sponsor falls under the accounting procedures of Butler County. When the RSVP project spends budgeted funds, receipts are given to the department office manager

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who writes a voucher for the purchase. The voucher then goes to the accounting department at the Butler County Court House in El Dorado Kansas. All bills are approved by the County Commissioners -- checks are then written and require three signatures. The county finance department does bank statement reconciliation.

The project director manages the RSVP budget with oversight from the sponsor director. The RSVP director maintains "cuff records" ensuring the budget is strictly monitored, and the director knows exactly what funds are available at all times. The project director and the sponsor office manager reconcile reports quarterly.

The grantee share of the budget is well above the 30 percent match required by CNCS. The Program Director has established United Way funding to expand the program by hiring a part-time volunteer coordinator with an 83 percent match from the sponsor. Excess budget funds include the United Way funding and county match to the United Way grant, along with the county's contribution of employee benefits. Tracking in-kind and excess funds has not been an issue for this project. While dollar amounts for in-kind are not necessary for meeting grantee share, a list of in-kind contributions made by the county and the sponsor is maintained in the RSVP office and includes such items as office space, phone, utilities, postage meter, computer equipment, office furniture, office supplies, copier, use of company car, etc. In-kind contributions also come in the form of donated newspapers articles about the RSVP program. The sponsor runs RSVP articles at least twice a year in their weekly newspaper column.

The program uses Volunteer Reporter as its database for collecting volunteer hours and managing volunteers and workstation information. Volunteers turn in hours and mileage requests on a monthly basis which is entered into the database by the Volunteer Coordinator. Volunteer and workstation hard copy files are also maintained. These contain the proper paperwork required according to CNCS guidelines spelled out in the monitoring compliance tool.

The project director gathers information and data from station reports and surveys. With the information collected about the impact volunteers are having in the community, progress reports are made to the state office highlighting the RSVP program and its outcomes.