

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

RSVP has been a program of Southern New Hampshire Services (SNHS) for over 38 years. SNHS is a private non-Profit Corporation chartered in the State of NH in 1965 to serve as the Community Action Agency for Hillsborough County. SNHS provides activities to assist low-income people in the areas of employment, health, nutrition and housing. Agency programs address issues that perpetuate poverty and block the achievement of self-sufficiency.

An estimated 424 RSVP volunteers will serve in various capacities addressing community needs. Some of the activities will include: distributing information related to education, life skills and social support in volunteer efforts to reduce food insecurity; doing minor home repairs to support elderly and disabled homeowners and providing social interaction during their assessment and repair; providing companionship and related independent living services through weekly friendly visits and group exercising; preparing and distributing dental information packets to families via the Manchester Public Schools; and partnering with afterschool program as volunteers meet with groups of children in grades K-5 to present nutrition lessons, enjoy a healthy snack, and join in active games.

The Primary Focus Area of this project is Healthy Futures. As a result of RSVP Programs, at the end of the 3-year grant period individuals will report increased food security; seniors and the disabled will live safely in their homes; elderly individuals and those with disabilities will have increased support; and both children and adults will acquire healthy habits through health education programs..

\$50,650 non-Federal resources will supplement the CNCS Federal investment of \$118,185.

The new focus areas will allow Hillsborough County RSVP the opportunity to better support the challenges faced by our Veterans and their families. The number of the RSVP Fixit Corps Program volunteers who are Veterans is expanding as are the partnerships being built with local Veterans-Serving organizations to both recruit additional Veterans as volunteers and to identify Veterans and their family members who are in need of the minor repair services that the program provides.

## Strengthening Communities

Describe the Community and demonstrate that the community need(s) identified in the Primary Focus Area exist in the geographic service area.

Hillsborough County has the largest population in the State of New Hampshire with 400,721, close to 31% of the state population of 1,320,718 according to the 2012 US Census Bureau's Quick Facts. In addition to a culturally diverse population, Hillsborough County's population is an aging one as well. As we increase our presence, we are noticing our community service extends to a growing veteran

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population as well. There are 11,558 Veterans 55 years and over in Hillsborough County approximately 21% of the state's population. Based on population growth projections for Hillsborough County (2000-2030) from the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning, it is anticipated that population among all individuals 55+ will increase as noted in county projections to be 24.5% during the period; for those age 55 and older, it is projected that the population will grow from 71,910 in 2000 to 104,328 in 2030, an increase of 154,118 (114.32 %). As the aging process encompasses more of our residents, access to resources in Hillsborough County becomes a vital link for a senior population. With poverty levels rising for seniors due to social isolation, ever expanding medical and food costs, and lack of family support, we are primed to focus on issues that alleviate some of the burden to this fragile population.

As homeowners grow older they are less likely to have the strength and energy to maintain their property at a high level. Homes fall into disrepair creating hazards that are both physical, possibly life threatening and becomes a challenge to the property values of the neighborhood. With the advent of the concept of aging in place, the RSVP Fixit Corps meets the challenge of meeting the needs of these homeowners. This unique and one of a kind program is involved with minor home repairs to elevate an unsafe condition in the home. Without family or neighbor support the RSVP Fixit Corps fill the role and supports the senior homeowner with low cost maintenance that otherwise would not be available. Volunteers also become engaged with the clients through social interaction during the initial assessment and the repair.

Closely related to aging in place is the ability to have enough food available. According to the Center for Public Policy in NH, 5.8% of seniors 65+ live below poverty level. "Facing the challenge of paying for food, rent/mortgage, heat, and medicine, many seniors sacrifice food," according to Melanie Gosselin, Executive Director of the New Hampshire Food Bank. She goes on to state that not only the Food Bank, but all the food pantries and other state wide food resources were greatly impacted by the closing of 12 supermarkets that provided food and commodities.

Regular contact with the community helps a senior remain healthy according to the Visiting Nurses Association of Greater Manchester. Social isolation leads to impaired cognitive ability, poor diet and social anxiety. 39,387 households in Hillsborough County, NH have a person 65+ living alone. By participating in the Friendly Visitor Program and the Bone Builders Exercise Program, seniors have a social outlet to remain connected and involved not only to their community, but with people who share the same interests.

Raising awareness through health information provides the community with greater access to those

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programs that promote lifestyles conducive to healthy living. The CATCH (Coordinated Approach to Child Health) Healthy Habits Program engages senior volunteers in the effort to combat childhood obesity. 14.5% of children in Hillsborough County are overweight and 16.2% are obese. Focusing health education through nutrition and activity both senior and child participants increase their exercise and learn how to make better food choices. In addition, the Manchester School Dental Project provides health information to parents who may not be aware that there is a low or no cost dental program for children. Information is sent home to over 8000 elementary student families. An average of 2,300 children will qualify each year for this program.

Community partners contribute greatly to infrastructure of RSVP and its ability to be a sustainable organization. RSVP receives in kind donations from local businesses to support programs and continue to offer services at low or no cost and enhance programs with materials that encourage education and community involvement. Through the generous donations of home improvement materials from Lowes and Home Depot, the RSVP Fixit Corps is able to provide some materials for free. Donations of food and educational materials allows for Pen Pals to have 2 gatherings a year. Donated space in senior housing units provides ample space to run Bone Builders exercise classes and maintain community offices.

Given the size and diversity of the county's demographics, the needs within the community are great and varied and, in order to meet these needs, volunteer assistance is necessary to build the capacity of area agencies, municipalities and public service entities.

Describe how the Service Activity in the Primary Focus Area lead to National Performance Measures outputs or outcomes.

RSVP volunteers are trained to interpret the needs of clients based on applications received by the specified food organization. Volunteers assist with the intake, certification and the distribution of food to agency approved applicants. Volunteer's presence at food distribution sites help the agency maintain food distribution schedules that meet the needs of those who are helped in the program and create a reliable record of who received assistance. By supporting the food program mission's and distributing information related to educational, life skills and social support enhance their food security efforts.

RSVP Fixit Corps volunteers (including documented service veterans from recent wars) will do minor home repairs to support the elderly and disabled homeowners in Hillsborough County. Volunteers also become engaged with the clients with social interaction during the initial assessment and the repair. The minor home repairs enhance the quality of life and allow for the senior to remain safe inside the home.

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RSVP volunteers will provide companionship and related independent living services through regularly scheduled visits and other individual contacts. RSVP volunteers will meet with clients twice a week for one hour at regularly scheduled exercise programs. This increases social connectivity and affords an opportunity to engage in activity outside the home.

Through the Seniors Count initiative, RSVP volunteers will provide weekly friendly visits that include running errands, providing a reassuring phone call, assisting with pet care and light housework, offering transportation and encouraging other social entertainment.

Describe your plan and infrastructure to support data collection and insure National Performance Measure outcomes and out puts are managed, collected, and measured.

Through the administering of surveys, pre and post questionnaires, attendance logs and hours served that are tracked through the Volunteer Reporter, this information becomes the tools to support the volunteer service. Compiling and confirming the results of these measurements allows an overall picture of progress and a reliable source to see if we achieved our targets. Data remains on file at the agency where it originates and a copy is supplied to RSVP.

Describe any activity in service to Veterans and or Military Families as part of service in the Primary Focus Area, other focus areas, or capacity building.

Volunteer recruitment is open and encouraged to all veterans in Hillsborough County. Our most visible effort is veterans helping veterans and military spouses through the RSVP Fixit Corps. A proposed Bone Builders Exercise Program is in the works at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Manchester that will be open to all veterans and eligible family members in the community and will be ideally led by veterans.

On an as needed basis RSVP volunteers have participated in events that embrace military service. RSVP Family Support volunteers have donated Red, White, and Blue Afghans and lap robes to the palliative care unit at the VA and have supplied over 2000 helmet liners to troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

### **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 their communities and themselves through service in their communities.

RSVP volunteers are able to build skills and develop leadership potential through the many varied opportunities open to them through RSVP. We interview each person over age 55 who wishes to become an RSVP volunteer to determine his/her expertise, experience and interests.

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Because we do co-programming, the RSVP office is located with the Seniors Count Program which offers numerous opportunities that maximize skills and leadership potential.

Each volunteer is given a written volunteer service description provided by the host agency ("station").

The volunteer receives orientation, training and supervision by the station where they are assigned.

RSVP volunteers serve on the Board of Directors of Southern New Hampshire Services, our sponsor organization, as well as on RSVP advisory committees and task forces.

RSVP volunteers provide companionship through our Seniors Count Program and as leaders of our weekly exercise programs; they share information regarding exercise and healthy food alternatives and do minor home repairs.

This level of community involvement is gratifying and ensures a high quality experience for the volunteers while enhancing the quality of their own lives and the lives of the clients they serve in the wide range of programs offered.

Periodic gatherings give the volunteers the opportunities to reflect and share experiences on the impact that volunteering has had on their quality of life.

Surveys to the volunteers and the stations where they serve provide a opportunity for input, reflection and response regarding the RSVP volunteer experience. Survey results indicate that volunteering allowed volunteers to contribute to their community, support the organization where they volunteered, and enhanced their well-being. Volunteers reported feeling better on the days they volunteered because they felt wanted and needed. In the last fiscal year, 441 volunteers served over 86,406 hours throughout Hillsborough County.

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. The demographics of the community served and plans to recruit a volunteer pool reflective of the community served. Including individuals from diverse races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, or degrees of English language proficiency. Veterans and military family members as RSVP volunteers. Your plan and infrastructure to retain and recognize the RSVP volunteers.

As of the 2010 census, Hillsborough County had a population of 401,696. 5.5% of families and 7.1% of the population were below the poverty line. 5.8% of those were age 65 or over. The two largest cities in the County, Manchester and Nashua, have total concentration of 16.2% of Limited English Proficiency students. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 54 different languages are spoken in Hillsborough County.

As RSVP is very effective at recruiting, retaining and recognizing volunteers, a corps of 424 volunteers

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is currently active in their communities. Since our own volunteers are experts at identifying others who would make great volunteers, word of mouth has been an effective means of advertising opportunities through RSVP. RSVP is located in senior housing facilities in both Manchester and Nashua and the residents are familiar with and eager to be a part of RSVP. Targeted recruiting is done through the media, specifically on radio, community TV, newspapers and publications that target the senior population. RSVP volunteers participate in volunteer fairs, and the Southern New Hampshire Services website links visitors to RSVP pages for volunteer opportunities within Hillsborough County. In addition, recruitment from diverse populations is done through churches, immigrants, multi-cultural center, as well as skilled volunteers offering their expertise in language interpretation and cultural diversity skills, retired police and fireman associations, the VA Hospital quarterly information fair, retired teachers association, artists and the NH Disability Association. RSVP offers a varied pool of volunteer opportunities and is constantly researching and receiving new opportunities, thereby attracting a diverse population. RSVP will collaborate with SNHS' Eileen Phinney Multi-Cultural Center. The Center continues to serve the Latino community but now will be a draw to a variety of different groups in the ever-growing minority community in Manchester.

Our Seniors Count RSVP Friendly Visitors volunteers attend orientation/training and are given guidelines regarding do's and don'ts, listening skills and other tools to be successful volunteers. A criminal background check is conducted and a confidentiality agreement is signed by every volunteer. Bone Builder Exercise leaders attend an all day training session that covers the program goals including having healthier bones, reducing the risk of falling, increasing strength and improving balance, feeling better and to having more energy and the opportunity to socialize. All RSVP Fixit Corps volunteers are interviewed and their areas of expertise such as carpenter, electrician, plumber, and landscaper are noted. RSVP Fixit volunteers have a criminal background check and sign a confidentiality agreement. Our CATCH Healthy Habits volunteers attend training to learn about nutrition, healthy snacks and active games to encourage the next generation to be a healthier generation.

Volunteers are retained and recognized in many ways. Annual recognition banquets recognize the senior volunteers and acknowledge their value to the community. We recognize our 20, 25 and 30+ year volunteers at these banquets. Birthday cards, newsletters and media coverage also offer opportunities for recognition and sharing. Each year RSVP volunteers are nominated for the Spirit of NH Awards, Book of Golden Deeds and Regency Home Health LLC Senior Volunteer of the Year. This past year RSVP Bone Builders earned a statewide award as the recipient of the Outstanding

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Achievement Award from the Governor's Council for Physical Activity and Health. We believe recognition is part of retention and RSVP is known for volunteer longevity.

### 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 develops and manages volunteer stations and volunteer assignments that impact specified community needs. RSVP Program Coordinators visit stations throughout the year to renew Memorandum of Understanding that outlines obligations to stations and RSVP, and to discuss any issues to prevent and identifying prohibited activities. Each station coordinator receives a packet of information including: RSVP brochure, Memorandum of Understanding, time sheets and station responsibilities. RSVP Coordinators educate stations on having a safe environment, chain of command if there is a problem, tracking systems and delivery of time sheets. By providing targeted placements for volunteers, through experienced staff managed community groups that center around community needs. Agencies needing volunteers sign on as a station and a Memorandum of Understanding is signed between RSVP and the Agency. Agencies provide orientation, training, criminal back ground checks and volunteer handbooks. RSVP coordinators are available, if needed, provide consultation on Volunteer Program Management.

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

Volunteer activity, information and data are managed through the software program Volunteer Reporter containing RSVP records. This enables program coordinators to report statistics monthly to the RSVP Director. A website and extensive email group list allows stations, volunteers and staff to interface efficiently in real time. Volunteers can log on to our website, look at current opportunities, email staff and keep abreast of new opportunities as they develop. A gallery section offers pictures of recent volunteer projects and events.

Project performance is evaluated annually by staff, stations and volunteers through strategic planning sessions. Input through staff meetings are where the status of our programs and volunteer service is reviewed. Comprehensive surveys are done annually to assess if programs are on target, meet the need indicated at the start of the project, and are producing the desired results. All of the assessment tools are built into the project design and are part of the work plans for each project. Data from surveys is analyzed and compared to the work plans by program staff to see if the project/program is on target and accomplishing its tasks and meeting, initial, interim, and long term goals. If a volunteer

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has had no hours, the RSVP Coordinator follows up with a phone call and a letter in an effort to confirm their volunteer status. Coordinators schedule visits throughout the year to stations to discuss improvements or enhancements to their volunteer program.

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.

The Volunteer Reporter was updated by inactivating volunteers who have served less than 5 hours in the last fiscal year. Volunteers were notified by e-mail or letter of this change and were offered new opportunities in our new focus areas if they would like to continue their service. For stations who have been inactive (no volunteers) they were sent letters asking what their volunteer needs are and if they would like a site visit from the coordinator to assess their needs.

Describe your organization's track record in the PRIMARY FOCUS AREA, to include, if applicable, measuring performance in the primary Focus Area.

The goal of the RSVP Fixit Corps is to help seniors and disabled homeowners with minor repairs and maintenance that enables them to stay safe in their own homes. RSVP Fixit Corps volunteers actively engage with the clients and provide the opportunity for social interaction during both the initial assessment and the repair visits. The RSVP Fixit Corps has been providing services since 1994.

Reviewing the surveys completed by clients, we are able to confirm that the volunteers have made a marked improvement in the household through repairs they completed, as indicated by the client's overall satisfaction level. A few survey comments include:

\* This program is wonderful! I worry much less now about problems like this.

\* With no surviving male left in the family, this is a wonderful program.

Using the surveys as an assessment tool allows us to refine and enhance the program's work plans to ensure that the volunteer service provided remains consistent and helps clients. This program is recognized as an essential service for seniors to remain safe in their homes and adds social connectivity to their communities.

The specific goals of the program and the strict adherence to on-going performance measures have resulted in continually meeting those goals.

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 required MOU, and ensuring all volunteers are eligible to serve in RSVP. The Manchester and Nashua Advisory Councils come from diverse sectors (banking, nursing homes, consultants, marketing, development, fiscal, health education, independent living) of the community

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representing both private and public entities. They meet once a month to discuss emergent and ongoing community needs, RSVP recruitment, fund raising, volunteer recognition, impact programs and visibility.

RSVP Coordinators visit new and existing stations and provide updated information packets that include an RSVP brochure, Memorandum of Understanding, time sheets and stations responsibilities. RSVP Coordinators constantly monitor the MOU's that need to be renewed and plan a visit to each station to discuss their needs and the placement of volunteers. RSVP recruits volunteers 55+ and no volunteers are placed at a station without an MOU.

### Organizational Capability

Briefly describe your organization's capability to operate the RSVP project that you propose with respect to: 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 and effective use of available resources.

Our sponsor Southern New Hampshire Service, Inc. (SNHS) is a private non-profit corporation chartered in the State of New Hampshire, May 21, 1965 to serve as the Community Action Agency for Hillsborough County in compliance with the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. From 1965 through 1969, SNHS was known as the Community Action Agency for Hillsborough County and served the City of Nashua and the Twenty-nine towns. In 1969 the organization became the Community Action Agency for the City of Manchester as well. In 1974 the agency's name was changed to Southern New Hampshire Services, Inc.

As a Community Action Agency, it is SNHS' purpose to provide social service programs and advocacy activities for the economically disadvantaged, elderly, youth and other specialized populations in the organization's service area. The agency offers 69 programs, contracting with the Federal, State and local governments as well as other social service agencies and private entities. The programs offered include the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Child Care, Early Head Start, Head Start, Women Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program, Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), Energy assistance, Weatherization, Asset Development, Supportive Housing for the Homeless, Homelessness Prevention programs, as well as several initiatives under the Workforce Investment Act. In the 2012 program year, 36,457 unduplicated clients received services valued at more than \$55,590,550 from Southern New Hampshire Services (SNHS). As the information presented below will confirm, SNHS has the administrative, fiscal, clerical, and purchasing infrastructure necessary to

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support local, county and statewide programming as part of its regular activities.

Describe clearly defined staff positions, identification of current staff assigned to the project and how these positions will ensure the accomplishment of the program objectives.

SNHS has sponsored RSVP for more than 38 years. The CEO/Executive Director of 46 years has a BA degree and is a Certified Community Action Professional; The Fiscal Officer/Deputy Director has 40 years with SNHS and a BS Degree in Accounting; The Program Operations Director has 36 years with SNHS and a BS Degree in Education and is a Certified Community Action Professional. The Volunteer Services Director has 33 years experience in Volunteer Program Management and Special Events. She serves in leadership positions statewide including ServiceLink (a resource center for connections for independent living and healthy aging) and Seniors Count (a community-based outreach and action center to ensure independence for older people). The Manchester Coordinator has a degree in Human Services and a Masters in Education. The Nashua Coordinator has four years experience working with seniors and a background in sales. Collectively, the RSVP team has the experience and dedication necessary to maintain and expand programming efforts throughout the community.

To ensure that emergent needs are identified and met, RSVP program staff interacts with the senior community on a regular basis at senior centers, senior housing, resource centers, other Southern New Hampshire Services' programs, and with other community-based organizations and communities of faith. Other successful programs offered by Southern New Hampshire Services that address the needs of the community's aging population include subsidized senior housing, Energy and Fuel Assistance, Seniors Count Flex funding, Supplemental Commodity Food, Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program and Seniors Count Community Collaboration.

Describe how your organization demonstrates organizational capacity to develop and implement internal policies and operating procedures to provide governance and manage risk, such as accounting, personnel management and purchasing. Describe how you manage capital assets such as facilities, equipment and supplies.

The Board of Directors is a policy making board, not an administrative one. The administration of SNHS is handled by the Senior Management staff; policy is set by the Board of Directors. Southern New Hampshire's board meets four (4) times per year, generally winter, spring, summer and fall meetings; the annual meeting is held at the fall meeting which is usually in September. The Board selects officers and its only personnel duty is to hire the agency's Executive Director/CEO.

SNHS is kept aware of RSVP program needs and is responsive to them. We enjoy adequate facilities which include parking, access to needed equipment such as computers, printers, copy machine, fax,

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telephones and supplies.

Purchasing is handled through a requisition/purchase order process, and procedures are in place for reporting and reimbursing travel and per diem expenses accrued by staff and volunteers through the Fiscal Department. Internal and operating procedures can be found in the Fiscal Procedure manual. Personnel management support is provided by the Human Resources department and updated employee personnel policies handbook is given to each new employee during orientation and outlines SNHS' personnel policies and practices. Job descriptions are mandatory for all positions, and performance reviews are done yearly on all RSVP personnel by the Director of Volunteer Services. Performance review for the Director of Volunteer Services is done by the Program Operations Director.

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

SNHS's fiscal system is based on Accrual Accounting with Double Entry Bookkeeping methods employed that provide controls to verify the accuracy of fiscal statements and reports. SNHS has an annual audit conducted in accordance with Office of Management and Budget Circular A-133, and all fiscal policies and procedures are compliant with relevant Federal regulations governing entities receiving Federal funds. There has never been a finding. The agency has more than 45 years of experience in managing grants and contracts of all sizes. In 2011-2012 the agency managed more than \$50,000,000 in resources from numerous funding streams. More than 80% of this amount consisted of Federal funds, with approximately 18% private, and less than 1% state funds. Federal funding sources include the Corporation for National and Community Service, Housing and Urban Development, Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Agriculture, Department of Labor, and Department of Education.

### Other

N/A

### PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A