

Narratives

Executive Summary

United Way of Pierce County (UWPC) is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization serving Pierce County, Washington since 1921. Our mission is to work from the heart to unite caring people to tackle our communities' toughest challenges. UWPC is pleased to submit this application as the current RSVP sponsor in Pierce County for the 2014 CNCS Senior Corps recompetition process. We anticipate that at least 617 volunteers will serve in our program, helping in the following capacities: literacy tutoring in elementary schools; reading and interacting with young children in pre-K programs; mentoring youth going through the juvenile court system; sorting, packing and distributing food at food banks; supporting veterans and military families through better access to healthcare and community resources; providing transportation to homebound seniors; providing financial literacy and healthcare navigation support; and more. These activities will take place at 32 stations across Pierce County including Communities In Schools of Tacoma, Lakewood and Puyallup, Children's Museum of Tacoma's Play to Learn Programs, Pierce County Juvenile Court, American Red Cross (ARC), FISH Food Banks, Korean Women's Association, Puget Sound Asset Building Coalition, ARC in Service to the Armed Forces (SAF) at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, and at Veteran's Affairs at American Lake. The primary focus area of this grant is Education. At the end of the three-year grant, our goal is to have 150 elementary children with improved academic skills as a result of tutoring; 200 veterans, and their families will receive assistance from healthcare liaisons and feel that they are better connected to their community; 500 disadvantaged youth will be connected to community mentors; and 125 low-income individuals and seniors will have received transportation, companionship, and access to healthcare services. The CNCS federal investment of \$114,463 will be supplemented by \$58,768 in non-federal resources.

Strengthening Communities

Pierce County, Washington, which covers 1,670 square miles in Western Washington, is the second most populous county in the state. It is comprised of 23 cities with populations ranging from 434 people in South Prairie to 199,000 in Tacoma. With its saltwater shores, rural farmlands and towering peaks, Pierce County is as diverse culturally as it is geographically, with 38% of the population identifying as other than Caucasian. The largest ethnic groups include African American, Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islander, Eastern European and American Indian. Approximately 14% of our residents speak a language other than English in the home. Like most American communities with Baby Boomers, we have a rapidly aging population with just over 29% of the people over the age

Narratives

of 55, and roughly 110,000 people between age 55 and 65. Our average family income is \$52,000, and unemployment rates continue to average just over 8%, which is higher than the state as a whole. This, coupled with a lack of critical services which were suspended due to the economic recession, leaves Pierce County with a relatively high number of families, individuals, and organizations needing help. With 47% of the school population eligible for free and reduced lunch, and 17% of the children under age five living below the poverty threshold, this translates into 27% who did not graduate high school, 7.7% served by children's case management, and 30% of children in our schools who did not meet third grade reading standards in Pierce County, which is a critical time in a child's life when the transition from learning-to-read to reading-to-learn happens [Annie E Casey Foundation, 2012 Wa KIDS COUNT]. One in four Pierce County third graders is not reading at a third grade level, and those who don't read at grade level by age 10 are six times more likely to drop out of high school [Puget Sound Education Service District]. The HighScope Perry Preschool program study also demonstrated that high-quality pre-K yields a high return and establishes the links between initial program impacts and long-term outcomes like greater school success, reduced crime and delinquency, and increased earnings over a lifetime [National Institute for Early Education Research]. As demonstrated above, the best way to create a thriving community is by making an early investment in our children. When children succeed communities succeed, therefore Education is the Primary Focus Area for Pierce County RSVP. RSVP volunteers will serve in Communities In Schools' tutoring programs in three districts in Pierce County and at their summer programs to help prevent summer learning loss by assisting with learning activities year-round. Outcome measurements in K-12 education will be collected through reading evaluation tests like DIBELS, WCPM tests, and Sound Reading Solutions. These assessments will be done at the beginning of the school year and again at the end of the year, with results reported annually for Education outcomes. In addition, RSVP volunteers will address the need to support early childhood education programs designed to assist low-income families to ensure that children are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten. Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is offered at early learning sites across Pierce County, providing children and their families with access to quality early childhood education and family support services, which act as a vital link in the sequence of early childhood development. Since children birth to five are cared for in both formal and informal ways--by their parents at home, by licensed child care providers or by friends, neighbors or family members--volunteer strategies will focus on supporting all of these programs. First 5 FUNdamentals (F5F) is a partnership of more than 35 early education and care providers and promoters (including ECEAP sites) in Pierce County whose

Narratives

mission is to build and sustain an integrated early learning system of community partners and organizations to support young children and their families. The partnership creates this integrated system by engaging in community mobilization activities, such as monthly partnership and subcommittee meetings. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research, pre-K programs produce substantial long-term gains when programs focus on intentional and individualized teaching and small group learning. RSVP volunteers will support F5F literacy programs like Play to Learn, a community outreach program for children ages six and under, which is sponsored by the Children's Museum of Tacoma. Play to Learn brings learning activities with thematic curriculum to remote areas in Pierce County for children who otherwise would not have the opportunity to be exposed to these hands-on learning experiences. RSVP volunteers will also tutor with Ready, Set, Read!, a pre-K literacy program through Communities In Schools which takes place in every elementary school library in Tacoma. RSVP volunteers will read to children to help get these children ready to succeed in kindergarten. Surveys of teachers and group leaders to assess social/emotional skills and early reading levels, coupled with the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) assessment tool will be used to measure kindergarten readiness outcomes in ED21 programs. WaKIDS is a transition process that helps to ensure a successful start to the K-12 experience and connect with the key adults in a child's life. (An assessment of kindergarten readiness by WaKIDS in 2012 showed that only 59-72% of students, depending on their demographic, demonstrated the characteristics of entering kindergartners. The six characteristics which are measured are social/emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy and math.) When connected to other aspects of the continuum of early childhood readiness efforts, these enhancement programs become powerful opportunities to provide positive learning experiences (cognitive, social and emotional) for very young children as they prepare to enter school. With an estimated 3,000 homeless students in Pierce County schools, adult mentors make a difference in these students' lives. Pierce County RSVP places volunteers in the Pierce County Juvenile Court's Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and Diversion programs. These volunteers serve as mentors to troubled youth in a frightening and bewildering time and help them understand the confusing court process, while providing continuity for these children to help them stay out of foster care and stay in school. Outputs in ED4A will be measured monthly through activity logs. Pierce County is home to the largest joint military base in the country, Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM). With a median age of seven for the children in these military households, RSVP volunteers will help these children, who often struggle in school, through Communities In Schools of Lakewood's 'Champions' tutoring and mentoring

Narratives

program.

The military population in Pierce County has nearly doubled in the last decade, with 44,000 active members and a total base population at JBLM of 100,000 [South Sound Military & Communities Partnership]. In addition, there are approximately 90,000 veterans in Western Washington (and it is estimated that about 13,000 service members will separate annually from JBLM as troops draw down overseas), which proves the need is essential for volunteers in service to our military population. Pierce County RSVP support for military members, retirees, veterans and their families will be woven throughout our service areas. Not only will community volunteers serve at military installations, but military members and veterans will also be recruited for volunteer opportunities through RSVP. RSVP volunteers will provide shuttle transportation to veterans on the VA American Lake campus. The Mount Rainier American Red Cross RSVP volunteers support JBLM through their Service to the Armed Forces (SAF) by providing health and safety liaisons to military members and their families. Pierce County RSVP will also support new initiatives through Rally Point 6 and United for Military Families, based on Points of Light's Project Blueprint, to enhance local community based health, human service, and early childhood development systems that will directly support the children and families of our deployed military troops. These programs are designed to use existing infrastructure and resources to build capacity within our community to provide the support these families so badly need. This approach will accelerate immediate service provision and simultaneously strengthen the relationship between soldier, family, and community. Best practices offered by Pierce County partner organizations, and facilitated by UWPC, will focus on military families' readiness, health, fitness, and resiliency before, during, and after deployment. RSVP will provide Military Sponsor volunteers through the Regional Social Services Coordination, Collaboration and Outreach Office to new JBLM members and their families to help them acclimate to the area as a resource for schools, churches, routine services needed, and more. Activity logs will be used to measure outputs for the Veterans and Military Families service area.

By 2030, one in four Pierce County residents will be over the age of 60, therefore it is in the long-term interest of Pierce County residents to prepare for our aging population by ensuring a strong network of services to help people live independently longer. Today, over 23,500 people in Pierce County 65 years of age and older live alone [Pierce County Aging and Disability Resources]. In older people, the risk of developing nutritional deficiencies increases due to age-related reductions in total food intake

Narratives

combined with the presence of debilitating disease. People over age 60 are estimated to be 15% of the general population and 56% of adults 60 and older self-reported their nutritional risk as high in Pierce County [Feeding America]. Pierce County has a food insecurity rate of 15.1% of the overall population. RSVP volunteers will support the Healthy Futures impact area by providing transportation and healthcare access information to seniors and veterans, as well as focusing on food stability for all families by packing and sorting at food banks and pantries. This is especially important in the rural areas of unincorporated Pierce County and the Key Peninsula, where services are sparse and the ability to connect with the low-income and senior population is difficult. RSVP volunteers will also support the UWPC collaborative 'Power Pack' weekend backpack feeding program through participating food banks by packing and distributing this critical food source for children. (Power Packs help sustain children over the weekend who rely on school meals during the week, which in turn helps support children's health, cognition, academics, and social/emotional well-being so they are ready to learn when they return to school.) Outputs in the Healthy Futures service area will be measured by tracking forms and activity logs, which will be collected and reported annually.

Since 1918, the Mount Rainer Chapter of the American Red Cross has brought together local volunteers to care for their neighbors, train in life-saving skills, and respond to disasters. With its topography running from sea level to 14,410 feet at the top of Mt. Rainier, plus four major rivers and diverse coastal areas, Pierce County faces many natural hazards. That, coupled with the increasing demand for Disaster Services aid across our country as evidenced by several recent nationwide natural disasters, creates an urgent need for disaster volunteers. RSVP volunteers will serve at ARC and Pierce County Citizen Corps, both of whom train volunteers in emergency preparedness and disaster response. RSVP disaster services support is also provided to our military through the American Red Cross SAF program at JBLM by helping military members, veterans and their families prepare for, cope with, and respond to the challenges of military service. Emergency communications, training, support to service members and veterans, and access to community resources and healthcare help an average of 150,000 military families and veterans annually. ARC provides counseling, guidance, information, referrals and other social services for all military personnel and their families. To measure the outputs in Disaster Services, timesheets will be collected to report hours served.

Recruitment and Development

United Way of Pierce County serves as a wealth of volunteer resources through its Volunteer Center by offering volunteer experiences for youth, families, seniors, companies, court-ordered community

Narratives

service, skills-based, and more. UWPC houses the countywide volunteer database, which is a resource for people of all ages looking for meaningful volunteer opportunities. The volunteer database is screened and updated on a regular basis to ensure it provides pertinent and useful resources for potential volunteers. The Center also serves as a resource for companies looking for impactful volunteer opportunities for their employees, organizes days of service on MLK Day, Make A Difference Day, National Youth Service Day, and Family Volunteer Day, and houses Youth United, a volunteer program for high school students which gives them the opportunity to earn a Varsity Letter in Community Service. Pierce County RSVP recognizes the need for high quality volunteer assignments through skills-based volunteering. We have started forming an Encore ambassador group of professional volunteers to help us with recruitment of Baby Boomers. This demographic is targeted for our skills-based volunteers, with more flexible, short-term opportunities for service. UWPC has a strong connection to companies and their human resources executives through our annual campaign, and through this network we plan to identify the Boomers for recruitment. This experienced group will serve in all of our impact areas and will provide a rich resource of knowledge and expertise to our volunteer efforts, and RSVP marketing materials have been updated to represent this population adequately. Recruitment will also happen in a variety of ways: at senior fairs, senior living community meetings, community events, and articles in church bulletins, the Senior Scene, a monthly senior publication, and in the Ranger and Guardian, both military publications. In addition, we publicize in our quarterly RSVP newsletter, our monthly Volunteer Center email publication, on HandsOn Connect, a Volunteer Match account, and a Facebook page. We will recruit from segments of our population that aren't currently represented through our new military initiatives with United for Military Families, Rally Point 6, and Veteran's Affairs. We will also engage more ethnically diverse volunteers through connections with the Korean Women's Association and Tacoma Community House, which provide social services and educational programs to refugees and immigrants. In an effort to connect more closely with our station coordinators to keep them apprised of volunteer program standards and provide new volunteer management tools, we will offer volunteer management trainings using the Points of Light Volunteer Management Training Series. In addition, we will organize Station Coordinator meetings twice a year to update them on any local or CNCS news and to provide them an opportunity to share best practices and network with each other. Our RSVP station managers are expected to abide by the regulations and requirements stated in the signed MOU, which includes data collection requirements, and any issues that arise will be dealt with immediately. During annual site visits, the MOU will be reviewed to assure the expectations of both

Narratives

the station and RSVP are met. Specifically, we will make sure job descriptions and applications are current, orientation and training is completed, background checks are handled, and new opportunities are included. Pierce County RSVP volunteers are updated on program happenings in a quarterly newsletter and mailed birthday and holiday cards every year. RSVP volunteers will be recognized annually at an ice cream social event during National Volunteer Week, where awards in the CNCS impact areas will be given. An annual survey of RSVP volunteers is conducted to help gauge if they feel their experience is worthwhile and if there are ways to improve or enhance the program. Pierce County RSVP has been graduating stations that don't fall under any of the CNCS focus areas and those who have been inactive or unwilling to meet the new outcome measurement reporting requirements. However, our volunteers have an affiliation with United Way's Volunteer Center, so we are able to shift them to the Center, where they will still be able to access volunteer resources and newsletters, plus information on supplemental volunteer insurance options.

Program Management

The vision of United Way of Pierce County is to lead, support, and invest in community efforts to ensure all of our children succeed in school and in life. UWPC is focused on early childhood development and early grade excellence and advocates for programs like ECEAP and Head Start to support low-income children. UWPC feels these programs should be regarded as a continuum of early childhood readiness efforts targeted at all children age birth to five that work together to strengthen parent engagement with children, support quality learning experiences in childcare and promote coordinated transitions to elementary school and beyond. Strengthening families and providing basic needs are also a focus of United Way of Pierce County. Everything we do, including our sponsorship of RSVP, relates to our mission and vision. Individual programs at United Way, including the Volunteer Center, have identified the goals necessary to meet community needs and have put the plans in place to reach these goals. UWPC's Volunteer Center has established relationships with nearly 200 non-profit organizations in the area. UWPC also integrates volunteers into programmatic responses to local needs through our community investment process, in which volunteers are making decisions about funding the most critical local needs. With regard to specific CNCS Focus Areas, United Way of Pierce County, the Volunteer Center, and the South Sound 2-1-1 Information and Referral Helpline program have long-standing relationships with organizations working in multiple focus areas, including work with adjudicated youth, engaging students in their communities, disaster preparedness and response, and mobilizing more volunteers, among others. We are confident that we can continue to work with our community partners to develop volunteer

Narratives

stations and assignments addressing the Focus Areas in Pierce County. United Way of Pierce County was a community leader in moving programs to outcome evaluation beginning in the early '90s. We have a specific board committee who evaluates our own internal community programs' indicators and outcomes, and we have contracts with everyone we invest donor dollars in which includes the requirement to participate in outcome assessment processes. We understand evaluation, participate constantly in the process, and expect outcomes to be a part of any investment, whether made by us in others, or by others in us. As the RSVP sponsor, we work with our partner organizations to develop reporting mechanisms designed to measure impact on volunteers and community issues. All United Way of Pierce County internal programs are committed to continuous quality improvement. As an organization, we continually assess program operations and outcomes to identify areas where we can improve program effectiveness and efficiency. This includes annual outcome evaluations. For our volunteer programs, we regularly survey participants for customer satisfaction. This provides us with important feedback on how well we are providing services, as well as feedback for our agency partners on their work with volunteers. Our internal programs (Volunteer Center, 2-1-1, Gifts-In-Kind, Project U, United for Military Families, and Youth United) have a variety of funding sources each requiring its own financial and data reporting. As an organization, we work tirelessly to leverage every dollar possible for the maximum community benefit. Each of our internal programs has a long history of 'doing more with less.' This process includes using National Service members (AmeriCorps and VISTA), volunteers, interns, and work-study students wherever appropriate to increase our capacity to serve a greater number of people in our community. As the RSVP sponsor, we will work to secure local funding and leverage all dollars available to the maximum community benefit. The culture within United Way of Pierce County is one of teamwork and working toward the greater good. This means we have a team of more than 35 individuals internally, multiplied by our volunteers out in the community, to help promote the RSVP program in Pierce County. We also work closely with the Volunteer Engagement Committee (VEC) to ensure successful continuation of current RSVP volunteer stations and placements. VEC is comprised of community and business leaders, school representatives, social service agencies, RSVP volunteers, and faith-based leaders. The committee serves as the advisory council for RSVP and conducts a self-assessment survey on an annual basis, as well as provides valuable input about the program's viability through the Stakeholder's Survey. We are working with non-profit partners to develop measurement tools for impact outcomes, which is essential to ensure tools that are beneficial and workable for the stations and RSVP. We will continue to use our strong community connections to move this important work forward and to gather data

Narratives

that demonstrates the invaluable impact our volunteers have on the communities they serve.

Organizational Capability

United Way of Pierce County has been in operation for over 90 years. The organization is healthy and growing, with widespread financial in kind and volunteer support from thousands of individuals and businesses representing many segments of the community. We take our fiduciary responsibilities to our donors and the community very seriously. UWPC has a long history of diligent financial management and is responsible for the annual investment of over \$10 million into community programs. In fact, Charity Navigator (an independent rating firm for non-profit organizations) has rated United Way of Pierce County "four stars" - its highest rating - multiple times. When funding cuts placed CNCS programs in jeopardy, UWPC backed RSVP by maintaining program standards in Pierce County. United Way of Pierce County believes education, basic needs, and health are the foundation for a good life, and RSVP enhances that work and has a natural connection to UWPC's mission. In the area of Education, RSVP volunteers are helping to combat rising dropout rates by mentoring in local schools such as in the Bethel and Tacoma school districts, which have the highest dropout rates in the county, to help students succeed in life. By tutoring elementary school children, RSVP volunteers help to prepare these students to succeed as they move on to middle and high school. RSVP volunteers are also active as mentors in the Pierce County Juvenile Justice System supporting adjudicated and at-risk youth. They help at-risk youth work toward a brighter future and escape the destructive cycle of the correctional system. At the Mustard Seed Project, Mid County Community Services, and Catholic Community Volunteer Chore Services, work is focused toward Independent Living for seniors. Volunteers assist with basic housework, shopping, transportation, and other chores. They support classes on computer skills, financial literacy, and driving safety. Our volunteers with the Mount Rainier American Red Cross chapter provide assistance in times of natural disaster, as well as work toward preparedness for all types of disasters and in Service to the Armed Forces. To effectively manage the RSVP program, United Way of Pierce County employs 1.0 FTE as the RSVP Project Manager supported by a .33 FTE RSVP Coordinator with oversight provided by a .30 FTE Director. Shawn Paton, Community Programs Director, has been with UWPC for 17 years. She is the founder of the Volunteer Center and was instrumental in the development of the Youth United program at United Way. She has nearly two decades of experience working with non-profit organizations in a variety of roles, including helping agencies increase their capacity to work more effectively with volunteers. As Director, Shawn provides oversight and program development for UWPC's South Sound 2-1-1 Call Center, the United for Military Families Initiative, the Gifts In Kind

Narratives

program, the Volunteer Center, Youth United, and RSVP. Allison Loft, RSVP Project Manager, is going into her second year at UWPC, and brings with her three years of experience in Volunteer Development at United Way of Greater Portland, plus five years working in higher education with volunteers in a variety of ways. She is responsible for the daily oversight of the program, as well as coordination of events, recruitment, outreach, and marketing strategies. She has worked with volunteers in a multitude of settings and brings outreach experience as well. By working with the Volunteer Center, Allison is capitalizing on existing community connections to recruit new stations and volunteers. Shayla Torres joined the UWPC staff in March 2013 as Volunteer Center Coordinator and brings with her health program coordination and data organization skills. She will be conducting RSVP site visits and recruitment activities. Debra MacDonald, RSVP Data Assistant, has been with UWPC for six years. She coordinates monthly reports and reimbursements and provides valuable support for the program. Cindy Evans, Volunteer Center Manager, has been with UWPC for 10 years. As manager, Cindy is responsible for all day-to-day operations within the Center, and she leads a networking group of volunteer managers at non-profit and public organizations and works with them to increase their capacity to interact effectively with volunteers. Background checks are conducted on all RSVP staff through the Lexis/Nexis United Way Worldwide network. UWPC already has deeply established relationships and high trust levels with many organizations in the community, therefore our ability to integrate senior volunteer services into the activities of others is naturally enhanced. UWPC also runs the South Sound 2-1-1 Call Center (offering information and referrals to health & human services), which is also closely aligned and a natural fit with RSVP and the Volunteer Center. Our organization is fully computer integrated and has some of the most state-of-the-art equipment available. We also have an organizational commitment, stated in our Key Organizational Objectives, to have our staff well-trained and knowledgeable about industry "best practices." For years it has been United Way of Pierce County's job to know about the most critical needs of our community. This information is essential to ensuring we are making the most impact through our investments of time and dollars in the community. The Community Indicators project was designed to compile the information and data necessary to not only gauge our needs, but also focus our work and monitor our progress. Foreclosures, poverty rates, and unemployment rates are just some of the factors affecting the quality of life in Pierce County. For those of us working to resolve the toughest issues in our area and to create a good life for all, it is important for us to be aware of the needs and make sure we are working together to make a difference in those areas.

Other

Narratives

N/A

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A