

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

A minimum of 240 RSVP volunteers will serve through RSVP of Saline County. Volunteer activities will include transportation of individuals with special needs, including veterans, to medical and social services; completion of minor home/property repairs to enhance safety and security of residents; collection, sorting, apportionment, distribution and teaching preparation of food items; delivery of Meals on Wheels; operating Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites to provide free tax return preparation for persons with moderate incomes; and participating in disaster preparedness and response activities. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. At the end of the three-year grant, 106 volunteers will have provided services which enhance the health of more than 1100 individuals, with a minimum of 850 of them reporting increased social support and/or food security for their households as a result of the volunteers' efforts.

The CNCS federal investment of \$40, 482 will be supplemented by non-federal resources totaling \$63,247.

## Strengthening Communities

Saline County is a rural county in central Kansas, situated at the crossroads of Interstates 70 and 135. The 2012 US Census estimate places the population at 55,988, with Salina encompassing 48,045. Five outlying "cities" range in size from 200-400; therefore, most social services are located in Salina. In a primarily agricultural area, Saline County enjoys a diverse mix of manufacturing, education and health care industries, yet the 2012 Census estimate indicates that 15% of the approximately 56,000 residents are over age 65 years of age. The presence of a wide array of health and social services, including a Regional Health Center, and the resultant migration of older persons from nearby counties, yields a projection that Saline County's 65+ population will continue to increase substantially for the foreseeable future. According to the "Community Profile: Community Compass: Directions for Tomorrow, Saline County 2007," compiled by the Alliance for a Healthy Community, "The elderly population of Saline County has been growing, ... with an increasing number of elderly in the upper age brackets, leading to a greater need for help with daily living..." The population 75 years and over continues to be one of the fastest growing segments of the Saline County population, increasing almost 17% in the last 10 years. The substantial growth rate of the 85+ age group has significant implications for the types of services needed and the manner in which they are delivered. A Saline County Commission on Aging study states, "Transportation is a requisite for many disabled and elderly to access medical, shopping and social services. ... Human service agencies, including

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those providing or subsidizing public transportation, report a growing need for more door-to-door transportation in the Salina community, especially for the elderly and disabled." Home chore and maintenance assistance were also identified as significant unmet needs of the elderly. Home-bound seniors who lack basic support services, particularly for provision of adequate, nutritious meals, are unable to remain living independently and are having to move into assisted living or nursing homes. Services such as volunteer-provided transportation to medical appointments and shopping and delivery of meals to persons who are unable to prepare meals will result in recipients experiencing increased social support, as well as allowing them to maintain their independent living status.

The percentage of persons living in Saline County whose income fell below poverty level was reported as 13.9% for the 2007-2011 period, 1.3% higher than the State rate. According to Kathy Jackson, Director of Salina's Emergency Aid and Food Bank agency, the past five years have seen an 18% increase in the number of clients served and a 36% increase in the number of food items distributed, totaling over 20,000 items each month. In the same 5 year period, the number of school children in Salina schools who received free or reduced fee lunches rose from 46.5% to 54.15%. RSVP volunteers' support of the Food Bank through collection, sorting, portioning, and distributing of food items, as well as teaching cooking classes utilizing food items available through the Food Bank, will result in clients' reporting increased food security for their households.

Volunteers are the critical providers of all of the services listed above, with a minimal number of paid staff supported by the host agencies. The need for additional volunteers to increase services, or to replace "retiring" volunteers, is an ongoing challenge for all of the agencies, as well.

Through sponsorship of an RSVP program for nearly 37 years, policies, procedures and relationships with local agencies have been developed to support data collection which ensure that programmatic reporting requirements are achieved. Requests for volunteer assistance resulting referrals and follow-up are communicated via telephone, fax and/or email. Volunteer reports are transmitted via email, fax or hard copy forms. A web-based option for reporting will be initiated in the near future.

Resulting data is maintained in the "Volunteer Reporter" database and/or in spreadsheets specifically designed to maintain required information. Expertise in developing special data collection and/or measurement tools is available through the resources of faculty and staff at the sponsor agency, Advisory Council members and other community partners, as needed.

Saline County has a long relationship with the military, from service as the headquarters for the Smoky Hill Air Base and Camp Phillips during World War II, through transition to Schilling Air Force Base, a home base for "Waiting Wives," and the current home of the Smoky Hill Air National Guard

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and an Army Reserve Unit. The 2012 US Census Bureau QuickFacts indicates 4,880 veterans living in Saline County between 2007-2011, including more than 1,100 military retirees, according to the Salina Military Affairs Council. RSVP volunteers will continue to assure access to medical care for veterans and their spouses by driving vans providing transportation to VA facilities, as well as scheduling the van drivers and riders (Healthy Futures). Veterans and military families will also be targeted for assistance as needs are identified through our partnerships with the local VA clinic, Salina Military Affairs Council and Area Agency on Aging, including performance of home maintenance chores for both veterans and families of deployed service members. Veterans are also potential clients of the Adult Education Center (Economic Opportunity) and will be included in efforts to increase community resilience through Disaster Preparedness promotions. Recruitment of veterans to volunteer their skills in service to the community will be equally emphasized and tracked.

### **Recruitment and Development**

A variety of volunteer opportunities are sought which offer outlets for RSVP volunteers to maintain and build upon existing skills, as well as to acquire new skills, should that be their desire, e.g., training for VITA tax preparation, Senior Health Insurance Counseling, Medical Reserve Corps, etc. New volunteer assignments are solicited through ongoing networking with existing community service entities, continual marketing of RSVP's role in mobilizing volunteers to meet community needs and intentional research and follow-up of newly developing service opportunities. Opportunities for enhancing leadership potential, including recruitment of other volunteers and service as team leaders are provided through in-service offerings and through development of volunteer opportunities which provide for such growth, e.g., program leaders, service project team leaders or site supervisors, agency board and committee positions. Opportunities which offer social interaction are developed for volunteers who desire to meet and work with others and home-based opportunities are sought to meet the needs of the home bound or those with challenges which limit their mobility.

Feedback is solicited from volunteers to assure that they view their assignments as rewarding/ "high quality." Opportunities are provided to reflect on the meaning of their service via prompts for self reflection and requests to provide testimonials for public relations activities, articles for newsletters, etc. Volunteers are also invited to reflect on the meaning of their service to the community, and how it enhances the quality of their own lives, through evaluation tools, invitation to participate as guest authors for the RSVP newsletter and newspaper column, as guest speakers for community groups, and as part of selected recognition activities. Annual measures of volunteer satisfaction with their RSVP experience will be accomplished through use of surveys and/or focus groups in conjunction

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with other evaluative means.

Training and support will be provided for volunteers as needs are indicated, as well as opportunities for personal growth through more diverse and/or challenging assignments. Specific skill training for volunteers, e.g., tax preparation, insurance counseling, etc., will be provided utilizing nationally recognized curriculum and qualified community resources, including agency personnel and local college faculty and facilities. Provision for evaluation of training provided will be made for both participating volunteers and the volunteer stations through which they apply the training.

All available methods of recruiting additional RSVP volunteers are utilized, including online services, with emphasis on presentation of volunteer needs/opportunities. Senior volunteers are encouraged to recruit their peers as RSVP volunteers, including participation with staff in public presentations.

Particular effort is made to recruit volunteers of diverse backgrounds for specific volunteer activities. The increase in Saline County's Hispanic population to 10.3% of the total has led to targeted efforts to increase their inclusion in volunteer service. This effort is assisted by the support of the editors of LaVoz, the area Hispanic newspaper, staff members of the City of Salina Human Relations Department, a volunteer station, and identified leaders of the Hispanic community. Similarly, targeted efforts will be made to recruit more veterans as volunteers, particularly to support the needs of service members' families. Partners in this initiative will include the local VA Clinic and the Chamber of Commerce's Military Affairs Council.

Plans for volunteer recruitment and recognition are developed and implemented with the assistance of the Advisory Council's Volunteer and Station Relations Committee. Retention efforts begin with the appropriate matching of volunteers' interests and community needs and are continued through 1) rewarding referrals, 2) follow-up, with problem resolution, as needed, and 3) appropriate, personalized recognition of volunteers' contributions.

Volunteer recognition will include a combination of individual and group activities, including provision of a personal name tag, listing of new volunteers in the RSVP PULSE newsletter, nomination of individual volunteers for special awards, and sending of cards for birthdays and other special occasions in volunteers' lives. A group recognition event will be held at least annually. New formats for additional events which represent a combination of educational and recognition elements will be developed.

### **Program Management**

Memorandums of Understanding which are negotiated with volunteer stations will clearly outline RSVP program regulations and the station's responsibility to ensure that volunteers are functioning

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within those regulations. Memorandums with new volunteer stations and orientation of new staff with responsibility for supervising RSVP volunteers under an existing Memorandum will be conducted by RSVP staff and / or trained Advisory Council members to assure that program regulations are clearly communicated. Volunteer job descriptions and activity reports will be monitored as they are received to detect indications of prohibited activities and to verify that volunteers are performing their assigned activities. Stations which provide services that may fall outside of the allowed scope of RSVP volunteer activities will be monitored more closely via periodic visits by RSVP staff or Advisory Council members and targeted conversations with RSVP volunteers who serve them. Quarterly newsletters will also include reminders of RSVP program regulations for the benefit of both volunteers and stations.

Volunteer stations and volunteer assignments are developed based on community needs obtained through needs assessments performed by lead agencies, e.g., the Salina Area United Way; participation in collaborations comprised of community service agencies, e.g., the Community Services Council; monitoring of local issues and new services reported in the news; and regular contact with existing volunteer stations. Careful matching of volunteers' skills and interests with identified needs is the goal for not only meeting community needs, but also providing meaningful service opportunities for volunteers. As identified needs fit the RSVP Performance Measure requirements, the stations and their volunteer activities will be incorporated into the approved work plans, including those in the non-Primary focus areas, with the same procedures of recruitment, referral, follow-up and record keeping applied to achieve the desired outcomes or outputs. Many of the existing volunteer stations and their activities will fall into the other CNCS focus areas. Current stations, their assigned volunteers and emerging community service entities/needs which do not meet RSVP Performance Measure criteria will be served through The Volunteer Connection, the community volunteer center, with RSVP volunteers serving in Capacity Building roles, as applicable. Since The Volunteer Connection evolved from the RSVP program, the protocols for engaging volunteers from any source to address community needs utilize the RSVP model.

As the incumbent sponsor of RSVP for nearly 36 years, Kansas Wesleyan has had considerable experience in supporting services within the Healthy Futures focus area via volunteer recruitment, support, monitoring and reporting of outcomes. As the recipient of Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Kansas Health Foundation and Salina Area United Way funding to support mobilization of volunteers to provide services which promote enhanced health outcomes for their recipients, a variety of data collection methods have been developed and utilized to meet reporting requirements,

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i.e., surveys of intermediary service providers and clients/recipients, spreadsheets, databases. The expertise of personnel at Kansas Wesleyan University is a valuable resource for development of evaluation and assessment tools. Volunteer stations will be asked to provide data which tracks projected outputs on a quarterly basis and to cooperate in implementation of the necessary assessment method(s) to determine achievement of outcomes on an annual basis, with intermediate measures ascertained as practical.

Performance Measurements will be developed/revised for volunteer stations addressing the Primary Focus Area and progress monitored to demonstrate the outcome of volunteer activities. Relevant data will be recorded in the Volunteer Reporter software program, and other record keeping methods devised, as needed. Staff and data entry volunteers will be trained in the procedures required to produce the information needed to demonstrate the concrete impacts of the project and its volunteers. Quarterly review of data will both assess accuracy of information and provide indication of corrective actions to be taken.

Program performance will be assessed at least annually to assure, and have means to demonstrate, excellence of RSVP project performance and program quality. Progress toward achieving goals and objectives will be reviewed quarterly and activities adjusted, as needed, to enhance progress toward projections. An annual evaluation of project accomplishments / effectiveness will be conducted with methods designed and implemented through the Advisory Council's Evaluation/Strategic Planning Committee. Assessment methods and foci will include surveys of volunteers and recipients and focus/listening groups including other community stakeholders. Evaluations will include means of measuring the degree to which volunteers experience their service as meaningful for themselves as well as those they serve.

Project compliance with the RSVP federal regulations will continue to be ensured through oversight of the project by the designated sponsor executive, with the assistance of the RSVP Advisory Council, which has a 35 year history of supporting the Saline County RSVP program. Advisory Council membership is composed of RSVP and community volunteers, volunteer station representatives, business persons and individuals with expertise in program planning and evaluation, marketing and fundraising. The membership nomination process involves careful attention to inclusion of individuals who represent diversity in age, gender, ethnicity and skills. The Advisory Council will be tasked with reviewing station MoU status and volunteer placements to assure that all are placed in stations with current MoUs in keeping with applicable federal regulations, including Performance Measurement criteria. The Evaluation and Strategic Planning Committee will also be charged with

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assuring that RSVP volunteer files include proof of age eligibility for RSVP service.

### Organizational Capability

A Cabinet-level designee serves as Kansas Wesleyan's sponsor executive for RSVP of Saline County. RSVP status reports are regularly shared with the Board of Trustees. As previously noted, the Advisory Council will play a supportive role in assuring that programmatic requirements are being met and fiscal accountability is being maintained.

Fiscal accountability is also assured through the program's relationship with the Kansas Wesleyan business office. The receipt and expenditure of all project resources are recorded in the Program's QuickBooks Non-Profit Version, as well as being processed through the sponsor's accounting procedures, providing a system of tracking project-specific line item expenditures, as well as a system of checks and balances, when office records are reconciled with the sponsor's computerized printout on a monthly basis.

Adequate cash and in-kind support will be obtained to sustain the services of RSVP of Saline County, with the assistance of the Advisory Council's Community Support Committee. A diversified annual "fund/friend raising" plan will be developed to include both existing and new events. Applications will be submitted to the Salina Area United Way, Greater Salina Community Foundation and other potential funders for funding of programs and projects. Additional grants will be sought to develop new initiatives and / or sustain current services. Special effort will be made to increase individual contributions. Opportunities to reduce costs will be examined, as well.

RSVP program staff include an 80% FTE Director, 60% FTE Volunteer Coordinator and 95% FTE Office Manager. The Director has primary responsibility for public relations, community needs assessment and project development , including assurance that policies and procedures are in place and followed to provide a quality RSVP project. The Volunteer Coordinator has primary responsibility for volunteer station development and relations, volunteer recruitment, referral and follow-up and volunteer recognition. The Office Manager coordinates episodic volunteer opportunities as well as having primary responsibility for data collection, entry and retrieval. Activities are shared among team members to assure good customer service to all stakeholders. Assisted by skilled volunteers, the staff has successfully operated the existing RSVP program during tenures ranging from 3 to 35 years. Kansas Wesleyan University was established in 1885, resulting in a long history of building organizational capacity. The ensuing years of oversight by a Board of Trustees, annual comprehensive audits, accreditation visits for various programs and the University as an institution of higher education have demonstrated that the University has developed strong internal policies and

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operating procedures that cover all aspects of serving as a sponsor for the RSVP program. The University manages over \$51 million in assets, including cash assets of nearly \$ 1.5 million, facilities, plant and equipment assets of over \$23 million and a roster of close to 200 personnel. The University has a lengthy history of managing Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants and Federal Work Study Program funds, in addition to 36 years of serving as the grantee for RSVP of Saline County.

### **Other**

Not Applicable

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

Not Applicable