

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) began as a national program in 1971. Anoka County has sponsored RSVP since 1973, valuing citizen participation in responding to local needs and partnering for solutions. Anoka County RSVP started with 53 volunteers and has 418 volunteers. In these challenging times, Anoka County recognizes the resources of older volunteers and as a sponsor continues to support RSVP in connecting volunteer assets to meaningful service. Anoka County RSVP [AC RSVP] links volunteers to meaningful opportunities which meet the CNCS focus areas and community needs.

An estimated 340 Anoka County RSVP [AC RSVP] unduplicated volunteers will serve their community in the following activities (but not limited to): provide respite/companionship, transportation for seniors and veterans to medical appointments, assist at 4 local food shelves, deliver meals, provide free tax assistance, Adult Basic Education tutors, GED/ESL tutors, job training, health insurance counseling, assist at 2 transitional homeless shelters, and much more. The primary focus area of this project is healthy futures. AC RSVP projects that 167 volunteers will serve beneficiaries in a wide range of healthy futures activities benefitting the community. At the end of the three-year grant, 91 of volunteers will serve 640 of clients, of which 90 individuals will report an increase in social supports in their community. 67 RSVP volunteers will serve at local food shelves to increase clients' food security, as well as 3 RSVP volunteers assisting beneficiaries in access to care through health insurance counseling. 6 RSVP volunteers will deliver meals to clients increasing their social ties and help them remain living independently within the community. The secondary focus will be economic opportunity, where 59 volunteers will serve in activities to increase access to housing, employment, and increase financial literacy. Last year, 295 veterans and military families were served through healthy futures and economic opportunity activities. Anoka County RSVP will continue to explore ways to increase partnerships with local VFW's, auxiliaries, and Anoka County Veteran's services to increase services to veterans and military families.

The annual CNCS federal investment of \$30,189.00 will be supplemented by Anoka County (local) in the amount of \$110,472.00 and also the MN Board on Aging (State) in the amount of \$12,509.00 for a total of \$122,981.00 in non-federal resources. The cumulative CNCS federal investment of \$90,567.00 will be supplemented by Anoka County (local) in the amount of \$331,416.00, and the MN board on Aging (State) in the amount of \$37,527.00 in non-federal resources.

# Narratives

## Strengthening Communities

Geographically, Anoka County encompasses 423 square miles, and is the fourth most populous County in the state of Minnesota. It is located in the northern section of the greater metropolitan area of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Comprised of both old communities and young growing communities, its 21 cities have a total population of 333,140 people. Anoka County has a blend of urban, suburban and rural environments offering its residents a small community atmosphere, while providing access to the larger metropolitan area. In 2011, the U.S. Census reported the following characteristics of Anoka County residents: 26% of the population is under 18, 10.2% of the population was 65 or older, the median household income is \$69,139, 6.6% of the population was below poverty level, 10.2% spoke a language other than English at home, and 6% are Veterans.

Anoka County's 40 year commitment to and history with the RSVP program uniquely positions AC RSVP to identify community needs and work within local programs to meet these needs. For the past 40 years, AC RSVP has partnered with over 100 programs to provide a wide range of services based on needs identified by providers and community members. AC RSVP has maintained its role as a connecting point between people interested in volunteering and agencies in need of volunteers by providing quality service to both volunteers and programs. When a community need is identified, AC RSVP is contacted to work alongside programs by providing available volunteers and quality volunteer management. The relationships AC RSVP has built over the years gives AC RSVP insight into the current needs of the community and credibility to partner in ways to help meet needs. Going forward, Anoka County RSVP will focus efforts on strengthening healthy futures initiatives that will address community needs in the areas of seniors aging in place, obesity and food, and access to care. The secondary focus will be to increase economic opportunities, specifically in the areas of housing, employment and financial literacy. Lastly, AC RSVP is exploring ways to increase the number of veterans serving as volunteers and increase the array of services offered to veterans and military families as they relate to the focus areas of healthy futures, economic opportunities, and capacity building.

According to the Minnesota Department of Human Services the percentage of senior adults in the population aged 65 and older is projected to double by 2030 to 77,870; while those over age 85 will more than double to 8,760. Additionally as the population ages, the incidence of chronic diseases increases. For instance, within the next 40 years the University of Minnesota Center on Aging

## Narratives

estimates the number of people with Alzheimer's and Dementia is expected to double for people age 75-84 and triple for those over 85; while costs are expected to increase five-fold from 20 billion to 100 billion (in the State of Minnesota alone).

According to the Department of Human Services survey, Families, friends and neighbors often provide 92% of the long-term care needed by frail older adults in Minnesota. Additionally, current caregivers report that receiving respite care improved their ability to provide care and enable their loved one live in their own home longer. In order to assist the increasing number of informal caregivers to provide quality care therefore enabling elders to remain as independent as possible, additional caregiver support and respite services will be needed. A planning report from the Minnesota Department of Human Resources calculates that for every 1% decrease in family-provided long-term care, this costs the State an additional \$30 million in public funding. AC RSVP proposes to continue to work closely with local programs to provide trained volunteers who will support caregivers by helping to meet the increasing need for respite care and identify additional opportunities for volunteers to serve in leadership capacities within these programs. AC RSVP projects an increase from 55 to 66 volunteers providing respite care to a projected 90 individuals, thus increasing caregivers' social support systems allowing them to care for their loved one longer within their own homes and reducing federal and state costs.

Public transportation in Anoka County is available via a fixed bus route system and call-ahead van ride system. Many seniors, veterans, and families find it difficult to utilize these systems for a variety of reasons: the location of the bus stop is inconvenient, the route does not meet their need, the transport time does not align with their appointments or the service is unaffordable. The Wilder Research study cites transportation as a key barrier to self-sufficiency, and employment. Anoka County offers a volunteer transportation system which residents can access for medical and social service related appointments. This service enables residents to continue living independently in the community. AC RSVP projects an increase from 13 to 25 volunteers that propose to provide a projected number of 550 unduplicated rides for seniors and veterans to get to medical appointments, which will increase their ability to remain living independently, while increasing their perceived social supports.

Additionally, families and individuals living in Anoka County are experiencing food security hardships.

## Narratives

Since 2012, local food shelves report a 29% rise in usage, with many individuals employed but in need of additional emergency food. AC RSVP projects an increase from 52 volunteers to 67 that will serve 500 clients at local emergency food banks to increase beneficiaries household food security.

Medicare is a national health insurance program for people age 65 and over as well as some people with disabilities. Medicare beneficiaries enroll in original Medicare and then face choices of purchasing additional insurance coverage and prescription drug coverage. Beginning in 2014, Minnesota will roll out national health care plans through MNSure. 3 RSVP volunteers will serve 40 beneficiaries by increasing clients' access to care through providing health insurance counseling.

AC RSVP proposes to increase from 40 to 59 RSVP volunteers serving in the secondary focus area of economic opportunity. Services may include (but not limited to): transitional housing, adult basic education, ESL/GED tutoring, tax counseling, and job training to increase skills needed to access jobs, transition to safe, affordable housing, and receive tax rebates which help seniors below the federal poverty line to pay for basic necessities. Anoka County RSVP volunteers will continue to serve in economic opportunity-related activities, after identifying community needs within that focus area.

The 2012 Wilder Homeless Survey informs us that Minnesota's homeless population rose 6% since 2009 to 10,214. The One Night Homeless Count conducted in Anoka County in January 2012 indicated there was a 22 percent increase in people living in places not meant for human habitation, with many of them being children and young adults. Anoka County RSVP proposes to increase from 5 volunteers to 15 volunteer services to 50 clients and families to find safe, affordable housing through transitional shelter activities such as: mentoring and skills training. Client tracking databases will be used to track the number of individuals transitioned into safe, affordable housing.

The Social Security Administration states many seniors rely on fixed incomes, receiving on average \$1,234 in social security benefits and \$516.90 in supplemental security income. If it weren't for Social Security, nearly half of Americans over 65 would live below the federal poverty level (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: Social Security Administration). Many low-income seniors and people with disabilities often do not file their taxes because of the complex tax questions, or are without access to computers to electronically file. AC RSVP projects an increase of 17 to 25 volunteers that will provide tax counseling allowing 940 seniors and adults with disabilities to file their income,

## Narratives

property, or mobile home taxes that help them receive rebates that can be used toward basic living necessities. Output targets will be measured through attendance logs and the Vita report.

Many volunteer stations rely upon volunteer leaders to effectively expand organizations' scale, scope and efficiency through managing volunteers. Five stations will implement effective volunteer management practices as a result of capacity building services. 12 RSVP volunteers will lead, recruit and develop systems to effectively manage a proposed 75 community volunteers. A Pre/Post Organizational assessment tool will be used to determine progress.

Local studies, projections, and large geographical service area indicate an increased demand for Anoka County RSVP program services with an emphasis on healthy futures initiatives that will engage, challenge, and encompass new skill based opportunities for overall volunteer participation.

AC RSVP collaborates with stations which fit within the primary and secondary focus areas (such as Family Caregiver Connection, Camilia Rose, Zion Spiritual Care, Tamarisk, Anoka County Volunteer Transportation, 4 food shelves, Tax Counseling, Metro North Adult Basic Education, Anoka County Workforce Center, Family of Promise, and Stepping Stone Emergency Housing) to collect outputs and outcomes to measure program success quarterly. CNCS approved evidence based surveys or measurement tools will be used whenever available. The AC RSVP project director recently updated the quarterly surveys to track additional information regarding the number of vets served and regularly monitors progress.

The AC RSVP director currently meets with each site station coordinator annually to review the station's mission, volunteer needs and data collection processes. Staff have worked closely with stations over the past year to identify or create data collection tools that are easy for stations to use and capture the necessary information to achieve grant outcomes. AC RSVP has a long-standing history since 1973 of working with many site coordinators and stations within Anoka County and strives to continue to maintain good partnerships within the community.

AC RSVP requires each station to complete and comply with a Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] which clearly specifies roles, responsibilities, safety assurances, and data collection requirements. Each station site is aware that compliance with data collection is a mandatory part of

## Narratives

the agreement and that failure to comply may result in a terminated partnership with AC RSVP as a last resort. Additionally, the AC RSVP director has discussed with station site coordinators the upcoming CNCS grant data requirements, and has implemented changes to data collection processes to meet these requirements. AC RSVP is also exploring technology that will help capture the required data and developing volunteer capacity building teams to assist stations with data collection. AC RSVP adapts the measurement tools and technology to ensure they are user-friendly for site station coordinators and volunteers.

AC RSVP project director will continue to capture the number of caregivers of homebound OR older adults and individuals receiving respite services, and the number of caregivers who report an increase in social ties/support. The AC project director will work with site station coordinators in implementing caregiver surveys and utilize CNCS supported instruments. 66 RSVP respite volunteers will provide respite care for 90 clients, allowing 90 caregivers time off from their caregiving duties and the opportunity to attend an on-site support group. This will increase their social ties and support systems which will allow them to continue to care for their loved one outside a long-term care facility, thereby reducing state and federal costs. 67 RSVP volunteers will serve 500 clients at food shelves, thereby increasing food security of themselves and their children. Additionally, 25 RSVP volunteer drivers will give 550 unduplicated rides to seniors and veterans allowing them to remain living independently while also increasing social supports. These outputs and outcomes will be measured through volunteer site client databases, sign in sheets, volunteer logs, and coordinator reports. The RSVP project director will continue to send quarterly email surveys to gather the outputs, outcomes measurements and will implement CNCS required surveys (e.g. transportation), and will create surveys for performance measures as needed. Surveys will be completed to determine increases in social supports/ties and increased food security.

In 2012, AC RSVP served 295 veterans and military families within healthy futures and economic opportunities focus areas through a variety of activities such as: respite, companionship, meal delivery, food access, and transitional housing services. This information is captured through recently updated quarterly station surveys. AC RSVP implemented changes to the volunteer application to identify veteran volunteers. AC RSVP is in communications with local auxiliaries, VFWs, and the Anoka County Veterans office to identify needs and develop volunteer assignments to serve veterans and their family members.

# Narratives

## Recruitment and Development

AC RSVP has a 40 year history of actively recruiting energetic volunteers age 55 or better and engaging them in meaningful and rewarding opportunities that goes beyond a volunteer just serving their time. AC RSVP assures a high quality experience for volunteers by engaging them in challenging assignments and applying sound volunteer management practices that include; thorough screening, offering a variety of well-crafted opportunities, a custom "right-fit" matching process, excellent orientation and training, placement follow-up, recognition, opportunities to provide feedback and on-going support. During the screening process, AC RSVP staff works with volunteers to identify their skills, interests, motivations and availability.

Staff also work with stations to identify and develop a variety of opportunities that meet the agency's needs while encouraging volunteers to utilize their experiences, abilities, skills and promoting personal growth for volunteers. One example of this is the Gathering which utilizes highly skilled volunteers with backgrounds in nursing, teaching, occupational and physical therapy, food service, parenting and social services to provide quality respite care in a small group setting. The volunteers work as a team and offer their respective talents in program delivery. Some of the lead RN volunteers have advanced to providing information and support to the family caregivers. The Gathering volunteers attribute their high retention rate as a volunteer due to the meaningful work and opportunity to draw on a variety of skills, with great leadership.

Many of the AC RSVP stations provide opportunities which allow volunteers to use their skills in social work, web design and fundraising, coordinating events, staffing marketing events, mentoring clients, and gardening. AC RSVP continually seeks to create new, meaningful and challenging volunteer activities based on feedback obtained from volunteer questionnaires, and face to face interviews. AC RSVP will offer expanded capacity building volunteer roles to partner with stations to create, develop and enhance current data reporting practices and outreach activities. This partnership will increase each station's capacity to manage volunteers, expand their project scope, while providing meaningful volunteer opportunities. For example, AC RSVP provided a station with a volunteer to teach, update, and enhance that station's website at no cost. The station's website is now current and self-sufficient. AC RSVP program staff work together with partner stations when recruiting volunteers. AC RSVP sends quarterly emails to station site coordinators to identify volunteer recruitment needs. AC RSVP recruits volunteers in a variety of ways including calls, emails, newsletters, expos and community

## Narratives

education classes. Unique to AC RSVP, is a partnership with Compassion Action Network (CAN) that allows RSVP to post volunteer opportunities outside of traditional recruitment strategies. AC RSVP staff identify volunteers with special skill sets through volunteer reporter. RSVP staff intentionally assist stations in developing volunteer opportunities which offer baby boomers flexibility, the ability to be self-directed, to use their expertise, be challenged, and connect socially with their peers.

AC RSVP has implemented a follow-up process with new volunteers to ascertain how their placement is going and thereby ensure a high quality volunteer experience. A recent volunteer survey indicated that 100% of volunteers would recommend participating in the Anoka County RSVP program. Also, 98% of volunteers were satisfied with their current volunteer assignment and mentioned they would recommend volunteering at their station sites.

AC RSVP currently selects partner stations based on the following criteria: the volunteer activity serves an identified community need in one or more of the primary focus areas, capacity building, or community needs, the station is willing and able to capture the necessary data to document impact as defined by CNCS' national performance outcomes and the station seeks to engage volunteers in high quality experiences.

The AC RSVP project director attends trainings to stay current on changing volunteerism trends which influence recruitment strategies and uses this information when working with site station coordinators on recruitment plans. One example of a current trend is offering both long-term volunteer positions as well as short-term opportunities that may attract more recent retirees. Also, AC RSVP will continue to engage stations in expanding volunteer opportunities to include more leadership roles, which will allow stations to expand the scope of their projects.

The AC RSVP project director, staff, and advisory council will continue to identify, plan, and update the infrastructure to ensure RSVP volunteers receive training to be highly effective in addressing focus areas, capacity building, and community priorities. The AC RSVP project director reviews station training plans with site coordinators annually to ensure volunteers receive training tailored to the station which effectively prepares them for their volunteer assignments. Part of the stations' plan includes training specifically needed at each site. For example, respite care station volunteers receive training on topics such as: dementia care, CPR, and specific training topics related to healthy aging,

## Narratives

increasing social supports, and independent living initiatives. Each year, tax counselor volunteers receive IRS certified training. Such site specific training prepares the volunteers to address the identified community needs within the primary focus area of healthy futures, economic opportunities, capacity building and community priorities. Additional training needs are identified through suggestions made by the AC RSVP advisory council and concerns or issues raised by station coordinators as well as feedback received directly from volunteers gathered through follow-up interviews and surveys. Some topics may include: caregiving topics, brain colors classes, conflict management, diversity, and master gardening.

AC RSVP staff will continue to frame solutions from an asset-based approach and pool partner resources to expand scope of service and increase efficiency. AC RSVP is exploring building capacity and expanding volunteer skill sets while expanding the scope and scale of site stations. One example is identifying local RSVP volunteer assets (special skill sets/experience) to mentor individuals or teach specific skill sets such as master gardener volunteers who would develop community garden plans, train other volunteers about gardening techniques, and teach skills to food shelf clients to alleviate long-term hunger. The AC RSVP project director is exploring developing a capacity building volunteer team to meet with site station coordinators to identify the following: developing databases or systems that will help build efficiency within stations, or help develop volunteer training surrounding new databases or procedures that will increase volunteer skillsets, and their program scope benefiting the community as a whole. An example may be redeveloping stations' websites so that they can edit and manage themselves more easily. Another example may be having the capacity building team put develop or organize station specific policies, risk management procedures for new stations. Another example may be to help new stations develop databases or systems to log or track volunteers, clients, and national performance measures. The volunteers would use high skill sets, while strengthening their local stations through building systems that would help their peers but also help site station coordinators manage their programs more efficiently.

AC RSVP seeks to recruit volunteers who are representative of Anoka County's large geographic region. Demographically, Anoka County is comprised of 87% Caucasian, 4.4% African American, 3.9%, Asian, 0.7% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 1.4% other race/ethnicity, and 2.6% two or more races/ethnicities. Currently, AC RSVP's volunteer pool includes 4% of volunteers self-identifying restrictions or limitations, although 1% has a disability. The 2010 Census data indicated that the

## Narratives

minority population in Anoka County at 13%, an increase from 6% in 2000. Even though the AC RSVP volunteers have not been racially diverse; staff continues to focus recruitment efforts on baby boomers 55 or better, regardless of ethnicity, disability, education, socio-economic status, etc. AC RSVP practices inclusivity by not including race/ethnicity on the volunteer application. AC RSVP continues to recruit volunteers through outreach events such as: senior expos, presentations, community education classes, website, printed materials, newspaper ads, local cable station public service announcements, public speaking, and word of mouth advertising through current stations. AC RSVP and its stations practice inclusivity by not discriminating against RSVP volunteers or in the operation of its' program on the basis of race; color; national origin; including limited English proficiency; sex; age; political affiliation; sexual orientation; religion; or on the basis of disability, if the volunteer is a qualified to perform the necessary duties. For example, AC RSVP site stations have made accommodations for volunteers that are visually impaired, wheelchair bound, and have limited use of extremities. Some virtual volunteer assignments were recently added for potential home bound volunteers.

Furthermore, AC RSVP incorporates county wide policies of inclusion, and English language learner best practices and outlines best practices in the memorandums of understanding with partnering agencies. AC RSVP continues to explore ways to coach, train and support site stations and volunteers to increase their best practices working with diverse populations. Bilingual AC RSVP volunteers are able to engage in and share their abilities to improve services to their communities through educating stations and volunteers about cultural best practices. The AC RSVP project director and staff attend annual ethnic and diversity training.

Given the large number of veterans living in Anoka County, AC RSVP implemented new practices to identify veteran volunteers and is in contact with the Anoka County Veterans Department, local VFW's and auxiliary groups to discuss ways to better serve military veterans and their families.

AC RSVP volunteers display diversity through age groups, socio-economic status, and education. AC RSVP volunteers are very diverse in their age groups: 19% are between 55-65, 34% are between 66-74, 35% are between 75-84, and 12% are 85 or older. This data indicates that many seniors are finding substantive volunteer roles within Anoka County.

## Narratives

Volunteers also display socio-economic diversity in the wide range of housing options they reside such as subsidized senior housing settings, market rate apartments, mobile homes, senior housing with services, older single family homes, new suburban townhomes or cooperatives, shared-living with related generations, and upscale single-family homes.

In Anoka County, 93% of the population age 25+ has a high school diploma, which is higher than the state average of 91%. 26% of the population age 25+ has a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 32% State wide. AC RSVP is capturing highly educated and skilled volunteers, which benefit stations sites and the community.

This data indicates that while AC RSVP may not be ethnically diverse, the community is rich in other forms of diversity (age, socio-economic status, education levels). AC RSVP actively seeks out new advisory council members to ensure a diverse mix is included.

AC RSVP has a great history of recognizing and retaining volunteers. RSVP volunteers are recognized for the difference their efforts make in the community throughout the year in a variety of ways. For instance, AC RSVP provides mileage reimbursement, annual recognition events, tickets to special local events, personal thank-you notes, impact stories, social events, ongoing educational trainings, and leadership opportunities. Anoka County has historically supported volunteer initiatives by providing mileage reimbursement at a rate which exceeds the Federal reimbursement rate and offering free admission to special local events. In 2012, AC RSVP sponsored its first bi-annual volunteer networking event in which each RSVP station was represented, allowing volunteers to learn about a wide range of volunteer opportunities. AC RSVP is exploring innovative recognition options such as: offering scholarships for volunteers to attend community education events (e.g. stations will nominate volunteer leaders to attend the Compassion Action Network Fall forum) and highlighting station impact stories in the quarterly newsletter to demonstrate volunteer impacts.

AC RSVP's infrastructure supports volunteer retention in a variety of ways such as developing meaningful volunteer opportunities that meet a need, adhering to sound volunteer management practices and garnering volunteer input and feedback via interviews and surveys. When concerns arise, staff work with stations and volunteers to resolve them as quickly as possible. AC RSVP seeks feedback from site station coordinators and the advisory council to provide adequate support and

## Narratives

technical assistance and to incorporate innovative ways to recognize and retain volunteers. The goal is to ensure that volunteers are not only matched with meaningful opportunities at station sites that engage their talents, skills, and preferences; but also allow continual growth and development while improving their community. The AC RSVP 2013 volunteer survey (with a 39% response rate) indicated: the average length of volunteer service is 9.3 years, with the longest being 30 years. AC RSVP's high volunteer retention rate indicates meaningful volunteer opportunities are provided.

### Program Management

The project director monitors RSVP stations and volunteer assignments for compliance with federal quality assurance standards. The AC RSVP project director visits stations annually and on-going with new site station coordinator staff to discuss program regulations and how they will be followed. Volunteer job descriptions are reviewed and updated on-going to effectively recruit volunteers as well as ensuring activities fall within program guidelines. Program staff remain current on CNCS regulations by participating in the knowledge network, ncsstalk, state compliance visits and regularly reviewing the compliance requirements to ensure AC RSVP and its volunteer stations are following program guidelines. The compliance visit in 2011 provided insights and resulted in a few minor programmatic changes. The project director regularly meets with the advisory board to update ever evolving policies, procedures, handbooks, and station site guidelines.

AC RSVP works with stations to ensure they understand program changes and that volunteer positions align with the new performance measures and CNCS focus criteria, while implementing identified surveys and required measurement tools for data collection. AC RSVP is considering creating volunteer opportunities to assist station site coordinators with data collection. AC RSVP annually meets with station site coordinators to review volunteer job descriptions and volunteer management procedures as well as checking activities reported on quarterly timesheets. One to one coaching is provided to site station coordinators if prohibited volunteer activities are identified. AC RSVP follows CNCS RSVP compliance manuals, eCFR, and has developed additional procedures, and policies for volunteer station sites, volunteers and staff within the program. The AC RSVP handbook is an on-going document that continues to be revised as needed.

AC RSVP's collaborations with various public, non-profit, and private entities enables staff to assess, evaluate, and meet needs specific to Anoka County. When assessing needs and developing strategic plans, AC RSVP draws from its participation in the following groups: Anoka County Social Services

## Narratives

and Mental Health Department [ACSS and MH], Senior Services workgroup, Anoka County Volunteer Alliance [ACVA], Compassion Action Network [CAN], and the AC RSVP advisory council. AC RSVP will evaluate partnerships based on stations' alignment with one or more of the priority focus of healthy futures, economic opportunities, capacity building, and community priorities as well as considering their ability to engage veterans in volunteer service and serve veterans and military families. An asset based approach which considers the resources needed for particular projects such as: (space, technology, and volunteer skill sets, experience in meeting said need) will also be applied. AC RSVP as the incumbent organization, has many community initiatives and will therefore seek to minimize volunteer disruption to current volunteers as much as possible while aligning with the new focus areas by implementing three main strategies. AC RSVP's primary goal is to use extreme sensitivity and disrupt the minimal number of volunteers as possible while moving towards the new performance measures. AC RSVP expects that with potentially shifting stations to capacity building or potentially graduating stations and shifting volunteers the proposed number of volunteers would be approximately 340 versus the current station roster of 418. First, AC RSVP proposes shifting five community priority stations into capacity building, where lead volunteers will recruit, manage volunteers and their activities. Secondly, AC RSVP proposes to invite current volunteers within those stations to consider volunteer opportunities within the focus areas. Lastly, AC RSVP may propose graduating stations (if necessary).

Although AC RSVP is in progress of shifting the program to align with the new focus areas of the grant, AC RSVP demonstrates a long track record in partnering with CNCS since 1973, and has established sound volunteer recruitment strategies, volunteer management practices, policies and procedures with volunteer stations and site coordinators. AC RSVP's unique position within Anoka County and collaborations with site station coordinators, the advisory board, CAN, ACVA and the senior service work group identified community needs in the areas of healthy futures and economic opportunity volunteer assignments such as: (respite care, emergency food pantry assistance, meal delivery, and access to care, housing, employment, and financial literacy).

Currently 31% of AC RSVP volunteers serve activities that provide independent living initiatives, increased social supports, increased food security and access to care. One respite site implementing new performance measures, reported 100% of caregivers reported increased social supports. 10% of AC RSVP volunteers serve activities that increase economic opportunities through financial literacy

## Narratives

services/vita tax assistance, job placement, and transitions into safe affordable housing. These percentages are projected to increase with the transition to the new requirements. Many economic opportunity sites are in process of implementing new performance measurement criteria. The AC RSVP project director has implemented new site station surveys to determine the amount of current data captured, and ways to decrease burdens to volunteer site coordinators by increasing data requirements. Again, although AC RSVP has not fully implemented the new performance measurements AC RSVP has good working relationships with volunteer site coordinators and is well established within the community to implement new processes and procedures to meet the new criteria.

During its 40 year existence, AC RSVP has developed stable practices which ensure project compliance. Also, AC RSVP has a reputation for developing good working partnerships within the local community. The AC RSVP Advisory Council Members adheres to 45 CFR (code of federal regulations) §2553.24. AC RSVP's advisory board consists of 7 RSVP volunteers and station staff committed to the mission and delivery of RSVP resources to impact identified community needs. Members are knowledgeable about human and social needs of the community, currently have volunteer experience and an understanding of best practices, and a desire to assist the RSVP project director plan for program impacts. Potential members are from various geographic areas of the county and for their abilities to convey relevant resource and community information, generate marketing and recognition ideas, promote membership, and review program progress. Term limits are 3 years and members are limited to 2 consecutive terms. A former member, if nominated, may return after one year of non-service. To help assess critical community needs AC RSVP draws on individuals and groups who attend strategic planning meetings, participate in government/legislative briefings, are involved with local needs analysis surveys and actively participate in relevant networks. The AC RSVP project director works with the advisory board to establish and develop new processes to adhere to new guidelines.

AC RSVP has established policies, MOU's, procedures and best practices that are ever evolving to grow and change with new programmatic guidelines. AC RSVP adheres to volunteer station 45 CFR regulations §2553.23 regarding Memorandum of Understanding policies [MOU's]. Prior to placing volunteers at volunteer site stations, a current MOU must be in place, as well as a written volunteer assignment description. The project director records MOU due dates within Volunteer Reporter. AC

## **Narratives**

RSVP project director reviews volunteer assignments with site station coordinators on-going as part of the volunteer recruitment process. AC RSVP is in process of working with station coordinators develop standard outcome measurement tools with site stations can implement to meet CNCS approved data guidelines and be in compliance with federal regulations. AC RSVP welcomes compliance feedback in order to strengthen the program. RSVP's most recent compliance visit and feedback gave us an opportunity to make minor programmatic changes that strengthened the MOU and time reporting forms.

Again, AC RSVP is an inclusive program regardless of race; color; national origin; including limited English proficiency; sex; age; political affiliation; sexual orientation; religion; or on the basis of disability, if the volunteer is a qualified individual with a disability.

AC RSVP ensures that all volunteers are eligible to serve in RSVP referenced in 45 CFR §2553.41. AC RSVP ensures that volunteers meet these requirements through the volunteer screening, application and entry into volunteer reporter database. If a volunteer does not meet the requirements, AC RSVP refers them to other volunteer agencies and opportunities within Anoka County such as Hands-On Twin Cities, or United Way.

### **Organizational Capability**

Plans 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 reliable resources.

With Anoka County as its sponsor since 1973, AC RSVP benefits from the stability and experience of an organization that has served the northern metropolitan area for over 100 years. The County structure provides administrative, technical, fiscal, monetary and community support to ensure RSVP's ability to meet community needs at a local level. RSVP is positioned in the Social Services area of the Human Services Department, giving it strong connections to both governmental and community programs that focus on healthy futures primary focus area.

Due to AC RSVP positions being paid through Federal and County funds, staff are not allowed to fundraise or contact legislation regarding funding issues. However, the County Board has

## Narratives

demonstrated its' continued commitment to AC RSVP by providing stable funding resources and has done so for 40 years.

The AC fiscal department provides financial oversight that ensures compliance with the RSVP program through a financial database, RSVP specific accounting codes, and a database to enter volunteer mileage reimbursements. These sound fiscal practices provide history and documentation of program compliance. Anoka County participates in audits (such as A-133) in accordance with the OMB circulars, and reports no findings.

The AC RSVP project director devotes 100% of her time to RSVP, receiving relevant information that ensures program accountability such as: the knowledge network, required CNCS training, the code of federal regulations, compliance monitoring documents, and on-going contacts with the State Program Specialist, as well as fiscal and supervisory oversight within Anoka County social services. The AC project director monitors program success through grant progress and meets with site station coordinators regularly to discuss requirements and how they will be met. The AC RSVP project director uses program self-assessment tools, volunteer station survey, volunteer surveys, advisory board and direct feedback to determine program success and indicators for program improvements.

Demonstrates clearly defined paid staff positions, including identification of current staff assigned to the project and how these positions, and how these positions will ensure the accomplishment of program objectives. These are the primary key staff positions that provide oversight, program management, and support. More detailed staff job descriptions are attached for further information.

Gayle Alexander is the Supervisor of the Community Resources and Volunteer Unit and has supervised AC RSVP for 7 years. She assumes responsibility for grant management and staffing oversight for 4 programs as well as several time limited projects. She has 14+ years experience in volunteer management, 10 years experience managing federal and state grants, and 16 years experience working with adults who are 55+ years of age. She works closely with the RSVP Program Coordinator (Anoka County's title for the RSVP Director position) to ensure that CNCS program requirements are met in the most efficient manner possible.

Tricia Lehti has served as the RSVP Program Coordinator for 1 year. Prior to this position, Tricia

## Narratives

worked part-time as the RSVP Program Assistant for 1 year. Tricia has been an Anoka County employee for 9 years. She has a Masters degree in Organizational Leadership and Management, and certification from MN Association of Volunteer Administrators in Volunteer Management. She has participated in CNCS virtual conferences, conference calls, MAVVA leadership series, CNCS sponsored trainings and webinars to familiarize herself with federal program regulations as well as attended Fall and Spring MN Senior Corp meetings where she connects with colleagues to discuss statewide RSVP plans. Tricia devotes 100% of her time to AC RSVP. The AC project director and supervisor will continue to monitor program indicators of success through surveys, assessments, and work plan progress to determine strengths and areas that need improvement.

For the past year, Lynda Keenan has served as the part-time RSVP Program Assistant. Lynda received her degree in business management from St. Thomas and has been an Anoka County employee for 6 years.

The AC Fiscal Services Department is located on-site, with specific accounting staff assigned to AC RSVP financial management duties. All funds are recorded and managed by accounting codes within the RSVP budget. The Anoka County Fiscal Services Department oversees RSVP's accounting, reporting tasks and budget. The AC Fiscal Services Department manages all accounting and reporting tasks related to the RSVP program, using a double entry, modified accrual basis of accounting. Revenues are recorded when they are received and expenses are recorded when they result in liabilities for benefits received. An up-to-date chart of accounts is maintained and grant funds are accounted for in separate funds identified within the accounting system. Monthly financial statements are prepared in sufficient detail to disclose significant variations in any category of revenue and expenses. Accounting functions are segregated so no one employee has sole control over cash receipts, disbursements, and reconciliation of bank accounts. Quarterly financial reports are provided to AC RSVP staff and programming adjustments are made accordingly. Semi-annual and year-end reports are reviewed by management as well as program staff. AC RSVP program has its' own accounting code that is identified in every budget expenditure within the program, and tracking to identify different funding streams (Federal, local, state). No in-kind resources are included in the AC RSVP budget. Anoka County also has policies and forms regarding purchasing items within the RSVP budget and must have supervisory approval. Timesheet entry and mileage reimbursements also reflect their assigned budget code. Timesheets are entered quarterly with multiple procedures that

## Narratives

allow for a checks and balance system to ensure that timesheet mileage is entered accurately. RSVP volunteers must complete and sign their timesheets, which station site coordinators are required to verify and sign. Once the AC project director receives the timesheets, the hours and mileage calculations are verified prior to entry in volunteer reporter. The AC RSVP project director initials timesheets in which the RSVP assistant double checks calculations, enters into the fiscal database, which is then approved by AC RSVP's program supervisor. Then, the fiscal department cuts checks. The RSVP project director submits a new "vendor request" form for every new volunteer requesting mileage reimbursement, which is attached to the RSVP budget code to ensure accuracy. AC RSVP follows fiscal policies to assign new volunteers with vendor identification numbers in the fiscal system. Original copies of the timesheets are then given to fiscal to keep for compliance purposes. Anoka County undergoes an audit annually and has not received any findings in the audit report. Monitoring visits by CNCS have also found proper accounting systems to be in operation. AC RSVP adheres to the policies and procedures set forth by the Human Resources department. The AC RSVP supervisor conducts annual employee performance reviews of RSVP staff and these are processed by two additional levels of management. Similarly, AC RSVP establishes policies and practices specific to volunteers. Conflicts among staff or volunteers are handled via a formal grievance procedure. Budgets include adequate space, equipment, supplies and support to effectively operate the program.

Kim Powell is AC RSVP's fiscal accounting representative and she has worked in the accounting field for 34 years. Kim has been with Anoka County Fiscal Department for 8 years, which she has worked with the RSVP program since that time and has many years of experience managing federal grant funds. Anoka County has successfully delivered services and managed a complex mix of federal, state and local funding, including the federal CNCS grant since 1973.

Cost effectiveness/Budget Adequacy:

The AC RSVP proposed budget accounts for reimbursable expenses related to volunteer staffing, supports on-going volunteer recruitment and recognition and adequately meets the required non-federal matching funds amount of 30%.

Volunteer related expenses such as reimbursement of transportation and insurance are figured based on past expenses incurred by a comparable number of volunteers and anticipated rate increases.

## Narratives

Staffing levels necessary to accommodate proposed volunteer recruitment and recognition activities are accounted for appropriately.

Expenses associated with direct volunteer recruitment and recognition efforts are based on similar past expenses for the proposed volunteer staffing level.

As evidenced in the application budget, AC RSVP has the ability to secure sufficient and sustainable resources to meet the required non-federal funds. Anoka County is prepared to contribute financial support in the amount of \$331,416.00 towards the sustainability of the RSVP program for the duration of the 3 year grant cycle.

### **Other**

NA

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

NA