

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The Central Vermont Council on Aging wishes to continue to sponsor the RSVP for Central Vermont and Northeast Kingdom. We have been a sponsor of Senior Corps programs since 1988. The mission of CVCOA is to support elders and family caregivers in leading independent, meaningful and dignified lives in their homes and communities. We propose to have 430 in the project. RSVP volunteers will serve in the primary focus area of healthy futures. The outcomes of their involvement will show that the individuals they serve will be more socially connected, and less socially isolated.

RSVP volunteers will serve as home delivered meals drivers, volunteer medical transporters, Tele-care and companion volunteers, firewood program volunteers, and local food providers.

We anticipate that that 50-65% of the volunteers will be placed in outcomes programs in the other Corporation for National and Community Service focus areas. The CNCS federal investment of \$142,334 will be supplemented by \$167,931 in non-federal resources.

## Strengthening Communities

Describe the community you serve. Provide persuasive evidence that community needs identified in the Primary Focus Area exist in the geographical service area and is currently unmet and demonstrate the Community needs identified in the Primary Focus serve -- including key economic demographic, demographic, and geographic features.

Volunteers for RSVP for Central Vermont and the Northeast Kingdom will serve five and half counties. The counties are: Washington, Lamoille, Caledonia, Orleans, Essex and parts of Orange. The services they will provide will be in the Primary Focus Area of Healthy Futures.

According to the latest census figures, the total population of the area is 162,279. This represents 26% of the population in the State of Vermont. The area that the program covers is expansive. It is 3,502 square miles, and represents 38% of the territory in Vermont. The territory is large and rural.

Using data from the Vermont Center for Rural Studies and the 2010 United States Census, the area has 22,198 adults that are 65 and over. Vermont has been designated as the second oldest state in the union. The area this project covers represents 30% of the Vermont population that is 65 and older.

According to the Vermont State Plan on Aging, this age group is projected to get even larger by 2025.

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The federal Older Americans Act identifies that states like Vermont who are designated as rural present additional barriers to those who need services that will be addressed in our Healthy Futures Primary Focus Area. Older adults in rural areas are more likely to have less income than those in metropolitan areas, are less educated, rely more on Social Security for their income and have a greater demand for medical, social and financial assistance. Older adults in rural areas are more likely to own their homes but it is generally in poorer condition often needing insulation, having poor plumbing, electricity and heating systems. Finally the OAA indicates that older adults in rural settings have a greater risk of being isolated.

The Cornell Institute for Translational Research on Aging (CITRA) has published an extensive review of studies done around the subject of social support, social isolation and social integration. Their conclusion is that Social Isolation defined as the lack of contact and interaction with people...leading to feelings of loneliness, lack of companionship or close and genuine communication with others. Social Integration, the opposite of social isolation, has been found to be beneficial to health across adulthood into old age. Social Integration is consistently associated with good health and well-being while social isolation is associated with distress and poor health. In addition they determined that interventions in the form of personal contacts either in group situations that included discussion, physical activities and exercise, education, skills training, telephone reassurance, etc. were effective in "reducing social isolation, thereby improving health" and promoting successful aging in place. The key is the perception of social support that the elder feels is being provided, either on a one to one basis or in a group setting.

Several other studies published on the National Institute of Health website further confirm this. In addition, they conclude that perceived isolation is a strong indicator of physical and mental health among elders. They have concluded that health risks associated with lack of perceived social ties can be compared in magnitude to the well-known dangers of smoking cigarettes and obesity....individuals with lack of social connectedness or feelings of loneliness suffer higher rates of morbidity and mortality as well as infection, depression, and cognitive decline. Health risks posted by social isolation may be particularly severe for older adults as they are likely to face stressful life course transitions, health problems and disabilities....social disconnectedness and perceived isolation pose unique risks for physical and mental health within this age group. They conclude that socially connected individuals who receive support in either a group or one on one format have more active coping strategies,

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greater self-esteem and sense of control thus diminishing poor outcomes physically and mentally.

A final study supporting the value of companionship interventions was reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA). This study examined the relationship between social isolation and functional decline and death in adults over 60 years of age. The study of 1604 participants using the Health and Retirement Study concluded that among participants who were older than 60 years, loneliness (social isolation) was a predictor of functional decline and death.

There are many indicators in our geographic and demographic area that support the OAA information, the above studies and further support why this project will focus on the Healthy Futures Primary Focus area.

Nine percent of Vermonters, using the 2010 Federal census and VCRS data, were designated as living in poverty. The area has over 11% or more than two percentage points over the state's average of the population, designated as living in poverty. The area also exceeds the state average in many other categories. Eleven percent of Vermont's population has a less than 9th grade education, or has no diploma. The average in this RSVP area is over 13%.

The Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan developed by the VT Agency of Transportation states that local service providers must continue, through their support services to ensure that elders can age in place successfully, and providing transportation to essential services such as medical appointments, food shopping, etc., is a crucial link in the chain of services necessary. They also state that elders require safe, reliable and affordable transportation to basic services and amenities a key to enhancing perceived social support/ties. This report further states that 64% of seniors over the age of 65 consider lack of transportation an obstacle to accessing the essential services they need to age in place, including medical appointments. Public transportation is nonexistent for all intents and purposes in this largely rural area, and taxi service costs are so high that elders simply elect to skip appointments if they cannot find free transportation. They also state that transportation services can be difficult to provide efficiently to these populations due to cost, differences in regional needs, etc. The challenge then is to provide cost effective travel options that are supportive of this population volunteers can and must help by offering their time and service as volunteer drivers can fill this need in a cost effective way that will enhance the perceived social support/ties for older adults in the

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communities we serve.

In Citizens Service Act of 2002, the Federal government identified the need for delivery/provision of meals to the elderly and terminally ill as a priority for volunteerism. Within the State of Vermont, the Department of Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) research has determined that Vermont's elderly suffer from poor nutrition. They have declared one of their priority outcomes to be improved is adequate and appropriate nutrition. They recommend meal provision through home delivered meal programs as an example of a positive intervention. According to a report from Chairman Bernard Sanders (Senator, Vermont) from the Subcommittee on Primary Health and Aging, a US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, over 90% of seniors receiving home delivered meals state the program allows them to remain in their homes, aging in place. Additionally, they conclude that for older Americans, hunger and malnutrition can completely undo any efforts to improve quality of life through non-medical interventions like social integration.

The varied mix of economies means that the area this project covers has a wide range of economic indicators that lead Vermont in the highs and lows. Using the 2010 data from the Center for Rural Studies, the average annual wage for this area was \$32,660. The range started at \$39,492 in Washington County and went to \$29,455 in Essex County, the poorest county in Vermont. The area average wage during this time is 15% below the Vermont average.

Based on the data and studies, it is clear that interventions to alleviate perceived social isolation can be an effective method of promoting successful aging in place. Furthermore, the intervention strategies provided by the RSVP volunteers in this project will show that individuals will be more socially connected and help reduce isolation

While the area is considered largely rural, and leads in many poverty statistics, this project is home to Vermont's capital, Montpelier, and has a number of areas that, by Vermont standards and Center for Rural Studies standards, are highly populated centers. These include: Barre, St. Johnsbury, Lyndonville, Morrisville, Waterbury, Newport and, of course, Montpelier, the capital.

The economy in this area is very mixed and varied. We are the hotbed of government and nonprofits because of Montpelier. Barre is known as the granite capitol of the world and base to the state's largest

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food distribution center, the Vermont Food Bank. Montpelier is home to the state's largest insurance company, National Life, and Waterbury is the corporate home of Green Mountain Coffee Roasters.

Tourism ranks high as an employer in this area because it is home to the largest ski area in the East, Stowe and Mt. Mansfield, but not far behind are the ski areas in the Waitsfield area, and the fastest growing ski area that is on the process of adding 900 jobs, Jay Peak.

Small business, as is in much of Vermont, is a major employer and continues to play a prominent role in this area's economy. The agriculture sector has changed drastically in this area. There is tremendous growth in small produce and animal farms. The region is home to many mega farms, meaning that larger farms have gobbled up smaller farms to make one large agri-business. These are important trends because our plan under Healthy Futures addresses increased accessibility to locally produced food for the older population.

The area is also home to the following colleges: Norwich University, the oldest military school in the nation, Union Institute, Johnson State College, Lyndon State College and Vermont Technical Center:

It is important to look at our area in a holistic way because the project is always on the lookout for partners who will support our Healthy Futures initiatives.

Describe your plans and infrastructure to manage RSVP volunteers and their stations as highly effective means to addressing the identified community need in the Healthy Futures Primary Focus Area.

The Central Vermont Council on Aging took on the sponsorship of RSVP for Central Vermont and Northeast Kingdom in 1988. They have been involved in the Corporation for National and Community Service Programming for Impact principles and other initiatives since its inception, 15+ years ago. Our operating principles fall squarely in line with the new Performance Measures established by CNCS. All of our newly developed work plans are in complete accordance with CNCS National Performance Measure outputs and outcomes. We utilize RSVP Reporter to manage our volunteer and station data, which includes outcome and output data. The software program has been revised and updated to include all the elements of the new National Performance Measure components,

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and RSVP staff has done the tutorial in preparation for the new data collection and tracking. We also utilize Microsoft Excel as a tool for data management. Research data used for developing work plan outcomes and outputs are kept on file and updated and reviewed regularly. We can and do access fairly quickly any data we need through a variety of online research engines and links.

In our 25 years of operation, RSVP has established ongoing professional, collaborative relationships with our volunteer stations and or other community partners. That includes open and frequent communication in person, e-mail, phone and written contacts by RSVP staff members. Our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed at regular 3-year intervals by both RSVP and the Volunteer Station, reflects the partner arrangement with responsibilities outlined that include the agreement on the part of the volunteer station to gather and share any relevant outcome data with RSVP, and to work collaboratively to meet our output and outcome measurement goals. Over the past 2 years, we have worked closely with our stations preparing them for the changes in our operation and focus areas, as designated in the RSVP Competition Notice of Funds Available.

Not all of them have embraced changes. That is not a total surprise because our role in the community will change. On the other hand we have spent 25 years preparing them to be better volunteer managers by hosting volunteer management training sessions and sharing our expertise with them over the years. Many have embrace having volunteer managers as part of a successful management team. Those that have embraced those practices no longer need us in the traditional role and the partners who have embraced the change understand that we can focus our efforts in a more concentrated area and now that there will be a better outcomes and better stories in the end. While we have not yet attained all the agreements we need to assist with the collection of data necessary to meet all requirements, we have shared the new instrument (the CNCS Senior Corps Independent Living Performance Measure Survey) with our Primary Focus area (Healthy Futures, Aging in Place) sites to familiarize them with it and to begin the process of buy in. One example of this is that we have held a meeting with the statewide home delivered meals managers. We have exchanged our survey requirements and we have come to an agreement on a tool that will meet the needs of both partners without having to survey the clients more than once. This probably could not have happened without our many years of success in local collaborative partnerships. We hope to do that with our other Primary Focus Area partners. We have shared all the webinar resources provided by CNCS and will continue provide solid training in the areas of output and outcome measurement, collection and

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management. Ongoing training for staff and stations will be provided to ensure success in this area of grant management.

Describe the service activities in the Primary Focus Area that lead to National Performance Measure outputs or outcomes.

Based on the studies and data examined, it is clear that interventions to alleviate perceived social isolation can be an effective method of promoting successful aging in place. The Central Vermont Council on Aging is mandated to conduct needs assessments that helps the State of Vermont develop a state plan on aging. Volunteerism is currently one of the strategies to help individuals age in place. Volunteers can, and should, play a crucial role in assisting the organizations which are charged with achieving these goals, and RSVP has and can continue to be a crucial link in the chain of senior service providers.

RSVP proposes to utilize what we are calling SPICE (Seniors Promoting Independence and Companionship for Elders), volunteers to provide services and implement the interventions reviewed above to enhance perceived social support/ties for older adults in the communities we serve. RSVP of Central Vermont and the Northeast Kingdom will involve 258 SPICE (Senior Promoting Independence and Companionship for Elders) volunteers who will provide transportation, meal delivery, wood heating assistance, food assistance and companionship services to no less than 2000 qualifying older adults, supporting them with services that will allow them to age in place, and to live dependently. That unduplicated volunteer total (248) in the Healthy Futures Focus Area represents 58%, or well above the minimum 25% of our total number of unduplicated volunteers required in the grant provisions. The breakdown we propose is as follows:

One hundred and eight SPICE volunteers will provide home bound individuals with healthy nutritious meals.

Thirty SPICE volunteers will provide transportation to those needing to go to the doctors, pick up medicine and or do essential shopping.

Thirty-Nine SPICE volunteers will provide ongoing contact through our Tele-care Program

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Forty SPICE volunteers will be involved in the Wood Warms program that provides firewood to the elderly who fall between the cracks for assistance.

Nineteen SPICE volunteers will involve individuals in physical activity programs that promote companionship

Thirty SPICE volunteers will provide food to area food shelves, and meal sites to assure that locally grown food is part of the plan to keep individuals socially connected.

Among the key components/outcomes of this service will be provision of social support services, isolation prevention, increased perceived social support/ties, successful aging in place and wellness checks. Services will be provided on a regular ongoing basis. The tool to be used to measure the outcome will be the CNCS Senior Corps Independent Living Performance Measures Survey.

Planned current or significant activities in service to veterans and military families.

This project has participated in the veterans and military families' initiative in the last two years. The Director and one Coordinator participated in a training provide by Operation Military Kids (OMK) One Coordinator has been a participant on a Veteran's Committee in his area. One Coordinator has had volunteers who are veterans, build ramps, redo a kitchen and provide wood for heating to identified veterans in his area. Some of the RSVP members were veterans themselves. Those veterans led training and were the focus of the Vermont Commission, now known as SerVermont, annual service training two years ago. The training has taught us a couple of things. Our project area is not home to many recent veterans, and those that are in the area are difficult to identify and rarely self-identify. We do know that many of the returning veterans have an ethic of service that leads them to want to be volunteers. Having said that, we are making every effort to identify those who are veterans who will be served in our Primary Focus Area of Healthy Futures. We will make every effort to encourage age eligible RSVP volunteers to help in the Primary Focus Area. We know that many of our partners in that effort also want to make sure that veterans are a primary target for services as well as veterans.

## **Recruitment and Development**

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Describe your plan and infrastructure to create high quality volunteer assignments with opportunities such as sharing their experiences, abilities, and skills to improve communities and themselves through service in their communities. Describe your plan and infrastructure to ensure RSVP volunteers receive the training needed to be effective in their assignments. Describe your plan and infrastructure to recruit a volunteer pool reflective of the demographics of the geographic communities served.

The Central Vermont Council on Aging has been a leader in aging services since the early 70s. They are currently part of a five member Area Agency on Aging network that serves the needs of older citizens living in Vermont. They have managed an RSVP project since 1988, the Vermont Senior Companion Program since 1999 and managed an AmeriCorps program called Neighbor to Neighbor program since 1993. The portfolio of Corporation and National and Community programs, the length of time that this organization has been a sponsor and the experience of program staff provide an excellent foundation to ensure that volunteers have a high quality experience. Clearly the project has managed many Corporation initiatives over the years. CVCOA is prepared to ensure that volunteers will have a thorough knowledge and comfort level with their service placement under our Primary Focus Area of Healthy Futures. We have always prepared our partners and volunteers to understand the role of RSVP locally, statewide and nationally from the moment the contact with a potential volunteer begins, up to and including their placement and beyond. Our experienced staff, all of whom have 7 or more years in their current positions, and one who has over 25 years of experience, are well versed in the needs of our communities and have prepared our partners, the volunteers and stations, to transition to the focus areas and performance measures that determine participation as a volunteer in this project. We anticipate a continued effort to provide the quality of experience that this organization has fostered since 1988. It just will be different.

We have since 1988 ensured that each individual goes through a thorough intake process. They have always been interviewed, had their skills assessed, been given advice, guidance and assistance in exploring their service options to best suit their needs, talents, and experience, to meet the needs, issues and problems in their community. This ensures a good fit, and promotes satisfaction both for the volunteer and the nonprofit organization they serve. When someone becomes a member it is made clear that their skills and talents become part of our skills bank that, when a need occurs that matches their skill set, they will get a call from RSVP. They can opt out for a variety of reasons, but, if a potential member does not buy into that philosophy, then we gently say 'no' to them as a member.

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The days of just signing people up were gone long ago.

The primary Focus Area of Healthy Futures fits perfectly with the demographic trends of our service area as outlined completely in the Strengthening Communities section of the narrative, and, as such, allows our staff to tap into the pool of volunteers we have access to, as well as utilize our proven recruitment strategies to ensure expanding those numbers in our focus areas. For years, this project has been viewed as 'The Place' where one can ask for volunteers to solve community problems

Supplemental insurance is provided for each volunteer through CIMA. A comprehensive Volunteer Handbook and other pertinent written materials are provided to assist in a complete volunteer orientation. The Volunteer Handbook thoroughly outlines RSVP's role in ensuring the volunteer's satisfaction and preparation and training for their placement. This is reviewed with each volunteer during the intake process and registration. All aspects of the volunteer's service experience are reviewed to ensure that the candidate understands his/her role. Each partner organization or station goes through a similar orientation and seals its' promises with a memorandum of understanding. Hopefully this results in situations where there are no surprises when the community service begins. Again, we do not see a change in our approach. It has been successful. In this new grant the outcomes and expectations will change.

Our staff has been the foundation on which we build our volunteer corps for many years. In some respects they are known as the change agents who help solve problems by involving volunteers. The four Volunteer Coordinators in the counties we serve utilize many innovative methods of recruitment. Every staff member has participated in multiple trainings and workshops centered on volunteer management skills such as recruitment, retention and recognition. Staff, as part of their portfolios of services, bring and share tools to help organizations help themselves to become better in the volunteer management business. It can be as simple as how to use a timesheet, sharing our handbook, and 101 Ways to Recognize Volunteer pamphlet, to as complicated as how to dismiss a volunteer.

They, in fact, along with the RSVP Director, have offered volunteer management workshop series to area nonprofit organizations in our communities. For years we sponsored a volunteer coordinator's symposium that dealt with volunteer management issues. We actually charged participants to cover the cost of the training. That role has been taken over by two local universities. We continue to

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sponsor a volunteer manager's tip column in our newsletter, and we are always available to provide consultation such as the recent day-long training to the Vermont Library staff.

The following is a list of the primary strategies we use for recruitment and public awareness:

1. PSA's on the radio, public access TV, and in print.
2. RSVP program brochure, and flyer distribution is done in locations throughout our region,
3. Our website: [www.volunteervt.com](http://www.volunteervt.com)
4. Our Facebook page:
5. Newspaper articles, magazine articles and ads.
6. Our own newsletter produced 2 times per year, and distributed to over 1500 partners.
7. Inclusion in other agency and community newsletters, such as AAAs, school flyers and newsletters.
8. RSVP display boards are utilized at presentations and information fairs which we attend throughout the year.
9. Opportunities listed on Volunteer Match, the search engine for potential volunteers
10. Our Sponsor, Central Vermont Council on Aging webpage, annual report, and other publications.
11. Staff and/or Director Presentations to area service, civic and social groups.
12. Listed in the United 211 system.
13. Listed with the Council on Aging's Senior Helpline.
14. Our website and Facebook links and contact information are shared on documents and newsletters of our Volunteer Stations and community partners, as well as on their websites, further widening the circle of education.

RSVP Coordinators are committed to making the perfect match between the placement, the volunteer, and the site. This individualized approach is the cornerstone of our recruitment and retention strategy. In the final analysis the staff provide for what many years has been the number one reason why people volunteer, they do the asking. These successful and proven methods of recruitment are used on an ongoing basis. All of these tools and strategies serve as recruitment tools and promote and educate the community about RSVP

Each staff member integrates themselves into local groups. It is important that they be seen, and learn the culture of our very mixed and varied project. All the staff serves on many community service

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boards. Those include, SerVermont, the Vermont Service Commission, Central Vermont TV, a local public access board, a local care home board, a local disaster preparedness board, board of civil authority, a local veteran's board, local planning board, local energy provider board and chambers of commerce. This list is only a small example of how involved they are in the community and does not include things like the local school board in years past. These efforts raise public awareness, and promote RSVP.

This RSVP project has had many and strong relationships in the area. It has existed for 39 years in Washington and Lamoille Counties, and 17 years in Caledonia, Essex, Orleans and Orange Counties. Over that time, the program has fostered many relationships with a variety of groups. The program has partnered with as many as 160 organizations. The introduction of our "Signature Programs" in the past 15 years has had a marked impact on our volunteer corps. RSVP is looked to now as an entity that can, and will, assist in areas where gaps in service exist and, most importantly, where that service can be delivered by highly qualified volunteers. That movement helped to further develop the concept that volunteers who are members of this project become part of a corps. Within this greater philosophy of corps, there are subgroups or corps that has developed as a result of our signature programs. For example: many of our projects work together on a similar mission to help solve a problem. They train together, go out in teams, and spread the knowledge. They share strategies, challenge each other with ideas and recruit their friends to come help. The Wood Warmers project builds a corps of volunteers who provide ongoing or episodic volunteering opportunity that brings in churches, students, businesses, and other community members. This project has become the kickoff event for the United Way of Lamoille Valley annual appeal. The ramp project has built a similar corps that has brought together project design people, with skilled craftsmen and others that.

Our newly funded Telecare program will build another corps of volunteers whose mission will help people maintain their independence in their own homes simply by allowing them to be more socially connected with a telephone call or by other technology. The beauty of these corps is watching people work together to reach a common goal. Again, we anticipate this experience will help make a smooth transition to the new requirements.

With the onset of impact programming, the number of partners has hovered around 100. The decrease in the number reflects the program's ability, and role of teaching partners on the importance

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of volunteer management, and the ability of organizations to build staff capacity to manage the important volunteer resource. Those relationships will enhance our ability to move into the Primary Focus areas and further reduce the number of partnerships that will result in more comprehensive outcomes.

The Vermont Senior Corps Association has a strong history of working well on statewide initiatives. In the past we have enclosed recruitment flyers in fuel assistance and commodities mailings. We have partnered on targeted recruitment postcards. This means that the mailing content and the list itself are carefully constructed to appeal to a specific demographic.

Of course, the hard work of our volunteers would be less valued if this project did not work at recognizing their efforts. Volunteer recognition took a drastic turn a few years ago when the Advisory Council was convinced to drop the five major events that were being held. The events were time consuming, labor intensive, and became known as the biggest party in town. Even when we charged outrageous guest fees, people would still come. This led to the events feeling very impersonal and not RSVP focused.

The major events were replaced with a recognition grant opportunity. RSVP affiliated stations are given the opportunity to apply for recognition funds to help recognize their volunteers during the fiscal year. The application encourages folks to be creative and encourages the use of funds to leverage dollars to provide a greater celebration of service at their sites. The applications are reviewed by an Advisory Council subcommittee, and it decides whether to grant a request. The requests have ranged from a low of a few dollars to a high of \$500. While the money is usually used to purchase food, the group has granted monies to purchase plaques, plant gardens, and recognition items. There was even a grant to purchase a button machine, with the Advisory Council making a provision that each button have RSVP on it, and that other organizations be allowed to borrow it.

The win-win for the project is that staff time in this area has been drastically reduced, allowing more time for programming. Recognition happens more often, and is more personal because it is with peers they have served with. The grant conditions require a public acknowledgement, so the RSVP name gets repeated many times and, for those who volunteer at more than one station, it means they get recognized more than once. In those cases we know that they will only be counted one time for

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reporting.

While this idea has replaced our events, our recognition does not stop there. Volunteers are given an RSVP pen, a pin, and a handbook upon being accepted. They receive a letter of welcome from the Director, with a membership card enclosed. That membership card also acts as a tip card, meaning there are amounts on the back that help people identify the appropriate tip when they are eating out.

Every volunteer receives an in-house designed birthday card personally signed by staff. This year's cards have been designed by former Coordinator and current artist Joy Huckinsnoos. Her designs and expertise were in in-kind gift to the program. In addition, every volunteer and station receives a copy of our newsletter that always highlights volunteer efforts. The newsletter is now on our website. Each Coordinator has been asked to submit at least one nominee for the Annual Governor's Service Awards and Governor's Healthy Aging Awards. We have continued the long standing practice of listing the name and the accomplishment of RSVP volunteers during National Volunteer Week. Those ads appear in the five major newspapers in the area. Most cover two full pages, and the best news is that they are free to RSVP because the newspaper sells advertising, some to our stations, to support the cost. We estimate the value of those ads to be in the \$10,000 range. Ads, as well, have been developed for the other special events, such as MLK Day, Senior Corp Week, Veterans Day, Establishment Date and, most recently, in Vermont Maturity Magazine. Staff is encouraged to send cards, again designed in house, when they learn of a special event, illness, or death. All staff is asked to submit volunteer needed ads to their area newspapers. They also do a variety of radio shows and some TV, and we have rolling RSVP ads on public access TV. Most recently, (2009). Vermont's Balladeer. John Gilmore, wrote a song honoring volunteers from this project.

The Advisory Council established the RSVP Award Program a few years ago. The awards are given to graduating high school seniors who have involved themselves in community service equal to or greater degree than that of an RSVP volunteer. There is an application process that begins with a mailing to area high school principals and guidance counselors. A committee of the Advisory Council reviews the award nominations and selects the winner based on a rubric they have developed. The awards are given out at year-end awards banquets, or at graduation. The money for the awards is raised by the sale of RSVP cookbooks, and by the generous support of the National Award winning

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children's author, Katherine Patterson. The award gives RSVP recognition, becomes institutionalized because it is announced in the yearbooks and local newspapers, allows for parents, potential boomers and grandparents to learn about RSVP and, most importantly continues to plant the seeds for future community service. The Advisory Council has established an Emeritus Program that allows RSVP members to continue to receive the newsletter and birthday cards if they can no longer volunteer because they are ill or caring for a spouse who is ill, have served ten years and or provided five hundred hours of service. This allows the volunteer to feel part of something and has led to an increase awareness of the organization when a volunteer passes.

Our website and our Volunteer Match recruitment continue to be a growing way for volunteers to enter the system. It is tool that is growing for those volunteers who are very computer and web savvy.

The reality in Vermont is that diversity based on race continues to be a challenge. Vermont has led the nation in many efforts, and one of those has been the fact that we are the whitest state in the Union. Census statistics support that notion. Four percent of the state population is Black/Hispanic/Asian/Hawaiian. Yet our service area drops to half that, or 2%. The area and our volunteers bring a rich ethnic mix which serves to educate the clients and organizations they serve. They share customs from generations of Italian, Irish, German, Swedish, and other ethnic backgrounds common in our region. We strive to promote diversity when opportunity presents itself.

We have played much larger roles in the last three years in promoting Martin Luther King Day. Our ramp project has had a major focus on those with disabilities, and we go out of our way to make sure that people of all skills and talents have an opportunity to serve their communities. Our involvement with the local colleges has allowed students to engage in service with local RSVP volunteers to help fight the stigma of aging, learning that getting old is not a bad thing, and that being young doesn't mean you don't care.

Our Wood Warms program will be a part of our Healthy Futures program. That program has been instrumental in having RSVP members who are veterans help other veterans. That project has volunteers cutting wood for individuals who do not meet fuel assistance guidelines but find themselves needing heating assistance during the cold Vermont winters. The project has become the major kick off for the Lamoille United Way, one of our funding partners, as well as a kick off and a major event

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for the National Day of Service and Martin Luther King Day.

### Program Management

Describe specific plans and strategies for overall management of the RSVP project that you propose.

Our approach to volunteer placement and management assignment is based on a variety of considerations. The Central Vermont Council on Aging has managed an RSVP project since 1988, but the program is over 40 years old. It has existed for over 40 years in Washington and Lamoille Counties, and 18 years in Caledonia, Essex, Orleans and Orange Counties. Over that time, the program has fostered many relationships with a variety of groups. The program has partnered with over 200 organizations during that time. . It has established community relationships and partnerships that have gained a level of respect. Some of those come with expectations such as you have helped us in the past with your social capital can we count on you? Many of our local funders, including towns, have a level of expectation that's not always aligned with the Federal priorities. When a project is over 40 years old, it is difficult to turn off the spigot on those that have been members for years. While those are challenges we have faced for a while we have developed a balance approach to providing volunteers to the communities we have served. We believe that that balance and experience will serve us well when we develop the Healthy Futures Focus Area. In addition, we believe that our mission as a sponsor is a perfect fit for the primary focus area.

Fortunately the onset of outcome-based programming 15 or so years ago began the process of change that created an expectation that at least 50% of our volunteers needed to be placed in areas of impact. This began the change from we can be everything to everyone to creating an entity that can, and will, assist in areas where gaps in service exist and, most importantly, where that service can be delivered by highly qualified volunteers. That movement helped to further develop the concept that volunteers who are members of this project become part of a corps. Within this greater philosophy of corps, there are subgroups or corps that has developed as a result of our signature programs.

Over the past 2 years, we have worked closely with our stations preparing them for the changes in our operation and focus areas, as designated in the RSVP Competition Notice of Funds Available.

Not all of them have embraced changes. That is not a total surprise because our role in the community will change. On the other hand we have spent 25 years preparing them to be better

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volunteer managers by hosting volunteer management training sessions and sharing our expertise with them over the years. Many have embraced having volunteer managers as part of a successful management team. Those that have embraced those practices no longer need us in the traditional role and the partners who have embraced the change understand that we can focus our efforts in a more concentrated area and now that there will be a better outcomes and better stories in the end. While we have not yet attained all the agreements we need to assist with the collection of data necessary to meet all requirements, we have shared the new instrument (the CNCS Senior Corps Independent Living Performance Measure Survey) with our Primary Focus area (Healthy Futures, Aging in Place) sites to familiarize them with it and to begin the process of by in. One example of this is that we have held a meeting with the statewide home delivered meals managers. We have exchanged our survey requirements and we have to agreement on a tool that will meet the needs of both partners without having to survey the clients more than once. This probably could not have happened without our many years of success in local collaborative partnerships. We hope to do that with our other Primary Focus Area partners. We have shared all the webinar resources provided by CNCS and will continue provide solid training in the areas of output and outcome measurement, collection and management. Ongoing training for staff and stations will be provided to ensure success in this area of grant management. Our summer issue of the newsletter has focused on the new requirements.

There are going to be three things that dictate our capacity to manage and recruit volunteer stations and volunteers outside the primary focus areas. The first will be expressed desire of the grant conditions to focus our time and efforts in areas that the Corporation for National and Community Service deems appropriate for the terms of the grant. The second will be to match those requirements with that of our non-federal resources that amount to over 50% of this project's fund raising. Lastly we will build on those years of partnerships to assure that we have the appropriate dance partners.

We believe our past track record shows that we have had a successful exit plan for stations even before it was a desired outcome. We have gone from feeding partners for a day to teaching them how to fish. That in itself is success. Once our remaining partners fully understand the expected changes we believe that we will achieve what we are proposing in this grant request. Again, our proven track record in being a good Corporation partner who embraces change will serve us well.

While graduating or reassigning volunteers may still encounter a few bumps we will argue that the

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past has in fact prepared us for the future. We are a program that has gone from 200 partner organizations and 1500 volunteers prior to impact programming to a program that had fewer than 500 volunteers in the last year serving at fewer than a hundred sites. We will stick with the past practice of being honest with our members and will continue to believe in our efforts to be able to provide the social capital needed when we build it. The staff, as stated previously, has experience in change, has managed it well and will rise to the desired outcomes. Having said that, we have paid very close attention to the demographics and the makeup of the area. The population is older, poorer and less educated than the rest of Vermont. Hence, our services and placements have been directed toward that area of need. (See the demographic explanation of our area.)

Describe your plan and infrastructure to assure that National Performance Measures of outcomes and outputs are measured and collected.

Before we address the future it is important to understand our approach to data collection in the past. First of all, the project has been diligent in refining the very basic assessment expectation of the Corporation for National Service, that is, time on task. We have worked with stations to ensure that RSVP members' time is tracked so we can accurately report how much time volunteers spend on a project. The reporting of hours ranges from a paper time sheet, self-reporting, or web reporting, to a combination of all the above.

Each signature program has developed a set of outcomes that aligns itself with the community need. We have had an assessment that goes out to each program that seeks to measure the outcomes of the project so that we can report that to CNCS. In addition, we maintain data sets so we can report to the large variety of funders who support the project. Those include our United Way funders, our State and Town funders, and our special grants.

Describe how you will manage information and data to demonstrate the concrete impact of the project and its volunteers.

We have a positive relationship with the nation's largest data base vendor, RSVP Reporter, for a number of years. RSVP Reporter has enabled us to not only save time, but to report accurately the level of involvement of the volunteers in the project. Our website tracks the number of people who

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inquire about our services and want to serve their community.

While we have not yet attained all the agreements we need to assist with the collection of data necessary to meet all requirements, we have shared the new instrument (the CNCS Senior Corps Independent Living Performance Measure Survey) with our Primary Focus area (Healthy Futures, Aging in Place) sites to familiarize them with it and to begin the process of by in. One example of this is that we have held a meeting with the statewide home delivered meals managers. We have exchanged our survey requirements and we have come to an agreement on a tool that will meet the needs of both partners without having to survey the clients more than once. This probably could not have happened without our many years of success in local collaborative partnerships. We hope to do that with our other Primary Focus Area partners. We have shared all the webinar resources provided by CNCS and will continue provide solid training in the areas of output and outcome measurement, collection and management. Ongoing training for staff and stations will be provided to ensure success in this area of grant management.

Describe your plan and infrastructure to manage project resources, both financial and in-kind, to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of resources.

The Project Director, J. Guy Isabelle, has been given the authority to monitor spending, according to a budget that he has helped develop with the Sponsor Director, Beth Stern. He has been a Project Director since 1988. He assures that the budget meets the requirements outlined by CNCS. He is expected to code all expenses and revenues, using a system prescribed by the accounting firm of Fothergill and Valley (FSV). He receives a monthly report of income and expenditures from FSV, and communicates with them every two weeks. He is expected to sign off on all time and expenditure reports, as well as to issue required reports to the State, United Way, Town funding, and any other grant funds.

This project currently has a variety of sources of funding: Corporation for National and Community Services; Vermont State; local Towns/United Way, and other grant funds. The project has expected the Director to fill the gaps between the Federal funding and the funding required to operate the project. Consequently, the project has developed an extensive Town Funding Raising plan that exceeds \$18,000. The project has been successful in securing funds from the Turrell Foundation, Tarrant

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Foundation, Phillip Morris, Richard and Deborah Tarrant Foundation, Ben & Jerry's Foundation, National Life Foundation, and has secured a number of PNS grants most recently to help support the Vermont Telecare Program.

The project has had a local cookbook fund raising project for a number of years. It also has an RSVP Bingo project that meets twice a month that helps support the project. It raises at least \$5,000 per year. The project is fortunate to have the support of free rent in the four offices where Coordinators are located. This equates to close to \$30,000 of free space. In addition, the sponsor, CVCOA, has allowed the project to partake in the State Centrex Telephone System, saving the project over 50% in telephone and other telecommunication cost. The support provided the volunteers through the Memorandum of Understanding exceed \$3,000, and the annual recognition of the RSVP volunteers in the local newspapers (which is donated) exceeds \$10,000. There have been no significant audit findings since CVCOA has been sponsor.

### **Organizational Capability**

Describe your plans and infrastructure to provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight day to day operational support and data collection, to include clearly defined internal policies.

The current sponsor, Central Vermont Council on Aging, has sponsored RSVP since 1988. They have been a leader in the field of aging since the early 1970s. The original RSVP project only encompassed Washington County. In 1972, Lamoille County became part of the program. In 1990, a small grant was acquired to begin serving part of Orange County. The footprint mirrored the geography of CVCOA. On July 1, 1994 Northern Community Investment Corporation relinquished the sponsorship of the Northeast Kingdom program. It was a move that more than doubled the size of the program, and was made possible because of the experienced RSVP staff.

In 1998, the program took on the Volunteer Concept using funding from two study groups in the Northeast Kingdom and Lamoille County. This opportunity allowed for a cradle to grave service concept without starting yet one more organization. The program is currently evaluating whether it will continue the volunteer center concept in Central Vermont as the resources to support that effort become more challenging, CVCOA took on sponsorship of the Vermont Senior Companion Program in 1999 from the State of Vermont. The program was a good fit because CVCOA had been a station since the beginning of the program in Vermont.

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CVCOA also has sponsored a statewide AmeriCorps program called Neighbor to Neighbor (N2N) for the last sixteen years. That project has received national direct funding over that period. The program will be discontinued in the fall of 2013.

The broad portfolio of Corporation funding has allowed for an economy of scale that utilized skills of the staff and offers for a multiple of cross-training opportunities.

The Project Director, J. Guy Isabelle, has been given the authority to monitor spending, according to a budget that he has helped develop with the Sponsor Director, Beth Stern. He has been a Project Director since 1988. He assures that the budget meets the requirements outlined by CNCS. He is expected to code all expenses and revenues, using a system prescribed by the accounting firm of Fothergill and Valley (FSV). He receives a monthly report of income and expenditures from FSV, and communicates with them every two weeks.

Describe the staff positions and how those positions will be sustained.

Beth Stern is the sponsor Executive Director. She has been the Director for eight years, Prior to that she lead the Advocacy and Case Management. Beth is a graduate of Stanford University, and has her MA from the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont.

The project Director, J. Guy Isabelle, has been the RSVP Director since 1988. Prior to that, he held various positions with the Central Vermont Council on Aging, leaving in 1987 as the Deputy Director. He has led the project through four major expansions, a variety of Advisory Council models, and has taken the project from a \$65,000 program to one that currently has a budget of over \$300,000. In addition to his extensive background in aging, he has held leadership positions on the National Association of RSVP Directors, has served on the Vermont Commission on National and Community Service as a Commissioner or Ex-officio member since 1993. He is the Treasurer of the Vermont Senior Service Corps Directors' Association, and serves as its legislative liaison for the Statewide Senior Corps appropriations. In 2000, he was honored with the Wendell Pelkey Award and, in 2008, was awarded the prestigious Barre Joint Service Clubs Award. Both were for his involvement in the community as a coach, school board member for 15 years, Justice of the Peace and the board of Civil

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Authority. In May of 2004, he became the Project Director of the Vermont Senior Companion Program. He continues to serve in that capacity.

Dan Noyes has been the Coordinator in Lamoille County since 2006. Dan is the agency technology guru. He has revamped our website, designed our newsletter and other publications. In addition to his Volunteer Coordinator duties, he has coordinated some of our signature programs. Dan recently received the prestigious Brooks/Potter Award for his work in community development. He has led efforts around stream bank restoration, has chaired the Review Board in his town, and has built websites for many area nonprofits. He has used all of these talents to help expand our visibility in the Lamoille County area.

Diana Lopez is the Coordinator in Caledonia and Orange Counties. She joined RSVP in August of 2006. She has a background in Corrections and Special Education. She has used those talents and connections to develop corrections programs and, most recently, programming around children of incarcerated parents.

Don Worth is the Coordinator in Orleans and Essex Counties. He has had a distinguished career in the military, and is retired as a border patrol enforcement officer with the United States Government. Don has used his extensive experience to work with law enforcement and with emergency management. He currently serves on the Board of the Johnson Electric Cooperative, a local veterans committee and recently joined a local literacy consortium.

JoEllen Calderara has just finished fourth year of service as the Coordinator for Washington County and as Program Assistant for the Senior Companion Program, Coordinator for the Vermont March of Dimes, worked for a large property management firm and served in the Vermont office of the Legislative Council. She recently used her event planning skills to help put together Boomer Fest, a daylong event that highlighted available services to that target group. She and Dan recently played a large part in having their areas help respond to the recent floods and Hurricane Irene that divested Vermont and much of our service area. JoEllen is now serving on the Long Term Recovery Committee for Vermont.

Gemma Philcox is our 94-year-old Administrative Assistant. She works from home, providing clerical

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duties for the staff. She has used her newspaper background to help us proof our many documents.

The above positions have been working on refining our Primary Focus Area Healthy Futures by identifying stations that will be good partners and volunteers that will help meet the outcomes defined in the work plans. The Director has also identified areas of strength for each coordinator that will not only match a community need but will recruit volunteers that will serve in those other focus areas.

The Financial Management Survey clearly outlines all the policies that govern the above staff. Our narrative in the Program Management section clearly identifies how these positions will be sustained. This RSVP project has consistently had an over 50% match of non-federal funds.

Describe your organizations track record in the Primary Focus Area, Senior Service, and managing volunteers and in measuring performance.

The introductions to this section as well as the other sections provide evidence of the track record in these areas. It is important to repeat, that we for close to two years, have worked closely with our stations preparing them for the changes in our operation and focus areas, as designated in the RSVP Competition Notice of Funds Available. Again, note that CVCOA has managed programs or contracts that deal with the Primary Focus Area, Healthy Futures. They continue to work with transportation , home delivered meals contractors and has extensive experience in the area of companionship.

Demonstrate strong organizational infrastructure including tangible assets such as facilities, equipment, and supplies.

The current project has had four donated office spaces in the four areas where staff is located. Two of those had to relocate in 2013. While the new rent in those places is no longer free the rent charged is way below market value and still provides a sizable in kind to the program. Each space has available meeting space for community meetings. Each staff has lap tops, each office has copiers and or scanners and each office is serviced by the State of Vermont Centrex Telecommunications system that saves over 50% of the cost for that service. The policies in the Financial Management Survey identify the purchasing procedures and the personnel management.

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The primary group we lean on for program design and evaluation is our Advisory Council. It is a representative group that geographically is spread out to every area of this project. That is not easy, given the square miles that are covered. The group is made up of a doctor, elementary school educator, AmeriCorps program director, adult literacy director, a minister, two members of the Senior Companion Program, a former disabilities nonprofit director, a health department employee, a hospice director, a nurse, lawyer and former law maker and former caseworker. This skilled and valued group has advised the staff and the sponsor on the direction the program needs to take to meet the needs of the community. Their most recent achievement helped lead the project through a Core Capacity Assessment offered by Common Good Vermont, an organization that helps small non-profits with management practices and Results Based Accountability. Some of the members have been instrumental in securing town funding support and some have provided leadership with other fund raising projects. They have, as stated established the RSVP Award Program . The awards are given to graduating high school seniors who have involved themselves in community service equal to or greater degree than that of an RSVP volunteer. There is an application process that begins with a mailing to area high school principals and guidance counselors. A committee of the Advisory Council reviews the award nominations and selects the winner based on a rubric they have developed. The awards are given out at year-end awards banquets, or at graduation. The money for the awards is raised by the sale of RSVP cookbooks, and by the generous support of the National Award winning children's author, Katherine Patterson.

Demonstrate how your organization will adequately sustain the proposed required non-federal share. The Program Management Section identified the non-federal sources of funds that will support this project. The match over the years has been over 50%. The program has never had any significant audit findings in the 25 years of existence under this sponsor.

### **Other**

No other narratives.

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

No PNS Amendment