

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Bryan County RSVP, Inc. is a non-profit, 501c3 self-sponsored program with a governing Board of Directors and Advisory Board. Our mission is to link person 55 years of age and older in meaningful volunteer opportunities that meet community needs as well as the volunteer. Through this program, an estimated 325 Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) volunteers will serve their communities. They will provide services to veterans in the form of transportation to medical center appointments and help completing the necessary forms. They will assist in disaster preparedness and capacity building by recruiting community volunteers. They will deliver meals on wheels to the homebound, help with blood drives, prepare taxes, and help with Coats for Kids, and National Day of Service and Remembrance. All of this will be carried out through a network of 58 volunteer stations. Stations include: Emergency Management, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, hospitals, Head Start, Senior citizen centers meals on wheels delivery, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site, capacity building sites and other community sites. The primary focus area of the program is Veterans and Military families. At the end of the performance period, RSVP volunteers will have served over 2,000 individuals and their families, improving the quality of their lives, schools and communities.

Bryan County RSVP is requesting \$35,389.00 in budget support from the Corporation for these activities. Bryan County RSVP will supplement the federal budget with \$48,073.00.

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### **Strengthening Communities**

Bryan County RSVP serves Bryan County in Southeastern Oklahoma; Achille, Bennington, Bokchito, Caddo, Calera, Colbert, Durant, Hendrix, Mead, Silo, Yuba, Utica, and Wade/Albany. Bryan County has a population of 42,416 persons. The area represents an area covering 904 square miles. The 18 yrs. old and under population represents an average 23.3% and the over 65 represents an average 15.9% of the population. The county percentage of poverty population 19.1% the state average is 16.1%. The median household income average is \$37,230.00 which is below the state average of \$41,716.00. The population is predominately white accounting for 77.4% of the population. American Indians are the next largest group at 13.2%. Two or more races account for 7.0%, Hispanic or Latino account for 5.3% and Black 1.8%.

The primary focus area for this program will be Veterans and Military Families. According to the website StateMaster.com, Oklahoma ranks 6th highest in the nation for

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civilian population who are veterans. Veterans account for 9% (3,926 persons) of the 18 and older population in our service area. Almost 60% of these veterans are from the Vietnam era. The Vietnam era veterans are part of the Baby Boomer generation and many have reached or almost reached retirement age. With this new attainment there are new systems to navigate such as Medicare, pensions, Social Security. Etc.... Bryan County RSVP volunteers will be there to help with contacts, connections, help completing forms and other general information and services.

Veterans with service-connected disability rating account for 20% of the veteran population. 8.7% of veterans age 18-64 had income in 2010 below poverty level; 59% of those have a disability. 8.4% of veterans age 65 and over had income in 2010 below poverty level; a staggering 78% of those have a disability. Given the high percentage of veterans with a disability living below the poverty level, one of the plans of this program will include activities to connect disabled veterans and families to community resources to improve their quality of life. Due to the rural nature of the service area, many resources are not available in the small communities where the veterans and their families live. Many service agencies do not have the necessary staff or budgets to meet requests. It is well documented by many sources that as the Baby Boomer generation ages, they place a greater burden for services on agencies. Consequently, the Baby Boomers also provide a pool of community members with seemingly unlimited skills, experience, and knowledge. According to the State Department, not only does Oklahoma currently have the 8th highest suicide rate in the nation, one fourth of those are veterans. The State of Oklahoma is working to address the suicide rate among all persons but especially youth and veterans. The Program Director will be working with the veterans organizations in the service area over the next 12 months to determine how RSVP volunteers can provide service activities to assist in the reduction of suicide rates among veterans. All statistics are taken from the 2010 Census: specifically the State and County Quick Facts. American Fact Finder and American Community Survey, unless otherwise stated.

RSVP volunteers will work with the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) center in the area. The volunteers will be trained by DAV to become service officers. Service officers help determine need, connect the veteran with resources to help with bills, food, transportation and other identified needs. Service officers are trained to assist with the ratings process that determines degree of disability for the Veterans Administration. They can assist veterans trying to navigate the disability system and help them understand the legalities involved pertaining to guidelines. Service officers are also trained to assist in other areas and benefits.

RSVP volunteers will also work with the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post in the area. As

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veterans request assistance, volunteers will help determine need, connect the veteran and/or family with resources to help with bills, food, transportation and other identified needs. Most VFW Posts the area hold a weekly activity for families. Volunteers help plan and staff these activities. Volunteers help plan and carry out special events throughout the year such as Easter dinner, Thanksgiving dinner, and Christmas food baskets with gifts for the children. Volunteers also help represent the VFW Post at community events and other activities that help the program achieve the desired output/outcome. RSVP volunteers will provide transportation for veterans needing to access medical services at the VA Medical Center in Bonham and Dallas Texas. Bonham is anywhere from 30 to 45 minutes, and Dallas is an hour and half drive from the area. As mentioned above, Oklahoma ranks 6th highest in the nation for civilian population who are veterans. In this service area, veterans are drawn to this area for our proximity to the Dallas Veterans Medical Center, DAV Center, and VFW as well as job opportunities and mainstream services. Census statistics show a large number of the veterans living in the service area are below the poverty level and are disabled. Proposed service activities will connect them to needed veteran and community services, help them traverse the paperwork and necessary documentation and possibly help them apply to re-evaluate their disability rating thus leading to an improved quality of life for them and their family. Veterans, in general, will be educated about available resources, benefits and how to access them. RSVP volunteers will be catapult to move veterans and their families toward greater quality of life through education, knowledge, accessibility of services and benefits and connecting them with their community.

As noted, the Primary Focus Area for this program is Veterans and Military Families. As detailed in the paragraphs above, there are significant service activities planned to benefit veterans and military families. Veterans and military families will also receive services through other Focus Areas as well. These include Education, Economic Opportunity, Healthy Futures and Capacity Building.

### **Recruitment and Development**

It is the goal of Bryan County RSVP to provide high quality, mutually satisfying experience for volunteers,

volunteer stations, beneficiaries, program staff and the Board of Directors. In order to achieve this goal,

a commitment has been made to considerable planning and preparation of a recruiting and training agenda. The recruiting plan addresses various methods for approaching, recruiting, and training volunteers and stations. Recruiting will be year round and achieved through a variety of methods.

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Recruitment will also be conducted through contacts with clergy, church auxiliary groups, senior citizen centers, civic and ethnic groups, and community engagement through special events and every day activities. Bryan County RSVP will also utilize web-based recruiting methods through United Way and VolunteerMatch.org. A high quality experience begins with appropriate training for both the volunteers and the station supervisors. Volunteer station supervisors will receive an orientation to Senior Corps and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program. They will also receive training on what is expected of the station and procedures for completing required paperwork. Station supervisors will work with program staff to identify the needs and priorities to be addressed by the assignment(s) and how to appropriately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of volunteers and their assignments. Volunteers will receive a pre-service orientation and on-site assignment specific training. Every effort is made to place the volunteer at a site that will be mutually beneficial for them and the site and provide a personal growth experience for the volunteer through sharing and service learning. The Program Director will follow up with new volunteers at 30 day intervals for the first three months to determine if they are satisfied with the assignment and/or need additional training. Additional training will be provided during the year and will include topics pertinent to seniors, enhancing the volunteer experience, changes to the project, leadership and other issues as they arise.

### **Program Management**

The Bryan County RSVP Program Director will handle the daily management of the program volunteers and their stations. The program will maintain frequent contact with volunteers and station through in-person/on-site visits, e-mails, phone calls, card and social media to ensure there is a harmonious working relationship with all partners. This is the first to highly effective assignments. Volunteer stations submit reporting paperwork on a monthly basis. As these reports are collected, the Program Director reviews them to determine if the output/outcome can be achieved in fewer hours, the specified number of hours or if it is more labor intensive than originally planned. Once this is determined, the Program Director will confer with the site supervisor and the volunteer to determine the best course of action to maintain a highly effective approach to meeting the community need.

The Program Director prepares a weekly status report detailing activities of the program. In this report, there is an opportunity to discuss items of concern, urgency, or requiring attention, as well as, milestones achieved. This report is submitted to the Board of Directors for review. One of the uses of this report is to determine the need for management contact, guidance, or intervention. As this report is weekly, it keeps management current and allows for adjustment in program activities or direction as needed prior to significant departures from its mission. This helps

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maintain the effectiveness of the program and program activities.

Bryan County RSVP is active in local service coalitions forging valuable partnerships with agencies and providers across the service area. These relationships allow for increased capacity to recruit volunteer stations that address specified community needs. The Program Director will work with community partners and the Advisory Board to identify and approach potential stations. Volunteer stations providing assignments that address community needs outside the Primary Focus Area will be managed in the same manner as those inside the Primary Focus Area. The Program Director will provide pre-service training to the site supervisor and other appropriate staff. The Program Director will conduct in person visits on a monthly basis for the first six months of service. The Program Director will continue regular visits as long as there is an active assignment of Memorandum of Understanding. The Program Director will also maintain frequent contact through e-mails, phone calls, cards and social media. All these methods of contact help streamline management of stations, volunteers and progress toward specified outputs and outcomes.

As community needs change, program design will change. This may require volunteer stations and assignments to change. In order to express our appreciation to existing sites, volunteer stations that no longer align with the program design will be given the opportunity to participate capacity building activities. Volunteers with assignments at these stations will be offered the opportunity to perform capacity building service activities at their current station or they may elect to choose an assignment at a different volunteer station or remain as volunteer outside the RSVP Program.

The RSVP Program uses the Volunteer Reporter software package to accurately track and report on volunteer activities. Volunteer stations submit reporting paperwork on a monthly basis. As these reports are collected, the Program Director reviews them for accuracy and completeness then enters them in Volunteer Reporter. On a quarterly basis, the Program Director reviews volunteer and station activities to ensure they are still aligned and progressing toward the outputs and/or outcomes in their respective work plans. If adjustments are needed, the Program Director will make contact with the station and the volunteers to identify any issues or barriers. The Program Director will work with both parties to make any necessary changes and to ensure appropriate data is being collected and measured for reporting purposes.

Bryan County RSVP draws from over 35 years' experience operating a multitude of state and federally funded program requiring management of financial and in-kind resources. Bryan County RSVP has

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established both internal and external controls to ensure compliance with state and federal rules and regulations concerning the management of federal funds. The Financial Procedures manual governs all transactions relating to financial and in-kind resources. Expenditures are approved by the Program Director. The Fiscal officer ensures funds are available for payment. Budget meetings are held quarterly between accounting and program Director. Financials are reviewed monthly by Program Director, the Board President, and Board Treasurer to ensure efficient and effective use of resources.

### **Organizational Capability**

Bryan County RSVP, Inc. is a non-profit, 501c3 self-sponsored program established in 1977, with a working Board of Directors and Advisory Board. Bryan County RSVP Inc. has in place an organization chart that governs the staff structure. RSVP has a staff of three consisting of Executive Director, Secretary/Bookkeeper and Volunteer Coordinator.

The daily operations of the program are supervised by the Program Director who has been with the program for 18 years. Day to day operational support will be provided to the Program Director by the Secretary/Bookkeeper and Volunteer Coordinator. Bryan County RSVP has extensive controls in place and outlined in the agency's financial procedures manual to ensure that federal funds are safeguarded. Bryan County RSVP has established both internal and external controls to ensure state and federal compliance with rules and regulations concerning the management of federal funds. The Bryan County RSVP Financial Procedures manual is reviewed annually by an outside auditor during the program's independent audit, as well as other funding sources. Financial data collection is carried out by the programs fiscal staff. Programmatic data collection is the responsibility of the Program Director.

The Bryan County RSVP will employ Program Director. Ms. Sheila Risner is the current program director and will continue in that role if this application is funded. This position is sustained through multiple streams including CNCS, Oklahoma Department of Human Services and Bryan County United Way.

Bryan County RSVP will employ a Secretary/Bookkeeper. The current Secretary/Bookkeeper has been with the program for 12 years and will continue in this role if this application is funded. RSVP will employ a part time Volunteer Coordinator if this application is funded. All position will be sustained through multiple streams including CNCS, Oklahoma Department of Human Services and Bryan County Way.

Bryan County RSVP program have been providing services to veterans for 20 years. Bryan County

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RSVP also provides a multitude of services to veterans through their other programs, such as Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, transportation, emergency services and others. Bryan County RSVP, Inc. has operated a Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) for more than 35 years in Bryan County.

Bryan County RSVP has administrative offices in Durant, which is provided by the city of Durant. The office supplies and technology equipment is in place to sustain these offices. Bryan County RSVP, Inc. is governed by a tri-partite board with representatives from the volunteer, private and public sectors. The board of Directors is 15 individuals representing the three named sectors. The Board of Directors sets and monitors overall program strategic priorities and operational systems. Internal policies and purchasing procedures are detailed in the financial procedures manual described above. Personnel policies are in place to govern the management of staff. All policies and procedures are reviewed by an independent auditor, as well as multiple funding sources. The Board of Directors approves all policy and procedures documents. Each year Bryan County RSVP distributes and collects community surveys to determine what the general population perceives as the greatest needs and causes of poverty in their community. Low-income families, business and community leaders, and elected officials participate in the survey. The RSVP Advisory Board is an integral partner in ensuring these surveys are completed by seniors in their communities. The compiled results of the survey are presented to the Bryan County RSVP Board of Directors. The Board then formulates a strategic direction for program planning and current services in the coming year. This information is also disseminated to the programs for use with the Advisory Board in planning their future direction. For over 35 years, Bryan County RSVP has managed both federal and state funds with multiple funding streams and allocated costs to different funding sources in accordance with general accounting practices and Office of Management and Budget requirements. The accounting staff currently manages a budget of over 100,000.00 annually and, as mentioned above, has a financial procedures manual in place to govern all financial activities of the program.

Bryan County RSVP will provide financial support for the non-federal share through multiple funding streams including Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Bryan County United Way funds and local agency funds.

### **Other**

Not Applicable

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

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Not Applicable