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Executive Summary

The Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging, Inc. (SVCOA) is requesting to become the sponsoring agency for the Green Mountain RSVP and Volunteer Center. As the new grantee, we are collaboratively working with the existing Green Mountain RSVP (GMRSVP) program so that volunteer services and support can continue in their planning, service area. GMRSVP will recruit and utilize the services of 600 volunteers throughout Bennington, Windham and Windsor Counties via 200+ volunteer stations. In support of this effort, SVCOA is requesting \$174,900. Some of the activities that will be performed include transporting qualified elders to essential services, delivering meals to homebound elders, providing companionship services as an intervention to prevent isolation and the expansion of our community "Chore Corps" sites that recruit local volunteers to assist elders with household tasks while strengthening community ties. The Primary Focus Area of this project is Healthy Futures. At the end of the three-year grant period 325 Green Mountain RSVP SPICE (Seniors Promoting Independence and Companionship for Elders) volunteers will provide services in the following areas: Food delivery, food pantry, transportation and companionship. 75 RSVP SPICE volunteers will serve 600 individuals for meal delivery services, 50 RSVP SPICE volunteers will serve 300 individuals who shop at area food pantries, 100 RSVP SPICE volunteers will provide essential service trips (medical appointments, food and pharmacy shopping, etc.) to 1,100 qualified clients, and 100 RSVP SPICE volunteers will provide companionship services ranging from one-on-one contacts to small group facilitations to 2500 qualified older adults who live independently and are aging in place. As for our performance measure outputs and outcomes, all of these activities (75%) will indicate an increase in perceived social ties/social support. We estimate a minimum of 4,500 qualified clients will be served for the three-year grant period. The CNCS Senior Corps Independent Living Performance Measure Survey will be the tool used for measuring outcomes for all of the Healthy Futures' work plans. 125 Green Mountain RSVP volunteers will address the Other Focus Area of Education and Economic Opportunity while 150 Green Mountain RSVP volunteers will address the Community Priority categories.

The CNCS federal investment of \$174,900 will be supplemented by \$76,700 in non-federal resources.

Strengthening Communities

DESCRIBE THE COMMUNITY AND DEMONSTRATE THAT THE COMMUNITY NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN THE PRIMARY FOCUS AREA EXIST IN THE GEOGRAPHIC SERVICE AREA. DESCRIBE HOW THE SERVICE ACTIVITIES IN THE PRIMARY FOCUS AREA LEAD TO

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NATIONAL PERFORMANCE MEASURE OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES:

The Primary Focus Area for the Green Mountain RSVP of Bennington, Windham and Windsor Counties of Vermont will be Healthy Futures, Aging in Place and the demographics for our service area fully support this choice. According to the 2010 United States Census, one in eight individuals or 12% of the population of Vermont are over the age of 65. Only 10 states in the country have populations with more elders over the age of 65 than Vermont. If demographic trends continue, by the year 2030 one in four Vermonters will be over the age of 65. Also, findings from the Older Americans Act (OAA) has concluded that our service area is rural with distinct needs around isolation, transportation, meals and nutrition. Research regarding older adults in rural areas state, "...these individuals will have a greater demand for medical, social and financial assistance, generally live in poor housing conditions and frequently live alone". In our planning service area (PSA) we have over 21,413 individuals over the age of 65. In the next ten years elders age 85 and older are projected to grow in numbers by nearly 23% and will have the greatest need for long-term care services.

Windham County is bounded north by Windsor County, east by the Connecticut River, south by the State of Massachusetts, and west by the County of Bennington. It contains an area of about 780 square miles. The surface of the county is much broken by hills and valleys: the western part is very elevated, and contains a part of the Green Mountain range. Immense quantities of granite are found in all parts of the county, both in quarries and boulders. The soil of the county is various from the rich and alluvial meadows on the Connecticut River, to the cold and rugged lands on the sides of the mountains. Windham County is finely watered by Williams', Saxton's and West rivers with their branches, and by numerous other streams.

Brattleboro is the largest community in Windham County and the oldest town in the state of Vermont. It is located in the southeast corner of Windham County with a population of 12,049, of that 16.6% are 65 years of age or older. The median income for a household in the town is \$31,997 with 22% of the population being below the poverty line and 9.2% of those are age 65 or over. Located 90 miles northwest of Boston, Brattleboro is accessible from Interstate 91, Route 5, Route 9, Route 30 and by railroad from the Amtrak Vermonter. The diverse community with a mix of residential property, active farmland, heavy industry, warehouses, and some high technology businesses, makes for a vibrant and vital neighborhood. Brattleboro is well know for its arts and human services such as

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the Austine School for the Deaf, World Learning School for International Training, and the Brattleboro Retreat for psychiatric and drug addiction treatments. Windham County itself is a unique area with an extraordinary variety of indoor and outdoor activities, arts and entertainment, and of course shopping. It is a regional center for commerce, finance and technology. The town of Brattleboro is nestled between the picturesque Connecticut and West rivers and within 30 miles of various ski areas and world class golfing. Other Windham County towns worthy of note include: Putney, Wilmington in the Deerfield Valley, Londonderry, Weston, Dover, Bellows Falls and Vernon. Windsor County is bounded north by Orange County, east by the Connecticut River, south by Windham County, and west by Rutland and a part of Addison Counties. It contains an area of about 900 square miles.

Windsor County is watered by the White, Quechee, Black, West and Williams' rivers. The surface of the county is uneven, and in some parts mountainous, but generally it is not too elevated for cultivation. The soil produces fine crops of grain, hay, vegetables and fruits: the lands are particularly adapted for sheep grazing on its varied surface of hills and valleys. The beautiful Connecticut, which washes its whole eastern boundary, gives to this county's large tracts of alluvial meadowland, and affords it as a navigable channel to the sea.

The town of Springfield is the largest community in Windsor County with a population of 9,373. It was chartered in 1761 and is located along the Black and Connecticut Rivers. Located 30 miles north of Brattleboro in Windsor County, the town is easily accessible from Interstate 91. Attractions such as shops, galleries, inns, and restaurants can be found throughout the town and along U.S. Route 5, and Vermont Routes 10 and 143. Known locally as the "Cradle of Inventions" and "Precision Valley", Springfield, Vermont has produced many notable inventions, including the Breech loading gun, the steam shovel, the sheep-shearing machine, the corn planter and the common spring clothespin. 30.5% of all households are made up of individuals living alone with 15.1% (nearly 1/2) of them being 65 years of age or older. The median income for a household in the town is \$34,169 with 18.1% of the population being below the poverty line and 11.4% of those being 65 or older. Major towns worthy of note include: Woodstock, White River Junction, Barnard, Windsor (first capitol of Vermont before Montpelier), Norwich, and Chester. Windsor County is bounded north by Orange County, east by the Connecticut River, south by Windham County, and west by Rutland and a part of Addison Counties. It contains an area of about 900 square miles. Windsor County is watered by the White, Quechee,

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Bennington County is nestled between the Taconic and the Green Mountains in the southwestern corner of Vermont. Bennington, chartered in 1749, is one of two shire towns (county seats) within this county, the other being Manchester. The town's current population is 15,764. By population, Bennington is the largest town in southern Vermont, the third largest town in Vermont, and the sixth largest municipality in the state. Bennington is situated minutes from the Berkshires in Massachusetts and within a 45 minute drive to New York State's capital, Albany. In Bennington (and its surrounding communities: Manchester, Shaftsbury, Pownal, Arlington and Dorset to name a few) both residents and business owners alike are well known for their hospitality and community pride. Natural beauty makes this area a visual delight. It is well known for its museums, attractions, antique shops, art galleries, covered bridges, foliage, summer and winter recreational opportunities, pristine state parks and quaint roadside stands.

Bennington is the oldest county in Vermont and located on the west side of the "Greens". It is bounded on the north by Rutland County, on the east by Windham County, on the south by Berkshire

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County, Massachusetts and on the west by the state of New York. The lowlands are excellent and produce good crops, but the largest portion of the county is mountainous and fit only for grazing. Many streams rise in the mountains and descend to the ocean from here. Lead and iron ores are found in the county as well as beautiful white marble. The county is the final resting place of Robert Frost, one of America's best-loved poets as well as memorable for many Revolutionary War scenes such as the Bennington Battle Monument, which is the tallest structure in the state of Vermont. 33% of all households are made up of individuals living alone with 14.5% (nearly 1/2) of them being 65 years of age or older. The median income for a household in the town of Bennington is \$39,765 with 29.3% of the population being below the poverty line with 6.9% of those being 65 or older.

The total population for the three counties is 139,170 with 21,413 being 65 or older. The median household income average is \$39,606 with a per capita income average of \$21,365. The State of Vermont's current unemployment average rate is 4.6%.

The state's current budget crisis has seriously impacted our PSA, which has resulted in a decreased capacity for our communities to serve urgent public needs, especially in terms of human and social services that benefit low-income community members. Also, many of our partner agencies are being inundated by people turning to them for assistance with food, clothing, housing, healthcare, help with paying bills, and other unmet needs. Green Mountain RSVP frequently taps into the pre-existing network of community, state and national resources in carrying out its program goals. They are very well known throughout the community, generating a level of trust and respect that benefits the implementation of what will be our performance measurement goals and volunteer opportunities within our Primary Focus Areas in Healthy Futures of companionship, transportation, and food insecurity.

In demonstrating the community needs identified in our Primary Focus Areas that currently exist in the above geographical service areas, one needs to look at research, data and statistics generated at a national and Vermont state/local level.

The Cornell Institute for Translational Research on Aging (CITRA) has published an extensive review of studies completed around the subject of social support, social isolation and social integration. CITRA defines social isolation as "the lack of contact and interaction with people leading to feelings of

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loneliness, lack of companionship or close and genuine communication with others". They determined that there was a clear link associated with distress and poor health for individuals socially isolated. However, social integration, the opposite of social isolation, was found to be beneficial to one's health and well-being across adulthood and into old age. CITRA also 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. Another key to success in eliminating social isolation is the perception of social support that an elder feels is being provided, either on a one-to-one basis or in a group setting.

Several studies published on the National Institute of Health's (NIH) website further confirm CITRA's findings. They conclude that health risks associated with the lack of social ties, connectedness and/or feelings of loneliness see these individuals suffer higher rates of morbidity and mortality as well as depression and cognitive decline. "Health risks posed by social isolation may be particularly severe for older adults as they are likely to face stressful life course transitions, health problems and other disabilities". They conclude that more socially connected individuals who receive support in either a group or one-on-one interactions will increase their coping skills, build greater self-esteem and bring a greater sense of control in their lives thus diminishing poor outcomes physically and mentally. Another study supporting the value of companionship interventions was reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA). This study evaluated 1,604 participants by examining the relationship between social isolation and functional decline and death in adults and concluded, "among participants who were older than 60 years, loneliness (social isolation) was a predictor of functional decline and death".

On a state and local level, the Department of Aging and Independent Living (DAIL), a division of the Agency of Human Services for the State of Vermont is charged with establishing goals and making recommendations of services and supports for Vermont's elders. Their goals and recommendations directly address the RSVP Primary Focus Area of Healthy Futures, Aging in Place. In their 2013 legislative report to legislators, "...aging baby boomers and elders especially need the support and interaction offered by community programs and volunteers". The report also states that nonprofit organizations need to provide "programs and services in their communities that support independent living". It is DAIL's hope that with community partners we can meet the state's outcome goal, which

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is that "Vermonters will live with dignity and independence, maintaining high physical and mental functioning, and become actively engaged in life". In fact, their mission statement is that Vermont seniors will continue to live independently, in a healthy, satisfying and safe environment that will meet their support needs and those of the community in which they reside while keeping costs at a fraction of what they would be in residential placements such as nursing homes or assisted living facilities where costs range from \$75,000 to \$150,000 a year depending on the care level". DAII's State Plan on Aging stated that rural adults, especially those struggling financially, must travel further to access key resources and have less access to transportation either public or private.

64% of the seniors surveyed for the state's Transportation Coordination Plan developed by the Vermont Agency of Transportation consider lack of transportation one of their top three obstacles for individuals to remain in their home. The report goes on to state that local service providers must continue, through their support services, to find creative ways to provide transportation to essential services. Unfortunately, public transportation is virtually nonexistent in our outlying, rural communities and if a taxi service is available most are cost prohibitive. The Transportation Plan also states that "elders require safe, reliable and affordable transportation to basic services and amenities, a key to enhancing perceived social support and ties".

In the Citizens Service Act of 2002, the federal government identified the need for the delivery/provision of meals to the elderly and terminally ill as a priority for volunteerism. DAII research has determined that Vermont's elderly suffer from poor nutrition and have added this as one of their priority outcomes that need to be addressed through such programs like the home delivered/Meals on Wheels program. In addition, according to a report from US Senator Bernie Sanders, Chairman on the Subcommittee of Primary Health and Aging, over 90% of seniors receiving home delivered meals state the program allows them to remain in their homes, aging in place. This report concludes that the demand for home delivered meals will rise as the population continues to age and the need for volunteers to provide this service is more crucial than ever before. The report also states, "...for older Americans, hunger and malnutrition can completely undo any efforts that are made to improve quality of life through non-medical interventions like social integration".

Based on the studies listed above and data examined, it is clear that interventions to alleviate perceived social isolation can be an effective method of promoting successful aging in place. All of the data and

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demographics examined add up to the need for area agencies who serve elders to enhance their service provision by wisely utilizing their resources to ensure that Vermont's elders age in place and remain independent for as long as possible. Every 4 years the state's Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) conduct a "person-centered" statewide need's assessments to help shape the direction of elder services. Based on the completion of these assessments area plans are developed implementing goals, activities and performance based outcomes. From the last state assessment the four key indicators for elders to remain in their home were transportation, nutritional supports, companionship and help with household chores.

Volunteers can and should play a crucial role in assisting these organizations charged with achieving these unmet needs. With that in mind, statewide RSVP volunteers propose to utilize what they are calling SPICE (Seniors Promoting Independence and Companionship for Elders) volunteers to provide services and interventions in our Primary Focus Area of Healthy Futures to enhance perceived social support/ties for older adults in each of our planning and service areas. Green Mountain RSVP of Bennington, Windham and Windsor Counties will recruit and manage 325 SPICE volunteers who will provide transportation, home-delivered meals, support at local food pantries and companionship services via healthy aging programs and "Chore Corps" community programs to no less than 4,500 qualifying elders, supporting them to live independently and age in the place of their choosing. These SPICE volunteers (325) represent 54% of our total number (600) of unduplicated volunteers, well above the minimum 25% requirement. The CNCS Senior Corps Independent Living Performance Measure Survey will be the tool used for measuring outcomes for all of the Healthy Futures' work plans and will be measured, collected and managed through our local RSVP Reporter database. In the Other Focus Area category 125 Green Mountain RSVP volunteers will address the areas of Education and Economic Opportunity in providing support for local blood drives, literacy/mentoring for students K-12 and tax assistance through the AARP Tax Assistance program where volunteers provide tax preparation services to qualifying clients. The combined total of unduplicated volunteers serving in the Primary and Other Focus Area is 450. Of that total 375 will be in outcome based placements or 83%, far exceeding the 10% requirement.

For the Other Community Priority Area, the remaining 150 Green Mountain RSVP volunteers will serve an estimated 30 non-profit organizations in Bennington, Windham and Windsor Counties who continue to face difficult financial challenges in providing their services. For many years now our

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local communities have looked to RSVP to offer volunteers who through their talents, efforts, dedication and time provide priceless services and supports. Without RSVP volunteers offering operational support, SVCOA believes many programs would fall short of meeting the needs of their clients. Not to mention the clients served. Green Mountain RSVP will continue to recruit and train volunteers for our libraries, museums, hospitals, offer volunteers to assist with mailings and other clerical duties, congregate meal assistance, senior center support, special projects, etc.

YOUR PLAN AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT DATA COLLECTION AND ENSURE NATIONAL PERFORMANCE MEASURE OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES ARE MEASURED, COLLECTED AND MANAGED:

Green Mountain RSVP of Bennington, Windham and Windsor Counties, Vermont has been following the CNCS Programming for Impact Principles since its inception so, their operating principles fall squarely in line with the new performance measures recently established by CNCS. All of the newly developed work plans are in complete accordance with CNCS National Performance Measure outputs and outcomes. Green Mountain RSVP will utilize their current RSVP Reporter database to continue to manage volunteer and station data along with outcome and output data. In fact, this software has been revised and updated to include all the elements of reporting needed by CNCS. It is also our intention to utilize Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word and Microsoft Power Point and Publisher as tools for data management, marketing and financial tracking. Research data, accessed through a variety of online search engines, links, and hardcopy articles used for developing work plan outcomes and output will be kept on file--updated and reviewed on a regular basis. We have also reviewed the new performance instrument (CNCS Senior Corps Independent Living Performance Measure Survey) and shared it with current RSVP staff, our volunteer stations, and other community partners to prepare them of the added importance of data gathering to meet our outputs and outcomes. Finally, ongoing training during the three-year grant period will be conducted for staff and volunteer station to ensure success in this area of grant management.

Recruitment and Development

DESCRIBE YOUR PLAN AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO CREATE HIGH QUALITY VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENTS WITH OPPORTUNITIES SUCH AS SHARING THEIR EXPERIENCE, ABILITIES AND SKILLS TO IMPROVE THEIR COMMUNITIES AND THEMSELVES THROUGH SERVICE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES. DESCRIBE YOUR PLAN AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENSURE RSVP VOLUNTEERS RECEIVE TRAINING NEEDED TO BE HIGHLY EFFECTIVE IN

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ADDRESSING IDENTIFIED COMMUNITY NEEDS IN BOTH THE PRIMARY FOCUS AREA AND OTHER FOCUS AREAS.

DESCRIBE THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE COMMUNITY SERVED AND PLANS TO RECRUIT A VOLUNTEER POOL REFLECTIVE OF THE COMMUNITY SERVED INCLUDING RSVP VOLUNTEERS WITH DISABILITIES. DESCRIBE YOUR PLAN AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO RETAIN AND RECOGNIZE THE RSVP VOLUNTEERS:

The Green Mountain RSVP organizational infrastructure insures that volunteers have a high quality experience and thorough knowledge and comfort level with their service placement as well as a clear understanding of the role of RSVP locally, statewide and nationally. Each volunteer goes through a thorough intake process in which they are interviewed, counseled, guided and assisted in exploring service options. Experienced staff then work with the volunteer to ensure their needs, talents and experience, along with the needs of the community, are a "good fit". RSVP program managers also do an extensive research of potential placement sites. The coordinator meets with the site supervisor, reviews the available volunteer opportunities and the appropriate job descriptions. It is imperative that the program supervisor understands the need for support of the volunteer, and the importance of providing meaningful assignments. We also discuss with the volunteer station the idea of measurable outcomes when considering job placement.

Critical to the continued success of Green Mountain RSVP, is the extent of their ability to recruit and retain volunteers. Coordinators work diligently through newspaper articles, public service announcements, brochures, media appearances and speaking engagements to educate the community to the value of volunteering and volunteers. All RSVP volunteers and volunteer stations are encouraged to be ambassadors for RSVP. Green Mountain RSVP website (rsvpvt.org) is regularly updated and can be used for potential volunteers to download a volunteer application, complete it and mail it to our office. We also have a Facebook page to reach out to users of social media. RSVP makes every effort to place volunteers within a week of receiving their application. Coordinators will follow up with the volunteer and site supervisor to assure that it is a good match and regular contact is maintained for the first month of service. Coordinators are always available to the volunteer and site supervisors to address problems that may occur. It is important to note that each staff member has participated in multiple trainings and workshops centered on volunteer management skills such as

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recruitment, retention and recognitions.

The following is a list of marketing strategies used to build public awareness of and support for Green Mountain RSVP:

- * Press releases in the local newspapers
- * Distribute brochures, flyers, posters
- * Announcements in church bulletins
- * Recruitment phone calls
- * Volunteermatch.org
- * Green Mountain RSVP webpage and links on sponsor's web pages, other RSVP's and non-profits websites, our Facebook page
- * Local TV and radio
- * Presentations to various civic groups, service providers, businesses, senior meal sites, senior centers and senior housing
- * Participation in community events
- * Program members help spread the work
- * RSVP newsletter
- * Listed statewide with the 211 (information line) and the Senior HelpLine
- * Recruitment flyers sent with state fuel assistance and food commodity mailings
- * Targeted, demographic recruitment postcards

These successful and proven methods of recruitment are used on an ongoing basis to promote and educate the community about RSVP volunteer opportunities. They also help to nurture support financially and help to advocate for our mission within the larger community. Green Mountain RSVP has a strong relationship with the community built on 39 years of continuous service. They have always been considered a leader in southern Vermont in mobilizing, utilizing, placing, recruiting and recognizing volunteers. As a catalyst for action, over 200 non-profits in southern Vermont, many of whom lack the resources to recruit volunteers, view RSVP as the key organization for their own capacity building and service delivery. Among these non-profits are: The American Red Cross disaster relief and blood drives, Bennington homeless shelter, Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging, AARP tax aide program, Green Mountain Express transportation provider, Center for Restorative Justice, to name a few.

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Vermont is a state that is not known for its ethnic diversity; second only to Maine in its lack of racial diversity. According to the most recent census, of the 620,000+ people in the state, only 3% are considered to be racial and ethnic minorities. That said our volunteers bring a rich ethnic mix, which serves to educate the clients and organizations they serve, sharing customs from generations of Italian, Irish, German, Polish, Swedish and other ethnic backgrounds common in our region. Green Mountain RSVP works with partner agencies to include all minorities in its recruitment efforts, as well as, the programs it offers. Specifically, RSVP volunteers serve as instructors for local ESL (English as a Second Language) programs, assist in fundraising efforts at the Asian Culture Center and as teacher aides at the Austine School for the Deaf. We have also utilized age-appropriate volunteers from our local mental health organization in the promotional efforts of other institutions.

RSVP staff will work closely with the volunteer stations to be certain that proper training is provided. Our MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) agreement with these stations clearly outlines a commitment on the part of the station to provide initial, ongoing and meaningful training to the volunteers. Trainings are seen as skill builders for each volunteer and can lead to further volunteer opportunities. RSVP staff distributes materials and information regarding workshops, trainings and seminars to stations and volunteers as another way to offer leadership and growth opportunities. Local service program providers and other community stakeholders also routinely inform RSVP of opportunities for volunteers and staff.

Study results released in the last several years clearly indicate the value of volunteering with regards to one's quality of life, especially for seniors. However, Green Mountain RSVP also takes added steps in recognizing our volunteers. In addition to birthday cards, we hold four annual recognition events throughout the three counties. State and local dignitaries are invited to assist in the recognition of the volunteers, by being present or sending letters or certificates of appreciation. Volunteers receive pins for years of service and we have two awards given for "outstanding service" yearly. These two awards are named in honor of Reverend Kevin Costins and John Creedy, past advisory council chairs, who were instrumental in the early successes of RSVP. Each year, Green Mountain RSVP submits the names of exceptional volunteers to the Vermont Governor's Award for Outstanding Volunteer Community Service.

Program Management

YOUR PLAN AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENSURE MANAGEMENT OF VOLUNTEER

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STATIONS IN COMPLIANCE WITH RSVP PRGRAM REGULATIONS SUCH AS PREVENTING OR IDENTIFYING PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES:

Through advance planning, education and collaborating with our volunteer stations RSVP staff ensures that our management of sites is in compliance with all RSVP program regulations. Green Mountain RSVP looks to the volunteer stations who work day-to-day with our volunteers to provide us with direct and expert advice. They have the opportunity to do this in several ways. 1) The RSVP program coordinators regularly interact with the various station staff as a routine part of placing volunteers, developing placements, revising and renewing volunteer opportunities and job descriptions, reviewing policies, etc. at which time they solicit feedback as to program design suggestions. 2) Ongoing outreach to our stations provides opportunities to gather input and receive invaluable feedback. 3) Each station is asked to complete a formal RSVP volunteer station evaluation, which provides us with written documentation and feedback. This is compiled and used to enhance and drive our program design. RSVP staff reads each one and a resulting action plan is formulated if need be to address any negative issues. Specific volunteer station responsibilities and expectations are also outlined in our Memorandum of Understand document and must be signed before any other services commence.

YOUR PLAN AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO DEVELOP AND/OR OVERSEE VOLUNTEER STATIONS TO ENSURE VOLUNTEERS ARE PERFORMING THEIR ASSIGNED ACTIVITIES:

RSVP staff is in touch on an ongoing basis with our volunteer stations and visit sites throughout the year. In addition, our volunteers are surveyed periodically to ensure that they are performing the activities agreed to as part of the placement process. The volunteer hours reporting form indicates the placement and by signing it assures the station has confirmed that the volunteer is doing what was agreed upon by all parties. Through ongoing contact with our stations, a primary job responsibility of our program coordinators is to be sure that stations are in compliance with our signed MOU. Should noncompliance become an issue, protocols are set in place within the MOU to address this issue.

YOUR PLAN AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO MEET CHANGING COMMUNITY NEEDS TO INCLUDE MINIMIZING DISRUPTION TO VOLUNTEERS AND/OR GRADUATING STATIONS:

Green Mountain RSVP and SVCOA are known for responding to changing community needs and we have been operating in this fashion for over 30+ years. Based on the latest assessments (local, state and national) our response in terms of prioritizing volunteer offerings reflect that dynamic. As a

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result active volunteer stations shift as well and that is not unusual or an issue in the communities we serve. The purging of volunteers and sites has occurred organically over the years and our key emphasis is directly in line with our Primary Focus Area of Healthy Futures, Aging in Place. Green Mountain RSVP anticipates no disruption to our volunteers or sites.

YOUR ORGANIZATION'S TRACK RECORD IN THE PRIMARY FOCUS AREA, TO INCLUDE, IF APPLICABLE, MEASURING PERFORMANCE IN THE PRIMARY FOCUS AREA:

As the sponsor for the Green Mountain RSVP program, Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging (SVCOA) has a strong, successful and proven track record of outstanding program management. SVCOA have been working in the Primary Focus Area of Healthy Futures for nearly 40 years. Just over the last 10 years SVCOA has coordinated the delivery of over 1.2 million meals and actively partnered with several area transportation providers who have coordinated over 400,000 rides to qualified clients. We have also been a host agency for the Vermont Senior Companion Program for 20+ years. These partnerships serve as a link between our volunteers and non-profit organizations throughout our region, allowing for more creative placements while staying abreast of trends and issues of consequence in our communities. These partnerships will continue to be developed based on common goals, populations served and performance measured outcomes.

For over 38 years SVCOA has not only fulfilled these tasks, we have also managed hundreds of grants at the federal, state and local levels. We have never wavered in our commitment to provide excellent service to our clients, their families/caregivers or the community partners we work with. Our years of successful volunteer management leadership include prudent program management and support, provisions for project assessment, training, technical assistance and staff oversight. In addition, SVCOA has, and continues to, meet their budget objectives each year to fulfill our longstanding commitment to our planning and service area, which include 37 towns within Bennington and Rutland Counties. It is our plan to use these same strategies for the overall management of the GMRSVP project we are proposing for Bennington, Windham and Windsor Counties.

GMRSVP and SVCOA's previous work/area plans and annual reports are strong indicators of our successes. We have a solid infrastructure in place to support all components of measuring performance--from formulating the placement, training and service activities, to gathering the data for measurement and analysis. SVCOA currently uses a results based accountability model in

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producing measurable improvements for our clients and communities and will most certainly carry forward this method of measuring performances.

YOUR PLAN AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENSURE THE PROJECT IS IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE RSVP FEDERAL REGULATIONS TO INCLUDE ESTABLISHING THE RSVP ADVISORY COUNCIL, ENSURING RSVP VOLUNTEERS ARE PLACED IN STATIONS THAT HAVE SIGNED THE REQUIRED MOU, AND ENSURING ALL VOLUNTEERS ARE ELIGIBLE TO SERVE IN RSVP:

It is the responsibility of the RSVP staff to ensure that all protocols are met to ensure federal regulations are strictly followed. The protocols are part of our policies and are on file at the GMRSVP office. Each staff person has access to these policy statements, which include direction on implementation and follow up. The program supervisor and the program coordinators work together to ensure through the intake process that all volunteers are eligible to serve (such as using proof of age via a driver's license) and that the volunteer will only be placed with a station that has a current MOU. If a station does not have a current MOU, either the program supervisor or area manager will follow up with the volunteer station to ensure it is updated. Stations are aware that no RSVP services will be provided until the MOU is updated. GMRSVP has an Advisory Council of five members, which represent a cross section of the communities they serve. SVCOA has a board of directors--currently at 10 members. The majority should be older individuals with special economic and/or social needs. The balance shall be representative of the community at large. Both of these groups oversee, guide and advise GMRSVP in all areas of operation. Having two distinct bodies offers additional perspectives, and input into program designs, which brings ongoing feedback and suggestions to constantly improve our outcomes.

Organizational Capability

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CAPABILITY TO OPERATE THE RSVP PROJECT YOU PROPOSE WITH RESPECT TO:

YOUR PLAN 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 USE OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES. CLEARLY DEFINED STAFF POSITIONS, IDENTIFICATION OF CURRENT STAFF ASSIGNED TO THE PROJECT AND HOW THESE

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POSITIONS WILL ENSURE THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE PROGRAM OBJECTIONS. DEMONSTRATE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT INTERNAL POLICIES AND OPERATING PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGE RISK, SUCH AS ACCOUNTING, PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT, AND PURCHASING. MANAGE CAPITAL ASSETS SUCH AS FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, AND SUPPLIES. DEMONSTRATE ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE AREA OF ROBUST FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CAPACITY AND SYSTEMS AND PAST EXPERIENCE IN MANAGING FEDERAL GRANTS.

SVCOA came into existence due to the Older Americans Act of 1965, which identified a series of broad objectives aimed at improving the lives of older Americans. In 1973, this Act was amended to create a network of Area Agencies on Aging (AAA's). SVCOA is a private, non-profit, 501(c) (3) organization governed by a board of directors.

The mission of the Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging is to be a community force in creating and sustaining opportunities for elders and caregivers in our region to help assure that elders are able to maintain maximum independence and quality of life.

To fulfill this mission, SVCOA has adopted three overarching goals:

- * To support elders in the southwestern Vermont planning and service area to face the challenges of aging with dignity and independence
- * To create and sustain working partnerships with elders and others interested in elder issues to make area communities better places for older persons to live by creating community based options and choices designed to enhance the quality of life of seniors and caregivers
- * To support family and other caregivers of elders to help them maintain their care giving role

We are also tasked with the responsibility for planning, coordinating, and advocating for community programs that will benefit individuals 60 years and older as well as younger disabled individuals who are enrolled in the state's long-term care program called Choices for Care. Some of these programs include: a Senior HelpLine, case management services, nutrition services, health insurance (especially Medicare/Medicaid) assistance, transportation services, money management services, to name a few. The programs SVCOA provide clearly indicate our experience in the Primary Focus Area of Healthy Futures. After 38+ years of working with seniors we believe this reflects our success and willingness to fulfill our mission.

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Sandy Conrad, MSW is the executive director of SVCOA and the former care management director at Gifford Medical Center in Vermont. She will be responsible for the management of this RSVP grant if approved by CNCS. Sandy is a social worker and has extensive knowledge and sensitivity with regards to the human service fields. Administrative and financial services will be provided by SVCOA's bookkeeper, Rosemary Greene who has 20 years+ of bookkeeping experience and a contractual arrangement with a Certified Public Accountant, Kevin Marchand-Fiscal Director, who has been with SVCOA for over 35 years. We will be looking to hire one full-time program manager in each county to be served, hire one part-time data manager and one full-time program supervisor. In terms of SVCOA's fiscal accountability, this organization manages a budget of \$3.5 million dollars. SVCOA and GMRSVP's financial records are audited annually and both have successfully undergone mandated A-133 audits. There have never been any deficit management findings. Other internal and external checks and balances are in place to ensure proper accountability. GMRSVP and SVCOA's grants have met or exceeded all administrative fiscal requirements set by federal guidelines and use the mandates and principles outlined in the OMB circulars and the RSVP guidelines set by CNCS.

Detailed quarterly financials will be provided by SVCOA/GMRSVP and our Fiscal Director to the SVCOA executive director, Finance committee and full board for review to ensure that income and expense reporting practices are followed according to federal guidelines. Ongoing and annual reviews of budget projections and financials will be utilized by the project supervisor and the SVCOA executive director. As to purchasing, there are clearly defined accounting policies in place that are followed by all staff and any purchases are subject to approval by the SVCOA executive director.

SVCOA and GMRSVP have demonstrated its ability to secure and develop additional funding and in-kind resources needed to support and sustain the programs we manage. Documentation of contributions by all sources is submitted on a regular basis and every effort is made to broaden our funding base. Currently we receive a wide range of financial support from; the state of Vermont, town funding, United Way, in-kind donations, community member supports, and various local grants.

Day-to-day responsibility for the GMRSVP will be handled by the project supervisor who will be supervised and annually reviewed by the SVCOA executive director. Job descriptions and resumes will be held on file with SVCOA. The program supervisor will supervise staff and conduct annual performance evaluations. These will be reviewed with each staff member for comments and

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performance improvement plans if needed. GMRSVP staff will be encouraged to attend conferences, workshops, etc., to promote professional development. Regular staff meetings provide an opportunity for best practice sharing and updates on policy changes. All efforts will be made to ensure that staff has the necessary tools to effectively perform their job duties.

This year SVCOA staff attended the second CNCS Virtual Conference to help support us in completing this grant. We also look forward to partnering with RSVP directors through the Vermont National Senior Service Corps (VTNSSC) to enhance and strengthen our professional growth. VTNSSC directors will work closely with the CNCS Vermont State program specialist in aligning these work plans and look forward to implementing the CNCS standardized performance measures that will focus and support these efforts to show an overall statewide impact.

The track record for both SVCOA and Green Mountain RSVP of Bennington, Windham, and Windsor Counties speaks volumes about their commitment to volunteer service as a solution to community challenges. Looking back over the nearly 40+ years of operation it is clear that our communities are stronger, healthier and more vibrant thanks to the effort, dedication, and impact of the thousands upon thousands of volunteers and staff who have served these organizations. We know that with this new CNCS/RSVP initiative and the Primary Focus on Healthy Futures we can continue to provide service as a solution through our well respected leadership in volunteerism and working with elders and younger disabled individuals.

Other

Other:

Not applicable

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

PNS Amendment:

Not applicable