

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Adams and Webster counties is sponsored by Senior Action, Inc. which was officially incorporated September 7, 1973 as a non-profit organization. Senior Action sponsors three programs including RSVP, Meals on Wheels, and the Foster Grandparent Program which all utilize senior volunteers as integral parts of their operation.

Senior Action's mission is to provide volunteer opportunities with program and services in the community that enhance people's quality of life.

Senior Action's goals

- \* Provide a nutritious meals to those that are homebound and unable to prepare an adequate meal for themselves.
- \* Create meaningful volunteer opportunities to people in the community and provide opportunities for people to give of themselves.
- \* To work in cooperation with other human service agencies and groups in the community to fulfill their goals and objectives.
- \* Provide opportunities for seniors to connect and impact at-risk children.

Senior Action's RSVP Program of Adams and Webster counties estimates 432 RSVP volunteers will serve. Some of their activities will include school and community based mentoring, emergency food distribution, leading exercise classes to help combat obesity, and services related to individuals remaining independently living in their home, such as transportation, companionship, and food delivery. Our primary focus area will be Health Futures which will help meet needs within our two county area including access to care, aging in place and addressing obesity and food issues. At the end of the three-year grant 5,693 individuals will receive services and \$5,000 will be leveraged for local non-profits. 40% of students served will show improved academic engagement, 75% will show increased social support due to food delivery, 30% due to transportation assistance 40% due to companionship services provided. 40% of individuals will have increased food security. The CNCS federal investment of \$57,558 will be supplemented by \$37,658 of non-federal resources invested in the two county area.

## Strengthening Communities

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program covers Adams and Webster counties in rural south central Nebraska. The office is located at 212 West 3rd which is centrally located within Hastings. The building provides plenty of parking and has a heated sidewalk which keeps the ice away in the winter.

## Narratives

The building is marked by a sign near the street and lettering on the door which makes it easy for people to find. The building is located on the one-way street that people use to get to the Post Office so it is traveled on a regular basis which has been helpful for increased visibility. According to the U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts 2012 data, Adams County, 563 sq. miles, has a population of approximately 31,459 people. The county seat of Hastings is the largest city with a population of approximately 25,058 and serves as the economic, industrial, and commercial center for Adams and Webster Counties. Also in Adams County are the farming villages of Ayr and Prosser each with less than 100 residents; Holstein and Roseland, with 229 and 242 residents; and Juniata and Kenesaw each with 693 and 873 residents. Approximately 6.5 percent of the population is under age 5 and 15.8 percent age 65 or older. The median family income in the county is approximately \$47,469 which is below the state average of \$50,695 and the per capita income is approximately \$24,390 which is also below the state average of \$26,113. 13.2 percent of the people live below the poverty line, the State of Nebraska is 12.0. Webster County has approximately the same geographical area as Adams County, 575 square miles, but a population of only around 3,725. Red Cloud, with a population of about 1,131, is the county seat and is located along the Republican River, near the Kansas-Nebraska border. The towns of Bladen and Guide Rock have 291 residents each, while Blue Hill has about 867 and Cowles 48. About 6.1 percent of the population is under 5 while another 23.1 percent is age 65 or older. The median family income is about \$38,538 and per capita income is about \$21,054 both fall under the state average significantly. About 14.7 percent of people live below the poverty line, which is higher than the state average. Adams and Webster Counties are mostly flat, with some rolling hills in Webster County along the Republican and Little Blue rivers. Agriculture is the primary industry in both counties with most of the land cultivated for row crops such as corn and soybeans. The largest employer in the region is Mary Lanning Memorial Hospital. Hastings College, a four-year private liberal arts college, and Central Community College, a two-year technical school, are both located in Hastings. Good Samaritan Village, located in Hastings, is the largest retirement community in the state of Nebraska, with more than 800 men and women aged 55 or older living in the 138-acre complex. We maintain positive working relationships with the community and endeavor to maintain friendly and helpful relations that are the hallmark of small towns in the Midwest. We write a quarterly newsletter that is sent or e-mailed to all of our registered volunteers and to our partner stations that contains important information for our volunteers as well as information about volunteer opportunities. The Adams County Board of Supervisors and the City of Hastings are strong supporters of the program both financially and those that are eligible volunteer at locations

## Narratives

throughout Adams County. We provide volunteers to non-profit organizations and public agencies that have a goal of helping and providing service addressing critical community needs. Our annual assessment completed by station supervisors, United Way agencies and our Board of Directors identifies a primary need in the two county service area as volunteer opportunities to assist seniors with tasks to help them remain in their own homes.

The biggest need is for transportation assistance. No mass transit transportation is available, both counties offer Handi-Bus for the public for limited hours. For Webster county, limited medical services are available in the community, however many doctors' visits are completed in Hastings, Grand Island or even Lincoln depending on the need. Public transportation services to Hastings are only certain days and in both counties neither transportation option goes to Grand Island or Lincoln. Adams County has one public taxi that operates during the week but no evenings. The Veterans hospital is currently located in Grand Island which is 45 minutes from Hastings and 1 ½ hours from the farthest location in Webster county. Evening and weekend transportation especially for those with a physical disability is unavailable. Volunteers have been filling this void for individuals for many years.

A second critical need for people in the communities is food security. Both Adams and Webster counties have above the state average statistics of people living in poverty and in many cases working class individuals unable to make ends meet with low paying jobs since both counties also fall below the state average in median family income and per capita income. Volunteers have been preparing emergency food for individuals for an extended period of time in each county. Services have increased from the local homeless shelter providing meals and one food pantry, to three food pantries, a backpack program for low income students at 3 different schools, and a sack lunch program that operates on a philosophy of no questions asked. Currently the backpack program is providing food in backpacks each Friday to 150 elementary students and is scheduled to begin at the Hastings Middle School in January 2014. The sack lunch program averages 187 lunches per day picked up by hungry individuals. Each of the emergency programs listed above (excluding the homeless shelter) are staffed by volunteers who sort, organize, pack food and deliver or hand-out to needy individuals. Each of these programs would not be able to provide services without volunteers.

It is very important to have a social support system of friends and family as we age. The lack of social ties can make elderly people more susceptible to disease, illness and ultimately death. According to the research in the American Journal of Epidemiology, social ties significantly affect the mortality rate of the elderly. Keeping active in the community, a church or other forms of social contact helps the

## **Narratives**

elderly enjoy retirement and avoid social isolation. Due to the isolated rural nature of the two communities a need for companionship of individuals is a constant need. Lack of accessible public transportation limits the activities of homebound or nearly homebound individuals to seek out social activities. Delivery of meals to their home not only increases proper nutrition but gives individuals a connection to the outside community. Companionship is one of the major factors that will enhance the positive aging of the mind as we grow older. In later stages of every person's life, it is common that one partner leave the other partner first; this is where companionship is greatly needed. It is the times that caregivers provides companionship that has monumental effects. By talking about experiences in life, current events or things of interest, the mind remains healthier and happier. Having a companion is like having a friend who is willing and able to see and help you improve your weakness.

As part of our annual self-assessment, questions are specifically answered for services provided through Senior Action, Inc. This assessment gives the partnering station the opportunity to evaluate the past year and document their volunteer needs for the upcoming year. This is also one of the opportunities when data is collected. Information is shared with each station supervisor about what needs to be collected, and the tools that will be utilized to make this happen. Stations can decide how they want to collect the information (i.e. phone, in person, survey monkey, client databases, etc.) but the information that is collected is standard for each performance measure. This information is used by the Senior Action, Inc. Board of Directors to plan goals and objectives for the upcoming year. Our Board of Directors also serves as our Community Advisory group because of the size of our agency. They are a working board which has formed committees so they are able to participate actively in program development, execution of services, policy making, strategic planning and visioning. Our Executive Director, who is also the program director of RSVP, spoke about RSVP on the local television and radio stations, and always welcomes articles in each of the local newspapers in the area. Media are always invited to functions and once a year a volunteer or volunteer station is highlighted in the newspaper. RSVP presentations have also been made to the Rotary Club, Adams County Senior Services Congregate Meals, Good Samaritan Village, Church Women United, Salvation Army, United Way, Volunteer Hastings, Webster County Senior Committee and Midland Area Agency on Aging. At these presentations our Director explains our program, the value to the community of volunteerism, the rewards of volunteering, and makes an appeal for volunteers. Through this public outreach we attract attention of organizations that have volunteer needs that we may not be aware of and recruit additional volunteers. Additionally, our Board of Directors, our volunteers, and our employees are all

## **Narratives**

active in the community and make recommendations to organizations or to us of partnership opportunities. Our Board of Directors is active in the United Way, Red Cross, Meals on Wheels, Good Samaritan Village, Adams County Extension, government and the business community. The United Way of South Central Nebraska conducts an evaluation of the needs in our community and the impact the programs available have on the people who live here. Our program meets monthly with the United Way director and other agencies and assisting in this process. One of the items evaluated is the need for volunteers in the community; the impact they make and the areas that still need additional volunteers to address unmet community needs. The data collected for our PPR reports, our Meals on Wheels survey data are used as sources for the evaluation. This is beneficial to our agency in deciding which new volunteer opportunities to make available and confirming the existing need for the stations already in place. Since our two county service area is at a disadvantage of not having a formalized community needs assessment readily available to determine where volunteers should be primarily focused we pay attention to news stories, newspaper articles and listen to people in the community which results in new partnerships being formed in a variety of ways. First, an existing volunteer sees a new opportunity or a way they can provide service at a new location or in a different way at an existing location. Secondly, the United Way holds monthly meetings with the 19 agencies they fund; issues and needs are discussed at this time many times resulting in the need for volunteers providing services due to everyone's limited funding. Third, a community member at a potential station contacts the agency needing volunteers. Lastly, information obtained from station supervisor interviews, agency and board self-assessment, volunteer evaluations and SWOT analysis is utilized to determine potential stations. Each potential station is then screened to ensure they meet CNCS guidelines for an eligible station, contact is then made to see how volunteers could benefit the station and the community in an impactful way and obtaining an explanation of what volunteers would be doing. This information is compiled and then brought to our Board of Directors for discussion and approval, then a Memorandum of Understanding is put into place. Volunteer service by RSVP registered volunteers enhances the capacity of the various organizations by taking on tasks that would otherwise go undone, hours would have to be cut or services tailored to the paid staff time available. Our registered volunteers are thoroughly integrated into the approximately 35 partner stations we have in the two-county area.

Volunteers are delivering services in the community as well as outside the primary focus area. Without the senior volunteer programs in the community services would have to terminate or be cut back severely. Our volunteers serve as guides and docents at the Hastings and Webster County

## **Narratives**

Museums, facilitate activities for 80 people locally and provided services to 37 people who participated in the State Special Olympic Games in Omaha and volunteered at the National Special Olympics games held in Lincoln. Volunteers are supporting blood drives, leveraging cash and in-kind resources for non-profit organizations, managing volunteers, improving public land and parks, repairing homes, comforting children and leading exercise programs to help combat obesity and help lessen muscle weakness, strokes, diabetes, acid indigestion, high blood pressure and cholesterol. Our program makes every effort to place all volunteers with an interest in the RSVP program including those with physical and mental disabilities. One of our volunteers is confined to a wheelchair and still wanted to give back to her community. We made arrangements for her to have transportation through the Adams County Handi-bus and she is taken to the Hastings Homestead once a week and calls Bingo numbers for the residents. In sum, our volunteers provide more than 42,000 hours of volunteer service to our rural area every year that improves the quality of life to individuals and to our community as a whole. As evidenced in our work plans volunteers serve at multiple sites doing a wide variety of different things.

In the two county service area volunteers not only meet community needs but also enable struggling non-profit organizations to continue to operate, extend their hours, offer services that would not be available, provide services to individuals and families on a regular basis and bridge gaps between diverse populations because of their willingness to give of their time, energy and expertise. This is done in a variety of ways but all with the goal of continuing to keep Nebraska the great place it is to live and as the "Happiest Place in America", where Hastings was featured on ABC news.

### **Recruitment and Development**

Our program assures a high quality experience for our volunteers by ensuring all volunteers are provided the training they need to be successful. Volunteer training in our program begins at the time of enrollment. When signing up for the RSVP program volunteers are given a one-on-one orientation with the director or RSVP secretary. During this orientation staff go over the volunteer manual which explains what the RSVP program is, how our program operates, prohibited activities, station and insurance information. Calendar information is included so volunteers understand how to track their hours and what the hours are used for. Individual stations provide training to volunteers on their policies, specific job duties and any information the volunteer needs to complete their service.

Training has been provided to Meals on Wheels volunteers to ensure all food is delivered in a safe, timely manner to clients. Mary Lanning Hospital and Good Samaritan Society -- Hastings Village offer monthly training opportunities for their volunteers. They have addressed an array of topics from

## Narratives

changes within the agency to tips and tools on how to best serve its clientele. Adams County Visitors Bureau provides weekly updates to volunteers because the need for volunteers to have the most current information when people stop in or call is crucial. In the past year RSVP volunteers were invited to quarterly "Coffee and Conversation" meetings with staff that covered changes in the RSVP program, talk about new volunteer activities and pass on any information that we have received from station supervisors. This is also a wonderful opportunity for volunteers to let staff know of needs they see in their station or in the community in general. The meetings were held at different volunteer stations, including Mary Lanning, Adams County Senior Services, Hastings Museum and Good Samaritan Society -- Hastings Village. Our Board of Directors received training during the past year on federal regulations, compliance monitoring guide, and station roles and responsibilities. Each board member added information they received to their board manual. Initial on-site training is provided to station supervisors going over the information in the Memorandum of Understanding, volunteer/stations handbook so they understand the benefits for volunteers, prohibited activities and the expectations from our agency view point. When gathering information for the PPR report telephone contact is made with all station supervisors, not only to collect the data needed but to also talk to them about changes in their program and ours. This gives the Director the opportunity to do immediate training on issues or concerns. Recruitment and development of volunteers is fostered through community relationships including a wide readership of our RSVP Newsletter and with the various media outlets such as the Hastings Tribune, KHAS radio and television, The Breeze 94.5 radio station and new in the past year The Bridge 95.7 Christian radio station. We also have an ad that runs on the Hastings Public Access Channel and the Good Samaritan Society - Hastings Village television station. The various media outlets in the community have given media coverage for our RSVP volunteer recognition dinner and the need for additional volunteers. The hands on approach to community involvement in our friendly small town environment leads to referrals for both volunteers and volunteer service opportunities. We continue to partner with students at the University of Nebraska in Omaha to update our website, have placed ads on the Volunteer Match website, have links on the Midland Area Agency on Aging website and have given brochures to the 55+ group that meets in Hastings. Baby boomers are a gregarious lot and less likely to volunteer out of a sense of duty or obligation, and more likely to volunteer as part of a social interaction. We continue to work with stations to offer more flexible schedules with short increments of time. In 2012 we offered a tea for existing RSVP volunteers who brought potential new volunteers. This gave non RSVP people the opportunity to learn about the program and have the opportunity to get to know other volunteers.

## Narratives

Retention of volunteers is fostered through personal interaction with the volunteers and the volunteer station supervisors, and encouraging friendly open communication. Additionally, during interactions with volunteers, our staff always expresses sincere appreciation both for the work being done by the volunteer, and the positive spirit they bring to the encounter. Each year our organization holds a Recognition Banquet for our volunteers in which we serve a meal, live entertainment and a small gift. Each year our event has a theme for the evening, the Board of Directors helps choose the theme, plans the evening, facilitation, set-up and tear down. This past year we did a Mardi Gras theme.

Additionally, awards are given for volunteer service anniversaries of 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 years.

Entertainment was provided by the Hastings College jazz band. Lucky winners get to take home the decorative centerpiece from their table. At our Recognition Banquet we share information with our volunteers about the positive impact they have had on the community, discussing both statistical and qualitative enhancements. Most of the volunteer stations have additional recognition dinners, teas, or activities to which our volunteers are invited and are recognized as well. This past year's event was attended by 293 people. Our staff members know our volunteers well, and have frequent interactions with them in our office, at volunteer stations, and over the telephone. In these encounters, our staff members discuss the experiences the volunteers are having and frequently reflect on the meaning of the service the volunteers are giving to the community. Our staff also seeks to reassure the volunteer of the importance of the work they are doing, as well as to make suggestions that may make the volunteers' experiences even more rewarding. Our volunteers frequently report to us significant personal value and comment that their service has enhanced the quality of their own lives, by allowing them to remain active and make a positive impact on the quality of the lives of those they serve. In an effort to ensure our volunteers feel connected with program staff and their peers a birthday call program was implemented and still continues in which a volunteer calls all volunteers to wish them a Happy Birthday with warm greetings from the staff. The coffee and conversation opportunities were available for volunteers to come and have social time and have fun. The particular focus was on volunteers enrolled with the program less than one year to ensure their expectations of volunteering is what they are experiencing.

Each year as part of our recognition dinner, volunteers are surveyed to help us evaluate certain aspects of our program. Listed below are the percentages of volunteers surveyed in 2012 who were:

Satisfied or very satisfied

RSVP Staff Support -- 92%

Recognition Dinners -- 95%

## Narratives

Training received from stations -- 61%

Cooperation received from stations -- 76%

96% of volunteers indicated their volunteer activities are rewarding or highly rewarding

91% stated they understand the RSVP policies and procedures

These statistics were then shared with station supervisors, our Board of Directors and published in our quarterly newsletter. The survey also gathered information on if their volunteering is beneficial to their health, if they have improved quality of life and if they feel safe while volunteering.

The population of Adams County is approximately 88 percent white, 8 percent of the population is Hispanic and 3.6 percent of the population Black, Native American, Pacific Islander and Asian. The population of Webster County is approximately 97 percent white, 3 percent of the population is Hispanic, Black, Native American, Pacific Islander and Asian. Although our community is not as diverse in ethnicity as most urban areas, we look at diverse populations in a variety of ways. We do partner with programs that bring seniors together with children and younger people. Good Samaritan Village houses the Children's Ark child care center that integrates 6 RSVP volunteers into classrooms with children birth through 12 years old. Three RSVP volunteers for the local Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program in the past year and five RSVP volunteers tutored students with Hastings Public Schools. One of our program goals is to reach out to the growing Hispanic population in our community. We include Hispanic churches, Hispanic Support Group and Salud Para Su Corazón into our newsletter mailings and translate brochures and applications into Spanish. Our Executive Director's previous experience was working with Hispanic families across the state in relation to education; during this process she met with many community partners active in the Hispanic community. Our RSVP volunteers are a melting pot of seniors with very diverse backgrounds in education, income, work history and life lessons.

The Executive Director currently serves on the Advisory Council of the local Vocational Rehabilitation Program community group. The partnership results in opportunities for individuals with disabilities to find opportunities to serve in the community. Ten people have been placed with volunteer opportunities in the community. Six volunteers are now preparing meals, Open Table sack lunches or sorting items for a local pantry. These meals are given to homeless and/or individuals with food needs at Crossroads, Catholic Social Services and the Webster County Food Pantry. One individual is delivering Meals on Wheels two days a week. The three other individuals are serving at the Hastings Museum, Hastings Public Schools and the Great Plains Chapter of the American Red Cross. This has

## **Narratives**

proven to be an invaluable partnership that is a win-win for the community, volunteer, the stations and the RSVP program. Vocational Rehabilitation has partnered with the station to provide additional training and accommodation as needed for the volunteer.

Our plans for the upcoming year include finding additional leadership opportunities for volunteers who are interested in growing the capacity of a volunteer station by managing other community volunteers. This need has resulted in information obtained in station supervisor interviews at several of the stations where volunteers are currently placed.

### **Program Management**

Program management in the agency is completed in a variety of ways to ensure that all aspects of the program not only meet the federal regulations and adhere to the rules in the Compliance Monitoring guide but also ensure that impactful programming is available to the volunteers that continue to address the needs in the two county service area. The Executive Director has a close relationship with most station supervisors, through e-mail and telephone contact. Detailed conversations occur with station supervisors at least once a year (May or June) to collect statistical and impact data for the progress report. This is also the time discussion occurs regarding updates in RSVP and station policies and procedures, what current needs are at their station, any unmet needs that volunteers are not qualified to do or unmet needs in the community they see through their station. Once a year the United Way gathers community agencies, members, city officials and clients from a 4 county area (Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster) to analyze the direction that the United Way needs to go with their funding awards. Neither Adams nor Webster county conduct community needs assessments, so this is part of the structure, in addition to station supervisor input, that Senior Action RSVP program uses as a partial guide to determine if where we have volunteers placed meets the community need. Prior to the phone conversations with station supervisors, performance measure requirements (including surveys, if applicable), current volunteer job descriptions and updated station and volunteer handbooks are e-mailed or mailed to them for their preview (2 months prior to call). Reminders are always given to stations about prohibited activities (which are listed on the job description and in the handbooks). A minimum of one site visit is made to each station per year to visit with the volunteers, stop by and say hello to the station supervisor, check for safety concerns and to see if volunteer duties are an accurate reflection of the job description. The performance measures relevant to their station are discussed to determine if the station is able to obtain the information requested, timelines for completion and to answer any questions. This open dialog has allowed conversation about how Senior Action can make data collection simple for the station and the volunteers. Performance

## Narratives

measure (both in and outside the primary focus area) results are then shared with the station supervisor and funding sources upon completion of reporting to the Corporation for National and Community Service.

In planning for the RSVP competition Senior Action's Board of Directors, which also serves as the Advisory Council due to the small nature of the non-profit, evaluated each station and volunteer job to determine where they would fit into the focus areas, the stations willingness to complete paperwork, number of volunteers and if they aligned with community needs. Fortunately most stations had opportunities available where volunteers could serve within a focus area, however several stations Memorandum of Understanding were not renewed. These station activities were not meeting a critical community need and/or did not have many active volunteers serving. All volunteers who had only one of these stations as a volunteer placement met with the Executive Director with the hopes of finding them another RSVP volunteer opportunity. 90% of the volunteers serving at those stations either had another focus area volunteer opportunity already or were placed in focus area (primary or outside) volunteer opportunities so they still serve in the program. All volunteers were explained that although the station partnership with RSVP was ending they could continue to not only volunteer at that location and/or look at other RSVP volunteer opportunities.

The two largest stations offering volunteer opportunities are Good Samaritan Society -- Hastings Village which is a non-profit corporation, and Adams County Senior Services. The Village is the largest retirement community in the state of Nebraska, and our largest and most active station. This station has opportunities for a wide range of volunteer activities, both for residents who live in the Village and others. The Village has a part-time volunteer coordinator with whom we maintain a close working relationship. We talk with the Village's volunteer coordinator via telephone multiple times per week and discuss issues involving volunteers and placement. We discuss with her the value of impact-based volunteer work and make suggestions for volunteer placements in meaningful assignments that are within the Corporation's Focus Area or a critical community need outside the primary focus areas. The Village is essentially its own special needs community with a nursing home, an assisted living facility, and many levels of congregate and independent living arrangements for the residents. In addition to the services provided at the various living facilities and the opportunities for direct service through visits, transportation and telephone calls, there are community resources such as a library, a diner, a thrift store, etc. that operate with volunteer labor. Most volunteer needs and opportunities that arise at the Village are handled as one station, whether the service is providing services to a shut-in so they are able to remain in their own home, performing housing maintenance, or working in the

## Narratives

community library. This approach at the Village allows for a continuity of purpose and a feeling of community. Adams County Senior Services also has a volunteer coordinator who places volunteers in a variety of situations throughout the community, including access to health education programs, preventive health care services, installation of smoke alarms, in-home visits, handi-man services, respite care, and others. These services are offered throughout Adams county, with similar services offered in Webster County with a stronger focus on transportation because most health care services are not available within the county.

At our annual meeting in March the Board of Directors updated the strategic plan for the agency. During 2009, data through surveys, meetings with city and county officials and station supervisor feedback was compiled into a Strategic Plan for the agency finalized in 2010. The Board President and Executive Director have been in close communication regarding the data being collected and the President helped formulate the data that was used for the Board to write the plan. Each March the board reviews progress on the strategic plan which concludes in 2015.

The Meals on Wheels clients are surveyed in June and are asked about the quality of the food they receive, the temperature, the friendliness of the drivers, if the meals allow them to remain independent in their home and if they increased social support. The Executive Director personally drives all the routes and collects the data. This also gives her the opportunity to meet the clients and get direct feedback about the program. In 2013, survey results showed, 93% of surveyed individuals stated they feel they have improved nutrition due to the food/meals received. 100% of people surveyed indicated their drivers are friendly, warm and appreciate the connection to the outside community via verbal and written information shared with them. In May or June, each station supervisor is interviewed regarding the number of clients served, what they provided, if volunteers met their needs and what additional information, training or opportunities will be available in the upcoming year. Surveys are conducted for food distribution, transportation, companionship, however, they are completed by station supervisors and the information is then gathered and given to us at the time of our phone call. Surveys are conducted in person at the time the service is provided, by telephone or volunteers with internet capability are given the opportunity to respond with survey monkey. Each station determines which way to collect the survey information is best for their station. All stations use the same survey provided by RSVP.

Volunteer and station information is tracked using Volunteer Reporter which allows monthly reports to be generated regarding when Memorandum's of Understanding are due, the Executive Director generates these reports monthly and works with each station supervisor to update any due MOU's.

## **Narratives**

Each year staff complete an internal review of the records. This review goes through each volunteer and station file and looks for accuracy comparison to the paper file and computer. The spreadsheet looks at the following items: volunteer birthdate, enrollment date, if application is completed, signed by volunteer, if beneficiary is noted, application signed by staff, Dru Sjodin background check completed, timesheets signed by volunteer and program director. For station files we compare station signature on MOU, MOU dated in the last three years, non federal funds statement on MOU, non discrimination statement on MOU, accessibility checklist completed and non-profit verification. This continues to monitor compliance with program regulations and to see if any holes lapse in the system.

Our program has been in the community for 39 years and is well supported by the community and we have secured cash resources from the City of Hastings, Adams County, and small donations from individuals. In 2012, the City of Hastings provided \$9,500. In 2012 Adams County provided \$13,500. The United Way in 2012 funded \$13,000. Further, we have a locally-owned supermarket that provides us with both cash funding and volunteer fundraising opportunities through a coupon redemption program. In 2012 \$3,700 was raised. This couponing program is popular and we have many volunteers who contribute coupons, clip, sort, and fold coupons for us. This is also an area where volunteers who are no longer able to contribute vigorous physical activities can still do volunteer work and make a meaningful contribution. Our agency uses Volunteer Reporter to manage the data collection of the volunteers. This software is used to compile data for the Progress Reports and Program Report Supplement, data requested by station supervisors and monthly reports to our Board of Directors. Volunteers receive time sheets quarterly with the newsletter that is mailed out. Volunteer hours are collected and entered on a monthly basis. At the annual board meeting the Board of Directors reviews and votes on reimbursement policies that will be in place for the year. The board sets the mileage rate for staff and volunteers; current rates are \$.50 for staff and \$.40 for volunteers as detailed in the narrative portion of the budget.

Program staff attend all required Senior Corps training and are signed up on the NESSTALK list serve. The director participates in the monthly conference calls hosted by the state office. In the past two years the Executive Director has received training at the Nebraska Aging Conference, National Conference on Volunteering and plans to attend the Senior Corps conference in May 2014.

### **Organizational Capability**

Senior Action, Inc.'s mission statement is to provide meaningful volunteer opportunities with programs and services in the community that enhance people's quality of life. Our agency goals:

## Narratives

1. Include providing a nutritious meal to those who are homebound and unable to prepare an adequate meal for themselves.
2. Create meaningful volunteer opportunities to people in the community and provide opportunities for people to give of themselves.
3. To work in cooperation with other human service agencies and groups in the community to fulfill their goals and objectives.
4. Provide opportunities for seniors to connect and impact at-risk children in our community.

The management of our resources is overseen by our Board of Directors, and the Finance Committee of the Board. A Financial Management Manual is in place that outlines the fiscal operations of the program. All expenditures from the program are approved with written authorization from a member of the Executive Committee. All checks require two signatures of executive officers of the Board of Directors. All fiscal operations are computerized and broke down by funding source. Each month the board of directors receives detailed financial reports. Our financial activities are audited each year by a local accounting and auditing firm. The bookkeeping job duties are the responsibility of the Executive Director with direct supervision of the Finance Committee. Additional internal controls have been put in place, such as someone else opening the mail and logging the cash/checks received, the Board of Directors reviews all transactions monthly and the Executive Director does not sign checks. The Board of Directors sets all policies related to the operation of the program. They determine salaries, benefits, paid time off and ensures that all policies are in compliance with local, state, and federal regulations. All long distance staff travel must be approved by the board in advance. Local travel is approved monthly when bills are submitted for payment. Annually, the board sets the mileage rate that will be reimbursed for staff members. The office's computers are all networked and files are stored on one computer to ensure daily back-up of information. Files used by several staff members are placed in a shared folder. This has helped the office run more efficiently and people can have access to the same documents and databases from their own desks. Inventory is kept in an access database and continuous updated with new items purchased. Once a year staff members are assigned inventory sheets for their area to ensure the information is current. Inventory includes item name, description, model, serial number, date purchased, condition, where purchased, funding source, cost, owner, location and type of item. For the purchase of property/equipment with a single item or cumulative cost exceeding \$500 written approval is obtained from the Board of Directors.

Senior Action currently operates RSVP, FGP and a local Meals on Wheels program. Non-federal share for the RSVP program consists of cash resources from the City of Hastings (\$9,500), Adams

## Narratives

County (\$13,000), United Way (\$13,000), small donations from individuals, a coupon redemption program (\$3,700), and donated meals from stations for volunteers who serve 4 or more consecutive hours.

The RSVP Secretary (salary paid at 70% RSVP through federal and non-federal sources) calculates and enters all volunteer records into Volunteer Reporter monthly. She assists in the preparation of the PPR reports, prepares the newsletter, interviews and provides orientation to volunteers, answers the phone and opens all the incoming mail.

The Executive Director (salary paid at 71.45% RSVP) of the program oversees all operations of Meals on Wheels, RSVP and FGP and reports to the Board of Directors monthly or more often as needed.

The Director is responsible for any reporting that funding agencies request, public speaking engagements, volunteer activities and training; RSVP and Station coordination, training and updating of Memorandum of Understandings. She is responsible for the oversight of the federal regulations and fund raising for the agency which is about 77 hours per year. She holds a bachelor's degree in business management and has previous experience in bookkeeping, grant writing, public relations and government regulation monitoring. The organization is governed by a Board of Directors that meets at least monthly, and more often as needed. Members of the Board of Directors serve on designated committees such as Finance, Meals on Wheels, Personnel and Special Events. Executive Committee members chair those assignments. The company has written By-Laws and has detailed Personnel Procedures and Financial Management Manuals that govern personnel and fiscal management. Our Board of Directors represents the retirement committee, education, self-employment, YMCA, Good Samaritan Village, Adams County Board of Supervisors and the business community. Our board is active in Meals on Wheels, local churches, RSVP, the United Way and local government. Three of the board members have been involved with Senior Action for 10 years. The Board oversees the Executive Director who reports on the business of the program. Monthly reports are given to the Board on the number of volunteers, the hour's served, potential and current stations, community involvement and in-kind. The Board of Directors have visited many of the stations where volunteers are serving hours. In July and August, during the proposed budget review and approval the Director gave recommendations to the board of the items that are needed for the upcoming year. The Personnel Committee is involved in all evaluations of employees for the agency. New employees are evaluated at 90 and 120 days and then yearly after that. A set evaluation tool is used for all employees which includes goal setting. All staff and board members have job descriptions to clearly define their roles. This information is reviewed yearly. The staff and board of directors evaluate all aspects of the

## Narratives

operation of the program and look at our strengths and weaknesses as an agency yearly as part of our strategic plan and goal setting for the year. All outlays by our organization are made by check, which requires two signatures. We have a payment authorization form in place that requires the form and appropriate documentation to be in place before a check is signed. Currently only the executive officers of the Board of Directors have signature authorization on the checking account. Our financial management manual created by the Executive Director and approved by the Board of Directors outlines all policies and procedures of the agency. We are also a member of the Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce which has increased our awareness amongst the business sector of the community.

As mentioned in other sections of the grant evaluation of the program is done in a variety of ways. Each year a self-assessment is completed by staff and station supervisors. One time a year station supervisors are interviewed to collect data and any issues/concerns, strengths and needs are provided to the Executive Director. Each year at our annual recognition dinner volunteers in attendance are surveyed. Data is collected for Performance Measurement. In 2010 the Board of Directors completed a SWOT analysis of the agency that addressed not only programmatic items but community and financial topics. All of the items listed above are used to not only evaluate the program and previous years goals, but help set goals for the upcoming year and look at where our strengths and weaknesses in the agency lie and also outline needed training areas in the staff, Board of Directors, volunteers and station supervisors.

Senior Action RSVP program has a long history of meeting and in many cases exceeding progress in performance measurement and timely submission of all financial and programmatic reports. For example in the last Progress Report submitted in July 2013, the following statistics were successfully completed for acceptable activities in the Healthy Futures focus area, which is our primary focus: Food Security: number of contributing stations was 50% higher than planned, number of people served as four times the amount planned (135 planned, 546 served). 83% of clients served indicated their food needs were met by the food they received. Station supervisors indicated that those who do not feel their food needs were met would like to have more access to food (more than 1 time per month for food pantry clients). These individuals were referred to Catholic Social Services Open Table program which provides sack lunches to individuals, no questions asked. 93% of surveyed clients stated they feel they have improved nutrition. Open communication with station supervisors, United Way agencies and city/county officials about community needs allows for a continuous evaluation of our program to ensure volunteers are meeting those needs and qualified for their assignments.

## Narratives

**Other**

N/A

**PNS Amendment (if applicable)**

N/A