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Executive Summary

Tri-County RSVP is designed to address a critical need for community volunteers within Robeson, Scotland, and Hoke Counties, NC. The area is rural, predominantly low income, with a diverse population (White, Native American, African American, and Hispanic). The project will recruit 60 community volunteers, age 55 and older, through media outlets, community based organizations, flyers, church announcements, and other traditional approaches. Volunteer orientation and training will be provided by the Project Coordinator and Assistant Project Coordinator. Prior to placement of the volunteer, organizations hosting volunteers will be required to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding which will define the working relationship between the organization/workstations, the sponsor, and each assigned volunteers consistent with the regulations pertaining to RSVP.

Throughout the conduct of this project, activities that engage volunteers in meaningful life experiences will be of paramount interest. Among planned activities are activities that address food insecurity, low educational achievement, and lack of affordably housing among low income individuals and families.

Strengthening Communities

Robeson, Scotland, and Hoke Counties are located in southeastern North Carolina. Collectively, these counties cover 1,662 square miles with a population of 217,277 (2010 census). Two out of every three residents in this tricounty area live in Robeson, the largest county in North Carolina, covering 948.84 square miles.

Of the 43,677 households in Robeson, 2.75 percent represent persons per household with a median household income of \$27,241 and per capita money income of \$13,224.

Last year, the public schools of Robeson County ranked 145 out of 176 school systems in North Carolina. Slightly less than sixty-five (64.9%) of the population 25 years of age and older are high school graduates and 11.4% hold bachelor's degrees or higher. This means that 25% of the population has less than a high school education.

30,082 persons age five and older report a disability.

Lumbee Indians, who account for 33% of the total population in the tri-county area, have significantly higher rates of chronic conditions and risk factors, less access to health care, and lower quality of life compared to whites. In a recent study conducted by the NC Department of Health and Human Services, it was noted that Catawba and Lumbee Indians, along with upper Midwest Indians,

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had higher rates of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, fair/poor perceived health status, and current tobacco use compared to other adults in their respective states.

Of 49,638 housing units, 72.8% of the population own homes; the median value of owner-occupied housing units is \$66,100.

According to the 2010 census, approximately 31% of all persons in Robeson live in poverty. Scotland is close behind with a rate of 30% and Hoke, the smallest, has a rate of 21%, slightly a point higher than the national rate. This data reflects a majority minority population, low educational attainment, a significant number of children (28.8%) and an aging population (22.8%) living in poverty.

Food insecurity in the tri-county area is directly linked to the poverty rate, unemployment rate, single-parent households, and the high price of food, particular fresh food. In Robeson County, the food insecurity rate is 23.5 percent or 31,200 people, compared to a state average rate of 19.3 percent.

The high incidence of poverty is largely characterized by single mothers rearing children and grandparents rearing grandchildren. Poverty affects school readiness, educational attainment, access to health services and health care, and an ill-educated and unskilled labor force with limited access to workforce development programs to earn a livable wage. Within this environment is the highest rate of STDs in the nation and an increased need for HIV-AIDS counseling and treatment. The loss of manufacturing jobs and loss of farming as a major source of income has created family stress and other social problems of alcohol and substance abuse.

Sacred Pathways is a volunteer-driven organization and, over the past 10 years, has developed a close working relationship with key community segments (professionals, nonprofits, faith-based organizations) in addressing the needs in the community. The goals of the Tri-County RSVP are:

1. To develop and maintain volunteer programs in local communities that support the Focus areas of SAA;
2. To provide services that Sacred Pathway cannot otherwise offer;
3. To provide training, personal growth and advancement for 50 volunteers;
4. To develop community partnerships with organizations and individuals that reflect the diversity of the population living in the tri-county area; and
5. To promote volunteerism in the tri-county area.

To carry out these broad goals, Tri-County RSVP will provide 60 volunteers who will be engaged in activities that focus on three of the six focus areas: Healthy Futures, Education, and Economic

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Opportunities. Specific activities include:

1. Distribution of food boxes to low income families and individuals
2. Serving hot meals to indigents, homeless, and low income individuals/families
3. Tutoring of low performing students
4. Assisting Habitat of the Humanity with collection of donated items, including assorting and sales

Data\Collection/Evaluation: Obtaining feedback from volunteers, workstations, and participants is vitally important as it enables Sacred Pathway to determine the success the organization is experiencing in the actual performance of its plan. The data collected through time attendance reports, activity logs, test scores, evaluation reports from workstation supervisors, and other data will also be useful in determining what adjustments, if any, are needed to ensure the greatest utilization of RSVP and local resources.

Among the tools to measure project success are:

1. Time Attendance reports - Each volunteer will be required to keep a daily attendance report that describes hours, services provided, # of participants. Target goal: 2000 volunteer hours
2. Activity logs - tailor -made activity logs will be developed by the project coordinator to measure the number of families or individuals receiving hot meals, food boxes, and tutoring
3. Post test (EOG, End of Grade) - For those students receiving tutoring/mentoring, a release will be obtain from parents for obtaining EOG scores. The project anticipates a 80% passing rate for students assisted by volunteers.
4. Surveys -- to measure workstation and participant satisfaction with all program services
5. Group attendance records -- for recognition events, orientation

Recruitment and Development

Sacred Pathways is a volunteer-driven organization and, over the past ten years, has developed a close working relationship with key community segments (retired school teachers, professionals, students, pastors, community based managers and organizers, stay-at-home moms). The goals of Tri-County RSVP are:

1. To develop and maintain volunteer programs in local communities that support the six Focus Areas of SAA

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2. To provide services that Sacred Pathway cannot otherwise offer
3. To provide training, personal growth and advancement for 70 volunteers
4. To develop community partnerships with organizations and individuals that reflect the diversity of the population living in the tri-county area
5. To promote volunteerism in the tri-county area

Volunteers will be recruited through methods that have proven to be successful in the rural minority communities:

1. Asking pastors and others to refer volunteers to RSVP
2. Placing recruitment notices in church bulletins, the veterans office, the African American History Museum (in Robeson)
3. Speaking to local community groups (e.g. volunteer fire department, kiwanis, chapter meetings of the NAACP, retired teacher association meetings)
4. Public radio announcements
5. Placing recruitment posters in local establishments (e.g. restaurants, ballparks, grocery stores)
6. Asking volunteers to recruit their friends and others
7. Referrals from the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina and other organizations

Volunteers entering into the program will complete a volunteer application and an eligibility to be a RSVP will be made based upon age (55 minimum age), commitment to serve without compensation, residence in the tri-county area, and the applicant agrees to abide by the rules and regulations governing the RSVP. Once an eligibility has been determined, the volunteer will be initially assessed as to interests, skills, time commitments, and factors that may limit or impact the involvement of the volunteer (e.g. transportation needs, volunteer also works or is a care-giver, etc.) This assessment will enable the project coordinator to:

1. Communicate the goals of the program and its six Focus Areas and incentives to volunteers (e.g. transportation, project supplies, insurance while performing authorized assignments)
2. To match the skills of the volunteer to a specific organization(s) or work station that enables the volunteer to work in one or more of the six Focus Areas identified by SAA)
3. Obtain basic information for tracking volunteer performance (assignments, training provided,

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hours contributed, etc)

4. Identify training needs that enhances the volunteer's growth and ability to perform assigned duties.

All volunteers will receive training. Orientation provides a deeper review of the program and its requirements, expectations, roles and responsibilities of volunteers, staff, and participating organizations/work stations. At the end of the orientation, volunteers should know the goals of the program (six Focus areas), understand who their sponsor/work station is, what is expected of them, how they report hours and other information, how to contact the appropriate personnel at Sacred Pathway, "dos and don'ts", etc. Dependent upon the availability of funds, each participant shall receive a tote bag fill with required reporting forms, pens, pencils, notepads, brochures, and other commemorative supplies.

Per memorandum of understanding (MOU) with each sponsor/work station, additional training will be made available by the sponsor. This training will provide station orientation and appropriate in-service training that enhances performance of assignments.

The MOU shall also cover record-keeping for tracking attendance and performance, station supervision, resources required for performance of work assignment, and appropriate recognition of the volunteer.

Sacred Pathway, through its year of community organization and delivery of program services, is knowledgeable of those organizations in the tri-county area who are engaged in the delivery of services embraced by the six Focus Area, and are in need of community volunteers. Among those organizations/work stations are:

1. Lumbee Boys and Girls Club - this program is operated by the Lumbee Tribe of NC in each of the targeted counties. It provides educational opportunities for low income children ages six to eighteen. There are approximately 100 low income children (of all races) enrolled in the tribal program.
2. Tri-County Community Action Agency - provides headstart, food, housing, and other assistance for low income people in Robeson, Scotland, and Hoke Counties.

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3. Sacred Pathway - consistent with 45 CFR Part 2553.61 [When may sponsor serve as a volunteer station], Sacred Pathway will be a designated work station. Sacred Pathway serves hot cooked breakfast and lunch meals daily to indigents and the homeless, distributes food box boxes on Saturday and Sunday, maintains a clothing closet, and is a certified food distribution site.

4 Scotland County (Laurinburg) Habitat for Humanity

All of the organizations listed above, and any organization in the tri-county area may apply to become a RSVP work station. Each application will be reviewed by the SACRED PATHWAYS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE and ranked according to a predetermined priority scale, consistent with 45 CFR Part 2553.

Selected organizations/workstations shall, at the minimum, successfully conclude a MOU with Sacred Pathway and agree to providing workstation supervision, recognition of the volunteer, meet reporting requirements, and provide orientation/training for the volunteer.

As noted previously, the population is primarily rural, has a large concentration of American Indians, and is one of the poorest areas in North Carolina. Volunteers recruited into this RSVP program will similarly represent the diversity of the population. Ideally, this will mean a volunteer population that is: 1/3 American Indian, 1/3 African American, and 1/3 White. Retired military and military families will be provided priority for purpose of recruitment and training.

Toward the end of the program year, the Tri-County RSVP will provide a recognition banquet that acknowledges the RSVP volunteers and their sponsors/workstations.

This project will also provide special recognition of any volunteer that is a veteran or military family member, or any disabled volunteer (regardless of military status).

Program Management

Sacred Pathway will employ a parttime project coordinator and a parttime administrative assistant. Working cooperatively with the management of Sacred Pathway and its ADVISORY COMMITTEE project staff shall be responsible for the day to day management of the Tri-County RSVP.

As sponsor, Sacred Pathway is cognizant of its responsibilities under 24 CFR Part 2553 and will maintain oversight to ensure:

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1. That RSVP resources are directed to ensuring a positive impact on critical human and social needs within the tri-county area;
2. Staff and board participate in activities that produces collaboration and jointly devised strategies in addressing community needs;
3. That the act of volunteering is a rewarding experience for volunteers;
4. That its pool of volunteers mirrors the diversity of the service area population and will, at the minimum, will serve a volunteer group that is 1/3 American Indian;
5. That volunteer work assignments and training are coordinated, compatible and complementary to services and activities with related national, state and local program, including other Corporation programs;
6. A plan for for promoting service by older adults is developed by year-end;
7. That the project is evaluated and its strengths and weakness in meeting community needs are identified; and
8. That RSVP volunteers are appropriately reimbursed on allowable cost.

Sacred Pathways intends to place considerable time in the negotiation of MOUs and monitoring of workstations to ensure compliance and a successful volunteer program. The MOU will, among other things, include the work description for each volunteer, a minimum number of hours (or time) that each volunteer will contribute, any additional training to be provided by the workstation, the frequency of onsite visits, purposes for visitation, and a delineation of the responsibilities of the workstation and sponsor.

Once a MOU has been approved and a volunteer has been assigned, each workstation will receive an ONSITE VISIT on a monthly or more frequent basis for the purpose of:

1. Ensuring that volunteer stations are in compliance with the MOU and RSVP rules and regulations
2. Collecting volunteer time records (to be approved by the workstation supervisor) and any other reporting records (e.g. mileage records ro , activity logs, evaluations)
3. Evaluation of the volunteer
4. Monitoring of volunteer performance
5. Planning recognition events with the workstation supervisor
6. Identification of training needs

On site visitations will be an opportunity for staff to assess the effectiveness of the RSVP and obtain insight into how the RSVP program is meeting community needs. Monitoring of activities further

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ensures that the workstation is abiding by RSVP regulations and not engaging in prohibited activities.

During these meeting, workstation supervisors will assist in volunteer evaluation and planning recognition events.554

A project coordinator, working under the supervisor of the Sacred Pathway's Executive Director, will:

1. Develop and carry out volunteer orientation and training,
2. Establish appropriate volunteer stations and perform on-site inspections
4. Provide staff assistance to the RSVP Advisory Council,
5. Negotiate MOUs
6. Maintain cooperative working relationships with community based organizations, civic groups, and others, to include presentations that encourage recruitment
7. Perform program evaluation, reporting results to Sacred Pathways and other appropriate entities
8. Assist Sacred Pathway in planning and carrying out quarterly and annual recognition events
9. Assist in transportation where needed
10. Attend all required training
11. Comply with budget requirements, personnel policies and procedures
12. Maintain all volunteer files

A part time Staff Assistant will be employed to assist with data entry, transportation, planning recognition events, maintaining volunteer files, receiving and monitoring of reports.

An ADVISORY COMMITTEE will provide guidance and direction in the overall performance of project management. This committee will be composed of five (5) members, two who are 55 years or older, with expertise or experience in conducting community based activities that serve low income people, managerial and fiscal management. The Advisory committee shall meet at least once every two months, participate in recruitment activities, and recognition events.

Organizational Capability

Sacred Pathways, Inc. is a crisis ministry that was incorporated in the State of North Carolina on July 20, 2006. The organization is headed by Dr. Ruth Dial Woods who has over thirty (30)years in grantee management, planning and evaluation. Dr. Woods is well known throughout North Carolina and on a national level in the area of American Indian Education. She has served NC Board

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of Governors and is a current member of the Board of Trustees, Fayetteville State University. Dr. Woods is also a former Assistant Superintendent for Robeson County Public Schools, Tribal Administrator, and one of the founders of Lumbee Regional Development Association and the NC Indian Commission. In 2011, she was one of four North Carolinians inducted by former Governor Purdue into the NC Hall of Fame.

Dr. Woods is founder of Sacred Pathways and serves as its Executive Director. In 2012, Sacred Pathways was selected as the Mission of the Year by the Board of Global Missions for the United Methodist Church. Since its inception, Sacred Pathways has been the recipient of several grants from AmeriCorps, United Way, the Lumbee Tribe of NC, the county of Robeson, NC United Methodist Conference, and the beneficiary of donations from people throughout its service area.

This program will employ a RSVP Coordinator (part time) who will work under the supervision of Dr. Woods. A copy of this job description has been sent by email. Also, a part time Assistant will be employ to assist the Coordinator in the management of volunteer files and tracking volunteers and attendance records. T

Ms. Natasha Tilson, a former Director of the Lumbee Tribe's Elders Services project, is being recruited to work with Sacred Pathway. Ms. Tilson has experience in working with RSVP and community organization and is expected to be employed as the RSVP coordinator for this project

While much of Sacred Pathway's activities are performed by employees through the senior employment program and work force investment act, the organization recognizes the importance of having expertise in financial management. Sacred Pathway is fortunate to have Ms. Carolyn Oxendine who has years of experience in accounting and fiscal management with the Public Schools of Robeson County, NC. While employed with Robeson County schools, Ms. Oxendine overseen the fiscal administration of the largest recipient of federal funds for Indian education in the nation. She will manage all RSVP project accounts receivables/payables, payroll, general ledger, and financial statements/reporting. Accounting policies and practices shall conform to general accounting principles and cost principles as expressed in applicable OMB Circulars. To ensure overall fiscal compliance and adequate internal controls, Sacred Pathways will contract with an independent auditor to review RSVP allocation of resources and compliance with applicable regulations.

Project activities will be housed in the offices of Sacred Pathways located in Pembroke, NC. This facility, approximately 2500 square feet, provides four (4) offices, a reception room, a computer/media lab, a kitchen and dining room (for feeding of the homeless and indigents; also used for staff and group meetings), a food bank, and storage area. This facility is adequate for the

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administration of this project, orientation and training activities, and advisory meetings.

Sacred Pathways has on hand policies and procedures that govern personnel management, procurement, and fiscal management.

Other

non-applicable

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

non-applicable