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Executive Summary

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Voluntary Action Center of NEPA will utilize the CNCS federal investment of \$77,434 supplemented by non-federal resources of \$18,694.

An estimated 230 RSVP volunteers will serve. The primary focus of this project is Healthy Futures. Some of the volunteer activities relating to this focus will include serving meals to homebound elderly and disabled, providing companionship to isolated veterans, staffing food pantries, assisting at VITA tax counseling sites, and counseling Medicare beneficiaries. At the end of the three year grant we anticipate that 1000 homebound older adults and disabled will report having increased social ties/perceived social support, 70 veterans or their families will have increased social support, 450 families facing food insecurity will receive emergency nutrition from food pantries, 900 low-income people will receive financial literacy services from VITA tax volunteers and 1000 Medicare beneficiaries will receive valuable information on Medicare, health insurance and access to benefits. We will also address needs in other focus areas: Education (elementary literacy skill building), Veterans and Military Families (recruiting them to serve as volunteers, thus increasing the capacity of community non-profits), Capacity Building (volunteers leveraging financial support for non-profits).

Strengthening Communities

Part II -- Section B. Strengthening Communities

RSVP of Luzerne and Wyoming Counties will serve all of Luzerne and Wyoming Counties, which are located in Northeastern PA. Luzerne County covers 907 square miles and is 80% urban and 20% rural. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population is 321,027. Wilkes Barre, the 13th largest city in PA has a population of 41,243 and is the county seat. Luzerne County population is 90.7% white, 3.4% black and 1% Asian. Fourteen percent of the population is below the poverty level. Unemployment is 9.7%. This geographic area includes a large aging population. In Wyoming County 17.3% of the population is over 65; in Luzerne County the 65 and over population is 18.4%. Adjacent to Luzerne County is Wyoming County. It covers 397 square miles and has a population of 28,123. There are no cities in Wyoming County; Tunkhannock is the county seat and is the largest borough with population of 1,836. The county is 85% urban and 15% rural. The population is 98% white. Unemployment is 9.4% and 12.1% of the population is below the poverty level.

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In 2011 the United Way of Wyoming Valley completed a community needs assessment. Through the convening of focus groups, the completion of a community survey and the collection of statistical and epidemiological data, it was concluded that among the top issues in Luzerne County are poverty, and access to health insurance. Among the top twenty medical conditions are depression and obesity. These issues -- obesity, depression, aging, poverty and access to health care -- will lead us to concentrate on the Healthy Futures Focus area, as identified by the CNCS Strategic Plan. For the period of this grant, RSVP volunteer service will concentrate on such activities as home delivered meals to elderly and disabled; staffing food pantries; financial literacy for low-middle income families, and Medicare counseling to aging, disabled and veterans, thus increasing their access to health care; providing companionship to isolated veterans. These activities will lead us to the following outcomes and/or outputs:

1. By delivering a daily meal to disabled and elderly, providing social interaction and a safety check we will enable this population to continue to live independently;
2. By distributing food at pantries and providing support for pantry staff we will increase food security for low income individuals and their families;
3. By delivering information on health insurance, health care access and health benefits programs and counseling Medicare beneficiaries we will increase their access to health care.
4. By providing companionship to veterans and their families via weekly visits, we will increase their social supports.

These outcomes will be confirmed by data collected periodically (surveys to recipients of services and statistics of activity) by the stations and RSVP office. These data instruments are described in the specific workplans.

The Voluntary Action Center has managed an RSVP grant for 37 years and has successfully collected, measured and managed data collection as required by CNCS. When memorandums of understanding with volunteer stations are negotiated, we take the time to discuss data collection with station personnel to ensure that all required report information will be collected and submitted on a timely basis, thus enabling us to measure performance toward stated goals.

Service to veterans will be integral to our activities in the Healthy Futures focus area. It is estimated that there are 30,254 veterans living in Luzerne County and 2,529 veterans in Wyoming County. Many of these veterans experience the same needs as the general population. In some cases, their

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need is greater. In Luzerne County 72% of these veterans are over the age of 55; in Wyoming County 76% are over the age of 55. This population will be targeted as both recipients of service through our Healthy Futures activities, and as deliverers of service as recruited RSVP volunteers themselves (as described in our veterans recruitment workplan).

Veterans and professionals in the veteran field will be represented on our Advisory Council, ensuring that any issues that develop during our service activities will be addressed.

Recruitment and Development

Part II -- Section C. Recruitment and Development

Voluntary Action Center, as the sponsor of RSVP of Lackawanna County and the Volunteer Center has had over 40 years experience in recruiting volunteers to meet community needs. Through collaboration with community partners, and alignment with the CNCS strategic plan, we will use our expertise to develop high impact, high quality volunteer assignments that address current community problems.

Discussions with prospective stations and community advisory members will identify needs and ensure that the service activity will address those needs.

RSVP staff will meet with station staff to ensure that volunteer assignments will be fulfilling for the volunteer, while, at the same time addressing community needs. All prospective volunteers will be personally interviewed to make certain that their skills and interests are utilized most appropriately. Subsequent follow-up after placement with the volunteers and the stations will ensure that both community needs and volunteer needs continue to be met.

Volunteers and staff will be encouraged to pursue further training within as offered by our partners, CNCS, and our staff both in the Healthy Futures Focus Area and other areas. RSVP will facilitate opportunities for volunteers to meet in small group settings to reflect on their service, sharing their experience and knowledge.

We will take every opportunity to recruit volunteers from diverse populations and will not discriminate with regard to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, degrees of English proficiency or ability. Voluntary Action Center strongly believes in the value of volunteers from every population. For years we have received funding from Lackawanna County for a program aimed at involving mental health consumers in service. We recently received a Penn Serve grant to recruit Veterans and disabled into National Service. The award will be used to create a training event for station volunteer coordinators

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and for assistive devices to increase opportunities to serve. We will partner with Veteran Service Organizations, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the VA Medical Center and Vet Center, all serving veterans and their families. Our goal will be to engage veterans and their families in service, while serving those whose needs need to be met.

Recognition and retention are paramount to a high quality volunteer program. Retention of experienced volunteers is important in building a strong volunteer base, one in which volunteer leadership is utilized and valued. Volunteers will be encouraged to keep our staff informed of their experiences. Inactive volunteers will be contacted to determine the cause of their inactivity and placed in another volunteer position if desired.

Volunteers will be recognized in a variety of ways, understanding that each volunteer's motivation for serving is unique. Volunteers will be sent written, personal cards, called, invited to an annual recognition event, and invited to participate in training events as appropriate.

Program Management

Part II -- Section D. Program Management

RSVP Staff will meet annually with volunteer station staff to ensure that they are in compliance with RSVP program regulations. During this meeting staff will review station volunteer management practices, review the volunteers' physical working environment, discuss new volunteers needs, update memorandums of understanding as necessary, and review methods of data collection (Performance Measures Outputs and Outcomes). As part of this review we will meet with volunteers to ensure that volunteers are performing the service activity to which they were assigned and to measure their satisfaction.

Luzerne and Wyoming Counties are areas not served by a current Senior Corps RSVP Project; the grant was relinquished by the former sponsor last year. We will make every attempt to restore relationships that have been interrupted, while forging new ones that will serve the area well.

Voluntary Action Center has maintained memorandums of understanding with organizations whose missions fall within the Healthy Futures Focus Area for many years. As a sponsor of RSVP in Lackawanna County since 1976, we are familiar with federal regulations governing RSVP. We have successfully recruited and managed volunteers who deliver meals to homebound, serve undernourished in food pantries, provide education to Medicare beneficiaries and provide tax preparation for elderly. We have been successful in collecting data and measuring performance in these areas.

We will put a Community Advisory Council in place at the establishment of the project. The Council

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will be comprised of individuals representing diverse interests from the Project's geographic area. They will be instrumental in assessing the community's current and future needs.

All volunteers will be recruited in compliance with RSVP age restrictions. No volunteers will be placed at stations until Memorandums of Understanding have been negotiated and job descriptions are on file at the RSVP office.

Organizational Capability

Part II -- Section E. Organizational Capability

Voluntary Action Center has sponsored an RSVP Project for the past 37 years, and has been Lackawanna County's Volunteer Center for 42 years. The Volunteer Center's mission is to identify community needs, reach potential volunteers, place volunteers in meaningful assignments, publicize achievements of volunteers and to provide volunteer management training opportunities. This mission is in direct correlation with the mission of RSVP.

Lackawanna County RSVP Director Nancy Post will have primary responsibility for overseeing the Luzerne/Wyoming RSVP Project. Ms. Post has served as the RSVP Project Director for over 15 years. She previously worked in the aging network and has vast experience in the field of volunteerism. A full time coordinator will be hired to work with her on the Luzerne/Wyoming project. The sponsor staff supporting the project includes the Executive Director, Office Secretary and Fiscal Manager (who is a CPA). Financial records are kept according to generally accepted accounting principles by the fiscal staff and audited by a certified accounting firm. Throughout its 42 years, Voluntary Action Center has successfully managed grants from many funding streams -- private, local, state and federal.

As previously mentioned, Voluntary Action Center has had vast experience directing volunteer programs since its inception as a volunteer center 42 years ago. Voluntary Action Center grew as it responded to community needs. Today it is an "umbrella organization" sponsoring many programs which provide direct service utilizing volunteers: Big Brothers Big Sisters, Tax Counseling for the Elderly, and APPRISE Medicare Counseling. Voluntary Action Center coordinates the PrimeTime Health Program in Lackawanna County (which presents health promotion programs to older adults) and supervises three Senior Community Centers. All of these programs track program outcomes to ensure that prescribed goals are met.

Voluntary Action Center is committed to ensuring that office space is adequate for staff and volunteers. We make sure that the environment is welcoming to volunteers who participate in

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numerous meetings, training events and volunteer assignments. Equipment is upgraded as necessary. Supplies (and any other expenditures) are requested with internal purchase orders by staff, approved by immediate supervisor and executive director. Purchase orders are then reviewed by the Fiscal Manager for proper expensing and payment.

Other

n/a

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

NA