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Executive Summary

The Greater Texarkana RSVP is a federally legislated grant program serving two counties with a total of 1,883 square miles in Northeast Texas. The Greater Texarkana RSVP has been providing volunteer services in Bowie and Cass Counties for 40 years. Volunteers, 55 and over are linked with community needs identified in the two counties. At the end of the grant period, an estimated 176 unduplicated RSVP volunteers will have served the elderly, homebound, provided educational opportunities for those students that are falling below grade level and low-income adults in rural areas. The primary focus for Bowie and Cass Counties will be healthy futures. In this area, 105 unduplicated volunteers will assist in collecting and distributing food at three pantries and provide companionship to homebound individuals. Cass County is very rural in nature and in dire need of companionship for the elderly and homebound individuals who are unable to seek services due to transportation and limited services available. The program is enhanced by being able to draw volunteers from their neighboring RSVP program for the recruitment of individuals who have exhausted their time for volunteering in Arkansas. The sequestration has caused many agencies to reduce services which have been provided in the past and therefore volunteers are a necessity for this service. There are two major industries in Cass County and three in Bowie County that provide financial resources to agencies that assist in serving the elderly. At the end of the 36 month period, 250 individuals will report increased food security for themselves. During the course of the summer months, there are often severe storms in the area and often times volunteer Fire Fighters are summoned to assist the elderly as well as individuals in emergency situations. All needed services described will be achieved through the efforts of the unduplicated 176 volunteers.

The CNCS federal investment of \$24,753 will be supplemented with \$24,415 of non-federal resources.

Strengthening Communities

Bowie and Cass Counties is comprised of 1,883 square miles of both metropolitan and very rural communities. According to the 2010 Census Facts, the population of the two counties is 123,029. Census Facts also indicate that 28% of the population is over 55 years of age and the compositions of races are: Blacks - 20.85%, Caucasian -- 71.4% and Hispanics -- 5.5%. Records also indicate that 17.70% of the population lives below the poverty line.

In Bowie County, there has been a decrease in employment due to cutbacks of two plants and there is an outcry for RSVP volunteers to assist in providing and assisting individuals with health issues and where to resolve them, especially in the rural areas. There are twenty seven (27) communities in the

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two counties with Texarkana (Bowie) being the largest and is comprised of 36,411 residents according to the 2010 Census. Bowie County, being the largest of the two counties, has the advantage of attracting volunteers from Miller County, Arkansas which is across the state line from Bowie County and amplifies the volunteer base in Texas and at the same time addresses community needs. The other attraction in Bowie County is the number of volunteer opportunities in the health related arena where there are two major hospitals serving the two counties.

The closure and reduction in the workforce has greatly affected those who once had health insurance and due to unemployment now requires some assistance due to health related issues and lack of income. The two counties have a population of 123,029 and of that number, 28% are over 55 with 16.5% below the poverty level. This target group is in dire need of services as a result of distance from those services available to the general public. The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) provides meals to needy individuals, but due to cut backs in funding, many qualified citizens cannot be served and there is no record as to how many needs are unmet. AAA has pointed out that there are a number of citizens over the age of 55 who are malnourished with 'inadequate nutritional' intakes. This also includes a number of families who were laid off at the two plants. A number of non-profits and businesses and churches solicit funds for the purpose of providing food and clothing for low income individuals and families in need of service. .

Studies and surveys show most homebound residents desire to remain in their homes rather than moving to a facility that will provide for their every day care. Many are of the opinion that although there are restrictions at home, they are still want to remain independent as long as possible due to being unwilling to leave and give up their home and into an unfamiliar location. This type of situation may also pose additional health issues and concerns because there are no family members living in close proximity to where they may be relocated. The volunteers will make every attempt to make the individual feel reaccepted by measuring what their limitations are and make every attempt to measure every opportunity in making the person receptive to the change if there are any. This will assure that these individuals receive at least one hot meal that is nutritious and they are safe in their home for a longer period of time. Volunteers will converse with clients to attempt conveying to them the benefit of safety as opposed to living in their home. Also, to make a comparison to living in a safe environment and especially if one is observed of being no longer able to take care of him/her self. Reports demonstrate that an overwhelming number of beneficiaries may be facing financial burden, emotional and physical stress. Statistics also indicate that companionship plays an important role in one's life especially those that are disabled and homebound. Records also indicate that homebound

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individuals have a tendency to gain weight and become obese and are in need of guidance in the preparation of menus that will enhance ones life. Volunteers will be available to guide one to healthy futures. According to the Texas Health Department there is a growing rate of seniors and younger who are affected by Alzheimer's. Volunteers will lend assistance to the targeted population who may be in need of support.

Recruitment and Development

RSVP Local coverage of activities performed by volunteers has been a phenomenal means by which to spread the RSVP message. The Advisory Council and RSVP has the advantage of utilizing the city's public service broadcasting network to target where volunteers are needed and to recruit volunteers and provide information about the program in any given area. The newspapers have been another network used for the purpose of educating the community about RSVP and its purpose. There are 5 radio stations in the area and they have been very receptive to RSVP request for announcements and the publicity of service in the catchment area. Additionally, the City of Texarkana, Arkansas provides the program with free advertisement that may change the focus areas of a program without any cost associated therewith.

Individuals from diverse races are sought at all times for immediate needs and for those sites or stations that are just beginning and seek those that meet the identified request interpret the mission of their program and place the volunteers who best meet the needs for the service to be provided. Some individuals/stations feel more comfortable when one like their own race is provided. The selection will be made on one by one criteria in order that the volunteers selected will meet the needs of both the provider and client to be served.

RSVP will recruit, train and conduct background checks for all volunteers who are placed at various locations in Bowie and Cass Counties. Volunteers working with the youth population will be of priority. The program will seek those individuals who possess the necessary skills requested from the volunteer arena. RSVP volunteers along with the site manager will collectively measure the volunteer experience to determine if that individual is capable of fulfilling the mission for a particular site or for the program in question. It will be the responsibility of RSVP and the volunteer station to provide the required training for a particular volunteer. RSVP will insure that he/she satisfactorily meets the requirements of the assignment before being placed. If the volunteers do not measure up to the requirement of the station request, then the program director will address the concern. The Memorandum of Understanding signed between the stations and RSVP will insure that the station and the volunteer are comfortable with the placement. In the event that additional training is needed

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either by RSVP/station then the extended variance for training will be put in place. Volunteer's hours will be submitted monthly to the RSVP office and also any problems or successes experienced during that period. Volunteer stations that address the program priority needs will be given priority in order to meet the requirements set out for the Primary Focus Area which includes healthy futures, education and other services identified. Volunteer stations addressing food, security needs for the elderly, disabled residents, Meals on Wheels, Senior Center Meals, home delivery, and emergency food pantries will be the source for satisfying the needs of hunger and meeting the food crises among with those that are in isolation or homebound.

Through the efforts of the RSVP volunteers, the assistance provided through the Healthy Futures Focus Area projects will lead to the National performance Measure outputs and outcomes. As outputs, the number of individuals receiving emergency food from the designated food pantries will be tracked through tracking forms. The number of homebound elderly who are able to live independently through receiving home delivered meals and have received companionship visits which showed a positive transition of independence will be reported as outcomes.

The need for home delivered meals, food pantries and companionship visitation will be carried out by RSVP volunteers who have committed themselves to helping to ensure healthy futures for low income, elderly, and disabled who are in need. The outcome of volunteers delivering meals to homebound will allow these citizens to remain independently in their own homes. Increased food security will be obtained through the efforts of the unduplicated volunteers giving of their time to distribute emergency food from food pantries that will reflect output and the number of individuals reporting increased food security for themselves will be a much needed outcome obtained through the efforts of volunteers.

Program Management

The sponsor of RSVP is the City of Texarkana, Texas and they have provided the oversight of the program for 40 years. The city also has years of experience administering state and federal grants and has a proven track record in all of these areas. The Bowie County Judge also supports RSVP by making a donation each year to assist the city in financing the program.

The Director has been with RSVP for over 21 years and has attended training that enhances her ability to meet the criteria as given by CNCS, State and the city. To insure that an effective program can be accomplished, program management must adhere to program regulations and guidelines. The RSVP Operations Handbook is an effective tool and it is imperative that the rules will be adhered to. The secretary has been with the program for 18 years and serves in assisting the director in many

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capacities. Due to funding, the program is unable to hire an assistant. The secretary receives all records and works closely with volunteers/stations and utilizes the Volunteer Reporter to maintain all volunteer statistics. Volunteer stations are developed and managed through contacts with the RSVP director and the secretary. The Memorandum of Understanding ensures the requirements of the station and RSVP are understood mutually.

Data requirements for reporting are discussed with the designated person to include but not limited to pre/post testing and surveys. Each station will complete the Safety and Accessibility Checklist document. The RSVP staff will consider the needs of the station and how each station can meet community needs in the Primary Focus Areas. Working with the station to meet National Performance Measure outcome and outputs is imperative. Measurements will be obtained through activity logs, client database and surveys obtained through a working partnership with the stations. If RSVP foresees the need to graduate volunteers to meet changing community needs in Bowie and Cass Counties, staff will work diligently to place volunteers in Focus Areas and in the community focus areas. Those who do not fit will be thanked for their longtime service to RSVP and the importance of the volunteer work performed and how grateful the program is for their support given will be pointed out. At the annual banquet volunteers will be recognized in the program and personally as to how appreciative it is for their unselfish support and giving. All volunteers will be informed during intake that once they have graduated from their assignment with RSVP and the volunteer station, they will no longer be included on the volunteer supplemental insurance and will sign a form indicating that they no longer have the insurance coverage. Volunteer stations who are graduating will also be recognized for the number of years given in support of RSVP and the support given their community. All volunteer stations will be encouraged to continue their support in the community by providing volunteer opportunities to older citizens. Also the volunteers stations who have completed their assignment will be informed that the continuation of reporting hours is no longer required, insurance coverage no longer exists, and the Memorandum of Understanding will become void when the station volunteer graduates.

Through thorough planning by the project director and abiding by budget items, the resources will be managed for 36 months. The program will insure that the resources will address those items that lead to a successful program for the 36 months. Accountability, efficient and effective use of available resources is overseen by the City of Texarkana, Texas by using allotted funds to meet the performance goals as described in the grant. In addition to the delivery of service, the sponsor and RVSP project director shall manage the State and other sources of funding for the purpose of meeting needs in the

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communities.

The recruitment of volunteers is by word of mouth and from current RSVP volunteers. It is important that volunteers understand how important they are to RSVP and the fulfillment of their service in providing volunteer opportunities in their community. Visitation to RSVP sites such as churches and other outlets will be contacted for potential volunteers to discuss RSVP program opportunities and benefits to be gained by not having to live in the home twenty-four seven. Many potential volunteers are excited to know that they do not have to go to senior centers to occupy part of their time for the day and find excitement as volunteers. Volunteer stations will be contacted prior to placement for the purpose of informing them of RSVP rules and regulations and to share with them what the rules are pertaining to preventing or identifying prohibited activities. RSVP will collect information as to the type of volunteers needed for particular assignment. Individuals with disabilities will be encouraged to participate through the new media and go into depth as to how they can serve in their community.

The program has a good rapport with a local television station where announcements are made for various volunteer opportunities, services requested and the recruitment of volunteers. Each year, a fan drive is promoted and broadcast through the local CBS network and hundreds of fans are given to the elderly and indigent. The city has a public service network where volunteer opportunities are noted and what services are needed or awarded to RSVP. The program broadcasts on live television and radio networks to inform the public about the program and volunteer opportunities that will enhance healthy futures, veterans, obesity among children, and veterans and military families. Local newspapers are used to promote, share information and request services in the both Bowie and Cass Counties.

At least quarterly, RSVP will visit volunteer stations to insure that activities are being implemented are in accordance to the plan. Volunteers will also be monitored frequently to determine if they are satisfied with their volunteer assignment. Each station will conduct pre and post tests to insure compliance with the established rules checked Safety and Accessibility Checklist. During the interview by the RSVP staff, the volunteer is asked to share his/her work experiences, skill and abilities or other areas of interest not trained for. The program stresses the importance of seeking volunteers and to meet RSVP goals and at the same time lend support to the individuals to make him/her to feel that a mission is been fulfilled because of the role they play with the volunteer station. RSVP volunteers who are in high quality assignments are a priority in the recruitment and development because their role will be of utmost importance in the success of the designated placement with an agency. Staff

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will stress to the volunteer the importance of what is expected from the volunteers. Every attempt will be made to place volunteers at stations that offers unique training to ensure that the volunteer clearly understand the assignment and is able to fulfill the requirements. The point of emphasis is to make the volunteer feel that they are making a difference in the lives of individuals who are less fortunate and without their support it might not have been possible. A quality assignment can make a difference in the life of volunteers who may be disabled or one who is interesting in serving others who are less fortunate. Many times by working with the less fortunate can make one feel that their skills are still marketable and at the same time build leadership and expertise with the target population. In recognition of volunteers, staff mails birthday cards to them on their birthday, mails quarterly newsletters and during the course of the year hosts a banquet that is supported by donors from Bowie and Cass Counties. A banquet is held with a speaker from the four states area selected either by the Advisory Council or the RSVP director and one who does not charge for their service. Usually there are 300-350 in attendance where they are awarded different tokens of appreciation for services rendered. Volunteers are recognized for hours contributed and their service at the volunteer site. At all RSVP Advisory Council meetings, members will be apprised of success and failures in the program and will also seek suggestions for resolving issues.

Organizational Capability

The Greater Texarkana RSVP has a vast experience gained after 40 years of implementing the RSVP program. The program has only two staff members and the director has to spend after hours in the promotion of the program by making speeches at various locations and the secretary prepares reports and maintains how the funds are being spent. The director works to ensure the success of the program and staying in contact with those who can make a difference. The program is grant funded through the City of Texarkana, Texas where the two employees have a clear and concise job description. Any new employees are required to have a background check before employment. RSVP has office space, utilities, maintenance, cases of copying paper, computers, office furniture, copy machine and telephones provided by the RSVP sponsor. Other items as needed are provided by other sources. The sponsor has a program for assessing employee performance, office policies, self-assessment, evaluation and a strong and efficient financial department that is always willing to help RSVP staff. The city's personnel policy handbook clearly defines procedures as it relates to travel and purchases. An independent audit is completed annually by the City of Texarkana, Texas which includes the RSVP program. Financial reports as required by the grant are provided by city staff. The Greater Texarkana RSVP is unique in that it also serves seven (7) counties in Southwest Arkansas

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under a CNCS federal grant in Arkansas. The program has a joint Advisory Council composed of ten (10) members with five (5) members from Texas. The council is comprised of members from nine (9) counties due to the fact that the program serves five other RSVP counties. The men and women serving on the advisory council represent Blacks and Caucasian, 55 years of age and older. The council meets quarterly where they are provided the program status, financial and performance measure reports at each meeting. The mayor is a senior citizen and supports the RSVP program in every capacity possible. He attends functions of the program and promotes the RSVP project by whatever means necessary. He also goes on the airways talking to the general public about the RSVP programs and the need for citizen participation.

Goal and objectives for the RSVP program are presented to the Advisory Council and sponsor representatives at the beginning of each year. The results of the previous year Performance Measures, goal and objectives including accomplishments are reviewed by the Advisory Council and during the January meeting. The mutual desire of the staff, advisory Council and sponsor is to continue to improve the quality of the RSVP program and meet performance measures and make an impact in the communities by the volunteers and stations that are responsible for the success of the program. Greater Texarkana RSVP has been managing volunteers for the past 40 years and as a result the program has had successful management of volunteers, volunteer stations and other related areas which has enabled the RSVP to exist for this period of time. Also the community and providers have been very supportive and having the reputation of meeting community needs especially as it relates to healthy futures and assisting school administrator on impacting the lives of youth who are falling below grade level. Tremendous support is given by volunteers whose concerns are to assist by providing emergency food assistance at food pantries in the counties served and the provision for companionship to homebound senior individual. RSVP will adequately sustain the required 30% non federal share through leveraging the State Grant, support from county judges, cities and public donations.

Other

N/A

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A