

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

An estimated 100 RSVP volunteers will serve. Some of their activities will include delivering meals to homebound seniors, disaster preparedness activities, capacity building services to nonprofits and general nonprofit program support. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. At the end of the three-year grant, [fill in the anticipated outcome(s)]. The CNCS federal investment of \$33,982 and will be supplemented by \$5,858.00.

## Strengthening Communities

The Council of Community Services is a private, nonprofit human services planning agency that has served the Roanoke Valley and Southwest Virginia for over fifty years. While primarily a planning organization, the Council also serves as a community "link" for citizens and the human service organizations in need of services, referrals or technical assistance. Programs of the Council of Community Services include: 211 Virginia; the Drop-In Center (providing information and referrals on, as well as testing of, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases; the Buchanan Resource Center (providing information and referral services to rural Botetourt County); MIECHV Central Intake; USDA Child Care Food Program, HandsOn Blue Ridge (volunteer center) and RSVP; Homeless Management Information System; and the HIV Resource and Training Center. The Council of Community Services previously operated the Roanoke Valley Retired and Senior Volunteer Program from 2004 -- 2013.

In addition to these programs, the Council also hosts several community committees: the Roanoke Regional Housing Network and the Family Violence Coordinating Council. The Council of Community Services' HandsOn Blue Ridge program currently serves the Roanoke Valley, which is comprised of the cities of Roanoke and Salem, and the counties of Roanoke, Botetourt, and Craig.

The Roanoke Valley, located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Southwest Virginia, has a population of 204,795. While the City of Roanoke is the largest city west of Richmond, with a population of approximately 93,000, the area is predominantly rural. An average of 16 percent (32,767) of the population of the Roanoke Valley is 65 years of age or older. There are 15.9 percent of residents 65 years of age or older living below the poverty line in Roanoke City; 4.5 percent of Roanoke County seniors; and 6.7 percent of Salem seniors. The most rural area served by RSVP includes the counties of Botetourt and Craig. The total population of these two counties is 36,607. The percent of the

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population of 65 years of age is 13.2 percent in Botetourt County and 13.6 percent in Craig County. The poverty level in Botetourt County is 5.2 percent and 10.3 percent in Craig County. A lower poverty level for Botetourt County is due to the fact that it has become a bedroom community for the Roanoke Valley with a median family income of \$48,731. An indicator of the level of poverty in the area, local seniors have a high need for services such as the Meals on Wheels program offered through the Local Office on Aging. RSVP volunteers are a good fit with the Meals on Wheels program since they are often available during the daytime delivery hours of the program.

The Council of Community Services conducted a Senior Citizens Needs Assessment in the spring of 2003. The most prevalent needs of senior citizens reported by agencies that serve senior citizens are transportation, increased awareness of resources, and assistance in negotiating the "maze" of services. Seniors report lack of transportation and money (for medications and healthcare) as their greatest needs, but also include a lack of knowledge of available resources as a barrier to accessing needed services. The conditions that contribute to a lack of knowledge are the barriers to available information reaching many seniors. Included in the strategies for addressing the needs of Roanoke Valley senior citizens are several which are addressed by RSVP: continued support for programs which provide volunteers for senior programs and volunteer opportunities for seniors, and readily available resources to aid seniors in negotiating the maze of services, such as Medicaid, which are available to them by connecting them with the 211 Virginia program, also housed at the Council of Community Services. RSVP Roanoke Valley will not allow volunteers to transport individuals.

The RSVP Project Director will sit on the Senior Citizens Coordinating Council, a local committee started by the Council of Community Services. This Council pulls together local agencies that serve senior citizens and local human resource managers to determine the needs of seniors and their families in our area. Sitting on this Council, RSVP will be able to keep up-to-date with current trends and offer insight based on senior volunteers. The Senior Citizen Coordinating Council does not serve to directly address the needs of seniors, but rather collects data to help support the case for additional funding to provide such missing services.

To meet the needs of the senior community, RSVP will utilize the agencies that are a part of HandsOn Blue Ridge and the Senior Citizen Coordinating Council to create, implement, and evaluate project activities.

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RSVP will work with Feeding America Southwest Virginia, the Roanoke Mission of Mercy Dental Project, the LOA, and Habitat for Humanity on special projects in the community. RSVP will participate with the local food banks, senior health fairs, and other events to make sure senior volunteers know about local services.

The RSVP Advisory Council will consist of community volunteers, business members, local senior-serving nonprofit members, a member from the area's regional commission, and representatives from local governments. The members will help recruit RSVP volunteers, solicit donations for events/recognition, provide guidance and feedback to the Project Director, and help designing, administering and analyzing the annual assessment.

Working with local agencies involved in with Senior Citizen Council and others, RSVP will receive support and awareness. RSVP will seek mention in local newspapers, TV, and various newsletters to support the program's work and gain community support through its projects and partnerships with local agencies.

### **Recruitment and Development**

In 1972, the Council developed a volunteer center, now called HandsOn Blue Ridge, to link citizens wanting to volunteer with nonprofit organizations in need of volunteers. In addition, HandsOn Blue Ridge (HOBR) supports volunteer coordinators through sponsoring educational, training and networking opportunities. Over the past 30+ years, the volunteer center has coordinated community-wide volunteer recognition events. Currently, HOBR advertises volunteer opportunities in the local media on behalf of nonprofit organizations and serves as a contact point for many of those organizations.

The RSVP Project Director will work closely with the HOBR director. New RSVP volunteers will be placed in appropriate work stations in the community. Workstations will provide any needed training to volunteers before they begin their service. The Project Director will conduct occasional surveys of RSVP volunteers to assess how RSVP can better meet their needs as volunteers. Results of these surveys assist the RSVP Project Director, Advisory Council, and workstations in tailoring the volunteer assignments to better meet the needs of the volunteer. For those volunteers looking for additional skills and/or leadership opportunities, the Project Director will pursue existing or new volunteer

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stations/assignments.

The Council of Community Services will utilize the vast experience and connectivity of the Council and HOBR to administer the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program. The Project Director will develop outreach marketing materials encouraging seniors and retirees to contact RSVP for volunteer opportunities. Currently, HOBR maintains established relationships with two publications focused on the senior population, Senior News and Prime Living, both of which are used to recruit volunteers. The RSVP Project Director will participate in senior health fairs, senior expos, and other events where there are active seniors. Through the monthly volunteer center newsletter, many in the community will be kept informed about RSVP opportunities and activities. In addition, HandsOn Blue Ridge hosts a website that identifies which posted opportunities are part of the RSVP program. Volunteers who indicate they are interested in opportunities for seniors will be contacted by the Project Director. RSVP volunteer will be asked for feedback on a regular basis to reinforce their involvement in the program and to address any issues or concerns they may have.

RSVP will host an annual volunteer recognition event in conjunction with HandsOn Blue Ridge. This community-wide event will take place around National Volunteer Week. The RSVP volunteers will receive certificates and will be honored for their impact on the community. The RSVP Project Director should participate in statewide and regional training opportunities. RSVP volunteer station supervisors and members of the Advisory Council will receive training and technical assistance from RSVP staff and other professionals. HOBR currently offers training to volunteer supervisors to include all RSVP volunteer station supervisors. To expand networking and technical assistance opportunities, HOBR will invite all RSVP volunteer station supervisors to join HOBR. Trainings include specifics on Baby Boomers, creating job descriptions for senior volunteers, recognition and retention, and any specific training that station supervisors request. All RSVP workstation supervisors are invited to attend HOBR's annual volunteer management conference.

### **Program Management**

RSVP Roanoke Valley plans to work with organizations to develop appropriate volunteer tasks for seniors. RSVP will work closely with these agencies to provide resources on managing volunteers and helps the stations use RSVP volunteers as effectively as possible. All RSVP stations will be invited to attend HandsOn Blue Ridge volunteer management trainings to obtain additional volunteer management knowledge.

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Publications that target the senior population will be approached for possible stories and/or advertisement space throughout the year to promote public awareness of RSVP. The Project Director shall explore the development a "speaker's bureau" of volunteers who would be willing to speak before community groups, faith-based organizations and other groups to promote RSVP.

In an effort to assess project performance, the Project Director will provide the RSVP Advisory Council a status report on the goals and objectives of the program quarterly. At the end of the year, the Advisory Council will work closely with the Project Director to conduct an annual assessment of project accomplishments. Volunteers and station supervisors will be surveyed on their satisfaction of the program, the effectiveness of the program, what the program contributes to the organization/community.

Data collected from RSVP surveys/assessments will be used to compile reports about the number of volunteers serving in specific areas, as well as the number of hours they contribute. Data will also be collected from the stations as to the impact and effectiveness of the volunteers and they programs the volunteers serve in. The Advisory Council, the Council of Community Services Board of Directors, and the Planning Department at CCS will receive this information quarterly.

HandsOn Blue Ridge connections in the community will serve RSVP well. Besides maintaining an advisory committee that provides guidance to the program, HOBR works closely with the local Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD). It is also a member of The HandsOn Network, the Volunteer Centers of Virginia, and works closely with the Virginia Commission on National and Community Service. Through all of these contacts, as well as through the establishment of partnerships, the Council of Community Services/HOBR continues to explore ways to integrate senior service into the activities of other service programs.

### **Organizational Capability**

Since 1972, the Council of Community Services (CCS) has operated a volunteer center, HandsOn Blue Ridge (HOBR). Through developing and maintaining this program, CCS has learned the most up-to-date methods for recruiting, retaining, recognizing, managing, and placing volunteers. The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program will be a perfect fit to compliment the services of HOBR.

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The HORB Director has over 10 years experience working with nonprofit agencies in the area, in addition to previous experience as RSVP Project Director. This position will serve as the supervisor for RSVP at the Council of Community Services.

The Executive Vice President (EVP) has worked in the field for over 15 years and is successful at managing all aspects of the organization's/program's financial services and has great experience managing grants and programs. The Council of Community Services financial system is up-to-date. As previously stated, the EVP has over 15 years of experience in financially managing local, state, and federal grants for a variety of programs offered at CCS. The federal grants managed in the organization include: HUD, CDC, USDA, and RSVP.

During the time that RSVP was previously housed at CCS, requirements of the grant were satisfied. Being in an organization that understands seniors and is proactive in its collection of data on seniors will benefit RSVP by allowing the Project Director to know and address the areas of concern/need for the local senior population. With this information, the Project Director will be able to identify where volunteers are needed for impact in the Corporation's programming. The majority of RSVP volunteers will serve as Meals on Wheels (through the Local Office on Aging) drivers since that is one of the area's leading needs. The local Meals on Wheels program serves 850 clients and relies on many volunteers each day to deliver the meals. Retired individuals are available to deliver the meals during daytime hours and this is a perfect fit with RSVP. In addition, RSVP volunteers will work with 211, to create senior information packets and distribute those to local senior centers, senior living complexes, doctor's offices, and other locations to ensure that local seniors have access to resources and information.

The Council of Community Services will make sure that the RSVP Project Director has adequate facilities, equipment, supplies, etc. In addition, there are specific purchasing procedures, internal policies (including travel), and clearly defined roles for staff and administrators (as described in job descriptions). These policies, procedures, and roles are monitored and updated as needed. In addition to the above mentioned policies and procedures, the CCS maintains specific procedures for staff evaluations and a strategic plan (updated at least every 5 years). Using these assessment/evaluations, CCS is able to make continuous improvements in its programs, including RSVP.

## **Other**

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N/A

### **PNS Amendment (if applicable)**

N/A