

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

An estimated 300 volunteers will be recruited and retained to serve through Lorain County RSVP. Of them, 40% are placed in primary focus areas, 30% are in other focus areas and capacity building activities, and 30% are in community priority areas.

Based on six of the 15 work plans developed, some of the roles and service activities they will fill include, but are not limited to: delivering meals to home-bound older and disabled adults, transportation assistance to medical appointments, friendly visitor program for homebound older and disabled adults, food pantry support and distribution, health education (including programs for veterans), tutoring and mentoring to help children succeed in school, and job readiness to improve economic opportunities for veterans.

The primary focus area is Healthy Futures. Additional work plans address Education, Economic Opportunities, Disaster Services, and Environmental Stewardship. Lorain County RSVP addresses military veterans, through work plans to provide health education, job readiness and assist Valor Home to increase its capacity to operate a homeless veterans program.

At the end of the 3-year grant, Lorain County RSVP intends to achieve the following outcomes with the 32% of unduplicated volunteers serving in work plans that include CNCS outcomes: (1) H8/H9: increased sense of perceived social support for 305 older and disabled homebound adults; (2) O2/O10: assist 4 homeless veterans to develop job skills needed to obtain employment; and (3) ED21/ED24: help 5 preschoolers to improve school readiness.

The CNCS federal investment of \$50,861 will be supplemented by \$3,772 in State RSVP funding and \$26,264 in matching in-kind and cash support provided through the sponsor organization, Lorain County Office on Aging.

## Strengthening Communities

Lorain County has a population of 301,614, with a diverse mix of urban and rural communities. More than 87% of County residents are white; 9% are black; and 8% are Latino. Minorities primarily live in urban cities. Lorain County has a poverty rate of 13.2%. While this is lower than Ohio average, 27% live at or below 200% of poverty. Lorain County residents often live paycheck to

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paycheck and are one crisis away from poverty. Hunger and poor health status are also significant challenges in Lorain County. Many chronic health conditions are higher than average. Increasingly older Lorain County adults are living alone with minimal supports to remain independent. Homeless veterans disproportionately struggle with chronic health conditions. As a result of these community needs, Lorain County RSVP selected Healthy Futures as its "Primary Focus Area".

### **UNDUPLICATED VOLUNTEERS**

Lorain County RSVP plans to recruit and retain 300 unduplicated volunteers. Of them, 40% (120) will participate in Healthy Futures work plans, which is our Primary Focus Area. We plan to place 30% of its unduplicated volunteers into work plans that address Other Focus Areas and Capacity Building. Lorain County RSVP plans to place no more than 30% (90) of unduplicated volunteers in "Other Community Priority" work plans.

### **PRIMARY FOCUS AREA NEEDS -- HEALTHY FUTURES**

Every day, thousands of Lorain County residents -- including seniors -- go to bed hungry because they did not get enough to eat. The poor economy and rising costs of food, gasoline and housing have forced many people to choose between having a roof over their head or enough food on their table. In 2012, it was estimated that 46,170 residents do not get enough to eat (Second Harvest). Nearly 1 of every 4 children living in Lorain County goes to bed hungry, every night. Lack of a countywide transit system, coupled with the high price of gasoline and a county size of 491.1 square miles, make it difficult for many area residents, especially homebound elderly and disabled adults, to regularly get adequate food to meet their health needs. For example, if nutritious food is not brought to frail or homebound seniors, they may not eat, since many cannot travel in order to seek assistance at churches or other sorts of food distribution center. A recent county Older Adults Needs Assessment reveals that Lorain County seniors find identify "food insecurity" as one of the biggest concerns they face. According to the fact sheet on Hunger in America 2010, released by the local Second Harvest food bank, there is an increase of 134% percent of those requesting food over the last study four years ago -- including 3,900 seniors.

Additionally, Lorain County residents suffer with more chronic health conditions than state or national average, according the Lorain County Health Department. Lorain County seniors are especially at-risk. Currently, 14% of Lorain County residents are 65 years or older; and this

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percentage is expected to increase. Older adults in Lorain County are increasingly live alone with few supports. In 2011, it was estimated that one-third of all single-person households in Lorain County are seniors, meaning that more than 12,105 older adults live alone. Many are isolated due to lack of access to transportation. Due to a mix of poor lifestyle behaviors and lack of access to medical care and nutritious food, Lorain County seniors -- especially homebound seniors - disproportionately suffer with chronic health conditions like arthritis (35%); obesity (35%), binge drinking (28%), diabetes (27%), hypertension (62%), high cholesterol (60%) and depression (20%).

Unfortunately, while Lorain County seniors are more likely than other Ohio seniors to experience health issues that reduce quality of life, they are often less likely to receive preventative health services that improve health outcomes and reduce medical costs. For example, according a 2011 Lorain Health Department study, only 68% of seniors had an annual flu shot. Further, while mobility issues, obesity, diabetes and heart disease rates are high among older adults, only 8% of adults in Lorain County eat 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day, compared with 21% of Ohio adults and 23% of U.S. adults (Lorain County Community College, 2012).

Additionally, many seniors are isolated because they are increasingly living alone, lack of access to public transportation and are often unable to drive during the last 6 years of life. According to a 2008 Lorain County Older Adults Needs Assessment, inadequate transportation is a main barrier to meeting health needs (16%). The same study showed 42% of seniors need transportation assistance. For example, Lorain County covers 492 square miles. Medical and social services are concentrated in the northern part of the county and in the county seat, Elyria, located in the middle of the area. Bus services do not serve outlying areas, and generally do not operate urban schedules that offer frequent transportation options for riders. Taxicab services are available, but not plentiful or affordable for most seniors on fixed incomes. Without transportation assistance, many seniors are unable to keep medical appointments that are important for their health and well-being.

Aging adults in rural communities are disproportionately facing challenges as they retire. Research suggests rural seniors do not have access to sufficient community-based health and social services due to income, transportation and "awareness" barriers (Goins, 2004). Non-farm rural elderly have the poorest health status of all senior populations (Ham, et, al, 2003). Unfortunately, evidence suggests rural elderly are more likely to wait until a health issue becomes a major health problem, before

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taking steps to address it (DHHS, 1996).

Last, homeless veterans disproportionately struggle with health conditions, when compared to the general population, many of which prevent them from achieving self-sufficiency. For example, one study suggested that of veterans who are currently homeless, 50% are experiencing with health issues; more than 50% are struggling with serious mental illness; and 70% are coping with substance abuse (U.S. Interagency for Homelessness, 2010).

How Service Activities Will Lead to National Performance Measure Outputs/Outcomes:

To measure impact of Healthy Futures service activities, Lorain County RSVP chose the paired output/outcome performance measures H8-H9 to monitor Healthy Futures/Aging in Place, which includes 29% of unduplicated volunteers. Service activities for the paired H8-H9 output/outcome include: home-delivered meals, friendly visitor program and transportation assistance to medical appointments. All require volunteers to have direct contact with homebound older and disabled adults.

Home-delivered meals (i.e., MOW and Meals on Wheels) are provided to at-risk, homebound Lorain County seniors and disabled adults. Five days per week, volunteers deliver a nutritionally balanced mid-day meal to homebound individuals. While delivering meals, volunteers spend a few minutes talking with the homebound older or disabled adult. Their regular contact with at-risk homebound individuals both gives them someone to talk to (and feel someone cares about them) and provides a safety check, since the RSVP volunteers often identify issues and concerns that require follow-up by the stations.

The Friendly Visitor Program is a telephone-based service offered to homebound older and disabled adults. To ensure these isolated individuals have someone to talk to (and feel cared about) and receive a periodic health and safety check, RSVP volunteers will make monthly telephone calls to individuals who have been identified as at-risk by social workers at stations. The volunteers, many of whom may be disabled and isolated themselves, will work with social workers to place regular telephone calls to at-risk persons to say "hello" and make sure the individual does not have any needs that need to be reported or addressed by the station social workers. When issues or concerns are noted to the Friendly Visitor, he/she will report it to the station social worker, who will follow-up with the client to address

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the situation and ensure needed resources are received.

Transportation to Medical Appointments is also supported by RSVP volunteers. As noted earlier, older adults are often isolated and unable to drive during the last years of life. Due to a severe lack of public transportation in Lorain County, many of these seniors would be forced to skip vital medical appointments - thus risking their health status - if volunteer drivers were not willing to go to their homes to take them to medical appointments. Additionally, many volunteers stay with the older adult throughout the medical appointment, thus, also offering moral and emotional support through procedures. In 2012, on average, older adults receiving Transportation Assistance to Medical Appointments received seven to eleven trips to appointments, depending on where in Lorain County they resided.

To measure increased social support, a survey will be implemented to measure perceived improved social support. In Year 3, Lorain County RSVP plans to reach 525 older and disabled older adults, with 305 reporting improved perceived social support.

Lorain County RSVP will also measure its primary focus area and address the Healthy Futures, Obesity and Food objective, through a work plan that addresses output H10. To address output H10, increasing the number of individuals receiving emergency food assistance, RSVP volunteers will provide food pantry and emergency food support. Activities include food pantry support and distribution. As part of these services, monthly bags of food - including fresh fruits and vegetables - are delivered to the homes of at-risk and homebound older and disabled adults, who are unable to go to a food pantry for assistance. Output progress will be tracked by measuring the number of individuals who received food pantry support. In Year 3, it is planned that 3,440 individuals will receive emergency food assistance, as measured by household food pantry assistance enrollment/eligibility forms.

Two work plans were developed to provide health education, to address the Healthy Futures, Access to Health Care objective (H4). The first includes health education training, through (1) 6-week Chronic Disease Management and (2) Exercise programs provided by volunteers. The second involves health education to promote the importance of getting an annual influenza vaccination.

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The Chronic Disease Management Program is an evidence-based education program developed by Stanford University to help at-risk populations to identify and implement strategies for addressing chronic health conditions and improving their overall health. To increase the effectiveness of programming, research suggests health education programs like Chronic Disease Management Program should be provided by trained peers. Evidence suggests audiences are most likely to feel information applies to them when provided by someone with whom they are able to identify. The Chronic Disease Management Program is designed to be a two hour per week, six week education series that helps both older and disabled adults identify and implement strategies to control chronic health conditions -- such as diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, substance abuse and severe mental illness.

Volunteers will also be trained to provide peer-led exercise programs, using Arthritis Association-approved curriculum for older adults. The weekly classes will help older adults learn about ways they can safely increase exercise, which is designed to reduce chronic pain, increase mobility and assist with weight loss. In Year 3, it is planned that 50 older and disabled adults will attend one of the Chronic Disease Management Program or Exercise Program health education training classes, including 10 veterans, as measured by class attendance sheets.

The second work plan provides health education coaching to encourage people to get flu shots, including understanding the benefits and risks of getting an annual influenza vaccine. As noted earlier, only 68% of Lorain County older adults receive annual flu vaccinations. This rate is lower than Ohio and national average. Unfortunately, according to a recent United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC) study, more than 200,000 Americans are hospitalized for flu-related complications, each year. Older adults typically account for 60% of these hospitalizations and 90% of flu-related deaths. The CDC has also demonstrated that getting an annual flu vaccine can help protect seniors from serious flu-related complications. One study showed that getting a flu vaccine reduced flu-related hospitalizations by 77%, for persons 50 years and older.

In Year 3, it is planned that 5,000 will receive flu shot education and vaccination, as measured by flu shot clinic attendance logs.

Healthy Futures Services to Veterans:

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To address the Healthy Futures needs of veterans, Lorain County RSVP plans to offer one of its planned Chronic Disease Management series to homeless veterans residing at the planned 30-bed Valor Home. The Chronic Disease Management Program is an evidence-based education program developed by Stanford University to help at-risk populations to identify and implement strategies for addressing chronic health conditions and improving their overall health. Evidence suggests that homeless veterans disproportionately struggle with chronic health issues, including mental health and substance abuse issues. For example, according to one Veteran's Administration study, 50% of homeless veterans struggle with health conditions; more than half struggling with serious mental illness; and 70% are experiencing a substance abuse issue. The Chronic Disease Management Program is designed to be a 6-week education series that helps both older and disabled adults identify and implement strategies to control chronic health conditions -- such as diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, substance abuse and severe mental illness.

To increase the efficacy of the Chronic Disease Management Program targeted to veterans, the Lorain County RSVP will make every effort to recruit an older veteran who is interested in becoming trained to provide these two hours per week, six week classes, since evidence suggests peer-driven health education programming is most effective at helping at risk populations to make sustained health changes.

In Year 3, it is planned that 10 veterans will receive Chronic Disease Management Program health education, as measured by attendance logs.

### **OTHER FOCUS AREAS & CAPACITY BUILDING**

Other CNCS Focus Areas that Lorain County RSVP plans to address include: Education, Environmental Stewardship, Economic Development and Disaster Services. One reason 27% live near poverty is low educational attainment. Currently, only one-fifth of residents have post-secondary education, making it difficult to move from a manufacturing to a technology-based economy. A 2011 Ohio Department of Education report suggests young and school-aged children in communities like Elyria, Oberlin and Lorain are not school-ready or making K-12 success. Lorain County RSVP addresses the educational needs of Lorain County children by engaging in activities that both help young children increase their school readiness and providing tutoring and other academic supports, especially in reading, to help children succeed in school.

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Evidence suggests low-income households do not always maximize tax credits and deductions they are eligible to receive, to both reduce their tax burden and increase their income. Numerous studies have shown that low-income families do not consistently receive EITC. Due to complex and ever changing tax rules, low-income families, including kinship caregivers caring for grandchildren , and Lorain County seniors do not always file tax returns that allow them to take advantage of all of the credits and deductions for which they are eligible. To help seniors on fixed incomes and low income families file accurate tax returns, Lorain County RSVP partners LCOA and AARP to provide free tax filing services.

According to our local Emergency Management Agency, Lorain County is at high risk level of threats, ranging from natural disaster to industrial emergencies. In order to help the community be prepared for emergencies Lorain County, RSVP volunteers are targeting the seniors that are homebound to provide emergency preparedness assistance, as a Disaster Services work plan. This includes providing education and emergency preparedness kits, as well as community outreach.

Recycling 75% of the nation's waste will significantly reduce pollution, saving water and energy, and building economically strong and healthy communities (Natural Resources Defense Council, 2011). Currently less than 35% of households and less than 10% of businesses in the U.S. recycle (EPA 2011). Lorain County RSVP seeks to protect the environment and promote improved Environmental Stewardship in Lorain County by collecting newspapers, toner cartridges other related computer supplies/equipment to recycle.

To build the capacity of area health and social service organizations, volunteers often become champions for mobilizing additional resources needed to address social problems. Collaborating with community partners also allows area non-profits to leverage funds and resources to maximize community impact. Many of our senior volunteers engaged in Capacity Building activities also report that they feel they are helping to make life better in Lorain County.

For example, to support some of Lorain County RSVP's healthy futures work plans, the program plans to enhance capacity of stations to help at-risk older and disabled adults to gain education tools and materials needed to eat healthy, on a fixed income, and make small lifestyle changes designed to

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improve health. For instance, as noted earlier, evidence suggests peer-driven health education is often most effective, since the target audience is better able to identify with the person providing education. Many also attend classes but are unable to sustain the long-term health benefits of health education classes, because they lack the "awareness" and tools to implement learned information into everyday life. For instance, an older adult might take a class that provides health education about the benefits of eating healthier, but the senior is unable to fully implement the education and eat more fresh fruits and vegetables, because he/she does not have enough recipes - that seem comfortable and familiar - that provide affordable and healthy options. This is especially problematic in a county where fewer than 10% of adults eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day. To address this need and build capacity to improve the health conditions of Lorain County residents, RSVP plans to partner with two stations to develop food/nutrition education publications that can (1) provide options for better using emergency food, including fruits and vegetables provided; and (2) support information provided in Chronic Disease Management Program, Exercise Program, to address obesity, and a Senior Dining Program provided by a partner, to for nutritionally at-risk seniors. First, Senior Years will provide monthly health healthy recipes and tips of how to eat healthy on a fixed or limited budget. The other is a healthy cookbook to provide coaching for nutritionally at-risk seniors. Volunteers will directly develop nutrition education materials.

### Other Focus Areas & Capacity-Building Services to Veterans:

Due to a combination of factors -- including lack of soft skills and supports needed to obtain employment -- homeless veterans are more likely than other populations to experience "chronic homelessness" (U.S. Interagency for Homelessness, 2010). To reduce veteran homelessness -- and improve their Economic Opportunities -- federal reports recommend that programs provide the following services to help veterans achieve self-sufficiency: (1) employability assistance; (2) health services; (3) housing assistance; and (4) behavioral health services (U.S. Interagency for Homelessness, 2010). Currently, Lorain County RSVP is negotiating a partnership with Valor Home to identify ways that volunteers can work with this organization to assist homeless veterans to develop skills needed to become self-sufficient and transition into independent living situations. To address Economic Opportunities of veterans, RSVP volunteers will provide job readiness assistance.

In Year 3, it is planned that 12 homeless veterans will receive job readiness education. Of them, 4 are anticipated to obtain employment, as a result.

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Further, to help Valor Home build capacity to serve homeless veterans, RSVP volunteers will help assemble "Welcome Kits" for veterans enrolled in the program. In Year 3, it is planned that RSVP volunteers will assemble 32 "Welcome Kits" for homeless veterans enrolling in the transitional housing program for veterans.

### COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

To develop "Community Priorities", Lorain County RSVP actively works with area leaders to identify community problems and develop potential solutions to address them. These needs are reviewed with the Advisory Council to define annual impact areas and develop ways that volunteers can assist to reduce social problems. Based on a recent Community Needs Assessment completed by the Advisory Council's Planning Committee, the following community priority needs were identified. The first major community priority is improving socialization and health of older adults, since evidence suggests that health and social activities provided by senior centers, nursing homes and pastoral visits/friendly visitors in hospitals in inpatient patients play an important role in reducing social isolation and improving the overall health status of older adults (Shippensburg University). To reduce social isolation and improve the health status of Lorain County seniors, RSVP partners with a variety of senior centers, hospitals and nursing homes to ensure socialization activities are offered, including arts/crafts, pastoral/friendly visiting, exercise classes and sing-along's. The second major community priority identified is arts and economic development, since research demonstrates that strong arts and cultural institutions improve the economic strength of a community. Thriving cultural centers generate income, jobs and tax revenue for a community. Lorain County RSVP seeks to address this by partnering with several business, governmental organizations, and arts and cultural intuitions to contribute to the economic viability of the region.

### OUTCOMES

Lorain County RSVP plans to place 32% (97) of its unduplicated volunteers in outcomes producing work plans, including:

1. Outcome H9 (Healthy Futures, Aging in Place) - Eighty-eight (88) unduplicated RSVP volunteers will participate in service activities to help homebound older and disabled adults receive increase social support, with the goal of helping 305 (of 525) individuals achieve improved perceived social support,

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in Year 3. To measure the outcome, Lorain County RSVP will implement a survey to measure if clients feel they have improved social support.

2. Outcome ED24 (Education, School Readiness) -- Five (5) unduplicated volunteers will assist in early learning classrooms to help preschoolers make gains in school readiness in terms of social and/or emotional development, as measured by report cards issued by classroom teachers. At the end of Year 3, it is planned that six of 10 preschoolers served will demonstrate improved school readiness.

3. Outcome O10 (Economic Opportunity, Education) -- To help homeless veterans obtain employment, four (4) unduplicated volunteers will be recruited to provide job readiness education. At the end of Year 3, it is planned that 12 homeless veterans will receive job readiness and four will successfully obtain employment, as measured by program reports.

### COLLECTING DATA & ENSURING PERFORMANCE MEASURES ARE MET

Standardized tools will be implemented to ensure that outcomes and outputs are regularly collected and analyzed. For example, to track Healthy Futures H9 outcomes measures, RSVP will work with stations to implement standardized satisfaction tools - to be completed annually by persons receiving associated service activities. As part of each survey consumers will be asked a standardized question (across all service activities included in a H8-H9 work plan) to assess and monitor improved perceived levels of social support, as a result of RSVP supported services received.

With regard to Education Focus Area outcomes, standardized teacher reports will be used to assess increased school readiness in early learning. Increased math/reading literacy of school-aged children will also be monitored via standardized teacher reports, used by the program.

Where surveys are being implemented to gather and report outcomes data, efforts will be made to both simplify the survey collection process and ensure a sufficient survey response rate. For instance, to make sure all clients receiving H8-H9 related service activities for homebound older and disabled adults, volunteers will be asked to distribute and collect surveys, as part of their home-delivered meal and transportation assistance routes. To protect consumer confidentiality, all consumers will be provided an envelope to place the completed survey in, when returning it to a volunteer. To survey persons receiving Friendly Visitor services, annually, a station staff person, intern or volunteer (who is

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not providing Friendly Visitor services to the consumers) will complete a short, standardized telephone survey with each consumer. This survey will include a standardized question to measure increased perceived social support. Further, if the response rate to the written survey for home-delivered meals and/or transportation assistance to medical appointments is low, RSVP will work with stations to implement a follow-up short telephone survey to gather needed outcomes data.

Results of all surveys and tools used to collect work plan outcomes will be provided, regularly, to the RSVP Director. When received, she will ensure required data are collected, reviewed, tabulated and reported. These data will be used as part of the Self-Assessment to monitor progress and ensure performance measures are being met.

To ensure necessary output/outcomes data are collected, stations will also receive education regarding performance measures, outputs/outcomes that need to be collected and ongoing support will be provided to ensure they know how to use new forms and report needed data.

MOUs will also be revised and updated to ensure all stations clearly know what data needs to be collected, how often it needs to be collected and when it needs to be reported. Progress towards work plan goals is reviewed, quarterly, and corrective actions are taken, as needed. Volunteer and site data are collected and reviewed, on a monthly basis. Outputs, outcomes and needs assessment data are regularly reviewed to ensure work plans meet goals and objectives.

Additionally, we will regularly monitor volunteer recruitment and station rosters, to ensure we recruit and retain a minimum of 296 unduplicated volunteers and place/retain appropriate numbers of unduplicated volunteers in Primary Focus Areas, Other Focus Areas/Capacity Building and Community Priority activities.

Information collected is included in the annual self-assessment, which is provided to the Advisory Council to make recommendations for improvement. Recommendations are implemented by the RSVP Director as corrective action plans, to ensure performance measures, including work plan outputs and outcomes are being met.

### **Recruitment and Development**

RSVP carefully screens sites and volunteers to make sure there is a good fit, and that both the station

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and volunteer opportunity address a national performance measure or community need. Before being assigned to a site, we assess volunteer skills and interests, to identify appropriate job descriptions. To ensure job descriptions are accurate, the RSVP Director regularly visits sites. We work with sites to provide volunteer training, to help them develop the skills needed to be successful -- and grow -- in their positions. At some sites, volunteers have even moved into leadership positions, where they supervise other volunteers.

RSVP carefully selects sites to ensure they are appropriate. Site supervisors receive RSVP orientation. During orientation, how proposed volunteer activities contribute to the site's ability to serve the needs of County residents and meet work plan objectives, outputs and outcomes is defined. They are also trained to develop meaningful volunteer activities, write job descriptions and complete required paperwork.

Additionally, to ensure volunteers receive initial and on-going training to build skills and be highly effective in Primary Focus Area, Other Focus Area and Capacity Building activities, we work with partner agencies to identify topics and host RSVP trainings. For example, to effective Chronic Disease Management education is provided, Lorain County Office on Aging plans to host Train the Trainer sessions to provide Lorain County RSVP volunteers with the education, curriculum, training and support needed to ensure related Healthy Futures outputs are met. If advanced training is needed, RSVP also may refer an individual to Lorain County Community College.

Lorain County has a population of 301,614, with a diverse mix of urban and rural communities. More than 87% of County residents are white; 9% are black; and 8% are Latino. Minorities primarily live in urban cities.

The Lorain County RSVP currently enrolls nearly 300 volunteers. We are actively recruiting new volunteers through aggressive outreach including advertisements in local newspapers, flyers in areas where older adults frequent, radio/television PSAs and community presentations. To increase recruitment of rural, minority, disabled and veteran older adults, the RSVP Director targets outreach to veteran's groups, senior events in rural communities and agencies disproportionately serving disabled older adults and seniors of African American and Latino decent. Work plan activities are also planned to allow persons with disabilities to actively volunteer, as well as address the needs of

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veterans, minority populations and rural communities.

To meet the needs of organizations, address the Primary Focus Areas and ensure that Other Focus Areas and Capacity Building performance outputs and outcomes are met, the program recruits volunteers from many sources, including the Senior Years newspaper, public service announcements (PSAs) and the LCOA website. We promote the value of volunteerism at area fairs and festivals. Lorain County RSVP has placed PSAs in local papers, public access television and radio stations that have older adults as their target audience. The program has placed flyers in church bulletins and key places throughout Lorain County. Last, we have recruited both LCOA staff and the Lorain County RSVP Advisory Council to make presentations promoting Lorain County RSVP and encouraging newly retired individuals to consider volunteering to make a difference in Lorain County and address community needs.

Lorain County RSVP has learned that word-of-mouth is the best way to recruit new volunteers. As a result, we conduct membership drives, where current volunteers are asked to recruit new volunteers. Many of our stations also partner with us to identify and recruit RSVP volunteers. To recruit baby boomers and the newly retired, RSVP increased its use of the Internet to recruit volunteers.

Advertisements are placed on volunteer websites and Internet message boards that serve Lorain County. We expect our use of the Internet to attract new volunteers will increase in 2014.

Lorain County RSVP is committed to retaining quality volunteers. Retention strategies start by providing volunteers supports before they start assignments. Frequent communication between RSVP, volunteers and partner agencies is critical. We stress the importance of community service from orientation through the entire volunteer experience. RSVP helps volunteers to see how their contributions fit into the "bigger picture" of alleviating community problems, including discussing with volunteers at orientation, how volunteerism helps organizations to improve life in Lorain County. Lorain County RSVP trains volunteers to use timesheets and complete required reporting, before they start an assignment. RSVP fosters communication by maintaining email lists for partner agencies and volunteers who have email. Emails are sent to update volunteers/partners about program changes and to publish new job site opportunities.

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After completing orientation, volunteers attend site training, provided by the job site. Because studies show feeling valued and personal growth are associated with higher retention rates, RSVP encourages sites to include volunteers in the planning and evaluation of services provided. We encourage volunteers to expand their skills and consider new volunteer opportunities.

RSVP regularly contacts volunteers through its Volunteer Ambassador program. Volunteers are contacted to make sure they are satisfied with their experience. Volunteer Ambassadors also reach to any volunteer who fails to turn in a timesheet for 90 days. Data collected during these contacts are reported to the RSVP Director, who compiles the data and includes it in the annual Lorain County self-assessment process, which is reviewed with the Advisory Council. Based on results, the RSVP Director and Advisory Council develop performance improvement plans to address noted concerns and provide the resources, training or support needed to recruit and retain quality volunteers, especially in Primary Focus Area -- Healthy Futures -- and other focus areas and capacity building activities.

Additionally, to ensure that we are meeting the national performance measures, including having enough unduplicated volunteers in Primary Focus Areas, other Focus Areas and Capacity Building activities that meet performance outputs and outcomes, the RSVP Director will review station rosters, at least quarterly, to ensure sufficient volunteers are being recruited and retained in these key areas. Data reviewed will be provided to the Advisory Council for review and to make recommendations for program improvement, if needed.

If data indicates that we are not retaining sufficient volunteers in Primary Focus Areas and other Work Plans with defined program outcomes, the RSVP Director will coordinate with the Advisory Council to determine the reasons why volunteers are choosing to leave these assignments, and a performance improvement plan will be developed to increase recruitment of volunteers and improve the volunteer retention rate.

The Annual Recognition Luncheon is also used to retain quality volunteers. As part of the event, all volunteers are thanked for their service. Awards are provided to people reaching milestones, including completing 100 to 30,000 community service hours.

## **Program Management**

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Lorain County RSVP ensures high quality services by continually monitoring work stations, volunteer activities, work plans and other quality improvement activities, including needs assessments, site and volunteer feedback, and the self-assessment. For example, to ensure the program, including volunteer stations and volunteer assignments, are in compliance with RSVP regulations, including that no station or volunteer is engaging in prohibited activities and all service activities support identified associated work plan outputs and outcomes, the RSVP Director maintains active and continuous communication with work stations. For example, the Director conducts work station orientation with each new partner site to (1) orient them to RSVP, (2) discuss the goals of the program (and work plan, when applicable), (3) define allowable volunteer assignments, (4) discuss program data that needs to be collected and reported and (5) review allowable and unallowable activities and practices, to ensure the station remains in compliance with all applicable federal rules. Once work station orientation is completed, the RSVP Director maintains regular communication with sites to provide program updates, monitor work plans and review stakeholder satisfaction. If issues or concerns are noted, the Director works with the station to and implement a solution to ensure Lorain County RSVP meets work plan outputs and outcomes. At least annually, the RSVP Director and/or an Advisory Council member will conduct a site visit to ensure the station is compliant with the federal rules and meeting work plan outputs and outcomes, and review/update the MOU. The RSVP Director will discuss with work stations the federal priorities for RSVP; how the station and activities fit into Primary Focus Area, Other Focus Area and Capacity Building; Other Community Priorities; and data reporting requirements. MOUs will be updated and revised, annually, to reflect the RSVP priorities and outline data reporting requirements.

The Primary Focus Area, Other Focus Area, Capacity Building and community priority work plans, including outputs and outcomes, are used to define the mix of sites needed to achieve RSVP goals. Needs assessments are used to determine service priorities. Based on Advisory Council recommendations, the Director reviews existing sites to determine if goals are being met. When new sites are needed, the Director expands partnerships with current sites or develops new sites. Lorain County RSVP continually evaluates its responsiveness to changing community needs through the Self-Assessment completed with the Advisory Council. As part of this process, the RSVP Director and Advisory Council review data to identify Lorain County needs. Based on the needs assessment, the Director and Advisory Council evaluate work plans, stations and activities to determine if they are meeting identified needs -- including work plan goals, objectives, outputs and outcomes. If it is

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determined that the mix of work plans do not sufficiently address the primary focus area, other focus areas and community priorities established, the Advisory Council and RSVP Director will develop a correction action plan. If it is determined that additional volunteers need to be recruited -- including volunteers with special skills or attributes needed to fully implement a work plan -- the RSVP Director and Advisory Council will implement a volunteer training and/or recruitment strategy to provide training to develop the skills of existing volunteers and/or enroll new RSVP volunteers. Additionally, at least quarterly, the Director and Advisory Council will review progress toward work plans. Based on a review, they will determine if corrective actions are needed ensure the Lorain County RSVP successfully meets stated performance measures, including work plan outputs and outcomes. The RSVP Director will work with volunteers and volunteer stations to implement corrective actions recommended to ensure work plans achieve stated outputs and outcomes.

Strategies may include, but are not limited to: providing additional training and support to existing volunteers, recruiting new volunteers, providing additional training and support to existing stations and enrolling additional stations to better meet the community needs identified in the primary focus work plan, other focus area work plans, capacity building work plans and community priority work plans.

To minimize the disruption to current volunteers enrolled in RSVP, existing stations and volunteer activities were reviewed to determine how many current unduplicated volunteers were participating in activities that met the performance measures for each of the CNCS focus areas. Based on the review, the Lorain County RSVP chose its Primary Focus Area and Other Focus Areas, to enable as many volunteers as possible to remain in current placements. It was determined that more than 30% were already participating in "Healthy Futures" activities. Thus, to minimize disruption, Healthy Futures was chosen as the Primary Focus Area, for Lorain County RSVP. Other focus areas were also chosen based on a review of stations, activities and unduplicated volunteers. In instances where insufficient number of volunteers were enrolled in "other focus areas" or "capacity building", the RSVP Director will educate volunteers about the new national performance measures and encourage them to enroll into additional volunteer activities (in Primary or Other Focus Areas), thus allowing them to remain active in a current "community priority" as a secondary activity, while being enrolled in a new activity in a primary focus or other focus area that will be counted as their primary/unduplicated activity. Increased recruitment of new volunteers is the last strategy being utilized to meet CNCS performance

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measures and minimize disruption to current volunteers. Lorain County RSVP conducting aggressive outreach to enroll new volunteers who are interested in Healthy Futures and other focus area-related service activities defined in work plans. The program is stressing the need to volunteer to make a difference in the lives of Lorain County residents and actively encouraging them to enroll in Primary Focus Area or Other Focus Area-related activities, as defined in our work plans.

The Lorain County RSVP is reviewing current work stations to determine if they need to be transformed or graduated to reflect primary and other focus areas. We are meeting with current sites to review the 2014 RVSP priorities to build capacity, where necessary, to address Primary Focus Area, Other Focus Area and Capacity Building work plans. Efforts are being made to provide the additional support to current stations to allow them to remain RSVP partners. Lorain County RSVP has become selective when partnering with new stations, and is only adding stations that provide volunteer opportunities in either the Primary Focus Area or Other Focus Areas defined in the work plans. We have been actively recruiting stations that serve veterans. As volunteers leave existing "Community Priority" activities, Lorain County RSVP will work with the stations to re-evaluate volunteer opportunities and determine the best strategies to transform station activities to better address Healthy Futures, Other Focus Area and Capacity Building work plans. If there is no way to transform the station activities to better align them with CNCS performance measures, Lorain County RSVP may begin to graduate the station, by not replacing retiring volunteers, to ensure that no more than 30% of unduplicated volunteers are engaged in Community Priority work plans, while also reducing disruption to current volunteers.

Lorain County RSVP currently enrolls more than 30% of unduplicated volunteers in Healthy Futures-related work plans, many of which already contain outputs and outcomes requiring data be collected, evaluated and reported. As a long-time sponsor organization and site, LCOA and Lorain County RSVP have a proven track record collecting data and measuring outputs and outcomes of a wide array of work plans, including Healthy Future-related activities like food pantry distribution, home-delivered meals and transportation assistance. During the FFY2013, Lorain County RSVP had a work plan to provide home-delivered meals and fresh fruits and vegetables to homebound seniors. Collected data indicated established work plan outputs and outcomes were met and exceeded, including the number of stations participating, number of unduplicated volunteers assigned, number of homebound seniors receiving food assistance and the percentage of homebound seniors reporting the program

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helped to improve their health.

MOUs are negotiated before sites are developed and volunteers are placed. Once signed, the RSVP Director meets with the site supervisor to complete orientation and develop job descriptions. Modifications of site activities and/or job descriptions are made, as needed. Before starting assignments, volunteers receive orientation and site training. During assignments, sites receive regular communication to address issues. The Director conducts annual site visits, ensuring services provided are meeting work plan needs and to review/update the MOU. No Lorain County RSVP volunteers may be placed in a station that does not have an active, signed MOU Agreement with the program.

As part of Lorain County RSVP, an Advisory Council of nine volunteers and community leaders (not counting the RSVP Program Director and Executive Director, who provide staff support) meet bi-monthly to oversee Lorain County RSVP operations, identify community needs, complete the annual self-assessment and make recommendations for program improvement. In accordance with RSVP regulations (45CFR2553.24), the Advisory Council includes people who are knowledgeable about health and human service needs of Lorain County residents. They are competent in the field of community service and volunteerism; and are capable of helping the Lorain County Office on Aging to meet the administrative and program responsibilities of RSVP, including fundraising, publicity and programming for impact. All Advisory Council members are interested in and knowledgeable about the capability of older adults. They also represent a diverse composition that reflects the demographics of the service area. Each serves a limited term, to ensure that the changing needs and interests of Lorain County are continually represented by the RSVP Advisory Council.

During bi-monthly Advisory Council meetings, data are regularly analyzed. Volunteer hours are collected and monitored in RSVP Reporter, monthly. Progress towards work plans is reviewed, quarterly. Volunteer and site data are reviewed. Outcome and output data are reviewed to ensure work plans and program activities address community needs. The Volunteer Ambassador Program is part of the self-assessment process, where volunteer satisfaction and retention information received is reviewed to make program improvements. Advisory Council members complete a sample of site visits. Based on the results of the self-assessment and quality improvement activities, the Advisory Council makes recommendations, which are implemented by the RSVP Director.

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Last, to ensure that potential volunteers interested in RSVP are eligible to serve, Lorain County RSVP has each potential volunteer complete an Enrollment Form and receive orientation, prior to being assigned to an RSVP station. As part of the Enrollment Form, potential volunteers are required to provide documentation used to verify RSVP eligibility, including evidence the potential volunteer is 55 years or older and a current Lorain County resident. As part of the Enrollment Form, potential volunteers also list skills, interests, and the types of volunteer service they are interested in doing. Once completed, the RSVP Director reviews the Enrollment Form and contacts the individual to review the form, inform him/her of eligibility to serve in RSVP and (if eligible) begin the orientation process. As part of the RSVP enrollment process, the RSVP Director discusses volunteer interests, skills, and special needs to serve at a site. She also provides an overview of the RSVP Program, including national goals to impact community needs in core focus areas. Additionally, as part of the enrollment process, the RSVP Director reviews volunteer interests, skills, and special needs that may need to be considered when successfully placing a volunteer at a station. Based on this review, the RSVP Director will identify potential stations and service activities, that are best suited to the volunteer's interests, skills, and placement/service needs. A volunteer is only placed after RSVP eligibility has been determined and a station/activity has been mutually identified to match volunteer interests and needs.

### **Organizational Capability**

Since 1973, Lorain County Office on Aging (LCOA) has addressed the needs of seniors. LCOA has experience recruiting and working with senior volunteers to provide effective services. The agency's large volunteer workforce enabled LCOA to provide food assistance to more than 5,500 people, in 2012.

LCOA has successfully managed federal funds since 1975. LCOA receives funding and operates highly effective programs that meet all Older American Act requirements. LCOA's programs have been so successful that it has leveraged additional funds from the United Way, local governments, and foundations. LCOA, which includes Lorain County RSVP, maintains policies and procedures that govern the agency, including a travel policy that outlines the current mileage reimbursement rate, for staff being \$.040 and volunteers being \$0.18. LCOA has operated a successful RSVP program for 37 years.

Lorain County RSVP is directed by a qualified Program Director, who has a bachelor's degree in social

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work and experience managing volunteers. She is a life-long resident of Lorain County who is knowledgeable about the needs of the community and resources available to address them. The Lorain County RSVP Director is responsible for RSVP operations, including recruitment, marketing, training/managing sites, volunteer relations, developing/upgrading sites, implementing quality improvement initiatives, staffing the Advisory Council, developing/implementing work plans, finding local resources and ensuring volunteers receive training. Through volunteer support, the Director manages volunteer assignments, including the Volunteer Ambassador program, timesheets, mileage reports and orientation/job site training.

The RSVP Director is supported by a highly qualified fiscal officer and executive director. The executive director has both master's degrees in public administration and social work, and 19 year's experience in social service administration, including program planning, management and evaluation of federal, state and locally funded programs. The executive director is responsible for supervision of LCOA operations. She actively works with RSVP to conduct needs assessments, strategic planning and evaluate program effectiveness. The fiscal officer is a United States Marine Corps. veteran with more than 30 years of financial management experience, including oversight of federal programs. He has a master's degree in business administration/finance and is fluent in generally acceptable accounting principles and QuickBooks. The fiscal officer is responsible for managing the budget, payroll and personnel files of paid staff. LCOA is governed by a 15-member Board of Trustees that meet monthly to oversee program and financial operations. The Lorain County RSVP Advisory Council meets bimonthly to review program operations, provide guidance and make recommendations.

LCOA uses QuickBooks and other software to manage finances. The fiscal officer establishes budgets and accounts for all revenue and expenditures. A program budget allows us to monitor Lorain County RSVP revenue and expenditures, separately from the LCOA budget. The RSVP Director, Executive Director, Advisory Council and Board of Trustees review budget statements, and request corrections, as needed. An annual independent financial audit is completed by a qualified independent auditor.

Lorain County RSVP is operated in a handicapped-accessible building. Each staff has a computer and email/internet access. The facility has ample space to conduct orientations, trainings and store

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supplies, including donations made throughout the year.

Self-assessment involves monitoring of program goals by the RSVP Director, Executive Director and the Advisory Council. Work plans are reviewed, quarterly, and corrective actions are taken, as needed, to ensure we meet stated goals, objective, outputs and outcomes. Information collected are included in the annual self-assessment and provided to the Advisory Council to make recommendations. These recommendations are implemented by the RSVP Director to continually improve the program.

LCOA, which includes Lorain County RSVP, maintains policies that govern the agency -- including personnel (including timekeeping and travel) and fiscal procedures (including financial controls, procurement and use of federal funds). All required staff complete criminal background checks and sufficient volunteer insurance is maintained, to meet federal requirements. Cash and in-kind resources are logged by the RVSP Director and forwarded to the LCOA Fiscal Officer to be included in the program budget. The Fiscal Officer uses generally acceptable accounting principles to establish budgets and account for revenue and expenditures. The RSVP Director, Executive Director, Advisory Council and Board of Trustees review monthly budget statements, and request corrections, as needed. Space, phone and other services are provided by the Lorain County Commissioners, and documented in an Indirect Cost Study.

Local fundraising generates revenue that offsets program costs, including salaries and benefits of staff assigned to RSVP. LCOA strives to increase local support of Lorain County RSVP, which now covers more than 30% of program expenses. Lorain County RSVP raises funds and collect goods from sites and corporate sponsors to pay a portion and the Recognition Luncheon and other expenses. Yearly, the Advisory Council conducts a fundraiser. In 2012, Lorain County RSVP hosted a cookie sale and solicited businesses and sites for recognition award donations. Additional staff and volunteer support and training are offered through LCOA services funded through local fundraising and the Older American Act.

### Other

N/A

### PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A