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Executive Summary

An estimated 1,921 RSVP volunteers will serve. Some of their activities include companionship, food delivery and distribution, tutoring, leading Bone Builders and creating disaster kits. The primary focus area is Healthy Futures. At the end of the 3 years, the following is anticipated:

- * Homebound or older adults and individuals with disabilities having increased social supports
- * Gains in literacy skills
- * Improved academic performance in literacy and/or math
- * Improved academic engagement
- * Increased food security and
- * Successful job placements

The CNCS federal investment of \$74,742 will be supplemented by \$243,767 which comes from local, state and other funds and includes the required match of \$32,032.

The legal applicant, self-sponsored, is Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Southwest Minnesota (SW MN). Our mission is to offer people 55 and older volunteer opportunities that fit their interests, talents, skills and life experiences. We are currently going thru strategic planning sessions regarding a possible organization name change including mission, vision, goals, etc. The organization serves 6 counties and has been in existence since 1972. The Board of Directors (Joint Powers Board) meets monthly and provides operational oversight as well as financial support (per capita, facilities and space). Our financial and database support services are completed by Southwest Regional Development Commission staff. The SRDC is a non-voting JPB member. The organization employs the executive/program director and 6 program coordinators.

Our 2012 year-end report indicates 2,089 enrolled volunteers were active. As of July 31, 2013, 1,904 enrolled volunteers were active. As of December 31, 2012, the cumulative cost per hour of volunteer service year to date was \$1.04/hour. In 2012, volunteers recorded 251,318 hours (10,315 more hours than 2011).

Our community support is very broad as 328 stations are enrolled (as of July 31, 2013).

Strengthening Communities

Q1. Describes the community and demonstrates through both the narrative and work plans that the community need(s) identified in the Primary Focus Area exist in the geographic service area.

RSVP of Southwest Minnesota (SW MN) serves 6 counties; Cottonwood, Lincoln, Murray, Nobles,

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Redwood and Rock. Our service area borders Iowa and South Dakota. Our service area spreads over 90 miles in any direction and over 120 miles from corner to corner.

2010 U.S. Census indicates that our service area has 73,432 people (a 1,697 decrease from Census 2000). Census 2000 indicates 6.3% are non-white. Our percentage of persons 60+ is higher than the MN average of 18.2% as it ranges from 21% in Nobles County to 30.1% in Lincoln County. USDA data from 2008 Percent of Total Population in Poverty ranges from 8.9% in Murray County to 13.4% in Nobles County. Census 2000 indicates our percentage of low income 65+ is higher than the MN average of 8.2% with Lincoln County at 15.4% and our minority 60+ is lower than the statewide average of 8.1% with ranges from 3 people in Lincoln County to 122 people in Nobles County.

We are currently experiencing high rates of minorities entering specific communities, such as Worthington and Walnut Grove. Minorities in Worthington (total population in 2010 was 12,764) comprise 50% in their public senior high and 64% of their elementary. During the 2011-2012 school year in the Worthington Public School District, 47.7% of student speak a language other than English in their homes and total minority is 50% of their enrollment. Of the 47.7%, 35% are speak Spanish in their homes however other languages include, Afrikaans, Amharic, Anuak, Armenian, Burmese, Chaldean (Neo-Aramaic), Chinese (Mandarin), English (Creolized), German, Karen, Karen (Pwo), Karenni (Kayah), Lao (Laotian), Nuer, Oromo, Telugu, Thai, Tigrinya and Vietnamese. Walnut Grove Public Elementary School has 33.2% of minority students.

According to the 2010 MN Nonprofit Economy report, there is evidence that nonprofits in the South Central/SW region have been facing significant financial pressures during the recent recession. Between 2007 and 2009, nonprofit revenues in the region increased an average of 6%, but nonprofit expenditures increased an average of 13 % per year.

According to Cameron Macht with MN Department of Employment and Economic Development, there are an increasing number of signs of an economic recovery, especially in SWt and South Central MN. While unemployment rates have dropped below 6% in the state -- which is nearly 3% lower than the national rate -- rates in the southwest corner of the state remain about 1% lower than the state. The 23-southwest county planning region added nearly 2,500 employed workers from September 2010 to September 2011, a steady 1.2% gain. That was twice as fast as the national increase in employment over the last 12 months. In contrast, the number of unemployed workers in the region dropped 11% in the last year, twice as fast as the nationwide decline in unemployment. In other words, regional hiring activity appears to be picking up, while layoff activity appears to be slowing down. Residents often must seek employment in other communities/counties.

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The state and federal budget crises have impacted our partners and service area. According to the 2010 MN Nonprofit Economy report, nonprofits reported that 7% of their revenue came from government grants and at least another 4% came from government contracts for services. Stagnant funding in nursing homes, etc. have forced staff to go without wage increases for several years and decreases in reimbursement rates in federal programs (i.e. Medicare) have resulted in businesses covering larger areas, etc.

The needs and assets of the communities we serve include the ever challenging health care system in working towards lowering readmission rates, budget cuts at all levels resulting in hiring freezes and volunteer differences between the older typical volunteers and baby boomer volunteers.

Every 2 years (since 2011), the MN Department of Human Services required county social service agencies to assess services in the county to address gaps. Current capacity can be identified as not available, available but limited or meets demand. The level of capacity identified correlates to the need for development. Gaps Analysis data is analyzed and discussed with appropriate entities to discuss implementation or expansion details, if appropriate. RSVP has implemented programs such as telephone reassurance and caregiver coach as a result. RSVP has provided respite as a wrap-around service to tele-homecare per their request. Volunteers often become needed based on community assessments from public health, emergency preparedness plans, energy audits, etc.

Directly in regards to our primary focus area, healthy futures, counties in our service area indicated "not available" or "available but limited in most cases in the following areas: chore, companion services, home delivered meals, in-home respite care and medical transportation. Food support programs are being used heavily and to the point of shortages. Telephone reassurance and chore was recently added to the list of eligible services to help older adults in their homes as they age according to results of an online survey the MN River Area Agency on Aging®, Inc. conducted. Services provided under healthy futures can prevent older adults from requiring more costly services or institutional placement. In 2009, the annual average cost for a private room in a MN nursing home was \$62,780. According to the MN Department of Human Services, "Every 1% decline in family caregiving costs the public sector \$30 million annually in MN."

Respite surveys indicated that caregivers are able to care for their loved one for a longer period of time and their stress/burden is reduced due to services offered by RSVP volunteers.

Q2. Describes in the narrative how the service activities in the Primary Focus Area lead to National Performance Measure outputs or outcomes.

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Q3. Plan and infrastructure to support data collection and ensure National Performance Measure outcomes and outputs are measured, collected, and managed.

RSVP of SW MN uses Volunteer Reporter to manage volunteer hours. Stations submit volunteer hours according to our policy. All data is entered from our administrative office.

Station supervisors are sent timesheets each month. Volunteers record their hours on the timesheet at the stations when they volunteer. Station supervisors are asked to submit timesheets by the 5th of each month.

Each month, a report is made including monthly hours by volunteer (shows monthly and year to date totals) and hours served by station (shows each station and which volunteers were active in the past month including number of volunteer hours). Coordinators use data to fulfill large or recurring requests.

An Excel spreadsheet is used to track hours, number of volunteers and number of people served by each station and by outcome. The spreadsheet is broken out by month and by quarter. Data is presented to the JPB on a monthly basis for approval and staff receive a copy.

Impact statement results are compiled in our administrative office in a Word document for easy evaluation. Originals are kept for the required amount of time. Impact statements or client satisfaction surveys are distributed to stations and/or participants in nearly every work plan we have. Data is used to improve the services as well as volunteer experience. In 2011, our survey focused on outreach effectiveness. Our 2012 survey focused on gaps and possible improvements in the communities we serve. Staff, JPB and joint advisory council members draft the survey and carefully analyze results. Results are shared with county commissioners and funders for accountability purposes. Our outreach effectiveness survey results have been provided in hard copy to our state program officer.

By using our database to match well qualified volunteers who are interested in the activities of that particular organization, we are able to save time as well as money for organizations.

Q4. Program Design includes activity in service to veterans and/or military families.

We continue to work with 5 stations in particular that only serve Veterans and their families. As a result of the Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging®, Inc. Veteran Directed project via the Sioux Falls VA Center, RSVP has become more involved in providing caregiver education and services to Veteran families.

We have one VA nursing home within our area, MN Veterans Home. RSVP volunteers help support

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the Luverne Veterans Home where it provides skilled nursing care for 85 residents. They follow the Eden Philosophy social model of care to help provide spontaneity and make life worth living for residents in their care. The home has a 17 bed specialized unit to care for residents with dementia. Community and groups from schools to churches to local businesses and RSVP are an integral part of the activity programming for the residents living there.

There is one "Beyond the Yellow Ribbon" Network in our area. The Yellow Ribbon Network is a diverse group of citizens and community leaders, including RSVP, uniting key areas within local communities to leverage existing support activities, build awareness and take action to recognize and support Service members and military families. RSVP worked with this network to get 30 fleece blankets to military families during the 2011 Christmas holiday season and worked with several organizations including Big Buddies to accomplish this.

Staff attended, per invite, an event in Redwood County that the local Veteran Service Officer (VSO) coordinated. The event included a meal, education and resource tables. The event was held at the Armory. Staff has a good working relationship with VSOs in our area.

Our volunteer enrollment form and annual program evaluation now includes a question on veteran status. We are working towards gathering number of served that may be Veterans or their families.

Recruitment and Development

Q8. A plan and infrastructure to create well-developed high quality RSVP volunteer assignments.

Our 2012 year-end report indicates 2,089 enrolled volunteers were active. As of July 31, 2013, 1,904 enrolled volunteers contributed time to the program during the calendar year.

Coordinators work hard to ensure that volunteers have a quality experience that builds leadership potential, reflects on the meaning of service to the community and enhances the quality of their life. Many individuals who have recently retired or now have more time due to a death of a spouse, etc. come to the volunteer office to talk. During the face-to-face interview, coordinators get a feel for what skills they already have and what new skills they are interested in obtaining. Volunteers are asked if they are interested in being a volunteer leader of a particular station.

A volunteer assignment description is created for each new opportunity.

An effective placement starts with effective communication regarding the need. The enrollment form is used to identify what volunteers may fit the need identified. Volunteers are asked to complete an

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enrollment form which asks where their interests in volunteering are and what community activities/event they would like to be involved in. Past occupations can play a role in recruitment however not consistent in all cases. Volunteers who are apprehensive about an assignment are paired up with another that can provide support which results in increased confidence and skills. This provides reassurance to volunteers that they still have a purpose in life and are useful to the community. Regular contact with station supervisors prevent any issues from occurring. Studies show that volunteers who contribute at least 2 hours per week benefit in a number of ways in regards to their health. Volunteer surveys a few years ago also showed similar results. Much of what we hear is that volunteers like being a part of a larger group and socialization is one of the factors to better health.

Volunteers want to feel good about what they contribute, want organizations to appreciate them and want to be treated with respect. In rural communities, where the overall population is both declining and aging, sharing strengths and mutually caring for each other is paramount. Volunteers want to give back to their community and enhance or maintain existing facilities/services for a better tomorrow. Volunteer opportunities that are meaningful and recognized by the community include, but are not limited to, RSVP Bone Builders, CarFit, Reader's Theater, Respite/Caregiver Support, telephone reassurance, respite, Salvation Army, health insurance counseling via the State Health Insurance Assistance Program, tax assistance, leading evidenced-based health promotion programs and American Red Cross (emergency preparedness). These programs mentioned build new skills (by offering or requiring training), develop leadership potential (as volunteers are trained initially, provided with on-going technical assistance but asked to volunteer in more of a one-to-one or small group setting), reflect on the meaning of service in the community (as they are consistent, responsible and make a difference) and enhance the quality of their own lives (through socialization, increased knowledge, enhanced responsibility or improved health).

Bone Builder leaders enjoy seeing personal and participant progress. Participants have reported amazing recovery times after surgery which physicians attribute to pre-surgery health and strength. Bone Builder participants report that they are more firm on their feet, can now comb their own hair, pick up their grandchildren, turn their head to see traffic, etc. Others have reported that they have been taken off of medications, particularly osteoporosis medications.

When a request is received, volunteers on that particular station sheet are called first. It is not uncommon to have the majority of volunteers unable to assist due to other commitments, including volunteer assignments. Recent stations that were in need of volunteers include Pioneer Village and

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Western Community Action Transit. Coordinators use radio, faith based venues, e-mail, newsletters, cable television, speaking engagements, health fairs, county fairs, FaceBook, brochures, etc. as ways to spread the word about the benefits and opportunities of RSVP. The Executive Director educates the county boards, JPB and Joint Advisory Council members about recruitment methods. Advisory Council members suggest recruitment methods that work best in their area. It is important to retain active volunteers but yet expand our volunteer opportunities to create substantive roles for others. Our volunteer handbook was recently revised (1/1/13). New volunteers have the opportunity to receive a handbook upon enrollment. Handbooks are available at each office and at annual recognition events. Volunteers are informed of changes via e-mail, expense checks, station supervisors, etc.

RSVP volunteers tend to be very active in many community activities such as Senior Centers, Kiwanis, Lions, Chambers, faith communities, community celebrations, veteran programs, transportation, etc. They also volunteer their time on local boards such as Health and Human Services, Hospice, Area Agency on Aging and schools to help make a difference in their community. Volunteers want to contribute to the good of their community and tend to thrive at community activities where they can use their talents to the max.

Our boomer volunteers have very different and distinct expectations of their volunteer experience. They expect their skills to be utilized, they expect to collaborate with staff instead of being in a subordinate role, they expect their service to be fun and challenging and they expect the results of their volunteer experience to have significant impact and outcome. Most boomers will volunteer only on their terms and they insist on determining when, where, how and what they are willing to do. We have begun to look at ways to work with the baby boomer. We are looking for ways to use creative, traditional and non-traditional methods. We have begun to use Facebook and are improving our website to target boomers.

Q9. Plan and infrastructure to ensure RSVP volunteers receive training.

Volunteers are trained and supervised by the station according to their responsibilities at the station. Training can be held at the station or via another organization, etc. Volunteers continue to be trained based on new circumstances. Training is addressed on our Memorandum of Understanding and is clear to volunteers prior to their involvement at that station.

Volunteers are given training opportunities thru local community partners and via videoconference (i.e. DHS) when appropriate.

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Examples of very specific training including volunteerism in transportation, respite, chore, telephone reassurance, Bone Builders, health insurance counseling, tax assistance, evidence based health promotion programs, etc.

Volunteer station supervisors are trained by RSVP coordinators. Coordinators provide station supervisors with appropriate training on reporting and RSVP requirements. Training relevant to their needs, such as bike lane markings to transportation stations, are shared with station supervisors. Coordinators connect with stations in-person annually, at a minimum. More frequent communication occurs via telephone, fax, e-mail and mail which was proven in our station survey results from 2010.

Q10. Describes the demographics of the community served and plans to recruit a volunteer pool reflective of the community served.

2010 U.S. Census indicates that our service area has 73,432 people (a 1,697 decrease from Census 2000). Census 2000 indicates 6.3% are non-white. Our percentage of persons 60+ is higher than the MN average of 18.2% as it ranges from 21% in Nobles County to 30.1% in Lincoln County. USDA data from 2008 Percent of Total Population in Poverty ranges from 8.9% in Murray County to 13.4% in Nobles County. Census 2000 indicates our percentage of low income 65+ is higher than the MN average of 8.2% with Lincoln County at 15.4% and our minority 60+ is lower than the statewide average of 8.1% with ranges from 3 people in Lincoln County to 122 people in Nobles County.

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Our service area has a large homogeneous older population and a younger generation that tends to be more multi-cultural, especially in certain locations such as Mountain Lake, Worthington and Walnut Grove. The younger generations tend not to have huge biases, like the older population, towards others in regards to races, ethnicities, sexual orientation or degrees of English language proficiency.

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Staff take into consideration preferences of volunteers and of the person being served in regards to volunteer placement, but with that being said, all persons regardless of what they bring to the table can be served, etc.

Respite, telephone reassurance, companion clients, etc. tend to be more comfortable with someone that has similarities with them. Targeted recruitment does occur. Training does address how to work collaboratively with others, regardless of their situation.

RSVP of SW MN connects with organizations that have a likelihood of serving individuals from diverse races, ethnicities, sexual orientation or degrees of English language proficiency. Staff are required to take part in some type of minority training annually.

Staff have access, via the Senior LinkAge Line®, to LLE- Link which offers phone based interpretation.

Brochures from national or state sources are available in multiple languages, at a level of reading that works for most. Local brochures have been translated for respite services.

Many of our older generation males are Veterans. Lion's clubs and VFW's are still active in many communities. Our employment application, volunteer enrollment form and annual program evaluation include a piece on veteran status. We work closely with Veteran Service Officers in the service area. Veterans are often recognized at volunteer appreciation events.

Disabled volunteers are encouraged to become a part of our program. There are volunteer opportunities that can be done at home or in a handicapped accessible location. If needed, a volunteer mentor can be arranged to assist. Handicapped accessibility is considered when locations are discussed so that those with disabilities can participate.

RSVP works to bring together people of diverse backgrounds with positive relationships being built with English as a Second Language (ESL), Intercultural Uniting (a 6 city collaborative to promote a welcoming and nurturing environment with a growing immigrant population) and District 518 Community Education. Nobles County has built a strong relationship with the AARP Tax Assistance

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program for the minority. Volunteers are placed in schools to assist with reading skills for those who have English as their second language. In the 2011-2012 school year in the Worthington Public School District, 18.8% of students are LEP (Limited English Proficiency). In-person interpreters are available. We work with local minority collaborative when putting together sponsored events or when working on new projects.

RSVP also works to bring together volunteers of diverse backgrounds. RSVP currently has 7 registered minority volunteers of which are Hispanic (2), Black (1), Asian (1) and American Indian (3) which volunteer in Redwood, Rock and Nobles counties. They are volunteering at Manna Food Pantry, Grace and Rock Quilters, Redwood Animal Shelter, Sanford Worthington, BFM and Special Events. Relationships continue to be built with minorities at these stations. Staff makes an effort to inform people with diverse backgrounds about services available.

Q11. Demonstrates a plan and infrastructure to retain and recognize RSVP volunteers.

Volunteer retention is unique to each volunteer. Personal connection between the volunteer and the coordinator and/or station supervisor is critical to volunteer retention and satisfaction. Each year, coordinators connect with non-active volunteers regarding their enrollment and remove volunteers that are no longer interested in volunteering or unable to volunteer (usually due to relocation, health conditions or death).

Retention is often measured by the longevity and commitment of volunteers to the program. Average hours/month, according to our July 2013 report, indicates that volunteers are, on average, volunteering 11-21 hours/month. We have recognized volunteers who have volunteered more than 10,000 in their lifetime or who have been enrolled 10+ years.

Each county has an annual recognition event. Each event is coordinated locally by the staff and advisory council. In 2013, Redwood and Rock counties partnered with Dad's Belgium Waffles. In Lincoln County, we partner with Hendricks Senior Dining and Ivanhoe VFW for a dessert luncheon and steak fry. In Murray County, we work with Lutheran Social Services nutrition and in Nobles and Cottonwood counties, we partnered with a local caterer. Education and entertainment is available however there is also a booth set up to showcase our accomplishments and current volunteer opportunities. Station supervisors have come in the past to show their support of the program. Stations and local businesses provide door prizes and cash donations. Funds obtained from ink cartridge and cell phone recycling, in part, is being used for volunteer recognition events. Volunteers are also thanked several times throughout the year informally. Some of the stations recognize their volunteers during volunteer appreciation month, etc. Newsletters often showcase volunteer station

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thank you notes.

Our volunteer handbook addresses program eligibility requirements including benefits (i.e. annual recognition event).

Program Management

Q12. Plans and infrastructure to ensure management of volunteer stations in compliance with RSVP program regulations.

Volunteer stations must submit a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which includes a volunteer position description. Staff reviews the MOU annually with stations. MOUs are regenerated every 3 years. Although the MOU is not binding as a legal contract, it does address the following: basic policies, volunteer assignments, orientation/supervision of volunteers, recognition of volunteers, volunteer mileage/meal reimbursement, insurance coverage for volunteers, transportation, evaluation of volunteer assignments, religious activities, displacement of employees, letter of agreement, volunteer time sheets, accessible and reasonable accommodations, accident reports, prohibition of discrimination, separation from volunteer service and annual safety assessments. By signing the MOU, the station representative certifies that 1) they are a public or non-profit private organization, or a proprietary health care agency 2) they will not request or receive compensation from beneficiaries of RSVP volunteers and 3) volunteer station financial support of the RSVP project is not a precondition for that station to obtain volunteer service.

Organizational Capability

Q19. Demonstrates organizational capacity to:

1. Develop and implement internal policies and operating procedures to provide governance and manage risk, such as accounting, personnel management, and purchasing.

RSVP of SW Minnesota has developed a personnel policy and operations manual along with the Joint Powers Board agreement to effectively govern and manage the risks associated with the work required of the organization. Along with these policies, a volunteer handbook is utilized to aid in the crucial management of our best resource, the volunteers.

Financial and management expertise has been proven with the overall financial and programmatic improvement that has occurred in the agency since 2007. Fiscal agents have had audits with no findings and questioned costs for numerous years and utilize the same policies and procedures in adequately safeguarding RSVP of SW Minnesota funds with the Joint Powers Board approval.

2. Manage capital assets such as facilities, equipment, and supplies.

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RSVP operates with a large majority of the facilities and equipment provided by member counties or outside sources. Supplies are utilized appropriately and paid for based on grant agreement budgets and consistent transactions.

Q20. Demonstrates organizational infrastructure in the areas of robust financial management capacity and systems and past experience managing federal grant funds.

Current Fiscal Agents have 35 years of experience in the field of accounting and federal grant management. Budgets are prepared in conjunction with and approved by the Joint Powers Board. Monthly the Director and the Joint Powers Board are updated with a comparison of budget to actual costs along with a report showing volunteer hours for the month and year-to-date. The Joint Powers Board has the information available to them to make the decisions necessary and work well with the Director and the Fiscal Agents in managing the federal grant funds.

3. Cost Effectiveness / Budget Adequacy (15%)

Q21. The adequacy and reasonableness of the budget to provide reimbursable expenses to volunteers such as transportation, meals, and insurance.

The organization has insured the volunteers with CIMA insurance to help them should there be a catastrophic cost. Volunteers are provided with insurance information and all other requirements in the volunteer handbook and are reimbursed according to policy.

Q22. The adequacy and reasonableness of the budget to support RSVP volunteer recruitment and recognition.

One of the great things about RSVP of SW Minnesota is that each member county has at least a half-time coordinator in their own area who is familiar with the volunteer needs of the area and also the people who might be most willing to volunteer at the various stations. They have connections to the area and do their best to recruit and hold a formal recognition each year of the volunteers.

Q23. The adequacy and reasonableness of required non-federal funds that are budgeted .

The state grant received helps to provide match to the federal funds and is very valuable to continue the work of the federal grant. In addition, other match provided comes from the counties who have seen the impact made by the organization through the coordinators in their areas and know that the value of the volunteer service received more than offsets the funds contributed. Among these contributions are the in-kind match provided by the member counties to house the coordinators

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locally.

Other

N/A

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A