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Executive Summary

Connections Area Agency on Aging is the former Southwest 8 Senior Services, sponsor of a Senior Companion Program and a Foster Grandparent Program in Iowa's southwest region. We are applying to become the sponsor for an RSVP Program to serve Mills and Pottawattamie counties in Iowa. Though the timing of this application is not ideal for our agency, we felt that it was too important of a program and asset to our community to not pursue this opportunity. Connections AAA has filed the proper paperwork with the Internal Revenue Service to have all of our documentation transferred from the Southwest 8 name to the Connections, and we are awaiting that documentation as of the due date of this application deadline. Our EIN number remains the same, and it is the same corporation, just with a name change. The former Southwest 8 served as a volunteer station for the RSVP program up until approximately two years ago when the program was halted in our service area. Once this opportunity presented itself, and we were fortified with the experience of working with two other Senior Corps programs, we knew that despite timing issues and all of our incomplete documentation, we felt it was an honor and a responsibility to Mills and Pottawattamie counties to seek sponsorship of the program. Mills and Pottawattamie counties are extremely civic and community inclined, and approximately five years ago, the Council Bluffs community lost our volunteer bureau, which was essentially a volunteer clearing house of opportunities. We feel that with the sponsorship of this RSVP program we can offer a variety of service opportunities where Baby Boomers, retirees and all age appropriate candidates can contribute to their community. Our anticipation is that we will cultivate volunteer stations that span interest levels to include education (which is the focus of our work plan goals), the arts, human services, and the environment. We will seek disaster relief opportunities as well.

Strengthening Communities

Connections Area Agency on Aging is just beginning the first year as the expanded organization formerly known as Southwest 8 Senior Services. Southwest 8 expanded from eight counties to our current level of 20 serving western, southwestern and south central Iowa. We are currently the sponsors of a Senior Companion Program that serves Pottawattamie County and a Foster Grandparent Program that serves Fremont, Mills and Pottawattamie counties in Iowa. We are seeking to become the sponsor for an RSVP Program which will serve Mills and Pottawattamie Counties in Iowa. The city of Council Bluffs in Pottawattamie County and the town of Glenwood in Mills County are classified as part of the Omaha/Council Bluffs Metropolitan area. The remainder of

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Pottawattamie and Mills counties are very rural in nature with no other city or town with a population over 3000. The two service counties are not racially diverse with an average of 97.5% of residents classified as white, which is slightly higher than the state average of 94.2%. As the Area Agency on Aging for these two communities, we have strong ties to the counties and communities served by this project. Our board voted to approve our applying for this funding opportunity on August 29, 2013. We have many partners who can enhance our ability to be a successful sponsor here, including the SW Iowa Networking Group (SWING), which is a collaboration of 50 nonprofits, businesses and organizations that work with seniors. SWING meets monthly, and hosts an annual resource fair. We have become involved with Promise Partners, which is Pottawattamie County's Alliance for Youth and organizations who focus on children. We are involved in partnership with both major hospitals in the project area to provide transition service for patients who are being discharged from the hospital. Through staff involvement we cross paths with many CEOs and Executive Directors in both the private sector and in the human services field. The communities of Council Bluffs and Glenwood are very community-minded, and one noticeable need is the lack of a centralized volunteer clearing house where civic minded citizens can explore so that they might be of service to their communities. We feel that providing sponsorship for RSVP can be a major asset to the Baby Boomers and retirees in helping them find meaningful volunteer opportunities in these two counties. Through our sponsorship of the Foster Grandparent Program, we were able to cultivate a partnership with the Council Bluffs Public School District. They have been delighted by the impact of the FGP, and we feel that they would be receptive to RSVP service as well. We became a private non-profit corporation in 1980, and we have been a mainstay in this community as the leading resource for older Iowans. We feel that our longevity, stability, reputation and partnerships make us a strong sponsor.

Public Awareness and Support: A primary goal for us with the RSVP is to communicate that the program is back and seek partnerships with volunteer stations that will provide meaningful service opportunities for individuals age 55 and older in Pottawattamie and Mills counties. We will keep volunteers, partner agencies, & family caregivers informed about the RSVP in newsletters, local newspapers, and other media. We will use our website, Facebook and Twitter to promote the program. Our staff speaks often at senior centers and service clubs throughout SW Iowa and we will use these connections to promote the RSVP. PD is on the Board of Directors of a small foundation and a Hospice organization and she is on the Advisory Council of the Alzheimers Association; and PC is active on the Pottawattamie County Human Services Advisory Council, on the Advisory Council for Catholic Charities Phoenix House Domestic Violence shelter, PTO Vice- President of College View

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Elementary in Council Bluffs, on the Community Education Council for Council Bluffs Schools, and on the Advisory Council for Legal Aid. Outreach for Diverse Backgrounds: The project service area has minimal racial diversity, with approximately a 2-4% hispanic population. We do have a Latino Center in our office building and we will seek their input as to opportunities with diversity. We will work with the Latino Center to determine which area churches have a major Hispanic attendance to identify needs. We will provide Spanish language marketing materials to these churches as an outreach effort. Mobilizing Community Resources: We have two primary resources assisting with developing community resources: 1. As the AAA, we are well-connected in the community. Project Director and Project Coordinator are involved with civic groups and service on area foundations and organizations. 2. We have applied for matching funding from a grant with the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service. Program Participants in the Community: Since we are essentially starting all over and building a program from the ground up, we will work to find identifiable community volunteer opportunities that will highlight the volunteers involvement with the RSVP. We anticipate that such sites might include schools, museums, hospitals, and other touchstones in the community. We will feature the success and impact of the volunteers as much as possible using print media/press releases, social media, photo opportunities and other means to highlight Senior Corps in general and the RSVP program in particular. In addition, we will work to build an Advisory Council comprised of community leaders and citizens of influence who can help us spread the word about the opportunities available through RSVP. Enhancing Organization Capacity: Service through RSVP in Mills and Pottawattamie counties will expand the capacity of the volunteer sites by accepting committed engaged volunteers who will help them meet their goals and or missions; it will help the two-county community funded by the project as it offers opportunities for meaningful service for Baby Boomers and retirees and it can serve as a centralized volunteer clearinghouse for these this demographic. Work to Integrate Senior Service: Connections Area Agency on Aging will work to integrate the RSVP by continuing to cultivate our partnerships with the following groups: senior centers, retiree groups, and other senior citizen clubs. Program volunteers will be kept apprise of topics of interest to senior citizens, and the services available to them through our agency.

Recruitment and Development

Connections AAA employs a multi-faceted recruitment approach to increase volunteer productivity in the service counties which include: * News stories to promote RSVP * PSAs and press releases for all media * Recruiting and posting flyers in senior centers, churches, clinics, and social clubs * Marketing with community partners at meetings * Sending flyers out * Work with retiree and service clubs *

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Showcase RSVP at area health fairs and events We will form an Advisory Council and charge them with the task of identifying some volunteer sites and strategies for recruitment. Prior to service, all volunteers will take pre-service training. This includes, but is not be limited to, introduction to the Corporation for National Service and the RSVP, history and goals of the RSVP, appropriate/inappropriate activities, RSVP policies and procedures, tips for working with different age groups, confidentiality, diversity, listening, and attitude. Volunteer Recognition: Volunteers will be recognized at an annual Recognition Banquet. The banquet will be an event attended by volunteer station supervisors, Senior Corps Advisory Council members and civic leaders. Special occasions, events, illnesses and hospitalizations will be recognized with cards or flowers. Volunteer station staff will also be encouraged to give recognition on an on-going basis. Supervision: Effective supervision on the part of Connections AAA and its volunteer stations is critical to a quality volunteer program. The agency will ensure that volunteer stations have the skills to manage volunteers and we will provide an orientation for new volunteer station supervisors that address their roles and responsibilities. Southwest 8 maintains a cooperative and successful relationship with all of our volunteer stations by continuing to visit, call and email with site managers. We require all documentation of timesheets be up-to-date and in compliance with the Corporation standards. Volunteer Retention: The success of any volunteer program is the retention of volunteers. Connections employs the following strategies to keep volunteers engaged: * Prior to service the volunteer receives ample training both by both Connections, and by the volunteer station in which he/she serves. * * Volunteers will be recognized and thanked regularly for their service * Input from the volunteers and the sites is encouraged and welcomed * On-going in-services enhance confidence and interest in program * Connections will provide CIMA insurance for the volunteers which covers accident coverage insurance which includes accidental medical expenses, eyeglass lens or frame replacement, death benefits and excess automobile liability insurance as part of a comprehensive benefits package. * Volunteers are always be treated with respect and shown how much they are valued by sponsor, volunteer station, clients and the community . Evaluating the Volunteer Experience: Volunteers will be given opportunities to reflect on the meaning of their volunteer service and how it has changed their own lives through annual program evaluations. The senior volunteers will identify how the RSVP has changed them personally, the effects on their family, and impact they see on their community. Volunteer station supervisors will report on positive changes they observe in the Volunteer's attitude and adaptability. Project Coordinator conducts annual evaluations individually with each volunteer, and the Project Coordinator also takes part in at least three on site visits annually per volunteer station, with prior

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authorization from the site manager. Technical Assistance: If we are determined as a grantee by the Corporation, we will hire a Project Coordinator and the PC will participate in the statewide association for RSVP to better learn how the program works to maximize our impact and success. Technical assistance will be obtained as needed through the Corporation for National Service.

Program Management

Connections AAA will utilize our standing in the community and the reputation of our other two Senior Corps programs to develop volunteer sites for RSVP. Volunteer sites will be solicited to enhance the engagement and impact for the volunteer. Volunteer sites are recruited using the guidelines developed by CNCS, and Connections AAA will insure that the volunteer site understands their roles and responsibilities, outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding which will be provided to and signed by the station's executive director. Volunteer Stations are required to engage in effective volunteer management practices that include appropriate supervision, ensuring a safe work environment for the volunteers, , and thorough data collection. RSVP staff will, in addition to communication with stations on a regular basis, visit the volunteer station a minimum of 4 times yearly in order to develop relationships that support the volunteer and the station and to ensure timely attention to problems or concerns. As a sponsoring agency, Connections will maintain personal liability insurance in compliance with Corporation guidelines on the property and for liability through CIMA. The sponsor carries coverage of \$1,000,000 per occurrence and \$3,000,000 aggregate. Assignment will reflect the individual preference and passion of the volunteer. During the interview process, the RSVP staff and the volunteer will discuss available volunteer sites and the individual volunteer's area of interest. Progress reports will be given quarterly to the RSVP Advisory Council. Annually, like all Connections AAA programs, the program will be subjected to an outside fiscal audit conducted by a CPA firm. The RSVP staff will complete an internal compliance audit once per year. The sponsor will periodically contact each of its volunteer sites to assess the program and maintain relationships. Impact of volunteer involvement will be measured by an annual evaluation of each volunteer by Project Coordinator. Staff will survey/interview each volunteer and Volunteer Station manager. Annually, RSVP will compile results of these evaluations and share the findings with the RSVP Advisory Council, the volunteer stations, the volunteers and collaborating agencies. Progress reports will be provided annually to the board of directors, the advisory council, and to collaborating agencies. Connections AAA uses the Sage Fiscal management software as its financial management tool. The sponsor has found that the Sage system is the best suited for RSVP because it allows the agency to easily generate the variety in reporting that is needed for the federal government, the state

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of Iowa, and internally. The agency is able to monitor each budget line item and is able to keep track of the program as a whole or by volunteer station. All checks must be signed by two individuals, and one of those individuals is almost always a board member. 99% of all checks are signed by the Executive Director and one member of the board of directors. In rare instances, the Fiscal Director or the Associate Director will sign if either the Executive Director or a board member is not available. The software allows the agency to keep record of individual receipts both cash and in-kind. These are maintained in the fiscal office by a full-time accountant employee of Connections AAA. The agency undergoes an annual audit by an independent Certified Public Accountant for conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

Organizational Capability

Connections is the Area Agency on Aging for Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie, Plymouth, Cherokee, Woodbury, Ida, Monona, Adair, Adams, Taylor, Union, Clarke, Ringgold, Decatur and Shelby counties in Iowa. As such the agency provides a "one-stop-shop" for information, resources, and coordination for seniors and their family caregivers. Connections AAA does this by offering over 37 programs and services for the elderly and their family caregivers such as case management, which coordinates in-home and community based services which enables seniors to maintain their independence and remain in their own homes for as long as possible. Examples of these services include homemaker, transportation, emergency response systems, personal care, skilled nursing, assistive devices, home-delivered meals and medication management. The sponsor also maintains 20 senior centers where older Iowans can go for hot nutritious meals, educational opportunities and socialization. Other services provided by Connections AAA include information, assistance and referral; advocacy; Elder Abuse Awareness and Prevention; insurance counseling; Senior Medicare Patrol; Friends and Family Respite; Grandparent Support; Public Education and Solution Options for Seniors (which is a financial assistance program for seniors facing an unexpected expense to repair or replace a critical life need). Connections has over 30 years of experience as an Area Agency on Aging. The agency manages a \$9 million dollar budget that consists of 37 programs and services that help seniors remain in their own homes, such as case management, nutrition, advocacy, information and assistance, and volunteer service. Through these programs and services, over 5000 individuals were served by the agency directly and approximately 12,000 more were reached through Information and Public Education efforts. The agency manages over 750 volunteers in areas such as advocacy, reassurance and visiting, senior center, delivering meals, transportation, chore, and volunteer board and council service. Program Director studied English and Gerontology;

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(University of Nebraska) has over 10 years of supervisory / volunteer management experience, and has worked in the aging network for 17 years. She oversees 10 program areas including Volunteer Management. Sage Fiscal Management is used for daily fiscal operations for Connections, and will be the system used for the RSVP. Expenditures are approved by Project Director and Executive Director. Checks are signed by one member of our Board of Directors, and Executive Director. Rare exceptions would necessitate the Associate Director or Fiscal Manager serving as a check signer, but this occurs in less than 1% of all checks generated by the agency. Receipts, both cash and in-kind are maintained in the office and in the accounting system. Connections AAA has a full-time Fiscal Manager to oversee all of the financial operations of the agency. Annually the program is audited by an independent CPA firm. Connections manages over 750 volunteers in a variety of program areas. These hours are reported and logged monthly by individual and by program area. The sponsor is a meticulous tracker of these hours because the compilation and reporting of them to the Iowa Department on Aging is critical in two ways: First, volunteer hours contribute to units of service provided, enabling the agency to report its progress. Second, the volunteer hours represent some of the match that is required to provide for state and federal funding. The sponsor remains very involved with seniors and volunteers through programs. The Executive Director, her entire management team and other key personnel make a priority of visiting each senior center annually. Every April and May volunteers are honored at regional volunteer recognition celebrations. Connections AAA has a large office suite within the Omni Centre in the heart of Downtown Council Bluffs, IA. The agency possesses adequate office space and equipment such as computers, filing cabinets, copy machines, fax capabilities for the program staff's utilization. Southwest 8 Senior Services also has a board room adequate for volunteer trainings and orientation opportunities. The sponsor uses a purchase order system for all payables and has set Fiscal Policies. This is in addition to the agency's overall Policy and Procedures, which includes a travel policy. Three other divisions also have individual policy manuals: Case Management, Nutrition and Elder Abuse. Each position has a written job description and all employees are evaluated annually.

Other

Connections AAA has applied for funding from the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service to achieve match for the federal funding.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

Not applicable