

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Experience Works is pleased to submit an application as a new grantee for the RSVP 2014 competition. We are seeking \$143,701 of CNCS Federal investment to support 411 retirement age volunteers in the PA-4X service area that includes Elk, Cameron, McKean and Clearfield counties in Pennsylvania.

Experience Works is a national, charitable, community-based organization. Originally named Green Thumb, and chartered in 1965 as a small, rural demonstration program, Experience Works has grown to be the nation's leading provider of training, employment, and community service that impacts the lives of low-income people.

Experience Works will leverage this experience to engage an estimated 411 RSVP volunteers to serve in Experience Works RSVP program in the four county RSVP PA-4X service area. The primary focus area of this project is "Economic Opportunity." Other focus areas include "Veterans and Military Families," "Healthy Futures," "Capacity Building" and "Community Priorities." Activities will include assisting individuals with job search skills training; housing assistance; and food services for economically disadvantaged individuals.

The project will recruit retirement age volunteers to provide assistance to veterans and economically disadvantaged individuals who are not able to take advantage of the employment opportunities due to the Marcellus natural gas activity into rural Pennsylvania. RSVP volunteers will provide informative guidance regarding access to community services and programs to benefit individuals who may have outdated job search skills, limited adult basic education or lack a GED or High School diploma.

At the end of the three-year grant, we anticipate the outcomes will demonstrate in part that economically disadvantaged individuals, including homeless individuals and Veterans, will have received job training and other skills development; housing services or reported improvement in their housing services; and/or emergency food services.

The CNCS federal investment of \$143,701 will be supplemented by \$14,370 (10%) in-kind support the first year; \$28,370 (20%) the second year; and, \$43,110 (30%) the third year.

## Strengthening Communities

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The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania) is one of the oldest states in the nation and all signals indicate that the population will continue to age-posing further problems for an economy stretched to the limit providing public benefits such as Medicaid, pensions, and post-employment benefits for retirees. The RSVP focus areas and activities are designed to improve the lives of older workers and veterans living in the PA-4X services areas.

Pennsylvania has a total population of 12,763,536. Populations in the service area include: Elk County; Cameron County; Clearfield County; and McKean County. The total population of the combined service area is 161,428.

Pennsylvania has almost 2 million citizens age 65 and older and ranks fourth in the U.S. by percentage of the population age 65 and older (behind Florida, West Virginia and Maine). One in five Pennsylvanians is age 60 or older. Pennsylvania also ranks fourth in the U.S. by number and percentage of population age 85 and older; and are the most intensive users of nursing homes. By 2020 Pennsylvania's 60 and older population is expected to be 25% of the total population--more than 3 million people. By 2020, the number of people age 85 or older is expected to grow to more than 360,000 residents.

Pennsylvania's economy is undergoing changes due to a renewal of oil and natural gas production in the "Marcellus Shale" region and its use of "hydro fracking." The dynamic nature of Pennsylvania's changing economy has presented several challenges in the PA-4X service area with the influx of new jobs and significant increase of the cost of living. In the PA-04X service area, the following counties have active wells: Elk-38, Cameron-4, McKean-54, and Clearfield-117.

Experience Works' outcome impact workplans will help to address specific needs of veterans, separating service members, military families, and older workers in changing economies in the PA-04X service area.

In Pennsylvania, jobs from "fracking" pay \$62,000 on average, nearly \$18,500 to almost \$25,000 a year more than the state average income according to a Penn State study. The benefits from natural gas production will only increase. By 2020, full development of Marcellus Shale could support more than 211,000 Pennsylvania fracking jobs, according to a study by Natural Resources Economics, Inc.

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Currently in Elk County (total populations 31,751) persons 62 years and older make up 22.2 % of the county population (7,049) and Veterans make up 9.7% (3,080). In Cameron County (total population 5,010) persons age 62 years and older make up 22.5% (1,127) and Veterans make up 11% (551) of the total population. Clearfield County, the largest county in the PA-4X service area (total population 81,642), persons age 62 years and older make up 21% (17,145) and Veterans make up 19% (8,197) of the total population. In McKean County (total population 43,127) persons age 62 years and older make up 17% (7,332) and Veterans make up 10.2% (4,399) of the total population (one of the highest percentage of veterans in the country).

Seniors, veterans, separating service members and military families face serious challenges to their health and well-being. Fortunately, organizations such as Experience Works through programs like the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) and RSVP are working to ensure that seniors stay healthy and active by providing innovative strategic programs that improve their lives and help improve communities by promoting civic engagement , and fighting economic insecurity by empowering retirees to make a difference.

Focus Area: Economic Opportunity Objective: Employment

Experience Works offers essential services at a time of growing need in the rural areas of the PA-4X service area. We understand the demographics of our territories, and reach out to populations who might otherwise fall through the cracks.

Jobs can be scarce for many individuals who need and want to work. Experience Works specializes in assisting individuals to regain their self-confidence and identify opportunities in their communities for available jobs. Many older workers served by the organization can no longer do the work they have done in the past due to plant closings or layoffs. Many of the individuals have multiple barriers to employment such as lack of education or competitive skills for jobs available in local communities. Experience Works helps these individuals regain their self-esteem, update their skills, and learn how to compete for jobs.

Often the individuals served need Adult Basic Education (ABE) training leading to a GED, and other

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skills development. Experience Works also provides extensive job search training such as resume and cover letter writing, budget building, interview skills, and dressing for success. When Experience Works operates the RSVP program, the outcomes will demonstrate that economically disadvantaged individuals who receive job training and other skill development services will be better positioned to successfully interview and obtain jobs which will have a profound impact on their lives and the communities in which they live.

Focus Area: Economic Opportunity Objective: Housing

Experience Works has more than 45 years of experience working with those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including veterans and has developed local partnerships throughout the proposed service area that will help make the housing service focus a success. For example, recently in a veteran needed a new place to live because his motor home was uninhabitable. Through the services offered by the Experience Works SCSEP, he was referred to a homeless shelter for temporary housing. After he began his SCSEP community service assignment doing building maintenance, he was offered on-site housing for a longer term solution.

This leads directly to the outputs which are to help economically disadvantaged individuals with housing search assistance. Our Experience Works RSVP Volunteers will be well-trained to provide referral services for housing in the communities in which they are assigned. The outcomes will demonstrate that economically disadvantaged individuals will receive viable housing assistance, which will result in improved knowledge regarding housing in their communities, and will show success rates for individuals who were able to obtain housing. The impact will have a profound effect on their lives and the communities in which they live.

### **Recruitment and Development**

Active recruitment of RSVP volunteers is a top priority for Experience Works to ensure that the Experience Works' RSVP program goals and objectives are met. The Pennsylvania state program director and the Experience Works RSVP coordinator will leverage existing recruitment and management infrastructure to ensure effective volunteer recruitment and management of the RSVP program.

Staff will customize Experience Works' "territorial planning resources" to develop RSVP recruitment plans at the start of the program, based on their territory profile. Territorial profiles include detailed

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demographic information on goals, population, current partners/stakeholders, and issues that affect recruitment. The territorial profile will serve as the blueprint for local recruitment plans, including targeted outreach to organizations that serve older individuals and veterans. Experience Works trains staff to develop effective recruitment plans and successful recruitment practices as part of initial training and at regularly scheduled staff meetings and technical assistance training sessions.

RSVP program staff will receive ongoing technical assistance and support from Experience Works national communications staff with recruitment materials, design of an effective recruitment outreach plan, and relationship building techniques to ensure that the community is informed about services and volunteer opportunities available to older workers through the RSVP program. RSVP staff will work in the service areas to strengthen existing relationships and develop new relationships with organizations and cultivate existing relationships with organizations and local media to promote the benefits and impact of RSVP services in the local community.

Staff make public presentations throughout the community; visit sites where potential participants gather; provide articles for organizational newsletters; build awareness during Older Worker Week, Older Americans Month, and Veteran's Day; distribute Experience Works brochures, flyers, posters, and fact sheets in places frequented by potentially eligible individuals or people they know; and actively encourage people involved in the SCSEP program to tell others about the program and how to apply.

Other key partners that assist in recruitment include the aging network, employment and training services providers, career centers, social service organizations, veteran services organizations and the department of rehabilitation services. Experience Works continually develops new partnerships to reach as many older workers as possible, especially those individuals who are identified as "most-in-need."

### **Program Management**

Experience Works RSVP will develop Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with all sponsor stations prior to assigning volunteers. EW currently uses a template to develop "Host Agency Agreements" with SCSEP community service agencies. This template will be modified for the RSVP. All MOUs will contain the contact information of the sponsor organization; the number of volunteer assignments projected to be available with the organization; the name of the primary volunteer

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station staff member responsible for day-to-day supervision of RSVP volunteers and a description of their supervisory arrangements; volunteer station and Experience Works' contributions to support RSVP volunteers; volunteer station's responsibilities in relation to implementing programming for impact performance measurement; volunteer station agreement to provide required reports; provision of safety of the RSVP volunteers while on assignment; a listing of reimbursable costs that the volunteer may incur while on duty, and a listing of geographic locations/sites where RSVP volunteers will serve through the volunteer station. The MOU with the volunteer station will provide assurances that the station will not discriminate against RSVP volunteers; assure that the volunteer station will provide reasonable accommodation for volunteers with disabilities and will not engage participants in political or religious activities prohibited by RSVP regulations.

EW will execute the MOU signed by the RSVP station that lays out the general framework for roles and responsibilities of the RSVP volunteer and the RSVP volunteer station. Specific language in the MOU will identify and include the required direct day-to-day supervision negotiated between EW and the volunteer station. A MOU agreement will be executed before assigning a volunteer to a volunteer station.

Primary responsibility for the day-to-day supervision of volunteers will reside with the volunteer station supervisor. The supervision requirement is covered as part of the MOU, with specific language requiring direct day-to-day supervision by the volunteer station supervisor. The volunteer coordinator will maintain regular contact with each volunteer station and RSVP volunteer to ensure that they are providing the supervision necessary for safe, productive, effective training, and to ensure that the station assignment complies with SCSEP regulations and guidelines.

A station site Monitoring Checklist will be completed prior to a participant's placement at the volunteer station and yearly thereafter. The RSVP staff will maintain regular contact with the RSVP volunteer and the volunteer station supervisor to observe the volunteer(s) outputs, working conditions for safety and other issues during monitoring visits. When potential problems or violations are identified, EW will notify the volunteer station supervisor of the issue or violation and monitor the volunteer station until the issue or violation is resolved.

A high priority of the Experience Works RSVP program is to establish an advisory committee as a part

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of a larger organizational structure. The Experience Works RSVP advisory committee will provide structure for involvement in assessing program effectiveness and providing invaluable support in assessing changing community needs and outreach. The advisory committee will make recommendations to the state director/manager and volunteer coordinator and provide ongoing support to resolve day-to-day problems. The advisory board will offer a forum for program stakeholders, volunteers, volunteer stations and beneficiaries of RSVP activities to communicate their opinions, share their expertise, coordinate services, act as a link between program operations, and support and represent the interests of the RSVP program within the service area.

The state director/manager will be responsible to establish the purpose of the group to build the membership of the advisory committee and recruit members that may include representatives of partner organizations.

Experience Works' mission is to improve the lives of older people through training, community service and employment. Experience Works currently operates the federally- and state-funded Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) in 30 states and Puerto Rico. Responsibility for program direction, fiscal management, monitoring and reporting resides at the national level. Our organizational structure consists of five main divisions: 1) Operations; 2) Finance; 3) Communications and Outreach; 4) Strategic Affairs and Special Initiatives and 5) Compliance and Performance.

By constantly adapting to the changing demands of the labor market, Experience Works excels in serving SCSEP participants and over the years has introduced practices beyond those required by the SCSEP. For example, Experience Works was among the first SCSEP grantees to offer computer literacy and higher-level computer skills training to SCSEP participants. In Program Year (PY) 10-11, staff received training in developing green jobs for older workers. As of 2012, all field staff are professionally certified in job development.

Experience with supervision and management: State Program Director, Joe Farrone, has been a director with Experience Works for more than 4 years, overseeing and managing federal and state-funded SCSEP programs in Pennsylvania. He currently supervises nine (9) staff in Pennsylvania and two (2) staff in New Jersey.

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Fiscal stability: Experience Works operates 36 grants with a cumulative value of \$106,978,460. Throughout our history, Experience Works has had to adapt to increases and decreases in funding. Like other successful nonprofit organizations, the ability to base budgets on reality ensures that expenditures never exceed resources. Experience Works continuously seeks out new mission driven funding to service low-income older workers

Experience Works' organizational structure ensures fiscal stability. At the national office in Arlington, Virginia, the Experience Works Board of Directors and Executive Officers provide overall direction while senior management staff executes strategic objectives and oversees activities. National staff provides a variety of resources to the operations at the state level through its finance, program operations/compliance, training, information technology, human resources and communications divisions. National staff has hundreds of years of accumulative experience managing and operating grants and contracts.

Experience Works has continuously operated a SCSEP program in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania since 1976. Experience Works funding in Pennsylvania in recent years includes federal and state SCSEP grants and contracts. The Pennsylvania program has an excellent record of management and performance, in part because of the depth of experience and commitment of its staff, and in part because of the relationships staff has developed with the community, host agencies and funders. The Pennsylvania program has expertise in serving both urban and rural communities.

### **Organizational Capability**

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### Other

N/A

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**PNS Amendment (if applicable)**

N/A