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Executive Summary

Swisher County RSVP, overseen by Texas Panhandle RSVP/Panhandle Community Services, is a federally legislated grant program serving rural Swisher County in the Texas Panhandle for the past 40 years. Senior volunteers aged 55 and over are linked with community needs in the communities of Tulia, Kress and Happy. At the end of the 36 month grant period, an estimated 185 unduplicated RSVP volunteers will serve elderly, homebound, disabled, veterans, low-income adults and children through their efforts at 24 volunteer stations in Swisher County.

The primary focus area for Swisher County RSVP will be Healthy Futures. Through this important area, an estimated 25 unduplicated RSVP volunteers will serve homebound, older adults, veterans and individuals with disabilities through sites providing meal delivery. Meals will be delivered by volunteers each weekday from the Senior Centers in Swisher County. At the end of the grant period, 70 individuals will report increased food security and increased social ties due to the meal delivery program.

In addition, volunteers will provide healthy weekend snacks for low-income children from food insecure homes, through the Snack Pak 4 Kids Program. An estimated 25 volunteers will pick up, unload, and sort food to be included in backpacks for 80 children in need of food for the weekend. Volunteers will fill the backpacks and deliver them to the schools for distribution. Coordination and implementation of food drives will require the assistance of RSVP volunteers. Panhandle Community Services, Tulia location, will serve as the location of food storage and as the site of sorting food and filling the backpacks.

The CNCS federal investment of \$46,314 will be supplemented by \$24,404 of non-federal resources.

Strengthening Communities

Overseen by Texas Panhandle RSVP/Panhandle Community Services, Swisher County RSVP is located in Tulia, Texas, and is the county seat which also includes the towns of Happy and Kress. Swisher County has an estimated population for 2010 of 7,854 with 4,967 of the people living in Tulia, 678 people living in Happy and 715 people living in Kress. Swisher County is located beside Interstate 27 in between the cities of Amarillo and Lubbock. This is a rural plains farming area. The county encompasses 900 square miles and agriculture of service related industries make up most of the work force in Swisher County with cotton, corn and wheat being the primary crops. The two year drought has affected this agricultural area. The largest employers, besides agriculture, are the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Prison Unit, Swisher Memorial Hospital, and the school districts

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located in each community. There are no major corporate philanthropies located in the county. According to census records, about 17.2% of the population is 65 years of age or older and will need assistance in meeting their needs to remain living independently in their own home. In 2009, census records indicate that 22% (which is higher than the state average of 17.1%) of Swisher County residents live below the poverty level. Due to economic conditions, non-profit and health organizations in the rural area served have tightened budgets and need RSVP volunteers to fulfill their missions to provide help for those in need. Each community in Swisher County has been strengthened through the volunteers meeting community needs.

Southern Online Journal of Nursing Research 2000 states more than 40% of older Americans have been identified as "at nutritional risk" and between 10% and 51% are malnourished or have an inadequate nutritional intake. Both obesity and malnutrition can lead to functional dependence, increased morbidity, mortality, and greater use of health care resources. Volunteers will make a difference for the elderly and disabled by delivering hot nutritious meals to homebound adults in Swisher County. Increased social support will be the outcome with volunteers checking on the well-being of meal recipients when meals are delivered. The number of individuals receiving increased social support will be measured by the results of the Annual Home Delivered Meals Survey completed by the recipients of the meals.

Hunger in Texas is a serious problem throughout the state. The Center for Public Policy Priorities states one in six Texas households is Food Insecure. The Texas Tribune states in the June, 2012 edition more than one in four Texas children lacked adequate access to food in 2010. Tulia Independent School District reports 81% of students enrolled in Elementary School receive free or reduced price lunches. The school reported with the economic crunch, food is often the cutting point in a family's budget. It is hard for students to concentrate and learn when they are hungry. Snack Pak 4 Kids provides food in a back pack for the children identified by the school to take home to ensure they have food for the weekend. Volunteers will remove food from shrink wrap, open packaging, sack food, and place in totes for delivery to the school.

Volunteers will be managed by the RSVP Coordinator. Volunteers are placed at stations that fit their interests and time requirements. Placing volunteers requires an interview by the RSVP Coordinator along with training and education of RSVP rules and requirements. Background checks are completed as needed. After volunteers have been matched and trained, each volunteer will sign the Snack Pak 4 Kids Sign In Sheet at the designated site and the Coordinator will oversee the volunteer activities and assign jobs.

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Recruitment and Development

Swisher County RSVP, overseen by Texas Panhandle RSVP/Panhandle Community Services, will strive to recruit volunteers by matching their experiences, abilities, and skills to the needs in the communities in Swisher County. Building and retaining a "volunteer base" in the communities requires an ongoing recruitment program. A high quality experience that utilizes the full potential of the volunteer and fulfills the meaning of service is achieved on an individual basis by the volunteers. Through contact with the RSVP Coordinator, volunteer assignments are assessed and changed as needed.

Recognition is an important component in recruiting and retaining volunteers. Each month a birthday card is sent to volunteers having a birthday and a birthday get-together is held monthly at the RSVP office for those celebrating birthdays. The Volunteer Recognition Banquet is held annually. An "Outstanding Volunteer" is selected for each community in the county and these volunteers are recognized for their accomplishments and service to their community. This special event is the time when RSVP reflects on the impact that volunteers have made on Swisher County communities, recognizes concrete examples of what the volunteer's service means to the communities and how this service has impacted not only the lives of the volunteers, but also the lives of those they served. Volunteers and volunteer stations are recognized at the Banquet for recruiting the largest number of new volunteers. There are 514 veterans residing in Swisher County per the U.S. Census. Veterans are recognized at the Banquet and other RSVP events. Their service is recognized and recruitment of veterans is a priority.

Volunteers are recruited without discrimination. All races, ethnicities, sexual orientation and degrees of English language proficiency are included in recruitment and development. Volunteers must be 55 years of age or over and pass a criminal background check as required. Volunteers with disabilities are linked with volunteer opportunities that work with their needs and abilities. Per the current Census Quick Facts, 41.2% of the population in Swisher County is Hispanic. Language other than English is spoken in 27.8% of the homes. RSVP offers enrollment literature in Spanish and interpreters are available as needed. RSVP events are highlighted in the newspaper "Swisher County News." Also, the daily news emailed information "Swisher Currents" is utilized to promote events and successes of the RSVP Program. The RSVP Project Coordinator presents RSVP programs throughout the year to service organizations and church groups.

Program Management

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Swisher County RSVP, overseen by Texas Panhandle RSVP/Panhandle Community Services, will strive to provide quality volunteer assignments for RSVP volunteers. Panhandle Community Services, sponsor, has many years of experience administering state and federal grants and has a proven track record in all these areas. The RSVP Director has 10 years of experience administering the program and attends all available training opportunities. The director maintains program visibility throughout the service area by participating in a number of key interagency organizations. The most wide-ranging of these is the Senior Ambassadors coalition of more than 100 agencies and organizations serving seniors in the 26 counties of the Texas Panhandle. She also serves on the board of the Veterans Administration VAVS Board and is co-sponsor of the VA Hospital's Welcome Home Event. In addition she attends Amarillo Area Foundation's meetings of the directors of area volunteer programs, and the United Way United Hunger Mission. She facilitates meetings of the RSVP Advisory Council and networks with community organizations to raise cash and in-kind contributions to the program. She oversees the activities of the volunteer Coordinators, including the Swisher County Project Coordinator, and reports on program and financial activities to the Panhandle Community Services executive director and board of directors.

To achieve effective program management, adherence to program regulations and the RSVP Operations Handbook is imperative. Meeting community needs while providing meaningful placements for the volunteers is a joint goal of the sponsor and the RSVP director. Swisher County program data is managed by the RSVP Project Coordinator who works closely with the volunteers and utilizes the Volunteer Reporter program to maintain all volunteer statistics. The program is user friendly and a valuable tool in all areas of recording, tracking, and reporting.

Volunteer stations are developed and managed through contact with the RSVP staff. The Memorandum of Understanding ensures the requirements of the station and RSVP are mutually understood. Stations will provide necessary materials for assignments along with training and supervision. RSVP maintains an open door policy to hear the grievances and needs of both volunteers and stations supervisors.

Data requirements for reporting are discussed with the station contact person. This can include pre and post testing/surveys. Each station completes the Safety and Accessibility Checklist. The RSVP staff considers the needs of the station and how each station can meet community needs not only in the Primary Focus Area, Healthy Futures, but also in Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, and Veterans and Military Families Focus Areas. Working with the stations to meet National Performance Measure outcomes and outputs is imperative. Measurement will be obtained through activity logs,

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client database, and surveys obtained through a working partnership with the stations. RSVP foresees the need to graduate volunteers to meet changing community needs in the communities in Swisher County. The RSVP staff will work diligently to place volunteers in Focus Areas and 30% of the volunteers in the Community Focus Area. Those who do not fit will be thanked for their longtime service to RSVP and the importance of the volunteer work they do will be emphasized. A personal meeting with each volunteer will be used to ensure the graduating volunteer understands how much his or her volunteer efforts have achieved throughout the years is appreciated. Even though their hours will no longer be counted for RSVP, they will be encouraged to continue their important good works. They will no longer be included on the volunteer supplemental insurance and they will sign a form stating they understand they are no longer covered by the supplemental insurance. Graduating stations will also be thanked for their longtime commitment to the RSVP program and also thanked for the community needs they have met though out the years. They will be encouraged to keep utilizing older volunteers. Graduating stations will no longer be submitting volunteer hours to RSVP and the Memorandum of Understanding will become invalid when the station graduates. Resources will be managed for 36 months through careful planning by the RSVP Project Coordinator, working with the Texas Panhandle RSVP Project Director, and adherence to budgeted items. Accountability and the efficient and effective use of available resources will be over seen by the RSVP sponsor, Panhandle Community Services. A purchase order will be submitted along with billing to the sponsor Finance Dept. for processing. Payments will require proper documents and monthly reports will be provided to RSVP by the Finance Dept. staff.

Organizational Capability

Swisher County RSVP has a vast knowledge of experience gained through the 40 years of implementing this important program and will grow and improve through the oversight of Texas Panhandle RSVP. The Texas Panhandle RSVP Director has been in place for 10 years. A Project Coordinator will be hired for the Swisher County RSVP office. The new Project Coordinator will work well with volunteers, stations, and the Amarillo RSVP staff. A background check will be required for the Project Coordinator.

The RSVP office is fully equipped and will continue to fill the needs of the RSVP program while offering a familiar home to Swisher County RSVP. Supplies will be purchased as needed through budgeted grant funds.

Panhandle Community Services will sponsor both Texas Panhandle RSVP and Swisher County RSVP. Texas Panhandle RSVP has tremendous experience in overseeing counties in the Texas Panhandle and

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currently oversees 11 counties in addition to Swisher County RSVP. Panhandle Community Services has in place a system for assessing employee performance, office policies, self-assessment, evaluation, and a strong and efficient Financial Dept. Purchasing procedures set in place for the sponsor are followed for RSVP. Each purchase requires a purchase order and corresponding receipts or invoices. The Panhandle Community Services Personnel Policy handbook clearly defines policies including travel requirements. An independent audit is completed yearly for Panhandle Community Services records and the Swisher County RSVP program will be included in the audit. The RSVP Project Coordinator will provide monthly financial reports to coincide with the monthly reports provided by the Finance Dept.

The RSVP Advisory Council is comprised of 16 members representing all communities served in Swisher County. The men and women serving on the Advisory Council represent Hispanic, Caucasian, senior and non-senior residents and in the future will be expanded to include black, veteran and disabled residents. This important group reviews the financial reports at each monthly meeting and provides support for the RSVP program.

Goals and objects for the RSVP program will be presented to the Advisory Council and sponsor at the beginning of each year. The results of the previous year Performance Measure goals and objectives including accomplishments are reviewed by the Advisory Council. The mutual desire of the Swisher County RSVP staff, Swisher County Advisory Council, the Texas Panhandle RSVP staff and sponsor Panhandle Community Services will be to improve the quality of the RSVP program and meet Performance Measures.

Swisher County RSVP has been managing volunteers for the past 40 years. Successful management of volunteers and measuring performance has enabled RSVP to have longevity in the communities served as well as a reputation for meeting community needs through the efforts of the senior volunteers. Volunteers have a proven track record they can make a difference for others by delivering meals to homebound seniors. They are also helping stop hunger by providing food for food insecure children through Snack Pak 4 Kids. Veterans are supported and recognized along with low-income residents are receiving financial literacy education through the efforts of the volunteers.

RSVP will adequately sustain the required 30% non-federal share through leveraging the State Grant, local Redmon grant, and the Tulia United Community Fund.

Other

N/A

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PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A