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Executive Summary

The Chickasaw Nation is a federally-recognized Indian tribe located in south-central Oklahoma. The Chickasaw Nation serves Chickasaw citizens as well as other Native American tribes and is a good neighbor to the non-Native community. It is estimated that 50 foster grandparent volunteers will be recruited to support the project serving a total of 60 volunteer service years. Some of their activities will include providing one-on-one attention to children through imaginary play, Chickasaw language and culture discussion, literacy development, math and science tutoring and offering emotional support and guidance to children, parents and staff. The primary focus area of this project is education. At the end of the three-year grant, 20 children will demonstrate gains in school readiness in terms of literacy skills, 10 children will demonstrate gains in school readiness in terms of numeracy (math) skills and 15 children will demonstrate gains in school readiness in terms of social and/or emotional development. The CNCS federal investment of \$360,000 will be supplemented by \$40,000.

Strengthening Communities

The mission of the Chickasaw Nation is to enhance the overall quality of life of the Chickasaw people. The tribe values community service and strives to increase the implementation of service opportunities for tribal citizens and other community members. The community being addressed in this work plan is the Chickasaw Nation Child Development Center and Head Start in Ada, Oklahoma; both located within the jurisdictional boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation. Most identified children within the community will be located at the child development center. The identified children will be those who are economically disadvantaged and/or have been identified by the early intervention program as having special or exceptional needs. Education is the Primary Focus Area chosen to meet the outcomes of set objectives. The child development center and Head Start have a combined 68% free/reduced lunch rate, 39% of child care families receive child care assistance and two Ada Head Start children are currently homeless. These economically disadvantaged children would benefit greatly from the presence of a foster grandparent. Additionally, 37 students are currently receiving intervention services with several more being monitored in the near future.

Through their various service activities, the foster grandparent volunteers, who reside within the tribe's boundaries, will reinforce the educational foundation while also bringing a new method of teaching to the classroom. This benefit matched with the data collection experience will ensure the successful accomplishment of all National Performance Measure outputs and outcomes.

The Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) manager will collect data for reporting and monitoring

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purposes. Data will be collected by retaining attendance logs for outputs and surveys and test scores for outcomes. The FGP manager will collect attendance data bi-annually from teachers who will record attendance both electronically and in a hard copy log. Each child in the child development center and Head Start has a portfolio of work and intervention records. The data collected on children paired with FGP volunteers will be retained in those portfolios and also in a locked filing cabinet and only accessed by the program director, FGP manager and the early intervention manager. That information will also be shared with the child's teacher, as needed, to gauge further need and the development of future activities. Since over 98% of Oklahoma school districts offer pre-kindergarten programs through public schools, the child development center collaborates with local schools to ensure children are learning core-based materials in order to be prepared for kindergarten. The data collected will be used to measure the success of the program to ensure the school readiness output and further outcome accomplishments.

The community need has been established in the work plan, but there are needs beyond what are listed. Not only will having the foster grandparent in the classroom assist in educational and emotional growth, but it will also provide a sense of family that might be otherwise insufficient in the child's life. The child will also give a youthful presence and sense of belonging to the foster grandparent, enhancing both of their lives in the process. The goal is for the foster grandparents to maintain an ongoing, intensive relationship with the children served over the course of the three year project period.

Recruitment and Development

The Chickasaw Nation currently employs over 13,000 employees and has established a successful business infrastructure that stretches across tribal boundaries and beyond. The heart of the Chickasaw Nation lies in community service and volunteerism. Tribal citizens and employees realize the value of service and the need to teach children the importance of giving back to their community. The Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) is the missing piece to an established and growing organization whose foundation remains rooted deep within the rich Oklahoma soil.

The FGP will fall under the direction of the Chickasaw Nation Child Care Program. The child care program is located in the Department of Community Services- Division of Education, and includes the Chickasaw Nation Child Development Center, sick child care center, school-age program, after-school program, child care assistance, early intervention program and resource, referral and training. The FGP will be an additional program provided through the child care program for Native Americans 55 years of age or older residing in the tribe's 13 county service area.

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The administration staff of the child care program have the education and experience needed to develop highly qualified FGP assignments that will help achieve program outcomes. Upon acceptance into the program, FGP applicants will be surveyed in order to gauge their abilities, experiences and skills. Once the volunteer is placed, not only will each volunteer have the opportunity to share their experiences, abilities and skills with children, staff and parents, but they will also bring kindness, compassion, love and respect to the child care program enhancing the lives of those affected. Working one-on-one with the children will foster the child's development and allow them to reach their highest potential. The ultimate goal is to produce exemplary citizens in the tribal and local communities. A bond is formed once a positive connection is made between the foster grandparent and a child. Research has shown that if a child forms a positive and unique bond with a person and the relationship is continued for the first three years of life, the child is more eager to learn and establishes a sense of security within themselves. Since the FGP has the potential to be a three-year project, the elder and the child can begin to establish a relationship that goes beyond the program. This will be an incentive to retain the foster grandparent within the child care program.

Selected lead teachers will serve as mentors to the volunteers to make sure they have all materials needed for their activities with the children. Each mentor will serve three volunteers at different times throughout each project year. That partnership will continue to develop over the course of the program, and not only will the mentor be helping the volunteer, but the volunteer will offer advice and support to the mentor in return.

Security locked iPads will be used by the FGP manager to communicate via email, set reminders, record notes, requested needs and volunteer attendance and schedule meetings and trainings. Teachers will use the iPads to quickly record developmental milestones, individualized lessons, concerns, supply needs, student attendance and to communicate via email with FGP manager and parents when necessary. Keyboards and software will help the teachers/FGP manager type more efficiently and the educational programs will be used as a reward for some students while still benefitting their learning. Hands-on learning with technology can be beneficial to students with disabilities who may have trouble communicating effectively. During student/volunteer use, the iPads will be locked into a program and only unlocked by the teacher to avoid any breach in confidentiality. The child care program provides many on-site trainings for teaching staff and the foster grandparents will have the opportunity to attend these hands-on trainings as well as contribute to the teaching of some trainings where relevant. This will give the foster grandparent the chance to engage in peer-to-peer learning and also the opportunity to contribute what they have learned from the children. The

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foster grandparent will also have the option to obtain certifications through those trainings. The certified trainings provided through the Center for Early Childhood Professional Development will improve the foster grandparents' skills and abilities to continue providing services to young children within the community.

There are many opportunities to recruit foster grandparents within the Chickasaw Nation. Child care program administration will recruit participants by offering presentations and advertising at the following tribal facilities: Chickasaw Nation Medical Center, Chickasaw Nation Elders Program (including senior centers), Chickasaw Nation Wellness Center and the Chickasaw Nation Food Services program. Along with presentations, flyers will be distributed and informational booths set up at various functions within the Ada area and surrounding communities within tribal boundaries.

As of May 1, 2015, the early intervention program is serving 22 children from the Head Start and child development center for various educational, developmental, behavioral challenges or autism screenings. Fifteen children are also either awaiting testing, advocacy services or other referrals for services. Of the 37 total children being served, 26 are Chickasaw, nine are from other tribes and two are non-Native/other. The child care program plans to recruit volunteers that reflect the demographics of the community served which will be primarily Chickasaw and other Native individuals. The child care program welcomes veteran applicants and volunteers with disabilities. Each volunteer will have the opportunity to gain a sense of belonging which will draw them out of seclusion and make it possible for all to benefit from their presence.

The child care program will recognize each foster grandparent volunteer at the yearly Provider Appreciation Banquet. This banquet honors providers working with young children. Foster Grandparent volunteers will be recognized during this ceremony for the commitment they provided to the children in the Chickasaw Nation community. Each volunteer will also be recognized on their birthday and give "random acts of kindness" treats out to the children across the child care community when they are caught doing something nice. This will help all children, not just those being served, feel like they are a part of the Foster Grandparent family while showing kindness toward others. FGP stations will also be regularly reminded to show their appreciation through cards and other small tokens of appreciation. The Chickasaw Nation continues to make elder services a top priority and each volunteer will be recognized from families, employees and children on a daily basis. The stability of maintaining the volunteers in the child care community throughout the course of the program will consequently help meet project outcomes.

Program Management

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The Chickasaw Nation has an already established, successful infrastructure. Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) plans are ongoing and the program will be managed by child care program administration. The child care director will ultimately oversee the budget, application process and recruitment of the foster grandparents. Upon award, the child care director will advertise for a FGP manager. The child care director will oversee the day-to-day operations until the position has been filled. In the meantime, the advisory council will meet to devise a plan for volunteer recruitment and advise the program administration. Next, staff management will establish mentors and plan trainings. Initial trainings will be provided for all managing and teaching staff to share the plan for the program plan, rules, assignments and expectations. After the implementation of the program, monthly meetings will be held to discuss the daily activities that were completed each day during the month, the progress of each child participating and changes needed in order to improve program function. Each foster grandparent will have the opportunity to share their successes and concerns during this time. Since lead teachers will be with the children every day, it is important for them to be actively involved in the development of further activities and the placement of foster grandparents with children. The program director will have the final say in child/volunteer placement.

The child development center is a licensed facility that follows the Oklahoma tribal and state licensing requirements. Within the requirements are volunteer specific mandates. The child care program will comply with the FGP federal regulations as well as the licensing requirements already established. The tribal child care policies and foster grandparent policies are similar in that the volunteer or foster grandparent are not included in staff ratio and are not permitted to be permanent substitutes nor are they assigned the role of teacher. All volunteers must be under the direct supervision of the director or designated staff member. All volunteers/foster grandparents must meet the background regulations of the hiring process and must complete the orientation training which includes the following: choking protocol, sudden infant death syndrome, shaken baby syndrome and a review of the child development center's policy and procedure and volunteer responsibility. Professional development training will be required throughout the year.

The Foster Grandparent Program will be monitored internally to ensure all federal regulations are being followed. Monthly checklists will be utilized to make sure the volunteer stations are established and activities are ongoing along with monitoring the number of hours worked to guarantee hours are not exceeded throughout the week. Day-to-day compliance will be monitored by the program manager and all concerns will be addressed immediately. The child development center assistant manager will assist mentors and volunteers in the absence of the manager.

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The proposed volunteer stations are located within walking distance of each other and the administrative offices. This makes it possible for the program manager to ensure that each volunteer is performing his assigned activity and any questions or concerns can be managed quickly. A foster grandparent handbook will be established that is similar to the current employee handbook to include responsibilities such as background checks, leave policies, yearly reviews of the foster grandparent and additional ways to effectively operate the program. The advisory council will determine the direction of the program and assist with goals and improvements for the next year.

Since the community described is comprised of children, there will be expected turnover due to family relocation or transfer, and while graduating a volunteer station is not expected, there will be a plan in place to handle that change. In order to minimize the disruption to the current volunteers, those involved in sudden changes will be provided other service opportunities.

The child care program will continue to manage volunteers according to the regulations explained above. If needed, additional advisement will be provided by the Foster Grandparent Advisory Council. Education is greatly valued among tribal leaders, and that will be the sole Primary Focus Area throughout the course of the project. Performance will be measured according to the FGP National Performance Measures and activities are aligned to meet specific outcomes and targets.

The Foster Grandparent Advisory Council has been established and will begin meeting upon the notification of award. The program director will ensure FGP volunteers will only be placed at stations that have signed a memorandum of understanding, and all FGP regulations will be followed to ensure each volunteer is eligible to serve in the FGP.

Organizational Capability

The Chickasaw Nation utilizes a centralized accounting department under the direct supervision of the finance executive officer. The operations of the tribe are audited annually per OMB Circular A-133 (2 CFR 200.500). This examination, including all funded programs and tribal enterprises, is conducted on a full-scope basis and provides for a continuing review of the accounting and management system. This sound infrastructure will provide programmatic and fiscal oversight (both financial and in-kind). The program director will provide day-to-day operational support and ensure compliance with FGP regulations at the advisement of the manager of grant compliance, as needed. The program director will be responsible for managing the budget and monitoring expenditures, ensuring efficient and effective use of available resources.

The organizational chart required will show the addition of a FGP manager, to be funded by the grant, who will report directly to the program director. Volunteers will report to the FGP manager, but

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all other staff will remain under their already existing chain-of-command. The current staff assigned to the project includes lead teachers and child development center assistant manager (on an as-needed basis). The FGP manager will be skilled in working with children with disabilities, but will consult with the early intervention manager, as needed, to ensure the practice of the most effective teaching methods. Lead teachers acting as mentors will also report to the FGP manager with successes or concerns.

With the leadership and authority of Governor Bill Anoatubby, chief executive of the Chickasaw Nation, and the success and knowledge of Wayne Scribner, secretary of community services, Tom John, under secretary of community services, Danny Wells, executive officer of the division of education and Michelle Key, director of child care, the Chickasaw Nation has proven management and sustainability success that dates back several decades. Upon implementation, the FGP has the support of all listed members of leadership and they, along with other program staff, will ensure the accomplishment of program objectives.

The Chickasaw Nation has an established code along with policies and procedures in place to provide guidance. The tribe also utilizes an effective risk management tool, a functional financial management system and internal audit staff provides routine reviews of all financial activity. The Chickasaw Nation successfully manages 214 facilities including well over 400 buildings under the direction of the executive officer of construction and support services and the property and facilities director. In addition, the equipment and supplies needed to successfully maintain those facilities are readily available. The division of education employs a facilities manager to oversee the day-to-day maintenance of all eight education buildings, including both volunteer stations.

Included in the tribe's advanced infrastructure is the organizational and financial capability and proven success in managing federal grant funds from several agencies including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Agriculture, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of the Interior, Department of Education, Department of Justice and the Department of Transportation. A complete list of federal financial assistance has been provided in the financial management survey.

Other

not required

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

not; required