

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The Josephine County RSVP is an integral part of United Community Action Network (UCAN), the designated Community Action Agency serving Grants Pass, Oregon and pocket communities within Josephine County. UCAN is a dedicated sponsor to Josephine County RSVP continuing a service component necessary to address a growing impoverished aging population, and fundamentally increasing capacity for our community partners.

An estimated volunteer corps of 389 will provide active services to seniors, disabled, veterans, low income families and individuals that increase self-sufficiency, increase community health and wellness, secure benefits for economic stabilization, educate to strengthen consumer protection and advocate for removal of barriers to independent living. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. The CNCS federal investment of \$42,304 will be supplemented by approximately \$ 41,971, funds invested from the local, state and private sector. At the end of the three-year grant, achieve greater health security and consistent access to health care, increase economic stabilization, maintain independent living and self-reliance.

Sponsor UCAN, founded in 1969 in Roseburg, Oregon by three women, then called "welfare moms", and two caseworkers who wanted more for their children's future have a 45 year history of services and commitment to the utilization of national service to build capacity, increase civic engagement and maximize the efforts of volunteerism in community objectives. UCAN as an agency operates throughout Douglas and Josephine Counties with a staff of more than 180 people committed to promoting resources and opportunities that increase the self-reliance of all low income families and individuals. Through the operation of RSVP as a UCAN sponsored program, our collaboration with community based organizations and agencies we address our mission in alleviating poverty and positively impact the quality of life for elderly, poor, and disabled individuals.

## Strengthening Communities

Josephine County is a rural area in Southwestern Oregon covering 1,640 square miles. It is rugged, mountainous, with two major valleys cut by the Rogue and Illinois rivers. Incorporated cities are Grants Pass (25,700 pop) and Cave Junction. 33% of the county 82,713 residents live in incorporated cities. The fastest growing population is over 45 years of age; with 25% of the population over age 64. 17% percent of the population base reports veteran status. Josephine County is an impoverished, economically depressed area, subjected to some of the most severe statistics in Oregon. The unemployment rate (approx. 11.1% Jan. 2013) is over 37% above the nation (7.6%). Many families

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live on below-average incomes, with the median family income at \$36,102, 33% below the state average. Over 18.8% of its residents and 30.8% of children live in poverty compared to state rates of 15.8% and 21.7%, respectively (CAA report 1/2013). Over 10% of seniors live in poverty, 20% more than the state's average. The annual Point In Time Count (24 hour period of counting homeless individuals in the community) resulted count of 1,867 homeless persons, over 1/3 being children under the age of 18 (OHCS/HUD-2012).

The Primary Focus Area is identified as Healthy Futures based upon these demographics. The service activities, such as access to health care navigation, safety-net health service delivery, independent living supports, patient care assistance, case management and food security as implemented through the Primary Focus Area directly relate to the National Performance Measures 2.1 Food Distribution (H12) 4.1 Distribution of Information (H2), 8.1 Companionship(H8, H9). We have an emphasis on addressing veteran's in homelessness and will be addressing Support to Veterans in Rural Communities (V1). The outcomes anticipated are stable and consistent access to health care, elimination of food insecurity, increased nutrition for vulnerable populations, linkages to services for veterans and sustained independent living .

Josephine County RSVP was established in 1973. United Community Action Network (UCAN) as sponsor welcomed RSVP into the organization July 1, 2009 and as a result, inherited an exemplary service model that complimented UCAN's hosting of national service projects. UCAN is also sponsor to three other Senior Corps programs (RSVP/FGP/SCP) in Douglas County, Oregon since July 2010, creating a multi-county network of national service that encompasses a broad range of knowledge and experience among staff, volunteers and community partners. UCAN is the host agency for the UCAN VISTA Coalition and UCAMeriCorps, a partnership through OregonVolunteers.

UCAN has been an integral part of the human service network for over 45 years, providing services for low-income families; including fuel assistance, food assistance, rental assistance, emergency and case-management services, and Medicaid Transportation rides. UCAN has a strong history of partnering with public and private entities to provide quality services and effectively mobilizing community resources. The ethic of partnering is a core value that RSVP and UCAN share and the partner relationships maintained by the RSVP program enhances UCAN's opportunities to implement innovative projects. Examples of UCAN's success in partnering and mobilizing resources is evidenced in the Raptor Creek Farm project, a CDBG project focused on community garden acreage, a new warehouse and certified kitchen maintained by service groups and volunteers. The cooperative vision is to create nutritional education, socio-economic enterprise activities and serve as a part of the

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recreational volunteer service strategy supported by the City of Grants Pass. County residents are made aware of the operation and services and witness how RSVP volunteers, VISTA members and AmeriCorps members work in a unified manner to build the capacity of our community to feed people while improving their overall health through sustainable farming.

UCAN also organizes a homeless count (OHCS Point In Time Count) that includes participation by over 42 agencies and 98 volunteers, resulting in the most accurate assessment on homelessness in Josephine County to date, and mobilizes free meals, clothing, veteran's support/supplies, health checks and even free veterinary care for homeless persons companion animals. UCAN maintains these connections and efforts in part due to the RSVP program, and accomplishes more by integrating older adult volunteers in direct service to build strong public awareness, most recently under development for serving homeless veteran's and providing support to case managers , peer support and outreach services to veteran's in our Supportive Services to Veterans and Families Program. The RSVP program supplies the human resources to provide direct services, implementation of outcome based model work plans that target self-sufficiency and stabilization for individuals and families being served by community agencies and other public entities.

Through site visits and periodic partner assessments, UCAN ensures RSVP partner agencies, organizations and services are diverse, are in compliance and integrate older adult volunteers as stakeholders in planning activities. UCAN's bi-annual community needs assessment solicits input from the community to help identify the impact that RSVP makes. UCAN has a Compliance Officer that focuses on data collection, integrity of data and reporting outcome measurements and the project utilizes RSVP Reporter for specific data collection and reporting in accordance with CNCS requirements. The 8 member RSVP Advisory Council works collectively with Project Director, broadens the spectrum of service engagement in Josephine County and provides guidance to the agency and UCAN Board of Directors. UCAN Board of Directors reviews monthly the impact RSVP activities achieve in the local community and involved in the planning for future support of those activities.

### **Recruitment and Development**

RSVP Josephine County will focus volunteers in service on activities that are unique and identified as required by the community at large. UCAN itself has extensive cadre of volunteers beyond RSVP, having a current pool of over 500 non-RSVP volunteers, providing an estimated 78,000 hours of service a year. Our belief is that all we do revolves around strong supportive relationships. This is our central premise in attracting and providing a high-quality experience for volunteers and assuring

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volunteers benefit from and stay in service. As sponsor, UCAN will ensure that currently serving RSVP volunteers are being utilized appropriately, and that all further recruitment be of a manageable proportion to need and staffing allowances.

UCAN places volunteers in work environments that value and respect them, provide appropriate orientation and training, offer other training and volunteer opportunities, and adequately recognize volunteers for their service. UCAN has replicated this practice with the Josephine County RSVP program and its volunteers. The RSVP program successfully restructured into a more efficient corps and has maintained a significant role in promoting the skills and abilities of people over 55 in the community. Three primary work plans address specific issues in the community that 389 RSVP volunteer placements at corresponding volunteers stations will build capacity and address infrastructure.

UCAN will provides regular recognition of RSVP volunteer efforts to community partners. UCAN ensures hosting agencies adequately integrate volunteers and provide day-to-day recognition and support so volunteers can identify their service as successful and relevant to the community needs. Volunteers are placed in positions that match their skills, interests and life goals. The RSVP Director maintains regular contact with the host sites and volunteers to assess if the experience is good for both parties and meeting the outcomes as identified in the work-plans. UCAN puts volunteers in advisory positions and leadership roles, thus enhancing their leadership skill development. UCAN requires volunteer sites provide adequate orientation and training. UCAN continues to develop further volunteer opportunities in which RSVP volunteers mobilize and recruit other volunteers to deliver essential services, as determined by community feedback and bi-annual assessments. UCAN has a strong value of providing ongoing staff training which will also apply to the RSVP staff and volunteers and a modeling tool for community partners.

UCAN demonstrates experience by currently operating a VISTA network program which provides a strong understanding of recruitment and retention of both volunteers and work sites as well as the operational aspects of the Corporation for National and Community Service. UCAN also operates UCameriCorps providing AmeriCorps members in service in conjunction with OregonVolunteers. UCAN's Chief Executive Officer, Mike Fieldman is an active Commissioner appointed to the Governor's Commission on Voluntary Service for the State of Oregon and is an encouragement to other CAA's leadership throughout the state to utilize diversity in service for maximum impact. UCAN has extensive experience in recruitment, orientation, development, recognition and retention of volunteers in our internal programs and use this experience to provide support and technical

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assistance to RSVP program staff.

UCAN continues to evaluate and solicit input from volunteers and station supervisors to assess the quality of the program and its services. Bi-annual CSBG assessments include evaluation measuring volunteers' quality of experience with assignments, training, and performance. Volunteer stations are also be surveyed to measure stations' satisfaction with volunteers, ensure stations are receiving necessary support from RSVP, and monitor success in meeting identified community needs.

UCAN engages with local media to promote the RSVP and to educate the community about the impact provided, as a means of building support for the program and recognizing service outcomes. UCAN has maintained the weekly recruitment newspaper column written by the RSVP Director and has been encouraging of the continuation of those media relationships that has supported the RSVP over several decades. UCAN uses its quarterly newsletter (circ. 3,500 households) to promote RSVP activities, and continues to develop UCAN's website, of which a significant portion is set aside for national service education, recruitment and promotion. Social networking sites, via FaceBook, Twitter, and interactive sessions via Skype are more modern efforts to continue to educate and recognize the critical services RSVP volunteers bring to a rural, impoverished community, and without such services, would compromise the quality of life for hundreds of community members.

### **Program Management**

UCAN currently has a strong volunteer services component with 4 Senior Corps programs (2 RSVP's, 1 FGP & 1 SCP), 10 member VISTA team and 16 member AmeriCorps team. These programs are grouped under the Chief Operating Officer, who reports to UCAN's Executive Director. UCAN has regular and consistent experience in evaluation, has a successful audit and compliance history and our programs have extensive experience in developing and managing volunteer stations and assignments in accordance with CNCS directives. RSVP continues to be a Senior Corps component that compliments the national service division, representing the surveyed needs of Josephine County, strengthening the community infrastructure that improves the quality of life in this rustic area. UCAN's budget is over \$15,000,000 from over 71 different funding streams, 180 employees, and a fiscal department of 5 staff. UCAN has annual A-133 audits that consistently have no questioned costs or audit findings. UCAN uses Sage Fund Accounting software that allows for the segregation of revenues and expenses by funding source. The system tracks revenues and expenses against a developed budget, has a rich reporting capacity and is effective in managing stipend and non-stipend programs. Non-cash, in-kind contributions are tracked in a separate Sage module designed specifically for this purpose is set up so the RSVP director can access online current fiscal information. RSVP

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Reporter maintains all data records for CNCS and UCAN employs a data management specialist to monitor all data systems. UCAN is skilled in creating databases for tracking program data and outcomes, and provides full Internet connectivity/email capacity, all of which are available and utilized by the RSVP staff and volunteers.

UCAN has a Resource Development department with three people who write grants for all agency programs, and a fund developer/PR person doing agency-wide fundraising projects, and coordinating media contacts. These staff will support the RSVP program in writing proposals that aid in supporting additional financial needs. UCAN has generated over \$200,000.00 in cash donations and over \$1,000,000.00 in in-kind donations, on average and exhibits weekly exposure in the various media outlets. UCAN has an endowment fund at the Oregon Community Foundation that allows for long-term fund development and the Board of Directors participates in fundraising and promotion. In-kind contributions of supplies, promotion and volunteer recognition from the community at large demonstrates local engagement and a willingness to invest in the goals of RSVP.

Our current infrastructure and resources for RSVP allow the RSVP Director to be maintained at the current rate of 90% of full-time capacity. The RSVP Director has over 14 years of experience and has deeply established roots in the community. The RSVP Director focuses energy into three specific work plan areas that engage older adults in service for addressing basic human needs through self-sufficiency programs, greater independent living and enhanced community and economic development. The work-plan service categories were established based on community input for stabilizing services for basic human needs, restructuring service delivery to manage growing population needs and reduced resources.

Current stations are supported to achieve specific goals and outcomes for placed volunteer positions. To ensure they address identified community needs and clearly define the skill sets needed from a volunteer, agreements are structured to identify priorities and resources such as the stations' supervisory abilities, training, and orientation options for the volunteers, including volunteer activity description. Follow-up, by phone or in person, will occur with all stations and volunteers, along with surveys, to determine the quality of the placement and identify and problem solve issues as they arise. UCAN RSVP regularly documents the activities and accomplishments of volunteers, and measure that against the goals and outcomes in the application, as well as RSVP's overall outcomes and against community needs. This will be done by obtaining regular written reports from the sites and volunteers. UCAN reviews a year-end report that assesses how the program and the stations have met goals and outcome objectives.

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In recruiting volunteers, UCAN RSVP will evaluate the necessity of recruitment or replacement of former RSVP volunteers based upon priority of work plan, national performance measures and external assessment. UCAN will continue to provide a celebration of self-sufficiency, also known as graduating stations, for those stations that have matured into independent volunteer stations no longer in RSVP work-plan focus areas, honoring the role RSVP has played in the creation of volunteer sites now self-aware and self-sufficient.

### **Organizational Capability**

UCAN has recruited and managed volunteers for 44 years. All service delivery programs use volunteers, as this is one of the most important ways to build relationships within the community, leverage precious resources and value the human spirit in which innovation and creativity can flourish. The use of volunteers is an ethic within UCAN and representative of the inclusive nature in which UCAN operates.

Seven years ago UCAN established a VISTA team serving three counties and in 2009, UCAN was granted an AmeriCorps team which has supported members through the Oregon Volunteer's State Commission. With Josephine County RSVP being an integral part of the UCAN system, our organization and staff have been influenced by and educated on the depth of seniors in service and increased the resource connection to our community partners. 2 RSVP volunteers have gone on to serve as VISTA and AmeriCorps members as well.

UCAN RSVP program will maximize the use of 7 RSVP volunteer administrative support pool which serves the public daily, in person, on the phone and as the information & referral portal for the RSVP program. RSVP Director, Rebecca DeGreyt, has expertise in national services as a VISTA & AmeriCorps Coordinator/Trainer, Certified Mediator, VISTA Team Leader and former VISTA member. The RSVP Director is a member of UCAN's Management Team and participates in agency wide development.

For RSVP Program supervision and support, the UCAN Chief Operations Officer fulfills sponsor duties for all UCAN CNCS funded programming, and possesses over 19 years of national service program delivery experience. The UCAN COO reports to the UCAN Executive Director, who has 35 years in human services, 17 years overseeing VISTA and AmeriCorps programs, and 12 years overseeing senior assistance and case management services. All programs provide monthly reports to the Executive Director and Board of Directors on performance and adherence to program requirements. UCAN uses periodic client satisfaction surveys and regular community surveys enhance, monitor and improve service delivery for maximum efficiency. Planning for RSVP programming is a direct result of the bi-

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annual community assessments orchestrated to be responsive to current needs. In February 2013, UCAN will again be conducting this assessment in compliance with our Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) funding, and utilizing the results to update RSVP strategies and performance work plans. The activities in the current RSVP work plans are a result of identified needs from the previous CSBG assessment, indicating the needs among older adults were: access to health care, food insecurity and housing stabilization in an economically depressed, rural community.

UCAN possesses a strong fiscal staff, knowledgeable in CNCS reviews and accountability. The Fiscal Director has been with the agency for 27 years and our Chief Financial Officer is a Certified Public Accountant. UCAN has solid written financial systems in place covering all fiscal functions including purchasing and travel reimbursement. UCAN has a sophisticated fund accounting system and has extensive experience managing federal and state grants, including Head Start, HUD, VISTA, FEMA, ESGP grants, and many others. Our financial operating systems are regularly reviewed by various funding sources and are found to meet all accounting standards. About 75% of our annual budget originates from the federal government. All programs require financial monitoring, extensive performance monitoring and tracking, and the meeting of various performance standards and outcomes. All of UCAN's programs regularly receive excellent monitoring reviews, and as an organization UCAN has a long history of unqualified audits and considered a low audit risk agency. To increase communication, UCAN seeks innovative solutions in reaching out to rural community members, utilizing technology to video conference, Skype and uses webinar practices to engage diversity in participation. UCAN receives federal funds (CSBG) and private donations to support the technology of the program beyond the required in-kind match and utilizes technical assistance through the CNCS Knowledge Network to maximize the potential for all UCAN national service programs.

### Other

n/a

### PNS Amendment (if applicable)

n/a