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Executive Summary

McNairy-Hardin-Hardeman-Chester (TN) Retired Senior Volunteer Program

Legal (Incumbent) Applicant:

Adamsville Lions Club, 408 Park Ave., Adamsville, TN 38310

Organization and mission:

The Adamsville Lions Club was chartered in 1944 as a service oriented organization under the International Lions Clubs. They saw the need for organized volunteers beyond their group to address community needs and challenges. This led to sponsoring a senior volunteer organization under Action in 1974. In the 1990, the name was changed to Retired and Senior Volunteer Program under Senior Corps and the Corporation for National and Community Services.

An estimated 500 RSVP volunteers will serve. Some of their activities will include disaster response, food security measures, financial counseling, companionship, capacity building for agencies, and outreach for homebound seniors. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy futures addressing food insecurity. At the end of the three-year grant, our Outcome will be 1500 families per year with increased food security. The CNCS federal annual investment of \$64,105 will be supplemented by \$28,041 per year in non-federal resources.

Methods to address those needs:

We will recruit senior volunteers to use their lifetime experiences, talents and skills to support activities of 60 local agencies addressing problems that impact our communities. Typically, our volunteers donate about 130,000 hours each year. We address food insecurity, disaster response, and independent living for seniors.

Anticipated Outcomes:

Our community will have basic needs met, such as safety, food and shelter, our seniors will feel the spirit of concern by understanding their need to be independent, and will feel a renewed sense of purpose, dignity, and energy from being valued.

Strengthening Communities

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Strengthening Communities

Description of our community:

McNairy-Hardin-Hardeman-Chester Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) recruits adults 55 and older to volunteer, using their experience and talents, in agencies that directly impact their communities. Our local sponsor is the Adamsville Lions Club. RSVP serves four (4) counties in rural southwest Tennessee. These are country communities, a mixture of families with old roots and newcomers seeking a quieter life, less crime and pollution, scenic hills, and rivers. Of this 95,380 population (2010 Census data), 12% or 11,500 is over the age of 65. These are rural communities, with scattered homes, small businesses, farms, and a few factories. We are not exempt from the economic crisis with factory closings and layoffs. There has always been a shortage of good paying jobs, due to a poorly educated workforce. Because there is no local transportation network, RSVP owns a van obtained through a grant with the Tennessee Department of Transportation for providing our RSVP volunteers a way to senior centers and special events.

Local Input into Program Design, Mobilization of Resources, and Partners:

Our Advisory Council is composed of 16 active RSVP volunteers, six men and 10 women, all involved in community leadership roles. Our rural area's main diversities are economic and education, not ethnic, reflected in our council. They are retired tradesmen, farmers, and stay at home mothers. They were selected for their differences, making them a valuable resource for program design by expressing local needs, offering solutions through our agency and connections, and evaluating the results. Because they choose to be part of the solution, they help us build support from community partners, such as civic groups, banks, businesses, newspapers, the school system, and local governments. These partners underwrite support for our non-federal match, donate to our Recognition banquets, provide space for offices and meetings, and help publicize our special events.

Building Public Awareness and Support with Diversity and Opportunities for volunteers as we Mobilize Resources:

Our primary avenue for generating local support and awareness is through each county's Community Advisory Board, or CAB. Each CAB offers the opportunity to network with diverse groups that cross ethnic, social, and economic lines, targeting identified needs in their community. We work with ministerial alliances on mentoring, DCS workers who work with children and the court system,

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emergency responders, and health departments. We partner with housing from federal programs to homeless shelters. Our partners provide emergency assistance with food, clothing, and household goods at thrift stores, and area senior centers with nutrition programs, Meals on Wheels, and hospices.

We provide a way for them to recruit volunteers to implement their programs, and mobilize community resources. We can supply mailing labels of volunteers in their area, post opportunities in newspapers, online, and in our newsletters. From Relay for Life to health screenings, all these need caring people to make it happen. We are the missing link for this. Many of these opportunities are perfect for our seniors. They can offer their time, talents, and a lifetime of experiences.

Enhancing Community Organizational Capacity while Integrating Senior Service:

Our Advisory Board members serve on the governing boards of the Red Cross, Heart Association, Imagination Library, several food banks run by faith-based organizations, and nutrition programs. Many are active CAB members, and network with other organizations regularly. These activities build their leadership skills in managing other volunteers, while they are building the agencies' available pool of resource volunteers for various events. They help develop programs to match community needs and staff these with our RSVP members. Since we know most of our volunteers personally, we can go over our list and connect special opportunities with volunteers having those talents and interests.

One example of building awareness of our agency is by partnering with the CAB-sponsored Back to School Fests for the last five years in McNairy, Hardin, Hardeman, and Chester Counties. Back to School Fests are scheduled for late summer and provide about 4,000 kids with free school supplies and backpacks. Our Advisory Council volunteers provide leadership roles in the McNairy and Hardin County events, directed by RSVP staff, and help recruit 15 to 20 other RSVP volunteers to help also in each of these 2 events. Kids must be present with a parent or guardian to receive these supplies. The space is provided free by local governments, with DCS providing 400 hot dogs and buns, chips, and drinks. Local Boy Scouts, lead by the Sheriff and his son's den, grilled these for us. Local businesses offer free pizzas, napkins, straws, kid's drinks, water etc. Two state medical insurance companies help with 800 or more drawstring bags and a starter kit of supplies and health screenings. These kits have a package of paper, folders, spiral notebook, pencils, pens, ruler and crayons. We give free table space to

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our partnering agencies to give out information on their services while offering other school supplies to all kids. Information is available on HeadStart, free phones, Girl Scouts enrollment, Imagination Library opportunities, churches, dental care, mental health services, and health department programs. UT Extension and their FCE programs had fundraisers this year and provided 2000 pencils, and 1000 packages of paper. Local churches had Vacation Bible School projects of collecting spiral notebooks and gave away over 530. Police and fire departments were present to have people sign up for free smoke alarms, and information on their DARE Program. While we were unable to track the value of these donations, to our low income families who eagerly welcomed this assistance, it was priceless.

Recruitment and Development

Volunteer Recruitment and Development

Assurance of a Quality Experience:

Active seniors are healthier and happier. We recruit senior adults 55 and older for volunteer opportunities that match their skills and interests. We recruit caring volunteers who can provide transportation with Meals on Wheels programs. We select and train our station supervisors to focus their program activities toward offering a quality experience for our members so they develop leadership skills, reflect on the true meaning of service and have a vision for their impact to an ever-expanding sphere of influence, enhancing their lives. Jesus Cares Thrift stores place the volunteers we send in leadership positions for managing donations, tagging items, or helping with stocking shelves. The donations provide support for all their services to the needy, about \$25,000 a year.

Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition:

Typically, volunteers are invisible to their communities, quietly serving to help their neighbors. RSVP is their voice and puts a face on their work. We are essential to the stabilization of the service workforce. We connect them to each other, implement new opportunities, and help focus well-deserved attention to the impact they make. Most would not continue to volunteer without our networking with them and recognizing their value. Agencies complain to us that they cannot keep volunteers. RSVP volunteers rarely drop out; in fact, many serve for 10, to 20 years. Our drop out rate is extremely low.

We utilize several methods for recruitment. We post about 20 current opportunities on VolunteerMatch and in all the local newspapers, following up on all contacts. Our VolunteerMatch

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postings receive a hundred hits each month, potential new members learning about RSVP, with an average of 3 to 5 referrals monthly. Our two offices are in senior centers, so we recruit seniors that come for events, such as commodities, gospel singing, or holiday parties, to become RSVP members. We ask our volunteers for names and phone numbers of friends that would make great volunteers and call and recruit them.

Central to the building of a successful corps of volunteers is their satisfaction and enthusiasm spreading to their friends and encouraging more to volunteer. Because volunteers need to feel appreciated, we have an annual recognition banquet thanking them for their service, handing out small gifts, and connecting them to others like them. Our last two Recognition Luncheons for McNairy and Hardin Counties were held at Shiloh National Park pavilion. The beautiful weather set the scene for the country music band, door prizes, and picnic food. Local banks help support this event, and appreciation for their support is printed on the notepads we gave out. We share stories, photos, histories, and acknowledge milestones, such as those over 90 and still active. We have many volunteers that have been with RSVP for more than 20 years, and use them in roles as mentors to new ones in the program. We give out small impromptu gifts, such as pens, at no-occasion gatherings, just because. We also send out sympathy cards, and thinking of you cards, as needed.

Training and Technical Assistance:

Our staff participates in annual training conferences in our state and at least one that is multi-state or national. These sessions broaden our knowledge, provide technical assistance, and enhance our skills in recruitment and retention. We meet regularly with our station supervisors and assist them with solutions for problems as they arise. We re-sign our Memorandums of Understanding with all stations every three years and go over all the details, clarifying our responsibilities and theirs. Any additional training is included that would help our volunteers treasure their experience working with them. One of our quarterly meetings with our Advisory Council is devoted to clarifying their responsibilities and providing training in their evaluation of our community participation activities. An example of training RSVP volunteers for leadership roles can be found in our two hospital auxiliaries. The profits from the Gifts Shops and fundraisers like bake sales are used for scholarships for local students going into the medical field. The Auxiliary officers manage the purchase of all items to generate the most profit, keep the books, and assign a committee for selecting candidates for these scholarships. These totaled \$9,000 this year.

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Program Management

Program Management

Stations and Assignments:

McNairy-Hardin-Hardeman-Chester RSVP has served these counties for 40 years. Our rural setting provides an ideal situation for developing a synergistic relationship with partnering agencies. Our volunteers grew up together, remain neighbors, and many are related due to close-knit communities with many families connected by marriage. When only the second Director in 35 years retired in 2009, our program was stable with adequate funding, but virtually unknown to most agencies. The new director and her assistant faced problems with branding, community awareness, and interactions with stations. That has been reversed in the last six years by the director and our county coordinators logging 500 miles a month or more going to meetings, visiting stations, and being more involved in our partners' projects.

Our participation in each county's Community Advisory Board, McNairy, Hardin, Hardeman and Chester, has enhanced this by networking with agencies that depend on volunteers. We promote our program, showing our capability in coordinating volunteer recruitment, training stations supervisors, advising on volunteer job descriptions, and their management of volunteers. As we expand our stations, we are focused on specific community needs to provide meaningful opportunities as our volunteers donate their time and talents to their communities. All station supervisors receive detailed training when MOUs are signed every three years, specifically on what is their responsibility and what is ours. Our quarterly visits cover any immediate questions.

Assessment of Performance:

Our Advisory Council is composed of active 12 to 18 RSVP volunteers in community leadership roles. This team of volunteers is all retired from jobs in the area, and serve multiple years until they miss three meetings, at which time they are dismissed. We have two officers with two year terms, President, currently being filled by past Director Bettye Miller and a Secretary. They fill out an annual survey of local needs as well as an evaluation of how well we are meeting current needs, our accomplishments, and impact on the community.

We discuss new community needs, such as responding to disasters like floods and tornados. What

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agencies are available, and how can we notify our volunteers to respond? Can we grade our last response? Was it adequate? Can it be improved? All of these RSVP volunteers have an impact on the neighbors they help. One meeting a year is focused only for this discussion. This is our time to assess our progress, show our impact, and set the goals and direction for the next year. One example, we have a discussion on new or expanding agencies and set goals for how we can interact with them. What do they need and how can we help them. We also give these members time to discuss their roles at different stations and their work helping others.

Managing Data for Impact:

RSVP staff and advisory council member(s) visit volunteer stations on a monthly or quarterly basis, assessing and developing specific assignments for our members. The Advisory Council conducts a yearly evaluation of the station accomplishments to ensure goals and objectives are being met. We do a survey of Advisory council members to ascertain their evaluation of our ability to have community support, give meaningful service for our volunteers, assessment of staff being open to new ideas, and provide worthwhile service.

We currently have 60 stations with 500+ volunteers contributing over 130,000 hours each year. Volunteer hours are collected from stations and/or volunteers, and recorded on Volunteer Reporter by name and station. The county coordinators collect these hours each month or quarter. They may also be faxed or emailed in. The office assistant records this data into the Volunteer Reporter program. Reports produced from this information show our volunteers are donating time worth almost a million dollars if valued at the hourly minimum wage of \$7.25.

Project Resources:

We use Quick Books to manage the project resources, both financial and In-Kind, to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of these assets. Our RSVP Director has previous experience in financial management with the State of Texas as a medical research lab manager. A CPA firm annually performs an Audit Review of the financial records offering no material modifications, and the CNCS state office conducts site visits every five years and monitors the project. Our grant budget is followed closely for compliance with every category. A separate Excel spreadsheet is maintained by the director monthly as a check on the Quick Books records.

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All financial reports through the federal Payment Management System are completed in a timely manner and Federal Financial Reports through eGrants are also completed as scheduled. Our Lions Club Liaison serves as Executive Director and personally reviews our grants, bank statements, financial activity reports, and is one of two signatures for all checks. The director is the other authorized signer. He signs all disbursements for our Director's salary and travel, grant applications, and official documents. All employee policies are in compliance with federal regulations. Program funds and In-Kind are received by the director, receipts and documentation filed and put in Quickbooks.

Our volunteer travel reimbursement policy only covers stations that request it per the MOU with them. Currently volunteers at three stations are reimbursed for two trips a month at .24 cents a mile roundtrip, paid quarterly, with a maximum of \$25 per quarter. Our staff local travel policy is for mileage reimbursement at whatever the current federal rate is (currently \$0.56/mi). Our long distance travel is calculated at actual cost.

Our By-laws and internal Policies and Procedures that give clear roles for staff and these policies undergo review every 2 years. Changes in policies are derived from assessments with the Advisory Council as we look for continuous improvement to meet new challenges. These changes are voted through the Adamsville Lions Club and signed by our Advisory Council Officers and the Lions Club Liaison.

Securing Essential Resources:

Resources of cash and In-Kind contributions are secured by the director to meet the required match of federal funds to sustain and expand the project. Three cities and two county governments, McNairy (\$2500) and Hardin County (\$2000), and cities of Savannah (\$1000), Adamsville (\$1000), and Michie (\$500) recognize this and place RSVP in their budget. This cash, \$7000, is part of our non-federal match. We receive In-Kind Space from Hardin County (\$7680 per year) and Adamsville (\$2880 per year) for our offices.

Our hospital volunteers receive a meal when they work four hours, and that meal is an In-Kind donation with a value set by the two hospitals of \$5 per meal. Meals are recorded on their timesheet with their hours. We average 290 meals per quarter or about \$5850 per year as In-Kind. We are

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given In-Kind credit of \$180 per quarter for \$2/day parking at the McNairy County Senior Center or \$720 per year.

Three local newspapers post our current volunteer opportunities weekly and the free ad space worth \$1260 is provided to RSVP and is recognized as an In-Kind publicity/printing donation. In the country, it is not uncommon for someone in our office to have a connection to someone at all these places. Although often difficult in urban settings, the strength of local networking cannot be underestimated. Cash is also derived from the West TN United Way Grant for \$1000/year for mileage reimbursement to our seniors.

Organizational Capability

Organization Capacity

Program Experience:

The Adamsville Lions Club has been our sponsor us since 1974. It was chartered in 1944 as part of the Lions Clubs International Organization. Their focus has always been to assist local residents with eye exams, and glasses. Our local club also assists local projects, like Girls State, a local scholarship memorial for a former Lioness, and specific needs as they arise. They saw the need for community-based volunteers, and organized our program under a federal program called ACTION, later renamed RSVP under the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The Adamsville Lions Club remains active in personnel and financial oversight for RSVP with monthly meetings.

McNairy-Hardin-Hardeman-Chester RSVP has served these communities for 40 years by answering the call for community needs with senior-based volunteers donating hours of service. We first served only McNairy County, and that success generated requests for our program to go into two more counties very quickly.

Key Staff Positions:

The RSVP Director implements the program and answers to President Paul Plunk and the Adamsville Lions Club, with the cooperative effort of the Advisory Council. Our Director, a senior and grandmother, has years of volunteer service, with experiences ranging from prison ministries to English for Speakers of Other Languages or ESOL. She is the current Executive Director of the Tennessee Association of Senior Volunteer Directors. She volunteers as a medical First Responder and

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Fire Chief of Michie Volunteer Fire/Rescue, and Board Member of the McNairy County First Responders, Inc., which she helped incorporate. She serves as Secretary for the McNairy County Fire Chiefs Association, and the West TN Association of Fire Chiefs, as an organizing charter member. She was appointed to the Volunteer Fire Chief Committee Board by the President of the Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association in 2010, and serves as Secretary. She assists the county mayor with finding grant opportunities for other county agencies, including the Emergency Management Agent and libraries.

The Director's Administrative Assistant also serves as the McNairy-Hardeman-Chester Counties Coordinator. She has close family ties to the community and attends all Community Advisory Board (CAB) meetings as part of her duties. She serves on the board of the Imagination Library, Family and Community Education (FCE) under the University of TN, and (2 county) Red Cross. She graduated from the Leadership Development Training Class of the McNairy Regional Alliance (Chamber and Economic Development).

She also serves as our van driver one day a week, and transports seniors to a local senior center and for special events. Our other staff member, the Hardin County Coordinator for four years, has been a RSVP volunteer for 14 years, and works with local agencies and stations to help recruit volunteers, maintains volunteer records of 300 volunteers, and documents volunteer mileage reimbursements.. The Director and her Assistant Administrator work at 85% of full-time due to budget cuts. The van driver's position was cut and is currently being filled by the office assistant at six hours, one day a week, or 15% of full-time, bringing her to full-time equivalent.

Organizational Capacity and Policies:

All financial management systems are in accordance with federal standards and are examined annually with an Audit Review. We have managed federal grants since our inception in 1974 without an adverse opinion. We use Quick Books software for check writing and financial records, as well as an Excel spreadsheet for monthly check tracking. Our Director has 15 years experience in grant fund management working with federal grants such as Centers for Disease Control (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Science Foundation (NSF) and Department of the Army for Research (DARPA) for medical research. These grants ranged from half a million to two and a half million. She just ended a 4-year Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency Grant for Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response or SAFER Grant (Homeland

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Security/FEMA) awarded to RSVP for recruitment and retention of volunteer firemen in McNairy County. This award of \$178,000 was the first of its kind to Senior Corps. She does grant writing on her time for local governments and agencies. Her awarded grants outside RSVP in the last seven years total over half a million. This includes TN Community Development Block Grants for two fire trucks for her fire department.

Our program manages about 500 seniors donating over 130,000 volunteer hours annually. We encourage our seniors to discover and actively show their collective power to foster positive change in their communities. Our volunteers are an integral part of active neighborhood programs from tutoring to food banks to emergency responders. They make an important difference in the lives of so many every day. One example is our multiple nutrition and food bank programs that feed about 650 families plus 200 seniors monthly. Our corps of volunteers helps staff activities like these in our 60 stations and make them possible. We have experienced a steady increase in opportunities to become more involved in activities around us. We assisted the Health Department in their first Family Fitness Day, and recruited volunteers to assist in typing the county Resource Directory. In fact, the Hardin County Librarian asked us to quit recruiting volunteers for her. She had too many respond.

Self-Assessment:

McNairy-Hardin-Hardeman-Chester RSVP undergoes an annual self-assessment and impact of the project by the sponsor, the Adamsville Lions Club, on financial responsibilities with the help of the Advisory Council on programming. An Evaluation sheet is given to all members of the Advisory Council asking if they feel our program is worthwhile, the service fulfilling for the volunteers, the staff accepting of new ideas, and has adequate support from the community. These answers are collated and discussed at an open meeting with the sponsor. Fifteen random stations and volunteers are selected for another survey. Questions such as station and project staff relationship are listed with questions such as visits by staff, hour sheets picked up promptly, and responsive to needs.

Questions about the impact of RSVP on volunteers is listed with responses for enhancing the quality of life, making good use of time, affording the volunteers opportunities to use and learn skills, and feeling wanted and needed. These surveys are collected and answers collated for evaluating our strengths and weaknesses.

The RSVP staff annually assesses the safety of all volunteers from our visits with all stations. An

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assurance of safety for all volunteers is part of our MOU with the stations and discussed whenever we sign updated Memorandums.

Other

N/A

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A