

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The City of Miles City was established in 1887 under the Montana Constitution and continues to provide public services to the residents of Miles City. The City has sponsored RSVP since July 2009. City of Miles City RSVP covers Custer and Rosebud County which includes the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation and in a separate grant covers Fallon and Carter Counties. RSVP of Miles City has 5 years of successful experience providing programs and services centered on impact-based programming.

An estimated 184 volunteers will serve. Some of their activities will include: volunteers recruiting volunteers, promoting food collection, distributing food, food drives, increasing awareness of food pantries and the soup kitchen. The primary focus area is Healthy Futures. Other focus areas include Veterans and Military Families. At the end of the three-year grant, 184 volunteers will be serving and there will be increased food security in Custer and Rosebud Counties. The CNCS federal investment of \$58,228 will be supplemented by \$17,469 non-federal resources.

## Strengthening Communities

Describe the community and demonstrate that the community needs identified in the PRIMARY FOCUS AREA EXIST in the geographic service area.

RSVP, under the auspices of its sponsor, the City of Miles City, serves the residents of southeastern Montana living in Custer County and Rosebud Counties, including the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. This is an area 369 square miles larger than Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Delaware combined. According to the 2010 census, the total population of this service area was 20,932 or 2.41 persons per square miles as compared with 23.16 livestock (cows, sheep, and pigs) per square miles. Low population and great distances between people, neighbors, and towns make this a frontier area. 17.5 % of Rosebud County residents and 11.5% of Custer County residents are 65 or older as compared to 14.8% statewide. There has been a consistent decline in youth population and an increase in senior population in this region. Overall social services such as low-income energy assistance and TANF and SNAP distributions have increased between the years 2002-2009, even though population has decreased. This is confirmed by the Custer County, Montana Community Needs Assessment compiled by Grounds for Change, which states 21% of Custer County residents live at or below poverty level. A majority of those in poverty in the county were 18-64 years of age, while 31.2% of those in poverty were under 18 and 9.2% of those in poverty were 65+. Living in a frontier area of Montana makes it very difficult for community members and families to make positive and healthy food choices. The

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number of families living in poverty in Custer County is growing and large numbers of these families have children ages 5 and under. Many of these families are families where the woman is the head of household with no husband present and half of the female householder families living in poverty have children under the age of 5. The effect of childhood hunger on child is: slow growth, poor stature, deficiency diseases, and early onset chronic diseases like Type II Diabetes and obesity, lowered learning ability and poor cognitive development, lower math and reading scores, and behavior problems. Although the unemployment level in Custer County is declining as many jobs have been created with the current boom development of the Bakken Oil Field moving into our area, our poverty level is increasing due to the increase in cost of living and demand for housing which is increasing the cost of rent, yet placing even more hardship on both seniors and families. This lends to the concept of 'the working poor' and those individuals who must keep multiple jobs in order to make ends meet. Average wages in Custer County are significantly lower compared to MT and the US. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Research indicates the 2010 poverty level for children ages 0-17 was 20.6% in Custer County and 27.2% in Rosebud County. For those households living on limited incomes, the ability to access adequate and healthy food is a daily struggle. Any sudden loss of income or unexpected expense can result in a downward spiral that is difficult for recovery. For most of households, hunger is just one element of a larger, more complicated situation. They also have difficulty paying bills on a limited income, the stress of dealing with medical issues, lack of available jobs, and the daily struggle to provide for themselves and their families. According to the 2010 Client Hungry Survey published by the MT Office of Public Instruction, the demand for emergency food continues to grow at food pantries and other feeding sites served by the Montana Food Bank Network. From 2008 to 2009, the MFBN Partner Agencies saw a 23% increase in the number of total household visits, as compared to the first six months of 2009. The food pantry is a critical resource for families dealing with hunger and food insecurity, helping clients meet their immediate need for food. Local use of the food bank has increased in the past year. According to Bob Parker, Food Bank Director the number of new households increased by 60% from July 2013 to July 2014. During the same period of time new clients (total number of individuals in the household) increased by 54% and the total number of individuals served increased by 85%.

The Custer County Food Bank and the Custer County Community Table/Soup Kitchen are housed in the VA Complex. Together they provide food to the needy in the area, or to the veterans with appointments at the VA Clinic. Often veterans stop by the Soup Kitchen for a hot meal before returning to their home. Miles City is the largest town near the Southeastern Montana counties of

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Fallon, Prairie, Rosebud, Garfield, and Powder River. Many veterans use the VA Clinic and are able to use the Soup Kitchen rather than pay for an expensive meal before returning to their home. Veterans living in the VA Community Living Center stop by for a cup of coffee, a cookie, and a kind word from the volunteers. The Miles City Soup Kitchen served an average of 46 individuals per day in July 2014, the average number of veterans served was 12 per day. B.K, a disabled man in his 50's, eats at the Soup Kitchen each day. He is in need of a hot meal, but he is also in need of the friendship he finds among the others eating at the Soup Kitchen. The RSVP Director visits the Soup Kitchen 2-3 times a week and enjoys listening to the conversations B.K. has with a group of individuals, many of who are involved with Eastern Montana Industries which provides people with disabilities the vocational and residential services necessary to achieve their highest levels of productivity and independence in the least restrictive setting possible. EMI does not provide lunch; therefore many stop by the Soup Kitchen for a meal. A female senior citizen, on Food Stamps, drops a quarter into the donation jar each day she eats at the Food Bank. She also lives alone and has a group she visits with each day. The Soup Kitchen provides a need, a need as valuable as food 'the need for contact with others; the need to feel a part of something.'

Describe in the narrative how the service activities in the Primary Focus Area lead to National Performance Measures outputs or outcomes:

The food distribution, by volunteers, at both the Food Bank and Soup Kitchen provides emergency food to individuals; those individuals have increased food security because these non-profits are available to them. Volunteers will work with the staff at these non-profits to assure individuals in the community are provided emergency food as needed. At Thanksgiving volunteers at the Food Bank provide Thanksgiving Baskets, and the Soup Kitchen provides a Holiday Meal at both Thanksgiving and Christmas. Records will be kept, by both, indicating the number of people receiving food. A Food Security Survey will be completed twice a year. Questions used will come from the Household Food Security in the U.S. questionnaire.

Your plan and infrastructure to support data collection and ensure National Performance Measure outcomes and outputs are measured, collected, and managed.

A file will be kept for each work plan. The work plan files will be reviewed monthly to assure the outcomes and output are on target. The file will contain a copy of the work plan, list of volunteer stations, copies of completed surveys and other documentation of performance, e-mails and other correspondence relating to performance measures, and summaries of hours/volunteers for each

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volunteer station printed from Volunteer Reporter. Volunteer stations in Focus Areas are contacted either in person, or by e-mail to obtain needed documentation. Contacts will be made monthly or quarterly depending on the agreement made with the Volunteer Station regarding the information they are providing. Surveys will be conducted with the assistance of the volunteer station and conducted as stated in the specific work plans. All documentation will be kept in the work plan file. Volunteer timesheets are submitted monthly and entered into Volunteer Report monthly. This allows RSVP to confirm the number of volunteers at the workstation remains consistent and within the parameters of the work plans and requirements for the grant.

Describe any activity in service to veterans and/or military families as part of service in the Primary Focus Area, Other Focus Areas or Capacity Building.

Although Veterans are not the Primary Focus area they are an important part of the service activities provided by RSVP volunteers. Veteran transportation will be provided by RSVP volunteers. 125 unduplicated veterans will be transported to medical appointments from Miles City to Billings, MT, Sturgis, SD, and Sheridan, WY. Montana is a frontier state and the nearest VA Hospital is located in Helena, a trip 12-hour round trip, not including appointment time. The VA Community Living Center also utilizes volunteers to assist in the activity department. Each month 25-30 veterans call the CLC

¿Home.¿

### **Recruitment and Development**

Your plan and infrastructure to create high quality volunteer assignments with opportunities such as sharing their experience, abilities, and skills to improve their communities and themselves through service in their communities.

High quality volunteer assignments begin with a new volunteer orientation explaining RSVP and its services. An in-depth yet informal and personal volunteer interview is completed to assure an appropriate placement and to develop rapport with the volunteer. Interview questions cover topics such as what new skills the volunteers would like to develop, what current skills they would like to share with Volunteer Stations, leadership skills and potential organizations they might like to be involved with, how they see volunteering as an enhancement to their lives, and what their goal is for service to their community. Follow-up is provided through visits and phone calls by the program director. Volunteers may be visited at their Volunteer Station or through chance meetings, such as the grocery store or Strong Women Strong Bones classes. Ongoing contact with the volunteer builds trust and confidence with the RSVP program thus allowing the volunteer the freedom, if needed, to change

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volunteer positions allowing them to best share their experience, abilities, and skills with the community as community needs occur. During a chance meeting a newly recruited and placed volunteer said, "Thank you it's a perfect fit for me!" Within the past year one volunteer's Volunteer Station changed their method of doing things and found they did not need a volunteer. This volunteer is very unusual in that she does not want to work with other people. In visiting with another Volunteer Station I was able to find a perfect volunteer position for her, and the Volunteer Station was happy to have a volunteer to organize art books and materials. A Volunteer/Volunteer Station Packet has been developed and is presented to all new volunteers. This packet includes policies, insurance information, RSVP contact information, facts about RSVP and Senior Corps, a list of current Volunteer Stations, and a volunteer timesheet. Volunteer Stations and volunteers are given the same information. RSVP Notes, a bi-monthly newsletter is mailed to all volunteers. Volunteers are encouraged, and do, stop by the office to visit anytime. Because of the open door policy, and the director's willingness to visit about RSVP anytime, anywhere we are continually promoting the value of volunteers, both to the volunteer and to the community.

Your plan and infrastructure to ensure RSVP Volunteers receive training needed to be highly effective means to addressing identified community needs in both the Primary Focus Area and in Other Focus Areas or Capacity Building.

City of Miles City RSVP's Primary Focus Area is Healthy Futures. Volunteers will be placed at the Custer Community Table/Miles City Soup Kitchen, Custer County Food Bank, and Meals On Wheels. When a volunteer is assigned to one of these Volunteer Stations that Volunteer Station supervisor provides one-on-one training to new volunteers about their agency, what is expected of the volunteer and confidentially training. Volunteer stations offer a variety of training and methods of training. Examples are a volunteer handbook that must be read and signed prior to volunteering, training on building policies, safety procedures, hand and respiratory hygiene, and specialized training on bereavement and caregiving. A Volunteer Survey was mailed to all volunteers in February 2014. One of the questions on the survey was "did you receive training and or safety information at your volunteer station." 76% said they received formal training, the remainder received informal training and 52% said they received safety information. Ongoing training is provided as needed, along with Volunteer Recognition (78% of the volunteers answered yes they received volunteer recognition at their Volunteer Station on the Volunteer Survey 2014.)

Volunteer Station Survey 2014 was returned by 49% of the Volunteer Stations. Of those returning the survey 80% indicated they provided Orientation, 76% provided Training, and 52% provide safety

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training. Follow-up will be conducted by RSVP staff to assure these number increase for the Volunteer Station Survey 2015.

The demographics of the community served and plans to recruit a volunteer pool reflective of the community served. This could possibly include: individuals from diverse races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, or degrees of English language proficiency; Veterans and military families as RSVP volunteers; and RSVP volunteers with disabilities

Custer County's population in the 2010 census was 11,699. Data obtained from 2010 census indicates that 17.8% of the population was 65 or older. 95.3% of the residents are white. The average persons per household is 2.25 and the median household income is \$41,386. 16.5% are below poverty level with an addition 4.5% at poverty level. Rosebud County's population in the 2010 census was 9,233. Data obtained from the 2010 census indicates that 13% of the population was 65 or older. 60.4% of the residents are white and 35.6% are Native American. The average persons per household is 2.79 and the median household income is \$45,977. 19.5% are below poverty level.

Volunteers will be recruited from the population regardless of race, ethnicities, sexual orientation, or English language proficiency. We currently have volunteers of several races, sexual orientations, and currently no one without the ability to speak English. Veterans and military family members are encouraged to volunteer and are often willing to do so as they understand the value of service to their country and community. Volunteer Stations are willing to work with volunteers with all types of disabilities. Volunteers with disabilities are placed in Volunteer Stations where they can be successful using the skills they are able to share with the community. No one is excluded from being a volunteer, nor is anyone made to feel inferior because of their status. The willingness to accept each volunteer for the special skills and abilities they bring to the Volunteer Station only serves to encourage more people to want to become RSVP members.

City of Miles City RSVP continues to recruit utilizing the most productive methods to reach potential volunteers. Efforts have been made to recruit volunteers at the Eastern Montana Fair, Resource Fairs, and Health Fairs. Volunteers have been recruited through the Montana Best Times, a statewide newspaper published specifically for the over 55 population and through the website [rsvpmilescity.org](http://rsvpmilescity.org). RSVP director and Advisory Council members can be very direct in asking if a community member would like to become a member of RSVP. RSVP has been featured in several articles in the local newspaper and this method of recruiting works very well. Word of mouth by satisfied volunteers and Volunteer Station supervisors is a very effective means of recruitment as noted by the 19 individuals

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that have walked into the RSVP office in the past six months asking to become RSVP members. 9/11 Day of Service projects are planned each year. These projects have been coordinated with AARP and Keep Miles City Beautiful opening opportunities for community involvement. Opportunities are available for volunteers to participate in the National Days of Service, involving a diverse group of individuals, including both adults and youth.

Your plan and infrastructure to retain and recognize RSVP volunteers.

**Retaining Volunteers:** To maintain a personally satisfying volunteer experience, RSVP relies on staff visits to work sites, conversations with supervisors, annual program reviews, and most of all, informal reports from volunteers. The RSVP office is located in a building with 5 Volunteer Stations giving staff daily opportunities for personal contact with volunteers. This daily contact allows the volunteers to become comfortable discussing any concerns. The established rapport with RSVP staff is a great asset in retaining and recognizing volunteers.

Efforts are made to visit with those volunteers not actively involved in a Volunteer Station to determine what kinds of volunteer opportunities would be interested them, if they are experiencing a medical or family issue that will not allow them to volunteer at this time, or any other issues. Volunteers that are currently active at a volunteer station are contacted to determine if their placement is rewarding. A Volunteer Satisfaction Survey is mailed to all volunteers. The most recent volunteer survey was returned by 62% of the volunteers.

RSVP will consult with the Volunteer Station supervisor to insure the work is structured to allow personal growth and satisfaction. A Volunteer/Volunteer Station Packet has been developed, and updated, and personally delivered to all Volunteer Stations. This packet contains policies, information on how to treat a volunteer, facts about RSVP, contact information, and a volunteer time sheet. A copy of all volunteer job descriptions and a current MOU for each Volunteer Station is securely kept in the RSVP office. The MOU, and/or job descriptions can be altered when necessary to accommodate unusual characteristics or changes in circumstances.

Recognizing volunteers is the best part! Who doesn't love a party? RSVP will plan and arrange for a formal recognition of volunteers service to the community in the form of a Holiday Event and a Volunteer Appreciation/Senior Corps Week event. Volunteer Station supervisors are also invited to these events. A "Red Carpet" event complete with a movie is being planned. Additionally, 78% of Volunteer Stations hold their own volunteer recognition events, or recognize volunteers individually. RSVP staff is invited to these events. This gives RSVP another chance to recognize the hard work volunteers do and to also recruit new volunteers. Volunteers will be recognized individually with

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personal thank you notes, through the local media with high publicity whenever and wherever possible. Letters to the editor are often used to thank the community and volunteers for their support of an event, such as 9/11 Day of Service. These letters list the names of the volunteers that helped with the project. Sympathy cards are sent to all volunteers losing a family member. Birthdays are listed in RSVP Notes newsletter, and starting in January 2015 a personal note will be mailed to all volunteers on their birthday.

Training and technical assistance to project staff, volunteers, volunteer station supervisors, and community participation groups:

**Project staff:** The director participates in online training through the CNCS website, participates in monthly Senior Corps calls, attends state training, and out-of-state trainings as funding allows. The Senior Corps Virtual Conference is very informative. The director calls the state office for assistance as needed and meets with other eastern Montana directors to share ideas and coordinate plans for service projects.

**Volunteers:** A Volunteer/Volunteer Station Packet has been developed and is presented to all new volunteers. This packet includes policies, insurance information, RSVP contact information, facts about RSVP and Senior Corps, a list of current Volunteer Stations, and a volunteer timesheet. When a new volunteer is interviewed they are presented with the packet which is then reviewed with them. Volunteers are encouraged to contact the director if they have any questions.

**Volunteer Station Supervisors:** RSVP provides informal and formal training to Volunteer Station supervisors so that volunteer job assignments are structured to attract and retain the best candidate. Training is also provided in order for the Volunteer Stations to better understand the requirements of RSVP. Volunteer Station supervisors are responsible for the Volunteer Station orientation and training. Before Volunteer Station staff develops a new volunteer job, they meet with RSVP so that the work will be structured to the needs of the potential volunteer as well as the needs of the work site. All Volunteer Station staff is presented with a Volunteer/Volunteer Station Handbook, which includes information such as care and handling of RSVP volunteers, policies, guidelines for Volunteer Stations and new volunteer jobs, Volunteer Station job description form, RSVP facts, volunteer time sheets, and contact information. Supervisors are encouraged to contact the director if they have any questions.

**Community Participation Groups:** The RSVP director is a member of Community CANS, an informal group of agencies that meet monthly from September through May. This is a perfect opportunity to explain the value of RSVP to the community. It is also an opportunity to learn about other agencies and what their volunteer needs might be. The RSVP Director is an ex-officio member

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of the Custer County Council on Aging Board and a member of the Salvation Army Board. The RSVP Director speaks to local organizations, individuals, and the business community about the beneficial work that volunteers are doing in our community.

City of Miles City RSVP strives to ensure their volunteers and Volunteer Station supervisors are satisfied with their assignments and volunteers.

### **Program Management**

Your plan and infrastructure to ensure management of volunteer stations in compliance with RSVP program regulations, such as preventing or identifying prohibited activities. Your plan and infrastructure to develop and/or oversee volunteer stations to ensure that volunteers are performing their assigned service activities.

RSVP will determine community needs through formal and informal meetings with community-based organizations, political leadership, faith-based organizations and Community Needs Assessments provided by other agencies, such as OneHealth/Grounds for Change. In addition, the Advisory Council, elected officials and staff from city and county agencies, and RSVP staff will provide links and leadership to participating organizations. Using this information volunteer stations will be developed to address community needs and provide a meaningful experience for volunteers and volunteer stations. Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) and Volunteer Job Descriptions will be signed by the volunteer station supervisor and updated every 3 years, or more often if needed.

Volunteer stations must sign an MOU before a volunteer is placed at that site. The MOU clearly states "Inappropriate Activities: The Volunteer Station will not request or assign RSVP volunteers to conduct or engage in religious, sectarian, or political activities." Initially the prohibited activities are reviewed with the volunteer station supervisor, and then reviewed again each time a MOU is updated. Annual evaluations and assessments of volunteer stations, volunteers and RSVP staff will be conducted to assist with program planning. During orientation, volunteers will be informed that if the volunteer station they are assigned to is not meeting their expectations they need to contact the RSVP office. Upon doing so, arrangements will be made to place them at a more suitable volunteer station.

Volunteer Reporter software/database is used to manage information and data. Program reports are available for all aspects of the program. Visits to volunteer stations and volunteers, both in person and by telephone, are documented in Volunteer Reporter. Reports are printed monthly to determine if the project is on target with goals and impacts. Volunteer stations are contacted monthly or quarterly to obtain their reporting information.

Electronic reminders ensure all agreements with volunteer stations are kept current. A personal visit

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to the volunteer station is made when the MOU becomes due.

Your plan and infrastructure to meet changing community needs to include minimizing disruption to current volunteers as applicable and/or graduating stations as necessary.

Past history between RSVP and the community has been such that every agency/organization that wanted volunteers and could meet the requirements outlined in the MOU were accepted. A meeting of all volunteer stations will be held to explain the new Focus Areas and Performance Measures required. This meeting will be held in the fall of 2014. With the information provided the volunteer stations will be able to make an informed decision about 'graduating' from RSVP. If, following the meeting, the volunteer station has concerns about 'graduating' a one-on-one meeting will be held to further discuss the issue. All volunteer stations will be treated with courtesy, and it will be explained that the volunteer may continue to volunteer; however they will no longer be volunteering through RSVP. Most volunteers serve at more than one volunteer station and therefore will still remain RSVP volunteers. RSVP will determine community needs through formal and informal meetings with community-based organizations, political leadership, and faith-based organizations. In addition, the Advisory Council, elected officials and staff from city and county agencies, and RSVP staff will provide links and leadership to participating organizations.

Your organization's track record in the Primary Focus Area, to include, if applicable, measuring performance in the Primary Focus Area.

Healthy Futures has been the focus of City of Miles City RSVP since 2010. There is a proven record with meeting or exceeding performance measures with volunteers at the Custer County Food Bank, Miles City Soup Kitchen, and Meals on Wheels. Since 2009 performance measures have been met, or exceeded in all work plans. RSVP staff will monitor the effectiveness of the volunteer stations by meeting informally with volunteers and volunteer station supervisors. Staff will visit each volunteer station at least once a year, with phone conversations at least monthly. Volunteer stations will be surveyed annually and the results printed in the newsletter. A file will be kept for each work plan. The file will contain a copy of the work plan, list of work stations, copies of completed surveys and other documentation of performance, e-mails/correspondence relating to performance, and end of year summary of hours/volunteers for each volunteer station printed from Volunteer Reporter. Volunteer stations in Focus Areas are contacted either in person, or by e-mail to obtain needed documentation. Work plan files are reviewed quarterly to assure performance measures are being met. All documentation is kept in the work plan file. This documentation assures all goals and objectives are met and that the results are a high quality project. City of Miles City RSVP has met or exceeded

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performance measures in all work plans, including but not limited to the Focus Area of Healthy Futures, since 2009. An annual evaluation of the program will be completed with the results published in the RSVP newsletter. The Advisory Council Program Development Committee will conduct an annual assessment of the project accomplishments and the impact our programs are having on the community. A major piece of ensuring a high-quality volunteer experience is the structure and content of the work assignment. When volunteers join RSVP, they are interviewed to identify their unique sets of skills, interests, and experience. This information is entered into RSVP's Volunteer Reporter software and volunteers are matched with work opportunities consistent with their skills and interests, and the needs of the community. Volunteer opportunities are listed in the quarterly newsletter and in Montana Best Times, a monthly supplement to the Miles City Star newspaper. Contact is kept with the volunteers to assure that they feel their volunteer assignment is rewarding and fulfilling and to assure them of their importance to RSVP.

Your plan and infrastructure to ensure the project is in compliance with the RSVP federal regulations to include establishing an RSVP Advisory Council, ensuring RSVP volunteers are placed in stations that have signed the required MOU, and ensuring all volunteers eligible to serve in RSVP.

City of Miles City has sponsored RSVP since 2009. The Advisory Council has been very active since 2009. By-laws state the Advisory Council shall be composed of members to be selected from interested citizens of the participating communities. It should be broad-based, representing those: knowledgeable of human and social needs of the community, competent in the field of service and volunteerism, capable of helping the sponsor and project director meet the administrative and program responsibilities, with interest in and knowledge of the capability of older adults, with interest in and knowledge of existing and potential volunteer stations, and that reflects the demographics of the service area. It must include Retired and Senior Volunteer representation, two or three members shall represent volunteer stations, one member appointed by the sponsor, and the project director. The Advisory Council shall be comprised of at least nine and no more than fifteen members. It should be large enough to represent a cross-section of the area and small enough to ensure its effectiveness as a working body. Regular monthly meetings shall be held at a time and place convenient to the Advisory Council members.

Current Advisory Council members consist of 3 volunteer station supervisors with expertise in marketing, mental health, and extended care; 5 individuals retired from banking, private business, retail, government employee, and education, 1 Job Service/Workforce Center Manager, 3 self-employed in mental health/drug & alcohol counseling, seamstress, and CPA; 1 school district payroll

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clerk; 1 government employee, and 1 County Extension Agent. Ages range from 40 to 78 and includes both male and female members.

City of Miles City RSVP is open to all U.S. citizens, nationals, or lawful permanent resident aliens, 55 years of age and over. The volunteer application requires date of birth to assure volunteers meet the requirement of age 55 or older. Every effort is made to place all volunteers in a volunteer station where they will thrive. Volunteer Reporter is used to determine the date a volunteer station's MOU needs to be updated. MOU's are updated timely; therefore a volunteer is never placed at a volunteer station without a signed or updated MOU.

### **Organizational Capability**

The City of Miles City was established in 1887 under the Montana Constitution and has been sponsoring the City of Miles City RSVP serving Custer and Rosebud Counties and the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation since 2009. City of Miles City has managed other federal grants through the 127 years since they were established, and have a grants manager on staff.

The City's 88 employees provide police, fire and emergency services, water, and wastewater utilities, street maintenance, parks, airport operations, health and housing services, library, planning services, and other municipal regulator and administrative functions.

The City employs a full-time grants manager, city clerk, deputy clerk, human resources manager/payroll clerk. All of these employees provide assistance to the RSVP Director in developing, implementing internal policies and operating procedures to provide governance and manage risk, such as accounting, personnel management, and purchasing.

The grants manager offers assistance, as needed, in federal requirements. The City of Miles City has experience with federal grants.

The city clerk and deputy city clerk work closely with the RSVP director to ensure that all federal requirements are met, and in that all federal fiscal reports are completed in a timely manner. The City has established and maintains adequate accounting systems and financial records to accurately account for grant funds through accounting and internal controls that meet federal standards for financial management. RSVP staff follows the City of Miles City Procurement-Purchasing Policy & Procedures. Authorization to make purchases is upon the city council's acceptance of budgets; all department directors are authorized to make purchases required for their departments in accordance with this policy. The department director may designate other department staff to make the purchases for the department, however, the department director will acknowledge ALL department purchases through sign off or initialing off on each transaction.

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Purchase order/claim vouchers are presented to the city accounting department with each invoice to be paid. The claim voucher is marked if the purchase should be paid for by federal or non-federal funds and the account number.

All income and expense is recorded on a spreadsheet before it is coded, copied, and given to the sponsor's financial staff for processing. When the sponsor returns documentation of payments or deposits to RSVP, they are attached to the copy of the actual bill or check. In this manner the status of all fund activity is readily available. When the sponsor closes out a month, the RSVP director receives a printout of all recorded entries and reconciles this official record against the internal and unofficial data. Discrepancies and errors are quickly rectified. All in-kind vouchers noted on a spreadsheet and original vouchers are kept on file in the RSVP office. In the most recent fiscal audit there were no exceptions.

Human resource support is provided by the sponsor. The human resources manager/payroll clerk provides input into RSVP policies regarding federal requirements in hiring, such as the recent adoption of the RSVP Employee Criminal History Check Policy. Changes to policy must be adopted by the City Council. There are eight members of the City Council representing four wards. Two members serve each ward and are elected to staggered four-year terms. The Mayor is elected at-large to a four-year term. RSVP staff and Advisory Council members attend City Council meetings. City council and city employees are very supportive of RSVP. Jerry Partridge, a city council member told the director that when the city was approached to take over sponsorship of RSVP he voted no because he did not see the value to the community, and because of problems with the previous sponsor and staff. Mr. Partridge stated he is very proud of the current RSVP program and feels it is very valuable to the community. The mayor recently participated in the Mayor's Day of Service, and has personally thanked the RSVP Director for all she does for the current service area.

RSVP Program Director Betty Vail has the principal responsibility for program management and administration. She is responsible for fiscal operations, orientation, and support to volunteer workstation and volunteers, as well as outreach and community networking. She has experience in providing services to disadvantaged families. In addition to being a member of the Miles City community for the past 15 years she has during those fifteen years, worked on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation and in the cities of Forsyth and Miles City as a WoRC Case Manager. Program Director Betty Vail has experience in event planning with non-profit organizations including Relay for Life, Volunteer Fire Department, Cub Scouts, and Boy Scouts of America. In addition to these experiences she continues to show a great deal of enthusiasm in creating new programs, activities,

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and fundraising events to boost both the budget and the overall volunteer experience. The director participates in online training through the CNCS website, Senior Corps Virtual Conference, attends state training, and out-of-state trainings as funding allows. The director calls the state office for assistance as needed, meets with other eastern Montana directors to share ideas and coordinate plans for service projects, and is a member of several local organizations. One of these is Community CANS, a group of agencies that meet monthly from September through May to share information about their agencies programs, services they offer, and needs of their agency and or clients.

The director is supervised by the City of Miles City Mayor, and supported by a very active RSVP Advisory Council.

The Advisory Council has the maximum 15 members allowed. Due to term limits new Advisory Members are recruited each year, with 4 new members recruited in spring 2014. New members bring expertise in veterans, government work, counseling, and volunteerism. These new members breathe new life into the organization. The by-laws allow for 9-15 members giving us the flexibility of not having to replace a resigning member until we find the right fit for our Advisory Council. By-laws created 2009 and are reviewed by the Governance Committee each fall. Committees are reorganized each year and meet on an as needed basis to provide support in Resource Development, Governance, Volunteer Support, and Program Development/Community Awareness/Days of Service. To ensure that RSVP continually improves, RSVP staff is evaluated annually by either the Mayor, or his designee. Evaluations are reviewed with the staff and suggestions for improvement are appreciated, as it is our desire to have the best possible RSVP program.

RSVP Advisory Council completes a formal self-evaluation each year. This formal self-evaluation covers: Recruitment/Orientation of Advisory Council; Conduct/Behavior of Council Members; Roles and Responsibilities of Advisory Council; Advisory Council Operation; RSVP Partnerships; Project Impacts; and needs for additional training/information. Self-evaluation is a continuous process. Progress, practices and program activities are continually evaluated and improved as accomplishments and needs for improvement are identified. Presentations will continue to be made to local service organizations and efforts will be made to reach out to all organizations in Custer and Rosebud Counties. The customer service focus of the program will be emphasized by ensuring all persons are treated respectfully and by promptly responding to their needs. RSVP staff will do their best to answer all questions, or to refer the customer to the appropriate agency.

RSVP staff, advisory council, and volunteer station supervisors are continually reminded of the importance of setting measurable goals, and the continued refinement of data collection tools.

## Narratives

Performance measures are important to the current RSVP staff and every effort is made to understand the process and implement it effectively, and to pass the information on to the Advisory Council, volunteer station supervisors, and volunteers in order for all involved to meet the federal requirements and guidelines. The past year we have met or exceeded goals in the impact areas of our grant. Volunteer recruitment has continually increased, even though inactive volunteers have been notified of their need to remain active and if they do not comply they are graduated.

**Adequate Facilities:** The RSVP office is located in the VA Center. The office provides adequate office and workspace, access to a conference/training room, and auditorium/meeting room for events. The VA Center also houses the VA Community Living Center, VA Medical Clinic & Pharmacy, Custer County Food Bank, Miles City Soup Kitchen, and OneHealth Medical Center, Montana Department of Military Affairs, VA Medical Transportation, Victory Insurance, and Custer County Council on Aging & Commodities. This centrally located office has increased our visibility and accessibility. Volunteers stop by more often because we are in the middle of a residential area, and because many volunteers serve at workstations within the building.

**Equipment and Supplies:** Equipment functions well and is replaced as needed by donations or purchasing. Supplies are ordered on an as needed basis, after comparing prices locally. Computers, printer, fax machine continue to perform well and a computer technician is available whenever needed.

City of Miles City is currently applying to continue serve to Custer and Rosebud Counties, Montana. April 2015 begins the seventh year of RSVP sponsorship by the City of Miles City, currently serving Custer, Rosebud Counties and the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation. The past six years, with seniors, have been very rewarding. Previously to this position the director worked as an elementary school secretary, high school athletic director, was on staff at a two-year college where she worked with the low-income population, among many other jobs. Moving up the ages (from Kindergarten students to seniors) I would have to say this position, with seniors, has been the most satisfying of all. The past 6 years have resulted in continued progress in every aspect of the RSVP program and we are ready to continue offering our expertise to promote RSVP/SENIOR CORPS and volunteerism.

### **Other**

n/a

### **PNS Amendment (if applicable)**

n/a