

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

An estimated 300 RSVP volunteers will serve. Some of their activities will include:

Mentoring for educational success -- a) volunteers read with 4-year-olds to help them prepare for entry into kindergarten, b) volunteers give literacy assistance to 1st-3rd grade students to help them read at grade level, and c) volunteers assist with math, reading, and writing skills to 3rd to 8th grade refugees from Burma.

Graduation Walk -- one-day event where volunteers walk door-to-door to visit high school students who have dropped out or are at-risk of dropping out due to lack of credits and encourage them to re-enroll or stay in school.

Tax Consulting/Counseling -- volunteers offer free tax preparation to low- to moderate-income families.

Transportation Services -- volunteers serve as drivers for people with disabilities and/or seniors with transportation needs.

Nutrition Education -- volunteers educate seniors at congregate meal sites on nutrition and healthy living.

The primary focus area of this project is Education. At the end of the three-year grant, United Way of Central Iowa's RSVP anticipates the following outcomes:

-Improve education and graduation rates by providing volunteer services through dropout prevention efforts (300 students) and mentoring for educational success (45 kids). Volunteers will provide service to approximately 345 kids/students.

-Impact and improve family financial stability by providing volunteer services through tax counseling (4,500 clients) and transportation (100 clients). Volunteers will provide services to approximately 4,600 clients and customers.

-Impact and improve healthy living by providing volunteer services through nutrition education (200 clients). Volunteers will provide services to approximately 200 clients.

-Strengthen and improve operating capacity at 15 of our 28 RSVP stations by providing services such as clerical and administrative services, communication assistance, hospice support, educational support, and blood collection and distribution.

The CNCS federal investment of \$81,823 will be supplemented by \$43,196 local and state sources.

## Strengthening Communities

Des Moines, Iowa is the state's capital and its largest urban center. United Way of Central Iowa

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(UWCI) serves this three-county area, including Polk, Dallas, and Warren Counties. The population of the three-county area is 543,000 and the population of the city of Des Moines is 203,433 (2010 US Census).

UWCI works toward community-wide goals in three areas -- Education, Income, and Health. Our goal in the area of Education (which is the primary focus area of UWCI's RSVP) is to increase the percentage of Central Iowa students who graduate from high school to 95% by 2020. Over the past five years, with our on-going work in Education, we have seen the overall graduation rate increase from 83.36% in 2008 to 91.97% today. However, some schools in our three-county area have high graduation rates, while others have rates which are much lower. We are concentrating our efforts on the lowest-achieving schools and districts in order to make a difference to the students who truly need assistance.

Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) is the largest district in the state with 32,413 enrolled students (2013-2014 school year) and its share of urban problems -- such as low levels of reading proficiency, low incomes, high mobility rates, and extremely high numbers of English Language Learners. DMPS serves 35% of all students in Polk, Dallas, and Warren Counties. The next largest school district has just 9,707 students (Ankeny). The graduation rate for DMPS is increasing, but still low (79% compared to the statewide graduation rate of 90%.)

According to the American Educational Research Association, a student who can not read at grade level, by third grade, is four times less likely to graduate by age 19 than a child who does read proficiently by that time. Add poverty to the mix, and a student is 13 times less likely to graduate on time than his or her proficient, wealthier peer. School-level data show that achievement levels at many DMPS elementary schools are low -- especially those schools located within low-income areas of the city. The percentage of students who are reading at grade level in third grade is just 21% at Edmunds Elementary, 38% at Monroe Elementary, and 40% at King Elementary.

Research shows that economic issues can play a large role in children not achieving in school. DMPS educates a large portion of the students with low incomes in our community. A school's free and reduced lunch rate will reflect the socioeconomic status of its students. In DMPS, twenty-two schools (more than half the schools in the district) have free- and reduced-lunch rates of 80% or higher,

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which has made every child in those schools eligible for free lunch. Some of the elementary schools have free- and reduced-price lunch rates as high as 95%-97% (King, Willard, and Edmunds Elementary Schools.)

Students who move from school to school suffer negative effects. Compared to the national annual residential mobility rate of 12%, the mobility rate of DMPS is 27%, and certain schools in Des Moines' inner city have much higher mobility rates (87% at Edmunds Elementary, 57% at Moulton Elementary, and 39% at King Elementary.) The more frequently a child changes his/her school, the greater the threat to academic achievement. Furthermore, according to a study by the U.S. Government Accounting Office (1994), children who change schools more than three times before eighth grade are at least four times more likely to drop out of school. Another study found that successive school changes result in a cumulative academic lag--students who move more than three times in a six-year period can fall one full academic year behind stable students (Kerbow, 1996) (pg. 7).

In Des Moines, the English Language Learner (ELL) Population is exploding, which is a new phenomenon for our community which has historically been mostly Caucasian and African American. Hundreds of refugees and immigrants are moving into the district. The school system does not have adequate resources to deal with this influx of students. Since 1990, the ELL population in DMPS has grown by more than 500%. The number of students has grown from less than 1,000 students in 1990-91 to more than 5,800 students in 2013-14. However, overall student enrollment has been stable at between 31,000 to 32,000 students each year. ELL students went from 8% to 15% of the total K-12 population. One of every four students in a DMPS elementary school is now an English Language Learner (25% of the population.)

In addition, aside from the increase in the number of ELL students the district is serving, the number of language groups has jumped from 45 to more than 80. There are 28 elementary schools in the district that offer ELL programs. Out of the 28 sites, 15 sites have more than 30% of the student population that are English Language Learners (more than 120 ELL students in each of their buildings.)

Funding for ELL in DMPS is limited. There are 86 ELL teachers for the entire K-12 system. The

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district also employs 44 bilingual outreach workers to assist with social/family issues. There are 3 ELL instructional support staff and 3 ELL central office staff members. Many of the children who are entering school as ELL students do not know how to read in their native language, so learning to speak and read a second language takes longer. The school district is stretched beyond its means, which makes volunteers even more valuable to the schools.

30% of our volunteers are working in the focus area of Education, through programs in school readiness and K-12 success. Book Buddy is an early childhood education program where volunteers work on literacy skills to support school readiness (currently serves 20 students.) Three of our programs assist students in improving their academic performance through school-based and community-based volunteering: Spark Tutor (40 students); Power Read (40 students); and Literacy Army (5 students). And Graduation Walk reaches 300 students through visiting their homes, encouraging staying in school and taking advantage of DMPS resources to graduate.

UWCI uses a tool called Scorecard to ensure every program we fund is impact-based. We work with our funded agencies to develop real, measurable goals and objectives to make an impact on our community's needs. UWCI's goals in Education, Income and Health closely correspond to CNCS's Focus Areas of Education, Economic Opportunity, and Healthy Futures.

Scorecard is a benchmarking tool. We use this tool in conjunction with a tool called Results-Based Accountability. With these tools, agencies can identify the most important measures and benchmarks, and in turn, can be held accountable for results. During the benchmarking process, UWCI works with the applicable funded partners to identify outcomes that correspond with RSVP.

Currently, RSVP does not have activity in service to veterans and/or military families. We are investigating opportunities in this area for future development.

### **Recruitment and Development**

UWCI's RSVP has a well-established plan and infrastructure to create high-quality volunteer assignments with opportunities. UWCI was founded by volunteers in 1917. With a long and rich history of volunteer leadership, our staff and board reached a common understanding of volunteerism and a shared appreciation of its value when we opened our volunteer center in 1968. We then expanded to include RSVP in 1972. Also, we sponsored the Foster Grandparent Program from 1981 to

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2008. Our volunteer programs offer a nurturing and enabling environment for volunteering. Today, we are recognized as the volunteer champion in Central Iowa. We mobilize nearly 10,000 volunteers annually.

There is committed national leadership through the United Way network around volunteering. United Way Worldwide has embraced a call to action of GIVE, ADVOCATE, and VOLUNTEER. The organization, as a whole, has a favorable policy and regulatory framework around volunteering and embraces it as one of our core offerings.

UWCI has adopted a diversity of approaches to mobilizing and facilitating volunteerism. We always meet with our prospective volunteers in person to determine their talents, interests, and needs in a volunteer placement. Personal conversation helps build relationships and rapport with our volunteers, as well as helping us appropriately match them with the available volunteer roles. We offer opportunities to volunteers who want to use their current talents, or build new skills, and thoughtfully look at the requirements of the volunteer assignment to make sure the volunteer is right for the matched position.

UWCI's RSVP offers opportunities for volunteers to improve their communities and themselves through service. For example, volunteers who become tax preparers with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program might enter their volunteer experience with just a basic knowledge of accounting. After rigorous training, however, volunteers earn an IRS certification as a Registered Tax Return Preparer. Another example is our Book Buddy program. This program is based on extensive brain development research and school readiness theories. The orientation was developed by literacy experts from area schools. Volunteers are able to share the information they learn to improve their communities and themselves through service in their communities.

Leadership skills emerge as a natural product of volunteering. For example, through our Court Mediation Program, senior volunteers learn to lead their peers. During the first weeks of placement, RSVP volunteers shadow an experienced volunteer. Through this process, volunteers learn the skills necessary to diffuse tense situations and how to lead by example. One of our VITA volunteers, in particular, has emerged as a strong leader. He started out as a tax preparer in 2009 and has moved through the ranks. He provides IRS tax training to the new and returning tax preparers, and he

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supervises our tax sites where there are over 250 tax volunteers, 50 of whom are RSVP volunteers.

UWCI's RSVP has an established plan and infrastructure to ensure its volunteers receive the training needed to be highly effective and to address identified community needs in our primary focus area of Education, as well as in other focus areas and capacity building. The components of our plan include orientation, training, and continual follow-up.

Orientation focuses on providing an experience that helps the volunteer to appreciate he/she is part of the UWCI's RSVP program and ensures he/she understands the organization on a larger level. Our orientation also includes a written manual, which consists of information about RSVP, the names of the stations we work with, the benefits available to our volunteers, and an explanation of processes, such as enrollment, placement, and reporting hours.

After talking with the volunteer to determine his/her interests, we provide an overview of our impact-based opportunities. We work together to help the volunteer select the placement that best fits their needs. After the volunteer completes his/her enrollment paperwork, we then refer the volunteer to the selected station. We follow up with the station and the volunteer to ensure placement was successful before processing the enrollment paperwork. Time sheets are then mailed to the station, or volunteer, depending on the opportunity.

Next, we work with the station supervisor to identify the volunteer tasks to be performed. We compile a written volunteer position description for each volunteer role, which lists the knowledge and skills needed to carry out the tasks. At that time, we work with the stations to ensure that training is appropriate to address our identified community need, for those volunteers working in our focus areas, as well as capacity building. It is important that the station supervisors understand these goals so we can work together to create positive outcomes.

We identify and design volunteer roles using research-based, evidence-based, or best practices-based strategies with measurable goals. The RSVP Director works with each station manager to develop volunteer position descriptions, performance measures, volunteer training requirements, and to develop a recruitment strategy. We discuss work plans and expectations of volunteer management and reporting requirements at that time.

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Working with the station supervisor, we consider the best ways to deliver the needed knowledge and skills to ensure the volunteer will feel secure in the position. We work closely with station supervisors to ensure they are equipped to meet the needs of our volunteers, have the ability to manage our volunteers, and will provide a positive, rewarding experience.

Station supervisors work directly with volunteers to provide training for each specific role, including providing a schedule, times and locations for the volunteer. Depending on the role, they also provide site-specific, project-specific, and task-specific training to the volunteers. We maintain regular contact with our station supervisors to monitor the progress of our volunteers, to identify unmet volunteer needs, and to assist them with our reporting requirements. When the station's MOU is renewed, we conduct site visits to discuss any changes to the MOU process, get feedback on the role of the RSVP volunteer, develop additional recruitment strategies and identify non-RSVP avenues of assistance.

To ensure quality, we are looking into ways for stations to evaluate the effectiveness of their training. We will be suggesting that each volunteer training session be evaluated as it occurs. That way, any suggestions for changes and improvements can be incorporated into future segments. Evaluation is promoted as a useful training tool and approached with that mindset. The most commonly used form of evaluation is a questionnaire that participants fill out before leaving the session. Trainers will also be encouraged to do his/her own evaluation before reading the comments of others. This will help to interpret the group's comments.

For UWCI's RSVP volunteer positions, the type of training depends on the volunteer's role and the requirements for their volunteer position. For some positions training may be brief and for others it may be extensive. For example, our VITA volunteers who want to work as greeters attend a short training on the importance of being the first point of contact with the client, how to manage the flow of clients at the tax site, and the importance of maintaining order at the site. Conversely, those volunteers who want to prepare taxes or be a quality reviewer must complete a 20-hour IRS tax training program and pass an exam to become IRS certified. For those efforts that UWCI's RSVP manages, we develop and deliver the orientation and training, as well as the tools to be successful.

The infrastructure of UWCI's RSVP ensures strong volunteer training. In partnership with Des

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Moines Area Community College, UWCI offers a six-part Volunteer Management Training Series twice a year. Over 60 agencies participate, annually. We encourage station supervisors, staff, and others interested in learning about volunteer management to participate in the program. Topics include understanding volunteering, planning, recruiting and placement, training and orientation, supervision, and evaluation.

In addition, agency directors of our community participation groups receive annual training through UWCI on a variety of subjects. This group is also invited to the Volunteer Management Training Series.

RSVP staff participates in additional trainings offered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, Iowa Commission of Volunteer Service, United Way Worldwide, United Way of Central Iowa, and Directors of Volunteers in Agencies (DOVIA.) The UWCI RSVP Director is a past-president of DOVIA, an association of volunteer managers offering professional growth, networking and leadership opportunities to both the experienced and new in the field of volunteer management. She is currently serving as interim president of DOVIA, as well.

In combination with the national performance measures, we seek out partner organizations which provide a positive and social environment for the volunteers. We know from volunteer management research that volunteers need to feel safe and welcomed, as well as appreciated, in order to continue volunteering with an organization. By using research-based volunteer strategies, and careful screening of sites, we are able to pinpoint volunteer roles in which volunteers are able to see tangible results of their efforts. These elements are all indicative of a positive and meaningful volunteer experience.

As mentioned earlier, the service area for UWCI is comprised of three counties -- Polk, Dallas, and Warren. Polk County is home to Des Moines, which is the state's capital and largest urban center. Dallas and Warren Counties are included in the Des Moines Metropolitan Statistical Area. Dallas County is a suburban county and is the fastest growing county in the state of Iowa. Its population has more than doubled since 1980. Warren County is a rural county, but its population continues to grow, as well.

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Poverty rates of the three counties vary. Suburban Dallas County has the lowest poverty rate (6.2%), Warren County has a higher rate of 9.1% and the poverty rate is highest in Polk County at 13.4%.

The racial demographics of our volunteers are reflective of the demographics of this service area. Polk County is has higher proportions of minority groups than Dallas and Warren. Dallas and Warren counties are 95% Caucasian. The racial composition of the three counties, combined, is 89% Caucasian, 5% African American, 4% Asian, 2% Mixed Race, and 7% Latino. Our volunteers are 97% Caucasian, 1% Latino, 1% African American, and 1% Asian.

In Polk County, 12.1% of citizens speak a language other than English. In Dallas County, this figure is 8.6% and in Warren County it is 2.7%.

We have begun to reach out to new partners increase the diversity of our volunteer base, especially in our Latino, African American and Asian communities.

We have developed a relationship with the Latino Forum of Des Moines, which is a voice to our community's 38,000 Latino residents. The Latino Forum is an offshoot of the Des Moines Capitol Crossroads initiative. Capitol Crossroads works to improve our community through research, collaboration, and action.

Another offshoot of Capitol Crossroads is the Urban Core initiative, which is an effort to improve housing, security, education, mental, and physical health in the 10 lowest-income areas of Des Moines. RSVP volunteers are serving in many of these neighborhoods. UWCI staff oversees this work and many of our investments are focused in this area.

Within the Urban Core is an organization called Transform Des Moines, a group of local religious leaders. Their congregations and parishioners are primarily located in the Urban Core area. They are working collaboratively with UWCI, the Latino Forum, Des Moines Police Department and other community networks to create a better community. Through this partnership, we are able to work with leaders in the Urban Core and encourage their members, many of whom have children who are benefiting from UWCI programs, to volunteer. We are also encouraging this group to help us mobilize the population of individuals who are 55 years of age and older, in their neighborhoods.

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We have also begun developing relationships with several African American sororities and fraternities, who focus on community service, to engage with this group. We are working with them to connect their members who are aged 55 and over with the opportunity to volunteer with RSVP.

Iowa has been a haven for refugees since 1975, when Governor Robert Ray established the Governor's Task Force for Indochinese Resettlement. Since that time, the State of Iowa has welcomed tens of thousands of refugees. Our state's refugee work in the 1970s included multi-pronged layers of government assistance. In contrast, today's refugees can count on 90 days of official help, and then have to patch together services depending on their circumstances. There are an estimated 6,000 refugees from Burma in our community. The Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services counts 1,667 refugees from Burma in Iowa, but that does not include secondary migration from other cities. Because of this, we have developed a relationship with Ethnic Minorities of Burma Advocacy and Resource Center (EMBARC). We are working with EMBARC to both recruit new volunteers and to offer volunteer management services.

In Polk County, 10.5% of individuals have disabilities. In Dallas County, this figure is 7.5% and in Warren County it is 7.6%. Our volunteers drive people with disabilities and seniors with transportation needs to medical appointments. Currently, 3% of our volunteers report having disabilities. We strive to include as many people with disabilities in our volunteer programming as possible.

Currently, 11% of our RSVP volunteers report being veterans, which is representative of the community as a whole. Military service of our community ranges from 8.5% in Dallas County to 11.2% in Warren County.

We approach volunteering with the belief that retention begins with the orientation process and continues throughout the volunteer experience. UWCI's RSVP has a strong history of volunteer retention. Our retention for the 2012/2013 grant year was 70%. In 2012, Iowa was ranked #4 in volunteer retention at 74.3% (Volunteering in America, 2013). In 2012, the average length of service of the RSVP volunteers in our database, past and present, was 17.7 years. We have one active volunteer who has been with us since 1980. Of our volunteers who are currently enrolled in the program, the average length of service with RSVP is 4.9 years.

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Once enrolled, we maintain periodic contact with our volunteers by phone, email, and through in-person station visits to ensure their needs are being met and the placement continues to be positive for the volunteer and station. Our recognition philosophy is based on the three R's: at the right time, at the right place, from the right person. We begin recognition by sending a "thank you for joining RSVP" letter within a week of enrollment. We recognize each volunteer's birthday with a card and a note from the RSVP Director and staff. When we have in-person or phone contact we thank them for making a difference in our community. We provide a small recognition gift each calendar quarter. We encourage our stations to recognize their volunteers for the time they contribute, to thank them for the help they provide and to share the goals and positive outcomes that they helped achieve. Recognition could range from a thank you note, to cookies on a special day, to nominating the volunteer for an award, or a variety of other acknowledgements. Additionally, we host a lunch for volunteers in our focus areas, and bring recognition items to sites for those in non-impact areas. Giving our volunteers recognition for the contribution they are making to RSVP, UWCI and their station, strengthens our volunteer retention rate.

We want all of our volunteers to reflect on the meaning of service to the community and to realize that the time they contribute to volunteering is, in fact, making a difference. For added recognition, UWCI's RSVP uses volunteer photos and stories in our promotional materials, with permission of volunteers. And recently, we began recognizing "Loyal Contributors," a giving registry of those individuals who have contributed to or volunteered for UWCI for over 10 years.

### **Program Management**

UWCI's RSVP established a plan and infrastructure to ensure management of volunteer stations in compliance with RSVP program regulations, based on proven practices in compliance and ethics. The elements of our compliance program include oversight and accountability; standards and controls; effective training and communication; evaluation, monitoring and auditing; enforcement and discipline; due care in delegating authority; and response and continuous improvement.

The UWCI board of directors is ultimately responsible for oversight and accountability of our RSVP program. UWCI is governed by a 35-member board of directors that meets four times annually to address strategic issues facing the organization. The board holds senior staff responsible for carrying out our mission. The board is composed of community leaders from throughout Central Iowa,

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including representatives from business, school systems, law enforcement, government, labor, community college, university, health care, and non-profit organizations. One member of the board of directors is designated Vice Chair -- Volunteer. This individual serves on the executive committee of the board and reports highlights monthly, as well as to the full board of directors, quarterly.

To maintain standards and controls, RSVP staff work with every station to develop a signed MOU. This document outlines guidelines, expectations, and procedures. RSVP staff uses this document to guide the relationship and ensure that prohibited activities are avoided, such as any political activities.

A large part of our plan is effective training and communication with the stations (as described in prior grant sections.) In order to maintain evaluation, monitoring and auditing of the program, every three years we update the MOU with each station. Additionally, we ask station supervisors to complete an accessibility survey, to help accommodate volunteer needs and requests appropriately, and a station safety checklist.

The MOU clearly outlines expectations, but if any discipline or enforcement issues would arise, we would work closely with the station supervisor to improve the situation. Stations which did not comply would be graduated for non-compliance.

UWCI has a track record of integrity and maintaining confidentiality. We thoroughly screen stations and volunteers using appropriate methods (our stations perform background checks, if required.) Through constant communication and in-person visits, we also work with station supervisors to ensure they understand their role within the RSVP program. This creates a sense of continuity and support for the volunteers.

UWCI's RSVP strives to offer continuous improvement to its program. RSVP staff visits every station annually to ensure they have needs met, to work on risk assessments, to review and amend the program if needed, and to assemble lessons learned.

To maintain the quality of stations and assignments, we solicit feedback from volunteers, consumers, and station managers. For example, at our VITA program, when a client has his/her taxes prepared, we ask him/her to complete a survey about the quality of service provided -- which helps us

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strengthen the program. We survey VITA volunteers and program staff after the tax season is over to assess volunteer performance. After our Graduation Walk program, we ask volunteers to provide feedback on their experience. Additionally, we hold a review and evaluation meeting with our participating partners after Graduation Walk. We also ask station managers for feedback during their MOU renewal meeting, or at any time during the year and we make changes to their MOUs when applicable. In addition, UWCI has a staff team called the Volunteer Engagement Team. This cross-functional team is led by an executive team member and evaluates and reviews all volunteer engagement strategies organization-wide.

UWCI's RSVP has established a plan and infrastructure to oversee volunteer stations to ensure that volunteers are performing their assigned service activities. We offer guidance to stations to both offer positive day-to-day supervision of volunteers, as well as periodic evaluation. We understand that a good supervisory relationship is critical to the success of volunteers. Volunteers require ongoing feedback and accountability of their performance to successfully serve at their assigned stations. In addition, performance evaluations can bolster accountability for volunteers and serve as an opportunity to provide effective and more precise feedback than volunteers might receive from their supervisor on a daily basis. Currently each station uses their own evaluation tool, but we are working to make a standardized tool available to them for consistency. Some of the questions on our volunteer evaluation tool will be addressing the volunteer's ability to follow instructions, how well he/she receives feedback, adherence to station policies, and responsiveness.

Additionally, UWCI's RSVP has a plan and infrastructure to meet changing community needs. We know that it is often difficult to manage volunteers during times of instability, so we are extra alert during times of change to ensure that our volunteers have as little disruption as possible. First, we work to emphasize the stability of UWCI's RSVP. Our organization has been a stable force in the community for nearly 100 years. We keep our volunteers focused on our mission so that when changes occur they understand that they are still working toward the same cause. We do this through regular communications and newsletters. Next, we have created a vision to energize our staff, volunteers, and supporters -- a community where all individuals and families achieve their potential through education, income stability, and healthy lives. This statement is guided by our bold goals for 2020. Next, we work with volunteers to intentionally build team spirit. This team spirit is evident in one education opportunities -- Book Buddy. Members of UWCI's Women's Leadership Connection

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(WLC) championed the program and volunteered for Book Buddy spots. During a short, but intense, 15-week pilot participating WLC members grew close to their students and each other. Their relationships and experiences brought, not only a strong training, but a passion for the program that new volunteers find hard to resist. Today, 12 of Book Buddy participants are RSVP volunteers.

During a time of change, if a station is graduated, for example, we work closely with our volunteers to retain them during the transition. We give them an opportunity to share their concerns and we listen to their feelings, so we do not lose our valuable volunteers. We also create a transition action plan during these times, which helps us identify who is going to be affected by the change, develop steps to implement the change, and develop ongoing communication through focus groups, newsletters, and informational meetings. Finally, we continually inventory this process to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our volunteers.

UWCI is a leader in the area of collective impact and serves as backbone organization for our region, offering leadership in the areas of Education, Income, and Health. In the area of Education, we have many funded-partners working on strategies in early learning, elementary school, middle school, and high school.

Our education goal is to increase the percentage of Central Iowa students who graduate from high school to 95% by 2020. The current total is 91.97%, up from 83.36% in 2008. The path to graduation begins before a child enters school. Children who do not read proficiently by fourth grade are more likely to eventually drop out of school. Today, UWCI supports 2,200 children at 18 early-learning centers, helping to ensure they start kindergarten ready to learn and are on track for success throughout their school careers.

Our goal in the area of early childhood learning is to promote school readiness. To reach this goal, we utilize a variety of strategies. One of these strategies is our work with early childhood centers. UWCI supports parents and caregivers to help them be their child's first and best teacher, from birth through graduation. Parenting programs, early literacy services, and in-home mental health clinicians all bring about dramatic improvements in school readiness.

Another important way we support early childhood success is through the UWCI Women's

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Leadership Connection. This group concentrates on the critical developmental years from birth through five, focusing investments in this area to accelerate the community's goal of ensuring that every child begins school ready to learn. Our Book Buddy program, as mentioned previously, is located at four UWCI supported early learning centers. Students not only receive one-on-one literacy guidance and mentoring, but at the end of the program, they each take home 25 books with tips and activities for parents to engage their students during reading as well.

In addition, UWCI was recognized as a Pacesetter for the All-American City Award in 2013. UWCI joined the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading which is a collaborative effort by foundations, nonprofit partners, business leaders, government agencies, states and communities across the nation to ensure that more children in low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship. The Campaign focuses on an important predictor of school success and high school graduation--grade-level reading by the end of third grade.

Also remarkable is the partnership between UWCI, DMPS, and funded non-profit community partners to implement a new collaborative data sharing process. As outlined in a newly executed Memorandum of Agreement, agencies serving DMPS students, and receiving UWCI funding, will work to secure parental permission to share specific student-level data (of students participating in UWCI-funded programs) with our organization. Once parental permission is received, United Way of Central Iowa will receive disaggregated student data and provide the performance measure data back to United Way staff and volunteers in the form of program reports. This process will promote collective accountability for community results related to UWCI's Education goals. In particular, this effort will be track students who are absent nine or more days of school per year.

UWCI's RSVP has begun to secure its infrastructure to ensure the project is in compliance and to establish an RSVP Advisory Council. A "Community Conversation" was held with current RSVP volunteers and UWCI donors, over the age of 55. We posed two questions to the group, which included -- "What type of community would you like to live in?" and "Why are the things you have just discussed important?" Out of this conversation, many participants indicated a desire to get involved.

The council now has 2 members and is in the process of vetting interested volunteers for the

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remaining slots. Future members will be community and business leaders who have experience with and value exceptional volunteer experiences. These individuals will advocate for strategic use of senior volunteers in meeting community needs. In addition, the RSVP Director is a member of UWCI's Volunteer Engagement Team and the RSVP Advisory Council, so she is able to serve as a liaison between the two groups. UWCI's Volunteer Engagement Team members are responsible for overall direction and leadership of UWCI's volunteer strategy in the areas of Education, Income and Health. Team members are key staff who is subject matter experts that provide advice and guidance in the identification and development of strategic volunteer initiatives. The UWCI Board of Directors' Executive Committee also has a "Volunteer Champion" with the title Vice Chair-Volunteer. She is a voice for volunteer engagement for our organization.

The advisory council will assist RSVP with helping to convene focus groups with RSVP stations, volunteers and/or other community groups. We will gather input from these stakeholder groups to help us with our plans to accelerate the growth of RSVP and senior volunteering.

### **Organizational Capability**

UWCI's RSVP is well-qualified to provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight to ensure compliance with RSVP program requirements and to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources. We have a track record of success in mobilizing charitable donations. Last year, UWCI raised \$27.5 million and invested these funds back into the community. We are respected throughout Iowa and are known to be a responsible steward of the community's dollars. In addition, as a backbone organization for our community, we are working toward the success of our collaborative projects through our nearly 80 funded partners. We also host many direct service projects, including AmeriCorps VISTA, VITA, and 2-1-1 (information, counseling, and referral services.)

All in-kind contributions are received, entered, and documented. Our specialized financial software manages the accounting side of the program. To keep the budget on track, when RSVP staff receives expenditure requests, they review them and then work with our finance department for processing. Quarterly, the RSVP Director reviews monthly expenditure reports provided by our finance department, which tracks all expenditures and funds received via budget line item. Quarterly review ensures that program expenditures and receipts are in line with the projected RSVP budget.

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The infrastructure and resources available to support the successful completion of the proposed project include a 17-member Community Impact team. This team currently manages more than 20 grants.

UWCI builds public will through many important partnerships, including its Education, Income, and Health cabinets. These cabinets are made up of teams of volunteer community leaders and content matter experts who help guide the agency in its work. Other partnerships include: Central Iowa Works, the Asset Building Coalition of Central Iowa, Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, Capital Crossroads, Regional Workforce Investment Board, Greater Des Moines Partnership Workforce Committee, Early Childhood Iowa Board, Opportunity Nation, Opportunity Iowa, the Homeless Coordinating Council, the Refugee Coalition, and many others.

UWCI's Volunteer Engagement Officer, Shirley Burgess, has 40+ years of experience working in the area of volunteerism. She is an expert in community engagement and volunteer issues and service. Ms. Burgess is one of two key organizers of the Volunteer Management Training Series and facilitates some of the sessions. Our RSVP Director, Joy Talmon, started with UWCI's RSVP in 2013. She has a strong background in volunteer management and over 10 years of non-profit experience. She has held a leadership position with DOVIA, has completed the Volunteer Management Training Series and holds a CVA (Certification in Volunteer Administration). Our Administrative Assistant, Erica Sherman, has 9 years of non-profit experience managing volunteers, using databases, and maintaining mailing lists. Our Volunteer Recruiter (contract employee) also has many years of experience recruiting and supervising hundreds of volunteers for a variety of initiatives.

Every UWCI employee, including RSVP staff, has a well-defined job description with specific position accountabilities, annual work plan, and annual performance review.

Accountability -- At UWCI's RSVP, we know success is measured by how our mission is achieved -- to make measurable improvements in communities. Setting high standards for ourselves and for our local partners is critical for that success.

Annually, UWCI certify our adherence to standards that include comprehensive requirements for financial reporting, governance, ethics, diversity and operations.

## **Narratives**

Tax-Exempt Status -- UWCI is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as well as corresponding provisions of other applicable state, local or foreign laws or regulations.

Governance -- UWCI is governed by an active, responsible, and voluntary governing board to ensure effective governance over the policies and financial resources of the organization. Our board is responsible for United Way delivering on its mission to advance the common good.

Ethics -- UWCI follows locally-adopted codes of ethics for our volunteers and staff that include provisions for ethical management, publicity, fundraising practices and full and fair disclosure.

Diversity -- UWCI has adopted policies/statements to ensure volunteers and staff broadly reflects the diversity of the community served.

Financial Accountability -- UWCI undergoes annual financial audits conducted by independent certified public accountants whose examination complies with generally accepted auditing standards. In addition, UWCI has developed comprehensive requirements for completion of audited financial statements to ensure consistency and transparency system-wide. These requirements are based on industry best practices and comport with generally accepted accounting principles.

Performance Excellence -- every three years, UWCI conducts a self-assessment of our governance, financial management, and impact in the community.

Public Reporting and Disclosure -- UWCI files an IRS Form 990 in a timely manner and we provide the IRS Form 990 on our website, at our offices, and upon request.

Legal -- UWCI complies with all applicable local, state and federal operating and reporting requirements.

Support the United Way Network -- UWCI provides financial support to United Way Worldwide and follows standards to use United Way's trademarks. UWCI charges fees based on actual expenses for donor-designated gifts and other processing services.

## Narratives

UWCI owns and operates the human services campus, a non-profit complex with 57,000 square feet of office space for health and human service agencies in Central Iowa. The building is a three-story structure that includes conference room facilities. UWCI estimates there are 250 employees in the office building. UWCI has depreciated fixed assets of \$2,798,226, as June 30, 2014, and has appropriate processes in place for the successful management of these assets. These processes include appropriate accounting, maintenance, and tracking.

In 2013, contributions from DMPS, the State of Iowa, the Des Moines Register, and UWCI helped to sustain current RSVP projects, to develop new stations, to recruit and mobilize new volunteers, and to expand the RSVP Program in the areas of Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and new mentoring and reading collaborations. DMPS supports the RSVP Program annually by providing 6.5% of the total funding amount for RSVP. Their contribution is to support the continuation of the School Awards project for K-3rd grade students and to support other school based projects when developed. DMPS also provides the supplies necessary for volunteers to make the School Awards. The State of Iowa provides 5.5% of the total funding amount for RSVP, which is allocated to mileage reimbursements made to volunteers. The Des Moines Register provides 11.8% of the total funding amount for RSVP by providing in-kind advertising space for volunteer outreach and recruitment. UWCI, as the local sponsor, provides financial support in excess of 9% of the total funding amount for RSVP, as well as in-kind non-financial and staff support for the RSVP Program.

We utilize Data Pro's Visions Accounting System with accrual basis financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. Independent auditors examine our financial statements annually. Experience with federal grants includes a +\$1 million annual Early Child Care Development Block Grant from U.S. HHS (2003-present). We also administered an \$8.7 million Dislocated Worker Program (1981-2001). We perform an annual grant compliance audit for our Board of Directors.

### **Other**

N/A

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

N/A