

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The Story City Senior Citizens, Inc. is the Sponsor of Central Iowa RSVP (CIRSVP), which was established in 1973 and serves Story and Marshall Counties in Iowa. CIRSVP is a dynamic national service program that is a well-respected, effective volunteer management organization, recognized for its ability to adapt programming to meet emerging community needs and changing demographics.

An estimated 550 RSVP volunteers will serve in a variety of assignments. CIRSVP is broad in its scope of services but will incorporate Education as its Primary Focus Area beginning in July, 2015. Although CIRSVP has two signature programs that will continue to engage RSVP volunteers in meeting needs in the areas of Healthy Futures (Volunteer Transportation Program) and Disaster Services (Volunteer Management for Disasters), the largest number of volunteers will serve in assignments that address School Readiness and K-12 success. Through a variety of pre-school/school-based and summer enrichment assignments including Reading Mentors, Head Start, Literacy and Writing Partners Project, and Speak UP! (public speaking course), we anticipate engaging 230 volunteers in assisting 670 students/children with increasing academic performance by the end of the three-year grant.

In addition, we will continue to manage the RSVP Volunteer Driver Transportation Program. Over the three-year grant cycle we will serve a minimum of 150 clients (mostly home bound senior citizens) by providing them with safe, reliable rides to medical appointments and other essential services. We anticipate engaging 50 RSVP volunteers in this important service, averaging 100 round trips/month. Volunteer drivers use their own vehicles to transport clients but can be reimbursed for mileage. This program is supported by United Way of Story County, Story County, the City of Ames, and donations.

We will also continue to recruit and train RSVP volunteers to address Disaster Services in Story County through our Volunteer Management for Disasters Program. Contracting with City government, Emergency Management, and Public Health, RSVP will manage the coordination of community volunteers in a disaster or public health emergency. In addition, CIRSVP will continue working with the Story County Sheriff's Office and other local law enforcement agencies to adapt the existing disaster volunteer management protocol to missing persons/child abduction emergencies. The Corporation for National & Community Service federal investment of \$75,498 (annually) will be supplemented by an anticipated \$127,041 in non-federal resources.

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## Strengthening Communities

Central Iowa RSVP includes two adjacent counties (Story and Marshall) located in the center of the state. RSVP serving Story County is a well-established and well-supported program with a 41-year history. In contrast, RSVP began serving Marshall County just over 10 years ago. Both counties are highly agricultural and located just N and NE of Polk County and our State's Capital, Des Moines. Despite similarities, the demographics of these 2 counties are very different. Story County (population 92,406 - 2013 census est.) is the larger of the two counties with its largest city, Ames (population 60,634-2012 census est.) having more residents than all of Marshall County. Ames is home to Iowa State University, a land grant university specializing in Agriculture, Engineering, and Veterinary Medicine. Story County ranks high in residents with high school diplomas (95.4%) and has a staggering 47.7% of residents with a bachelors degree or higher. (State average is 24.2%). However, Story County is below the average median income compared to the rest of the state.

Regardless of the "story book" picture drawn by the educational statistics, there are many critical needs to be addressed. Over 20% of Story County's population is living below the poverty level, a much higher percentage than the states average of 12.2%. These demographics offer RSVP both a challenge and an opportunity. We continue to recruit a highly skilled pool of volunteers (the opportunity) to meet the critical unmet needs of the people and the communities of Story County (the challenge).

By contrast, Marshall County has a population of 40,994 (2013 census est.). In Marshall County there is a high percentage of persons over age 55 (28%), and it is below the state average in both median income and level of educational attainment with 86% of its population having a high school diploma or better. Only 18% of the population has attained a bachelors degree or higher. Marshalltown is the largest community in Marshall County with a population of 27,683 (2012 Census estimate), which represents 68% of the county. Marshalltown is home to a community college, large businesses, and a large manufacturing and production industry. According to the US Census, over 13% of the population is below the poverty line with 18% of Marshalltown's children living in poverty and 25% living in a family headed by a single parent. Residents of Hispanic decent make up 24% of the population while 17.5% of Marshalltown children age 5 and over have a language other than English spoken at home. These factors present unique challenges for the Marshalltown School District and the community at large.

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One of the strengths of Central Iowa RSVP has been our ability to adapt programming to address existing and emerging community needs. Although there are many ways in which RSVP volunteers have and will continue to address the needs of families and individuals in the focus areas of Healthy Futures, Disaster Services and Economic Opportunity assignments, (home delivered meals, transportation, representative payee/bill payers, food pantry helpers, community teaching garden mentors, housing/weatherization services, Volunteer Management for Disasters, etc.), Central Iowa RSVP has selected Education as its Primary Focus Area. The largest percentage of our volunteers will be helping area students increase academic success. RSVP volunteers will serve in several capacities to address academic and educational enrichment programming. Work plans include: Elementary Reading Buddies/Reading Mentors (part of the Campaign for Grade Level Reading), Head Start, Literacy Partners Writing Project, and Speak UP (instruction in public speaking). By the end of year three, we anticipate 230 RSVP volunteers will serve in School Readiness and K-12 Success assignments, serving 670 children/students. These assignments will enhance and improve the reading, writing, and oral communication skills of area students.

Both Ames and Marshalltown are part of the network of communities working with The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. The Campaign 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.

According to Ralph Smith, Managing Director of The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, an alarming number of children--about 67 percent nationwide and more than 80 percent of those from low-income families--are not proficient readers by the end of third grade. This has significant and long-term consequences not only for each of those children but for their communities, and for our nation as a whole. If left unchecked, this problem will undermine efforts to end inter-generational poverty, close the achievement gap, and reduce high school dropout rates. Far fewer of the next generation will be prepared to succeed in a global economy, participate in higher education, or enter military and civilian service. The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading was launched to reverse this potentially catastrophic trend by supporting common-sense solutions at the federal, state, and local levels.

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Efforts have been launched by many community partners to address the educational needs of area children, with an emphasis on prevention strategies, and access to building blocks for academic success. In 2014, United Way of Story County started the Partners in Education Collaboration, bringing together area schools and many partner agencies to launch a grade level reading campaign as part of the Iowa Reading Corps. This pilot project was designed to increase the number of students reading at grade level and included instruction in the schools as well as Summer Learning Opportunities and Enrichment Activities. We know that research spanning 100 years shows that students lose ground academically over the summer months and low-income students lose on average two months or more in reading. For many of these students, they are already behind when they first come to school and even if they can catch up during the school year, the lack of learning opportunities in the summer makes that gap even wider. What is most alarming is that by the end of 5th grade, disadvantaged children are nearly three grade equivalents behind more affluent peers in reading. RSVP volunteers played a key role in the success of the Summer Learning and Enrichment Program and we will continue to help United Way and other partners build on what was started in 2014.

In Marshall County, Marshalltown Schools launched Spread the Words - Read by 3rd!, an early reading initiative co-sponsored by Mid-Iowa Community Action and the Martha-Ellen Tye Foundation. The goal of the initiative is to increase the number of children in Marshalltown reading at grade-level in the third grade to 90% by 2016. By the third grade, children need to know how to read well because they are no longer "learning to read" but "reading to learn." In Marshalltown, over 33% of children aren't able to read proficiently as they leave third grade, and this percentage increases in students with low socio-economic status. In both Story and Marshall County, RSVP volunteers can be part of the solution in closing the gap in reading proficiency rates in 120 children, specifically focusing on helping students from low-income families improve academic performance in literacy.

Reading is just one of four communication skills that is vital to student success. In addition to developing reading skills, it is important for students to engage in activities that also develop writing, listening, and speaking skills. RSVP volunteers will engage in several educational assignments that help students improve in all areas of communication, including Speak UP! (public speaking course for 5th grade students) and Literacy Partners Writing Project (RSVP volunteers corresponding with elementary students to increase student writing and reading skills).

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RSVP will also be engaging volunteers in Head Start Programs in both Story and Marshall Counties. "Research has shown that low-income, at-risk children typically are behind their peers before they enter kindergarten," states Brenda Spurgeon, an Early Childhood Education Specialist with the Head Start Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) System. "That's why it's so important that Head Start provide quality classroom experiences, assess children and provide individualized support," she says. According to Mid-Iowa Community Action, over 35% of the 150 children entering Head Start in Story and Marshall Counties exhibit moderate to severe delays in pre-literacy skills. The participation of volunteers has been an effective way of mobilizing community resources to strengthen Head Start Services. RSVP volunteers will be an important part of that strategy.

RSVP will work with United Way, educators, and other partners to support data collection and ensure National Performance Measure outcomes and outputs are measured, collected, and managed in the Focus Area of Education. These partners already have the measurement tools in place and can provide RSVP with relevant data that corresponds to the children served by RSVP volunteers. In other Focus Areas, Central Iowa RSVP has been implementing data collection strategies for 18 years. When Programming for Impact was first introduced by the Corporation for National & Community Service, RSVP staff worked closely with the Volunteer Stations to develop measurement tools and even implement the data collection (if needed). At that time, most non-profit agencies were measuring accomplishments and/or outputs, but not outcomes. However, in the past decade, many of our local funders began to incorporate outcomes measurement into their reporting requirements, including United Way of Story County, Marshalltown Area United Way, Story County, and the City of Ames. RSVP is a respected resource for organizations in the community. We work well with these agencies to determine the impact RSVP volunteers are having, and collect the data needed to demonstrate it.

Although our Primary Focus area is Education, we will continue to develop assignments around meeting the needs of Iowa's elderly population. According to the 2010 census, between 2000 and 2010, the population 65 years and over increased at a faster rate (15.1 percent) than the total U.S population (9.7 percent). Iowa is among the top 5 states in percentage of persons age 55 and over, and in the top 3 in the nation of percentage of persons age 85 and over. In Story and Marshall Counties, 14% of the population is age 65 or older, and 5% are home bound (State Library of Iowa Data Center - Self-care disability statistics for civilian non-institutionalized population). RSVP will address the needs

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of this population through a variety of assignments including: home delivered meals and food delivery, transportation (RSVP Volunteer Driver Transportation Program), Representative Payees/Bill Payer Program, and the Supplemental Food Assistance Program.

RSVP will also continue to address Disaster Services and Public Safety/Public Health through established partnerships with Story County Emergency Management (EMA), City of Ames, Ames Police Department and Story County Sheriff's Offices, American Red Cross, etc. According to Melissa Spencer, Deputy Coordinator of Story County EMA, in any major emergency or disaster, there will be an outpouring of public and community support. This mass volunteerism may overload already overworked public officials; however, community volunteers are vital in the event of a disaster when organized and mobilized effectively. Through contractual agreements, RSVP is the lead agency identified in Story County for Volunteer Management for Disasters (VMFD). In a disaster, Central Iowa RSVP is activated to provide the coordination and management of spontaneous community volunteers and staff a non-emergency phone bank. RSVP staff provide recruitment, orientation, training, database management, and oversight of a Volunteer Reception Center, a Disaster Non-Emergency Phone Bank. RSVP Disaster volunteers participate in ongoing trainings and drills and are prepared to serve in these capacities.

In the same way, RSVP will continue to address Public Safety and Public Health through established partnerships with HOMEWARD Public Health, Ames Police Department and the Story County Sheriff's Office. In public health, RSVP coordinates the recruitment and management of all volunteers who will be pre-trained to respond when PODS (Points of Dispensing) are activated to vaccinate or medicate mass numbers of residents. In public safety, RSVP works with the Story County Sheriff's Office to incorporate RSVP's Volunteer Management for Disasters protocol into their Missing Persons/Child Abduction Plan. This plan includes the training and preparation of RSVP volunteers to assist the Sheriff's Office in the event of a missing person's case in Story County requires volunteer mobilization. Volunteer Reception Center volunteers will be trained to manage the spontaneous volunteers who help with missing person searches and will also be trained to staff the tip hotline in the same cases. This new partnership is unique to Iowa and once protocols and procedures are fully developed, we will be able to help other interested national service programs work with local law enforcement to serve in this capacity. (RSVP is also working with the Iowa Department of Criminal Investigation to develop this template). In addition, RSVP has had a partnership with the

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Ames Police Department since 2003, providing volunteers to serve in a variety of capacities, including the full staffing of fingerprinting services for the public.

In partnership with the American Red Cross, Central Iowa RSVP will be coordinating a new initiative called the Pillowcase Project. A disaster, natural or man-made, can happen quickly and with little warning. These events are frightening for adults and can be very traumatic for children and youth, especially if they do not know what to do. Experience shows that if a person has spent time becoming better informed and preparing for disaster, the fear and anxiety caused by the disaster can be reduced. American Red Cross staff and volunteers made an interesting observation through Hurricanes, Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. When children were displaced from their homes and re-located in an emergency Red Cross shelter, many of them were carrying pillowcases filled with their most prized possessions: a favorite book or toy, a stuffed animal, or a treasured blanket. When there was little time or means to pack up a lot of personal possessions, the pillowcase was an easy thing to grab and quickly fill with those things so important to a child. From those observations, an idea was conceived....the Pillowcase Project. RSVP Volunteers will be trained to present the Pillowcase Project, helping children become familiar with the types of disasters that affect their local area including thunderstorms, tornadoes, fires and floods. They will inform students and, by extension, families, about the importance of creating a disaster preparedness kit and plan. If resources are available, volunteers will help the children to assemble/prepare their "pillowcase".

As noted previously, one of the strengths of Central Iowa RSVP has been our ability to adapt programming to address existing and emerging community needs. We will continue to engage volunteers in Community Priority assignments that do not fit one of the six main focus areas. A report released in by the Urban Institute named a lack of human resources as one of the top five most difficult obstacles facing nonprofit organizations in today's challenging business environment. Uncomplicated, yet time-consuming tasks associated with business operations drain valuable staff time while diverting attention from essential outreach activities. RSVP volunteers will enhance and supplement the services of approximately 35 local Public and Non-profit organizations in Story and Marshall Counties. Assignments include providing clerical assistance (staffing information kiosks, answering phones, directing clients, data entry; filing, greeting the public, assembling newsletters, assisting with annual events, etc.); providing exclusive fingerprinting services to the general public at the Ames Police Department and staffing the Jail Visitation Program (coordinating visitation between

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inmates and their visitors for the Story County Jail); RSVP providing a variety of services to support the staff, patients, and residents of area nursing homes and hospitals; assisting staff and clients at area Public Libraries; regularly staffing two thrift stores and one clothes pantry; assisting IRIS (Iowa Radio/Reading Information Services) - recording the reading of a local newspaper that is broadcast daily over the radio for blind/print handicap residents; helping with a variety of tasks at local Senior Centers; supporting RSVP by providing leadership and helping RSVP staff with a variety of services through their service on the Sponsor board of directors and Advisory Council.

Central Iowa RSVP does not engage RSVP volunteers in assignments that are exclusive to Veteran's and Military families through the Veterans and Military Families Focus Area. However, the Iowa Veteran's Home is located in Marshalltown, Iowa, and is one of our newer volunteer stations. To date, RSVP volunteers have assisted at the home in clerical/ receptionist capacities as well as helping with crafts. Because all of the residents in the home are Veterans or the spouse of a Veteran, they are indirectly served by the RSVP volunteer support. In addition, in both Story and Marshall County, RSVP conducts a winter weatherization project, engaging volunteers to provide weatherization services designed to help families and individuals save money on their winter fuel bill. This service is provided to low-income families and frail elderly residents, and is also offered to veterans and/or families of veterans who are currently deployed.

### **Recruitment and Development**

Central Iowa RSVP has the infrastructure to ensure effective Volunteer Recruitment and Development processes are in place. In addition to quality partnerships with the volunteer stations that produce rewarding and high impact volunteer opportunities, Central Iowa RSVP also has highly skilled staff, written volunteer placement policies/procedures that address volunteer training and development, and a pool of 550 skilled and dedicated volunteers.

There are many beneficiaries of RSVP: the volunteers, the numerous agencies that depend on RSVP services, the clients and residents who rely on direct services from the volunteers, and ultimately the community as a whole. In the banking world, RSVP could be referred to as an asset-based organization because our funds are secured by assets, those assets being the skilled, committed, age 55+ members of our community who are engaged in life-changing and life-sustaining volunteer service because of RSVP. It is critical that we respect the needs of the volunteers and provide meaningful opportunities that will drive them to stay engaged because the experience starts with

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them.

It has been an ongoing goal of Central Iowa RSVP to put the needs of our volunteers first and to recruit volunteers from all economic, educational, and social backgrounds. It is important that we respect the preferences and unique skills that each bring to his/her volunteer experience. We are committed to not only providing quality volunteer opportunities, but also the tools needed for our participants to make an impact through their volunteer service.

We are fortunate to have tremendous support for human services and to reside in counties with a major land grant university (Iowa State) and a Community College. RSVP has a good relationship with the Volunteer Stations, and we have been able to collaborate well with the agencies that provide direct services. Through coalitions and networking mechanisms (Human Services Council, Seniors in Story, Coalition for Disaster Recovery, United Way Collaborations and Coalitions), strong partnerships have been developed with these agencies.

RSVP is a respected resource for organizations in the community, offering many ways to help enhance the services of these agencies. In addition to providing traditional volunteer recruitment services, RSVP also identifies unmet community needs and develops impact-based volunteer assignments in partnership with several volunteer stations (i.e. Disaster Education Team, Winter Weatherization Project, Community Teaching Garden). Additionally, RSVP volunteers are provided with supplemental insurance provisions (personal liability, accident, and excess auto) and mileage reimbursement, a definite "perk" for not only the volunteers but for the agencies that we serve.

RSVP works with the Volunteer Stations to ensure volunteers are receiving the highest level of training needed and desired. RSVP staff assist directly in the coordination of training for RSVP volunteers in public safety at the Ames Police Department, Speak UP (Public Speaking Course in the Schools), RSVP Volunteer Driver Transportation Program, Volunteer Management for Disaster Program, and the Winter Weatherization Project. As staff, we also provide assistance as needed to Volunteer Stations in effectively measuring outcomes.

Ongoing communication with both the volunteers and the volunteer stations is essential to effective volunteer management. In Education (primary focus area), contact with teachers and other educators begins early in the school year or in some cases, at the end of the previous school year. For

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all of our school-based assignments, there are well-defined job descriptions with clear expectations related to volunteer background checks and volunteer duties. Volunteers are provided with appropriate instruction from educators and receive ongoing oversight from school staff as well as follow-up from RSVP staff. The same ongoing communication and oversight by RSVP volunteer coordinators working with educators applies to all of our volunteer assignments.

Through the development of strong partnerships with the volunteer stations, Central Iowa RSVP is able to successfully recruit and retain volunteers by placing them in rewarding volunteer activities and recognizing them for their service and accomplishments. Volunteer retention starts with RSVP staff creating a strong connection with the volunteers. All volunteers (or interested volunteers) are invited and encouraged to attend an RSVP orientation. Orientations are scheduled 10 times/year in Story County and as-needed in Marshall County, giving RSVP staff an opportunity to connect personally with the volunteers, explain our mission, volunteer benefits (supplemental insurance and mileage reimbursement), agencies served, volunteer impact, featured volunteer opportunities, and to emphasize our commitment to them.

After the orientation, we either meet one-on-one with the volunteers or schedule a time for them to return and meet with staff. At this time, we review their application and discuss opportunities available to them. All volunteers must either attend an orientation and/or be interviewed one-on-one by an RSVP staff person before they are placed in a volunteer assignment. This personal contact allows us to more effectively assess the volunteers' abilities, habits, appearance (hygiene), etc. We can also visit with them in more detail about their interests and specific assignments so we can direct them in the best possible way.

Several of the volunteer assignments that are developed provide a great opportunity for RSVP to share experiences from their own lives. Whether sharing experiences with a child through inter-generational literacy programming or helping a student overcome their fear of public speaking, providing leadership and working alongside college students to weatherize homes of low-income residents, helping low-income seniors access food assistance, or training to be a community leader in public safety special projects, volunteers will be part of something that will enhance their own lives through serving others. We are fortunate to serve counties that are progressive in the area of community service, with agencies, organizations, and groups providing an immense variety of services and

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volunteer opportunities. We are committed to offering opportunities that meet the individual needs of our volunteers, and enhance their personal lives.

Many RSVP volunteers build new skills and serve in leadership capacities within the agencies they have been placed, especially in the areas of disaster preparedness, education (Primary Focus Area), and public safety. Some have been asked to assume roles that require learning new skills and developing leadership potential. For instance, RSVP volunteer leaders with our Volunteer Management for Disasters Program are provided with an opportunity to take NIMS (National Incident Management System) training and tour the Emergency Operations Center, learning how any incident (disaster, emergency) will be managed, including the chain of command. They become familiar with terminology and know what to expect in an actual emergency. Also in Disaster, RSVP volunteers have an opportunity to be part of a new initiative as members of a Disaster Preparedness Education Team, providing disaster preparedness information and services to the community, targeting our most vulnerable/special needs citizens as well as children. Whether we are providing opportunities that enhance the volunteers' social, intellectual, emotional, mental, or physical well-being, they are our number one priority.

Every 3-4 years we ask all of our volunteers to complete a satisfaction survey. This survey gives volunteers an opportunity to give us feedback on their satisfaction with RSVP, with their current assignments, frequency of contact by RSVP staff, etc. In the 2012 the survey 100% either agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoy their current volunteer assignments. Over 89% either agreed or strongly agreed that RSVP provides them with opportunities to serve that they would not otherwise have, and over 96% agreed or strongly agreed that RSVP provides them with opportunities to stay engaged in their community and/or with others. Current volunteer management strategies and a continued focus on volunteer satisfaction will position Central Iowa RSVP to attract "boomers" and other diverse members of the community to volunteering. Updates in marketing strategies and the development of quality assignments will assure that RSVP has something to offer every qualified volunteer.

Recognition is also critical in the retention of volunteers. The RSVP Advisory Council includes a committee that has the responsibility of assisting staff with the implementation of volunteer recognition. In addition to hosting events, RSVP volunteers are recognized on our website, on

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Facebook, in our newsletter ("brag book" photo page) and through feature stories printed in the local newspapers. Another way we recognize our volunteers is to provide them with a name badge to wear while volunteering and for some assignments, special shirts. We like to show off our volunteers! RSVP staff members often stop by during volunteer assignments just to greet and thank the volunteers. A gift (stick on calendar) is sent to the volunteers each year along with a copy of our annual report, featuring volunteer assignments and outcomes data. This report provides a collective overview of what RSVP volunteers have accomplished and how community needs have been addressed. Sharing this with the volunteers is important so they can see how much of a difference they are making in their communities.

Central Iowa RSVP maintains and adheres to a written diversity and non-discrimination policy applicable to both volunteer and staff recruitment. Although our collective service area is not ethnically diverse (with nearly 90% of the population being White), one community (Marshalltown) has a 24% Hispanic population. It has not been a challenge to find ways to serve the Hispanic community in Marshalltown, but the language, socio-economic and cultural barriers have made it difficult to engage this age 55+ population in volunteer service. With help from our Advisory Council we plan to develop a strategy for reaching out to recruit volunteers from Hispanic and other ethnically diverse populations.

Other areas of diversity are well represented in both our volunteer pool and our Advisory Council. The RSVP Advisory Council represents differences in age, gender, community connectedness, education, occupation, residence, disabilities, and to the degree that is possible, ethnicity. Beginning in July 2007, we established one Advisory Council representing both Story and Marshall Counties (versus two separate councils), with representation from the Hispanic community. As with our Advisory Council, we also maintain a varied pool of volunteers in these areas of diversity. Although we only started tracking the veteran population in our volunteer pool a year ago, we estimate that 15-20% of our volunteers are veterans.

### **Program Management**

As the sponsors of this RSVP project since it began in 1973, Story City Senior Citizens/Central Iowa RSVP has extensive experience in managing the project in the proposed program area. We have a well-established infrastructure in place along with internal policies and procedures to ensure effective program management. We continue to assess and implement policies that address volunteer station

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development and volunteer assignment oversight. Residents of our counties and the agencies and organizations we serve have embraced RSVP's focused approach in having a greater impact meeting the needs of the communities. As the new performance measurement requirements are implemented we will continue programming in a way that is consistent with grant requirements and meeting current and emerging community needs.

Ongoing contact with both the volunteers and the volunteer stations is required to assure that roles are well-defined, that needs and responsibilities are being met, and that volunteers are being appropriately utilized. No volunteers are placed with an agency that is not a registered and qualified RSVP volunteer station. When a Volunteer Station is registered, RSVP coordinators meet one-on-one with appropriate staff, providing general information on volunteer management, reviewing all of the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding, including but not limited to requirements in the RSVP Federal Regulations Subpart F (Responsibilities of a Volunteer Station). RSVP staff review roles, expectations, limitations, assurances, volunteer hours reporting, non-discrimination, volunteer support and safety, etc. All contacts are identified and the appropriate signature is obtained.

RSVP staff follow up with partnering organizations to assure that timesheets are being validated and submitted, volunteer needs are being met, and outcomes (when appropriate) are being reported. Consistent communications with the volunteer stations help RSVP assess, identify, plan, and maximize existing relationships with the agencies we serve. It also helps us to update our records and prioritize partnerships with agencies that have the greatest need and desire for our services. A new procedure will soon be implemented with RSVP staff tracking communication with the volunteer stations on a spreadsheet. We will modify the station roster and categorize the type of communication (phone call, email, site/volunteer visit, volunteer safety visit, MoU renewal, etc). This will allow us to see if there are any volunteer stations being neglected and assure that follow up is taking place.

In a similar way, RSVP coordinators currently keep track of newly assigned volunteers. All volunteers receive follow-up communication related to their volunteer experience and satisfaction within a short time after placement. If a volunteer expresses dissatisfaction, RSVP coordinators follow up with the volunteer site and work with both their staff and the volunteer to resolve any issues. This does happen but it is rare. When recruitment and placement procedures are thorough, the volunteer station/volunteer matches are usually successful.

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In 2011, Central Iowa RSVP went through strategic planning and in that plan addressed volunteer assignment development and volunteer station assessment. The following year, we streamlined our volunteer station roster, retaining only those partnerships that provided us an opportunity to address a community need that met our priorities and that had demonstrated the ability to meet the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding. Partnerships will be continued that help us meet the new Performance Measurement requirements and our overall program design. With Education as our Primary Focus Area, along with assignments developed in other Focus Areas, and an allowance of 30% of our volunteers serving in Community Priorities, we do not anticipate having to eliminate volunteer stations. If it is necessary to graduate volunteer stations, we will encourage them to access other sources of community volunteers, including Volunteer Solutions, and in Story County, the Volunteer Center. We may also be able to transition them to a recipient of RSVP Capacity Building services.

At the end of this grant period, RSVP will conduct a survey of volunteer station satisfaction and volunteer impact. Although RSVP gets informal feedback from many of the volunteer stations regarding the value of the services provided by RSVP volunteers, this survey will give all active volunteer stations an opportunity to more specifically report about the impact RSVP volunteers have made in enhancing and delivering their services.

One of the characteristics that has made Central Iowa RSVP a unique and respected resource for organizations in the community has been the diversity of our services. Even though we have streamlined our work plan development over the years to better address impact-based programming, we have still maintained high-level assignments that fall into several of CNCS's focus areas, specifically in Education, Healthy Futures, and Disaster Services. However, we have longstanding relationships with many of the school systems and Head Start programs in our service area and despite the fact that overall academic performance in our service area is high, there are always children that struggle and slip through the cracks without intervention. Also, we have school-based programming and projects that have been successfully incorporated into various language arts curriculum at area schools for years, even decades. Among those is: Literacy Partners Writing Project, Speak UP Public Speaking Course, Head Start Assistance, and Reading Buddies. Last fiscal year, 241 RSVP volunteers served 512 students in 7 school districts and 2 Head Start programs. On

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those collective assignments, all intermediate and end outcomes targets were met and overall they exceeded the targets by an average of over 10.2%. By contrast 197 RSVP volunteers served in Disaster Services assignments and 176 RSVP volunteers served in Healthy Futures work plans. We can still maintain a high level of service in other Focus Areas, but we have a successful track record of serving in education-based assignments and plan to expand on that success.

Central Iowa RSVP has internal written procedures for staff to follow in assuring that we are in compliance with federal regulations that address volunteer recruitment. The volunteer application contains all the fields needed to assure a volunteer is eligible to serve and access RSVP benefits. No placements are made that would compromise adherence to federal regulations as they are outlined in our agency's Volunteer Placement Policies and outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding that we have with the volunteer stations.

Central Iowa RSVP also meets federal requirements that address the involvement of a community participation group. We currently have a 12-member Advisory Council with representation from both counties we serve. It is a well-developed and highly involved council that serve as ambassadors and liaisons for RSVP and come from 8 different communities in our service area. This council represents the following groups: RSVP volunteers, RSVP volunteer stations, Iowa State University, Ames Police Department, Chambers of Commerce, disaster services (volunteer), Hispanic ethnicity, and an age range from 24 to 82. In addition to promoting RSVP and fostering good public relations in the communities they live, members of the Advisory Council also assist with assessment of the overall operation of the project, including: programmatic policies and procedures (i.e. reimbursement provisions, content of volunteer applications, personnel policies and issues, etc.), Director's annual performance evaluation, fiscal and budgetary recommendations, compliance (corporate/federal regulations), risk management, volunteer recruitment strategies, special events, marketing and technology, and outcomes data management and collection.

### **Organizational Capability**

The Story City Senior Citizens (SCSC), Inc. is the administrator of the Story City Senior Center (managing activities and facilities) and the sponsoring agency for Central Iowa RSVP and Central Iowa RSVP North. SCSC, Inc. has been the sponsor for Story County RSVP for over 40 years. In response to a needs assessment that was conducted in Story City and surrounding communities at that time, the Story City Senior Center was opened to provide social and educational programming for

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seniors. Also, a grant to start an RSVP project was awarded to provide a mechanism to link older adults with meaningful volunteer service. Since that time, RSVP staff under the leadership of SCSC, Inc. has expanded the program to reach volunteers throughout Story County and beginning in 2003, Marshall County. In addition, SCSC, Inc. is the sponsor for Central Iowa RSVP North, which operates under a separate grant. This project serves two counties just north and west of Central Iowa RSVP and represents two former projects that relinquished their RSVP grants in 2011. Story City Senior Citizens, Inc. was awarded state funding in July, 2012 to restore services to this geographic area and was awarded a federal grant through the competition process in September, 2012.

The 13-member Story City Senior Citizens, Inc. Board of Directors characterizes a cross-section of the community with members representing business, agriculture, public safety, city government, banking, retired adults (RSVP volunteers), and volunteer stations. This active and involved board administers policy, employs staff members, and advocates for older adult volunteerism in the service area. As RSVP sponsors since 1973, SCSC, Inc. has extensive experience in managing the project in the proposed program area as well as managing federal grant funds. They are knowledgeable about countywide needs and are supportive of RSVP's involvement throughout Story and Marshall County. Shannon Bryan, (Assistant Vice-President -- Reliance State Bank) a dedicated Sponsor Board member and SCSC, Inc. Treasurer, serves as the liaison to the RSVP Advisory Councils. (A 12-member RSVP Advisory Council plays a vital role in assisting staff with meeting the goals and objectives of the program).

SCSC, Inc. and Central Iowa RSVP conform with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States. An annual audit is conducted by an outside CPA. Central Iowa RSVP utilizes QuickBooks Pro to track financial activity. There have been no audit findings.

One of the great strengths of the organization is the dedicated and qualified staff members, who have collectively contributed 55 years working for RSVP. All staff positions have detailed job descriptions and well developed personnel policies are reviewed every three years by the RSVP Advisory Council and the Sponsor Board. Staff members include four full-time employees, and one 62.5% time employee. This dedicated group of individuals provides a great combination of experience, education, and commitment. They represent diverse skills and personalities that respect and complement each other. They are truly a well-developed team with clearly defined roles and a commitment to senior service. Please note that the Director and the Administrative Assistant, although full-time employees,

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are approved by the Iowa Corporation State Office to have their time split between Central Iowa RSVP and Central Iowa RSVP North.

Director, Kalen Petersen, is responsible for the overall management of the project and all programs, including supervising and supporting staff, securing financial resources (i.e. grant writing), administering all components of the federal grant, programmatic oversight of internal policies/procedures and federal regulations, implementing goals and objectives that address volunteer recruitment, marketing strategies, recognition, evaluation, fundraising functions, volunteer assignment development, etc. She has a Bachelor's Degree from Iowa State University in Adult Education (Family and Consumer Sciences) and has been employed with RSVP since July 1989, serving the last 23 years as Director. Kalen has participated in numerous trainings and educational opportunities, including extensive training in impact-based programming and grant management. Kalen has developed the skills and leadership abilities needed to operate a successful RSVP project. Kalen has also served in several leadership roles within the Iowa RSVP Directors Association and has served on the National RSVP Directors Board, representing ten states in the North Central Cluster. In February, 2014, Kalen was one of 23 RSVP Directors from across the country who attended training (by invitation only) on the Management of Spontaneous Volunteers in Disaster. Respected for her leadership in working with disaster-related programming, Kalen was able to attend the 3-day training presented by CNCS and held at the Emergency Management Institute in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Administrative Assistant, Pat Firnhaber, has over 30 years of experience in bookkeeping, accounting and office management. She is extremely organized, thorough, and efficient, effectively following general accounting practices. Pat was welcomed back to work for Central Iowa RSVP/Central Iowa RSVP North one year ago after retiring for three years. Because our bookkeeping is done internally, she has extensive experience in managing the RSVP budget, preparing payroll, managing accounts payable and receivable, preparing and submitting all necessary financial and draw down documents/reports, and assisting as needed with volunteer recruitment, recognition, etc. Pat has a very good understanding and working knowledge of federal regulations and the statutes of the OMB circulars, as does the RSVP Director. She also coordinates the RSVP Volunteer Driver Program trip requests that come in to our Story City office.

Three volunteer coordinators have been on staff for Central Iowa RSVP for a total of 28 years

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collectively. Their primary role is to recruit, screen, mobilize, and support RSVP volunteers. The volunteer coordinators implement recruitment strategies and recruit volunteers according to RSVP guidelines, follow up on volunteer placements and assignments, and maintain good communication and cooperative working relationships with the volunteers, volunteer site staff, RSVP staff, community leaders, and media sources. They also assist the director with public relations, recognition, evaluation, fundraising, and special projects.

Volunteer Coordinator, Betty Boccella is a 62.5% time employee for our public safety/disaster preparedness initiatives and started with RSVP in August, 2002. She came to us with over 35 years of experience in Story County human services and is a skilled and talented coordinator that is well-connected in Story County. Betty has extensive experience working with volunteers and the senior population, having been the Assistant Director of Heartland Senior Services for over 10 years prior to coming to work for RSVP. Betty was also employed for three years with Youth and Shelter Services, helping them develop and track outcomes data. Through a contractual agreement with Story County Emergency Management Agency and the City of Ames, RSVP is the designated agency in Story County for the management of volunteers in a disaster. Betty is responsible for coordinating the RSVP Volunteer Management for Disasters Program, providing ongoing volunteer trainings and drills. Betty also has a key role in coordinating the expansion of other public safety, disaster, and public health assignments we have developed (Disaster Education Team, Public Health Emergency Volunteers, Story County Sheriff's Office Volunteers, Ames Police Department Fingerprinting, etc.).

Volunteer Coordinator, Arti Sanghi is a full-time employee responsible for the recruitment and placement of Story County RSVP volunteers and managing the RSVP Volunteer Driver Program trip requests that are called in to our Ames office. Arti has been on staff since August 2005 and has extensive experience and education in Human Resource Management. Arti is originally from India but has been a United States citizen for nearly 30 years. We appreciate the cultural diversity and enthusiasm Arti brings to our staff.

Volunteer Coordinator, Linda Von Holten is a full-time employee that splits her time between Story and Marshall Counties. In addition to general volunteer recruitment, Linda also has a key role in addressing disaster-related assignments in Marshall County. Linda has an Associate's Degree in Paralegal Studies and a professional background in the legal field as well as sales and business. Prior to

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working with RSVP, Linda was the Office Manager at ISU Extension, working with all ages of clients. Linda has exceptional people skills, is detail-oriented, positive and enthusiastic. She is also cross-trained to assist with our Volunteer Management for Disasters Program in Story County. Linda assists with volunteer recruitment and with the management of the Volunteer Reporter Database at our office in Story City.

Internally, Central Iowa RSVP staff members are cross-trained to assist in other areas. All are prepared to step in and help out in another position if needed. In addition, all critical tasks performed by staff are documented with written instructions. Coordinators submit weekly staff reports to the Director, noting significant tasks and assignments accomplished. Each staff member also presents a report to the Sponsor Board each month. In this grant cycle, RSVP will be assessing the "succession management" procedures in place and determining how they can be improved.

\*Performance evaluations of all staff positions are conducted annually. All support staff submit a confidential supervisor evaluation (of the Director) to the chair of the Advisory Council Chair and the Sponsor Board President. This is used in the performance evaluation of the Director, conducted by the Sponsor Board President and Chair of the Project Management Committee. The RSVP Director conducts annual performance evaluations of subordinate staff. The Sponsor Board of Directors (SCSC, Inc.) evaluates and prepares an annual report of all SCSC, Inc. activities (not RSVP) that is provided to the City of Story City. This report includes financial and participant statistics.

In addition to quality staff, Central Iowa RSVP has office facilities that are more than adequate for staff to conduct all necessary business. In-kind office space has been provided (in the Senior Center) for RSVP's main office for the entire 41 year history. In return, RSVP provides a staff presence at the Center, Monday-Friday, offering assistance with information and referral as needed. All programming activities at the Center are coordinated by board members.

In 2007, the City of Story City purchased a large building in downtown Story City and renovated it for the Story City Senior Citizens, Inc. to house the Senior Community Center and RSVP offices. (The City committed \$300,000 to this project, which is well-supported by the community). We moved to our new location in March, 2008, and now have all new office space that is more efficient and technologically wired. The facilities include excellent storage, a community room with seating for 150, a meeting room, and a very large kitchen, all available to RSVP at no charge. In addition, RSVP staff

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helps SCSC, Inc. with the rental of the facility for a variety of events. For that service, RSVP retains 25% of all rental fees, adding to our self-generated local match. Marshall County RSVP is provided with office space at a minimal cost by ISU Extension in Marshall County. A third office location in Ames is maintained with very low monthly rent payments. All office locations are adequate facilities with all the necessary equipment (computers, copier/printers, etc.) and supplies to run effectively.

Financial management of the project is the responsibility of the Director, Administrative Assistant, the Sponsor Board President and Treasurer. Invoices are posted and budget reports are prepared by the Administrative Assistant, reviewed and initially approved by the director, with signatures and final approval from the Sponsor executives. All invoices are reviewed and approved by the Director, as well as the ordering of all supplies and other budgeted expenses. With review by the Director and final approval by the Board (president or treasurer), we are assuring that expenditures are appropriate and necessary. A full audit is conducted (by a contracted CPA firm) annually of Central Iowa RSVP's accounting books, a requirement of our United Way funding. The Administrative Assistant is responsible for tracking all income and expenses as well as drawing down on local and federal funds. The Director is responsible for the management of the budget, closely monitoring expenses, income, and in-kind contributions. The Director and Sponsor Executive are responsible for preparing funding proposals and securing the funds necessary for the program to operate. The Director meets regularly with the Administrative Assistant to review all financial data, including budget projections, balances, accounts payable, funding received to date, etc. These checks and balances help assure accountability, efficiency, and effective use of available resources.

Central Iowa RSVP has written policies in place for compliance with federal, state, and internal procedures, including fiscal internal controls, diversity and non-discrimination, volunteer hours tracking and reporting, volunteer safety, facility accessibility assessment, criminal background checks, etc). In addition to staff and board involvement, the RSVP Advisory Council assists with assessment of several aspects of the project, including: programmatic policies and procedures (i.e. reimbursement provisions, content of volunteer applications, personnel policies and issues, etc.), Director's annual performance evaluation, fiscal and budgetary recommendations, addressing compliance issues (corporate/federal regulations), risk management, and outcomes data management and collection. Recommendations are shared with the board of directors through the sponsor liaison.

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Central Iowa RSVP has a strong track record of securing the local match needed to ensure we are managing a quality RSVP project. We continue to be well-supported at the local level, with a significant portion of our budget being provided by United Way, Story County, and City government funding. Also in 2013, Iowa RSVP's received a significant increase in State funding (55%), restoring funding that had been reduced over several years since 2001 and providing an amazing 32% more than our highest level of state funding! This increase served as confirmation from state legislators that they recognize RSVP as a valuable and cost-effective way to meet the needs of Iowans. Iowa's Governor, Terry Branstad, has set a goal for Iowa to become the number one state in the country in volunteerism. The State of Iowa established a "What's Your 50?" marketing message encouraging all Iowan's to volunteer 50 hours annually and making RSVP Projects in Iowa are an important part of the state's strategic message to encourage more volunteer engagement.

In addition to well-developed local and state funding sources to meet the needs of our operating budget, Central Iowa RSVP continues to look to the future. In January, 2012, with \$2,500 in seed money from a portion of the life insurance policy of a former RSVP volunteer and Advisory Council member, we started the Central Iowa RSVP Endowment (formally the Ann Herriott Legacy Fund). This fund is one of many funds held by the Story County Community Foundation and to date donations to the Central Iowa RSVP Endowment have brought the balance up to \$5,970.94. Once we reach a balance of \$10,000, RSVP will be eligible to draw interest from the fund on an annual basis and use it as needed to support our budget and our project expenses.

Story City Senior Citizens, Inc. and Central Iowa RSVP are committed to the accountability of every aspect of our project. We have a history of sound financial/grants management and competent staff oversight. We strive to use the tools provided to us through the Corporation for National and Community Service (i.e. National Service Knowledge Network, online courses, virtual conference workshops, RSVP Handbook), the Iowa Non-profit Resource Center, the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service, and other resources to assure that we are conducting all business in an effective and accountable way.

As the current sponsor of this project, we are mindful of the considerable responsibility we have in effectively using the funds entrusted to us. We know it is crucial that the investment made in RSVP has a high return and we are working every day to not only provide meaningful opportunities for

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RSVP volunteers but to develop assignments that have measurable outcomes and a significant impact on the community. We will continue to ensure that RSVP participants deliver the high quality of service that our network of community partners come to expect.

### Other

Central Iowa RSVP continues to look for ways to have more effective program delivery. We are excited for the opportunity to become part of the Service Enterprise Initiative in 2015. Nonprofits that effectively leverage the skills and talents of volunteers into their core operations are known as "service enterprises." Research conducted by TCC Group, a national program evaluation firm, demonstrates that service enterprises are more adaptable, sustainable and capable of scaling their impact in comparison to peer organizations and, as a result, are able to more effectively deliver on the social mission of their organization. And yet, less than 15 percent of nonprofits nationwide operate in this manner.

Through a multi-month engagement with Volunteer Iowa, Central Iowa RSVP will move through a change management process that will result in more effectively leveraging the time and talents of volunteers and lead to greater impact. Central Iowa RSVP staff and leadership will access this innovative training and consulting support to become a service enterprise. This research-based assessment of our existing organizational capacity and volunteer engagement practices will involve up to 16 hours of training to assist in re-tooling the roles and ways in which we engage volunteers. Over the span of this process we will address unique organizational opportunities and challenges. Central Iowa RSVP's goal is to increase the engagement of volunteers utilized internally to increase our proficiency in appropriately leveraging the time and skills of volunteers to meet the social mission of our organization.

With leadership provided by the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service, Central Iowa RSVP will consider serving as a Service Enterprise Hub for our area, engaging staff and volunteers in helping other non-profits to operate as service enterprises. This strategy is outlined in a Capacity Building work plan. The designated outcome outlined in the Appendix B Performance Measure Requirements indicates an outcome (G3-3.3) that is tied to the number of organizations implementing effective volunteer management practices. Therefore, the summary in the work plan only reflects a target of one.

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**PNS Amendment (if applicable)**

NOT APPLICABLE