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Executive Summary

Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1940 as a private, non-profit corporation with the mission of putting Stuttgart on the map. In its more than 70 years as an advocate of area business, the Chamber has established Stuttgart as an economic leader in southeast Arkansas. You could say the Chamber works on those issues that affect the "quality of life" in our community with volunteers being a critical piece in our community.

An estimated 385 RSVP volunteers will serve. The CNCS federal investment of \$58,326 will be supplemented by \$30,772.

Stuttgart RSVP sponsor will serve Pine Bluff and Jefferson County in all service categories with the majority of volunteers serving in health futures, education, disaster training, veterans, and military families. RSVP volunteers will address needs related to veterans, at-risk seniors and children, reinforcing social behavior, health and nutrition, administrative and clerical support for non-profits, and other community needs. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. The US Department of Agriculture annual report released on September 5, 2013, ranked Arkansas first in low food security and with the federal nutrition program not reaching all food-insecure people, this shows the important role of charitable hunger relief programs in Jefferson County.

The mission of Stuttgart Arkansas County RSVP is to engage volunteers over 55 years of age to lend their time and expertise in service to non-profits and organizations to strengthen the well-being of both self and community. We know now more than ever, volunteers, especially baby-boomers feel their time is precious by offering unique experiences with additional flexibility we can make a difference by touching lives and lifting spirits.

Strengthening Communities

Jefferson County RSVP will primarily serve the City of Pine Bluff and the surrounding communities located in Jefferson County. With the primary focus to build a healthier community by lending their time and expertise for change and growth of both self and communities.

With a population of 73,191, Jefferson County, 884.8 square miles, was created by the Territorial Legislature on November 2, 1829, from parts of Arkansas and Pulaski counties and was named for

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Thomas Jefferson, United States President. Pine Bluff, 45.6 square miles, is the County Seat and the second oldest settlement on the Arkansas River and located in the heart of the Arkansas River basin. The 1838 courthouse is the only courthouse known to have caused a river to be changed. During the 1908 flood of the Arkansas River, the Judges' chambers, jury room, part of the courtroom, and the Sheriff's and Assessor's offices were purposely torn off and dumped into the river to keep the rest of the building from caving into the river. After the flood, the course of the river was changed to save the courthouse, and now channel Lake Pine Bluff. The landscape of the western third is pine-covered, rolling hills, and the eastern two-thirds is rich, fertile Delta farmland. The Arkansas Delta was once a place where sharecroppers lived in poverty yet forged a vibrant community. Industry has erased the culture, leaving behind flat land with endless sky and now with the closing of industrial plants such as the Pine Bluff Arsenal, Tyson Foods and others, Pine Bluff is becoming one of America's fastest shrinking cities.

The county is located in eastern Arkansas in a rural area typically known as the "Mississippi Delta", a region of high property, an undereducated workforce, and a generational history of single parent families. In 2013 the estimated income was \$30,797 for Pine Bluff and \$37,561 for Jefferson County below the State of Arkansas at \$40,531 with 13,782(29.9%) persons living below poverty level in Pine Bluff. Households that fall into the "low food security" category had more severe problems, experiencing "deeper hunger and cutting back or skipping meals on a more frequent basis with both adults and children." A Majority of households experience food insecurity at times during the year, meaning that their access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources. According to the USDA September 2013 report, households with children headed by single parents with income near or below the federal poverty line are in the more severe range for food insecurity. According to 2010 census ---of adults have not completed high school. Children living in rural counties often enter kindergarten without basic numeric and language skills as well as social and emotional skills putting them behind their peers.

The Community consists of people from diverse backgrounds with 21.8% of the residents categorized as white, 75.6% as African American and 1.5% as Hispanic. The remaining 1.1% is distributed among other races. More than 455,743 seniors over the age of 65 live in Arkansas with 5,716(12.4%)living in Pine Bluff according to the US Census Bureau. There are many identifying aspects of diversity not always related to race or ethnicity. Diversity, within age groups can enhance civic engagement if we

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utilize the respective talents of each individual and groups. The community lack of enough resources to help frail seniors, at risk families and disabled veterans find affordable transportation, food, health services and etc. which in turn helps alleviate loneliness and isolation. RSVP volunteers will provide such assistance to help the elderly, at risk families, veterans and the disable remain in their homes with quality of life.

Communities are about people-the greatest asset in every city, neighborhood, or rural town. It takes a collective effort, energy, resources and commitment to improve the quality of life for everyone. The volunteer program will establish a partnership within the community to provide strategic volunteer engagement and collaborate with other non- profits to discuss common challenges, exchange ideas and share solutions. Senior volunteers are the preferred providers of services to area non-profit organizations and government agencies. We know that, now more than ever, volunteers, especially baby-boomers feel their time is precious. Volunteers are encouraged to participate in community outreach programs such as fundraising, recruitment, speaking at local organizations, and educating each other in regards to the special needs of the military and the community. Stuttgart RSVP sponsor will seek to find ways to more effectively prepare this vital "resource" to serve the needs of the people of the communities through its partner agencies. There are many identifying aspects of diversity not always related to race or ethnicity. Diversity within age groups can enhance civic engagement if we utilize the respective talents of each individual and groups. Leaders will develop a strategic approach to managing volunteers, and appropriate training that expands our vision by creating a volunteer experience that is a challenging, transformative experience that gives an in-depth understanding of challenges facing our community members and their Families. Community partners such as American Legion, State of Arkansas Veteran Service Office, Jefferson County Economic Opportunity Commission, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Emergency Management, American Red Cross, Salvation Army and other Groups will help fund, assist and provide moral and physical support to our community and provide volunteer opportunities in food banks, transportation for veterans, tutoring, volunteer reception centers, and a lot more.

Healthy Futures being the primary focus area, 100 RSVP Volunteers envision our county as place everyone has all resources necessary to achieve maximum wellness. The Economic Research service of the U S Department of Agriculture annual report released on September 5, 2013 ranked Arkansas first in low food security. According to local telephone survey provided by Baptist Health, the top three

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health concerns for local residents is smoking, diabetes, and obesity. In an effort to meet the community health concern, 100 unduplicated RSVP volunteers with the help of local community action groups and agencies will join to explore ways to combine resources to feed and educate the low-income and senior families in need of emergency food assistances. With the downturn in the economy, unemployment, and low income families there is a real need for food. There are children going to bed hungry and elderly who must choose between medicine and groceries. With the help of new partnering agencies, the Pine Bluff Jefferson Community EOC and Local Food Pantries, who will complete client's assessment forms assisting the clients with answering the food insecurity survey on the bottom of the form. The Client brings completed forms with survey questions answered to local food banks where volunteers complete in-take forms with name, address, number in household, income and sign-off on completed forms. Clients receive emergency food and personal hygiene products. Volunteers complete activity log and sign-off on forms. RSVP volunteers enter information from completed forms to food bank clients and volunteers activity spreadsheet. Community action group meets on a quarterly bases to address the outcomes and if services needs improvement to best meet the client's needs.

RSVP volunteers will provide leadership in local coalitions working on implementing solutions that improve the health of the community while taking on ownership of health problems. Working with local coalitions, volunteers will provide educational program and community outreach program focusing on food security, health promotion and disease prevention events such as local food drives, local health fair, commodities distribution and etc. This raises awareness of the importance of good nutrition and general overall health quality.

All volunteer data will be maintained using the volunteer reporter software. New RSVP volunteer's complete application which provides name, address, date of birth, military service and their skills and hobbies with staff verifying their identification. A primary placement will be chosen for each member so that unduplicated numbers of volunteers may be indicated. Volunteer stations are monitored annually to insure MOU compliance and unique and high quality opportunities for the volunteers. RSVP staff will provided each volunteer station with customized times sheets in order to facilitate their collection and reporting of volunteer hours for RSVP members. Volunteer hours will be collected by the partner volunteer stations and reported for each volunteer on a monthly basis. Data will be entered by the RSVP staff using the volunteer reporter software. Questionnaires will be mailed on an

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annual bases to RSVP volunteers and work station managers to evaluate job assignments and performances. Outcome from the survey will be report to Advisory Council and Stuttgart Chamber Board at the yearly program of works review.

RSVP Volunteers will serve in an advisory capacity for organizations, or committees that promote services that meet community needs and build public awareness. The Advisory Council members will be chosen from political, educational, senior citizens, and active community members. Members provide input into our program from various views and diversity, while monitoring progress to insure local input into programs designed to provide yearly evaluation to the Chamber Board. RSVP will provide volunteer resources and advertising campaigns to reach new organizations and new volunteer opportunities in the Pine Bluff, Jefferson County area. With our new focus areas, RSVP will be accessing the community to form new workstations such as Department of Workforce Services, Food Bank, religious organizations, etc. to meet the new performance measurers. RSVP enhances the capacity of organizations and institutions in our community providing help and support that allows organizations to keep their doors open while bridging the gap both economically and overall diversity.

Recruitment and Development

Stuttgart RSVP Sponsor is well established in Arkansas County and is a long- term partner with over 22 organizations within the community and hope to expand services to neighboring Jefferson County. RSVP Volunteers enhances the capacity of organizations and institutions in our community and neighboring community providing help and support that allows an organization to keep their doors open while bridging the gap both economically and overall diversity.

RSVP sponsor will ensure that management of volunteer stations are in compliance with RSVP program regulations and applicable laws by requiring monthly visits to the station by the either the RSVP director or the volunteer coordinator. The staff has a checklist of items which are discussed at each station during these meetings. All volunteer stations are required to be handicap assessable, so handicap individuals can volunteer or participate in activities at volunteers stations. RSVP advisory council perform annual assessments of the stations where they assess the stations level of satisfaction with both the program and the volunteers. If the advisory council feels the need to graduate the workstation, first it's verbal followed up with a written letter, and the volunteers are notified by the director. Each volunteer is visited by the director and reassigned to new work stations. In effort to recruit new volunteers and workstations we hope to form a new coalition, which will meet quarterly

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to network, communicate and assess community needs. We hope to host volunteer job fairs and other community events. This would open the door to a variety of information about the community and enable us to form new partnerships. We hope to expand our workstations and create new opportunities for the volunteers.

Staff works with each volunteer who has a desire to learn new skills while making a positive contribution to the community with opportunities to enhance leadership skills and broaden the senior volunteer experience. The volunteers will be Pine Bluff, Jefferson County most valuable asset, making volunteer recruitment, retention and recognition a top priority.

New volunteers are most often recruited by existing volunteers who have shared their experiences and inspired others to serve. One area that appeals to Baby Boomer volunteers is enabling them to reinvest in their communities and in themselves with instant gratification. Many volunteers are veterans and member of the American legion we hope to focus on recruiting these individuals to help with completing benefit forms and transportation issue affecting the health needs of disabled veterans. While working the program, we hope to recruit these volunteers by providing them with the opportunity to give back to the community and have the flexibility and knowledge to work with short term assignments. Research indicates that baby-boomers and veterans are seeking new opportunities that offer unique experiences, challenging positions and flexibly. Recruitment strategies to be used include : Keeping a high profile in the media, partnering with American Legion, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Pine Bluff Jefferson County Economic Opportunity Commission, American Legion Auxiliary, Arkansas Department of Health, State of Arkansas Veteran Service Office, and other groups while networking with local community groups.

Orientation is conducted for all new volunteers. The Project Director meets with each new volunteer to discuss work stations that might be of interest to them. New volunteers receive a handbook which contains volunteer stations, job descriptions, volunteer guidelines, rules for staff, information on volunteers insurance, time sheets and volunteer calendars. After selecting the capacity in which they want to serve, the director and work station manager meet with the volunteer to discuss their job skills and requirements.

Strategies for retention include: orientation for all new members, conducting follow-up with

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volunteers after recruitment, reviewing hours reported monthly to identify volunteers that are not reporting and make personal contact, local newspaper articles on Senior Corp, RSVP Program and their volunteers. RSVP Facebook page, Twitter and newsletters stimulate interest in upcoming events and volunteer opportunities.

Most of the volunteer assignments will be on-the-job training positions provided by partnering agencies, Arkansas Department of Human Services, Office of Emergency Management, Arkansas Department of Health Services, Salvation Army, Arkansas Division of Volunteerism and etc. are just some of the agencies. RSVP will make use of local coalitions to meet the training needs of most volunteer assignments with one-on-one orientation by station supervisors with group training provided by partnerships and the RSVP staff. RSVP staff attends all training as required by CNCS and participates in other professional development opportunities.

Volunteers will be recognized for their time and service during four events throughout the year. Volunteers receive recognition during National Volunteer Week in April, Senior Corp Week, and Veterans Day Celebration and treated to a holiday potluck complete with food, fun, and fellowship during December.

Program Management

RSVP will be an active participant in community development with volunteers readily available to assist Pine Bluff and Jefferson County. The Project Director will work with volunteers to determine which projects will be of interest and provide meaningful volunteer opportunities. We will try to develop programs where volunteers feel productive, do work that challenges them, and have an opportunity to grow. All volunteer stations will report to volunteer coordinator that goes over the handbooks which sets guidelines to follow for volunteers and volunteer stations. All volunteers will receive training, and supervision by the volunteer coordinator. Volunteer stations will be in compliance with RSVP program regulations and our Memorandum of Understanding with annual site visit from staff. Questionnaires will be mailed on an annual basis to RSVP volunteers and work station managers to evaluate job assignments and performances for impact statements. The Advisory Council members will assess the stations on level of satisfaction with the program and volunteers.

In an effort to recruit stations, we will work with local community action groups and city officials to network, communicate and assess community needs. We hope this will open doors and enable us to

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form new partnerships and expand our stations, as well as create new opportunities for our volunteers. We hope this strategy will help guide us in not only providing meaningful volunteer experience but also assist us in meeting the community needs. The volunteer coordinator will meet monthly with all stations to determine compliance with their monthly report of volunteer activities. The volunteer station can recruit and enroll new volunteers to help build capacity of the program. RSVP stations not reporting service hours will be listed as inactive and volunteers will be moved to other stations of interest.

The project director will report to the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors on a monthly basis, providing them a programmatic and financial report. Through the use of volunteer reporter which tracks volunteer's information and hours of service, performance data, volunteer stations and mailing database. The local college will provide RSVP with work-study students each year who works directly with the project director and the program coordinator in managing the data entry on tracking volunteers and volunteer stations making sure volunteers are placed in stations that have signed MOU's and ensuring all volunteers are eligible to serve in RSVP. If disruption of volunteers services at work stations or if graduating a station is necessary, first is verbal communication followed up with written notification of ending of services. All files of supporting documentation will be maintained at the RSVP office with procedures reviewed annually while ensuring all programs are in compliance of federal regulations. Software will be updated as revisions become available. Board of Directors will conduct an annual evaluation of the RSVP program and staff, assuring that goals and objectives are being met and that a significant impact is being made on the community. The project director will be responsible for managing information and data for the programs. This task is made easier by utilizing computer software. A file of supporting documentation will be maintained as well. Software will be updated as revisions become available and staff will become competent in their use.

Financial management will be accomplished with the support of the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce which will provide financial oversight as validated by yearly audits. The program director and executive vice-president of the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce oversee a budget that will use available resources as well as in-kind contributions and donations, providing a workable system of checks-and-balances. A bookkeeper, provided by the sponsoring agency, will perform the day-to-day financial duties using QuickBooks to manage finances, with the executive vice-president of the

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Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce signing checks. The bookkeeper and project director will keep accurate records and supporting documentation. All expense vouchers will be signed off on by the program director and the executive vice-president of the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce. Systems will be in place to provide accountability for all funds by keeping all RSVP monies in a separate banking account and the director provides a monthly financial report to the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce Board.

In the fall of 2011, Stuttgart RSVP sponsor received a large in-kind donation of an office suite at the local college. The college pays all utilities while providing computer technical support and free internet service. RSVP program has use of the Phillip County College of the University of Arkansas and the Grand Prairie Center. The program will also receive funding for state and local governments.

The RSVP program will be documented by the community through the local newspapers, radio stations, and the RSVP newsletter. RSVP volunteers will serve in an advisory capacity for organizations, and committees that promote services that meet community needs and build public awareness. The Advisory Council members will be chosen from political, educational, senior citizens, and active community members. Members will provide input into our program from various views and diversity, while monitoring progress to insure local input into programs designed to provide yearly evaluation to the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce Board.

Organizational Capability

Our plan is to operate RSVP following the guidelines of CNS grant. We will prepare guidelines for day to day operation of the volunteers and the volunteer stations.

Stuttgart RSVP Sponsor has a project director to oversee the project. Stuttgart RSVP Sponsor receives funding from state and local governments. Phillips County College of the University of Arkansas provides a large in-kind donation of 825 square feet of office space plus use of the college facilities. The Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce has been the sponsoring agency for Stuttgart Arkansas County RSVP since 1973. The role of the board of directors and the executive vice-president of the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce are clearly defined and corresponds with that of the key RSVP staff positions, as they both work to ensure the continuous improvement of the project for the benefit of volunteers as well as the community as a whole. Sponsorship support includes financial support to meet the sponsor match, providing a Finance Manager, an annual evaluation of the RSVP Program Director, issuing

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checks for expenses, and technology assistance. Program performance will be assessed through surveys and combined into a program evaluation by Advisory Council and results are shared with the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce Board. Memoranda will be signed, filed with each station, and updated in Volunteer Reporter every (3) years and station visited by director via telephone or in person quarterly. Volunteer Reporter will have easy access to volunteer information and job descriptions with a database for assignment and record keeping. Impact Statements will be filed under each volunteer station and enable the staff to develop and manage volunteer assignments that address specific community needs. Resources, both financial and in-kind, are kept on record by the director. The bookkeeper will use quicken an accounting software to track and pay invoices with the executive vice-president of the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce signing-off on the original vouchers (in-kind or bills) to manage the monetary portion. The RSVP Director reports monthly to the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors with RSVP Highlights of Events and provides a monthly, as well as year-to-date financial report with bank reconciliation from previous month banking transactions.

The project director is a full-time position and the person primarily responsible for overseeing the program with over 10 years of experience managing grants. The director received certification as a Certified Grant Specialist from the National Grant Writers Association which has provided a detailed overview of grant administration as well as grant research and development. Having completed the required criteria, The director is hereby recognized as a Leadership Stuttgart graduate from Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas. Stuttgart North Arkansas County RSVP has two part-time staff with the support of the local college. The administrative assistant has been with RSVP over 6 years and works directly with the volunteers and the volunteer stations providing services that reinvest in the community. We hope to add one additional staff member, volunteer coordinator, who will assist the director in focusing on increased results for greater impact to benefit those we serve working directly with the volunteers and volunteer stations. Under the new grant we will need to recruit volunteers that will help us address the community need in the Primary Focus Area-Health Futures, and the other focus areas. By partnering with local agencies we can try to meet the needs of the elderly, veterans, disabled, and children. The local college provides RSVP with work-study students each year who works directly with the Project Director in managing the data entry on tracking volunteers and volunteer stations making sure volunteers are placed in stations that have signed MOU's and ensuring all volunteers are eligible to serve in RSVP.

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This organization has an excellent track record of successfully managing volunteers with volunteer stations. The Stuttgart RSVP sponsor has worked with seniors for more than forty years and has clearly demonstrated an ability to carry out impact-based programming and manage federal and state grants. In addition, this organization has adequate facilities, equipment, supplies, purchasing procedures, as well as personnel management support and policies. With the acquisition of RSVP new office we expanded volunteer educational training and host short term volunteer projects. Systems for self assessment, evaluation, and continuous improvement are in place with annual review from the sponsor and volunteer surveys. Results of the evaluation and surveys will be reviewed by the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and recommendations or change will be reflected in the yearly program of work.

We hope to become a active participant in community development, and virtually become the only volunteer organization with a large number of volunteers readily available to assist, RSVP will be sought out by organizations needing volunteers. The project director will work with volunteers to determine which projects will be of interest and provide meaningful volunteer opportunities. Questionnaires will be mailed on an annual basis to RSVP volunteers and work station managers to evaluate job assignments and performances for impact statement.

Other

n/a

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

n/a