

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Volunteers for Community Impact, Inc. (formerly Florida Senior Programs) amended its name, mission, vision, and values to meet the growing needs of the community it serves. Its mission is: "Building relationships that add value to the community by utilizing the experience of caring adults through high-impact volunteer service." Volunteers for Community Impact, Inc. has been the sponsor of RSVP of Volusia County since 2012 and is dedicated to improving our Central Florida community through recruiting, training, placing, recognizing, and retaining volunteers ages 55 and over to meet the critical needs of this community through CNCS initiatives. Additionally, Volunteers for Community Impact, Inc. (VCI) is the sponsor of the Foster Grandparent Program that serves Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Volusia, and Flagler Counties as well as sponsoring RSVP in Orange and Osceola counties.

The Board of Directors for Volunteers for Community Impact, Inc. has strategically aligned the organization with the Corporation for National and Community Service's service categories, performance measures, and current initiatives. This proposal is reflective of the successful transition of RSVP to an impact based program. Three hundred RSVP volunteers will serve in activities to meet the objectives of: Educating youth through School Readiness and K-12 Success, Health and Wellness, Employment, Obesity and Food, and Housing.

The primary focus area of this project is Education. Volunteers will support School Readiness through early intervention in child care classrooms, VPK classrooms, and Head Start classrooms. Volunteers will support K-12 Success through tutoring youth in public schools and other community organizations focused on academic success. At the end of the grant cycle, RSVP volunteers will serve 375 students in the Education focus area, with 80% showing age-appropriate gains in social and emotional development or academic improvement.

As a direct result of RSVP volunteers, nearly 2,000 residents of Volusia County will receive increased services in education and other identified areas. This allows for a more diverse pool of volunteers to utilize their experiences and interests. The CNCS federal investment of \$105,000 will be supplemented by at least \$48,086 of non-federal resources.

## Strengthening Communities

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Volunteers for Community Impact (VCI), previously Florida Senior Programs, has successfully operated RSVP of Volusia County Florida since 2012 by providing meaningful volunteer opportunities to the community. VCI's presence in Volusia County has been established and continues to demonstrate high impact volunteer services to meet critical community needs.

Volusia County, Florida has a land area of over 1,100 with an estimated population of 500,800, according to the Census Bureau.

Within that population, 18.2% are under the age 18 years old, and 22.8% of residents are ages 65 or older. Volusia County residents self-identify as 84.8% Caucasian, 11% African-American, and 12% Hispanic or Latino. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Volusia County has a 16% poverty rate, a \$43,419 median household income with a per capita monetary income of \$24,176. The unemployment rate in Volusia County is 5.7%.

Currently, throughout the area, more than 87.5% of the county's population holds a high school diploma or higher education level. Despite this, approximately 13,235 residents have less than a ninth grade education, and 52,274 residents over the age of 18 do not have a high school diploma or the equivalent. In the 2011-2012 school year, Volusia County had more than 3,300 juvenile delinquency arrests, according to the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. The Florida Department of Education reports that more than 3,914 students were not promoted to the next grade in the 2012-2013 school year. That same year, 7,516 Volusia County students were classified as "Chronically Absent" having missed 21 days of school or more that year. For the 2013-2014 school year, 61.8% of students enrolled in Volusia County Public Schools qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Based on the data, additional resources are necessary to support students who are increasingly falling behind in education. Early educational intervention has the capacity to provide economic benefits for individual residents, families, and the entire county. Due to public school budgetary restraints, this educational support can be successfully provided by volunteer services.

RSVP volunteers in Volusia County are mobilized to meet critical community needs by: helping 3-5 year old children learn to read, aiding elementary who are below grade level to improve their literacy skills, and mentoring those who are academically at-risk. Thirty percent of RSVP volunteers will be placed in the primary area of education. The outcomes will be measured by assignment plans

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completed by station staff and students. More than 300 students will benefit from RSVP volunteer services.

Due to the many needs of the community, other opportunities are available in the areas of health and wellness, obesity and food, employment, and housing. The remaining 200 RSVP volunteers will provide information and hands on services to nearly 2,000 needy residents. Volunteer stations will provide output data to verify the volunteer impact. This will allow for RSVP to best utilize a diverse pool of volunteers, their unique knowledge, skills, and abilities. RSVP volunteers build capacity for other organizations through their voluntary service.

Partnerships throughout Volusia County have been created, supported, and nurtured, in order to increase the capacity of area nonprofit and public agencies. Each new partner is carefully selected and screened based on mutual needs, current funding, and the ability to create and sustain a mutually beneficial partnership. VCI presently has recognized partnerships in place with organizations such as the local school district, Volusia County Public Schools, the area Head Start programs, and local Boys and Girls Clubs. These are only a few partner agencies that amount to VCI's 200+ Volunteer Stations. The responsibilities of a Volunteer Station are to provide each volunteer with training, supervision, public awareness, and support to enable the highest level of impact in the local community and VCI with outcome data.

Outcome-based programming has been implemented to measure volunteer's performance for over ten years with the Corporation for National and Community Service and additional funders. All RSVP volunteers serve in an assignment as outlined in the work plans. Outputs and outcomes will be measured specific to each volunteer and client beneficiary using the relevant Assignment Plans, surveys and log sheets completed by Station staff. Data is collected, organized, and analyzed throughout the year by the Director of Programs.

Volunteer recruitment requires a multidimensional approach to ensure a diverse, skill based, population is recruited. A special emphasis in recruiting will be given to our veteran population, who continue to give back in our community.

VCI continues to recruit new volunteers, increase brand recognition as a leader in volunteerism in our

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community, and demonstrate a high level of impact and community involvement. Our formal Recognition event, other hosted events, ongoing participation in community events, our newsletter, and word-of-mouth VCI is positioned to add new volunteers, establish new partnerships, and foster a positive image in our communities.

The VCI board, staff, and volunteers participate in a variety of activities - including special events, community task forces, and neighborhood and community groups. VCI continues to secure dedicated volunteers and loyal supporters through the use of social networking pages on Volunteer Match, Facebook, Twitter, Google, LinkedIn, and Idealist.org. Through RSVP, Volunteers for Community Impact will continue to expand its resources - financial and in-kind support - in order to continue addressing the critical needs in our community.

### **Recruitment and Development**

Effective recruitment, screening, training, and recognition of volunteers will ensure the best use of their experiences, skills, and abilities to create a positive volunteer experience.

Each potential volunteer will complete a volunteer application to ensure their eligibility to serve. This includes outlining their individual interests and skills. RSVP staff conducts an in-depth interview with each applicant. This includes a relevant background screening, further identification of their individual interests, talents, and availability for volunteer service. Based on the results of this interview, volunteers will be placed relevant to their geographic area, interests, experience, and skills. These opportunities allow RSVP volunteers to grow by developing leadership skills, enhancing their social network, and improving their overall health and quality of life through purposeful and high-impact volunteerism.

VCI offers a cafeteria of volunteer opportunities giving volunteers options when selecting their placement. Volunteer activities in the primary focus area include reading to children to ensure school readiness and mentoring students for K-12 success. Volunteers also assist community organizations with food security as it relates to Obesity and Food, Employment, and Housing. VCI's years of experience in volunteer recruitment and partnership development has resulted in successful volunteer retention.

All volunteers receive general programmatic training as well as training specific to their assignment. RSVP staff will conduct an orientation which outlines specific training, rules and regulations,

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prohibited activities, and best practices. Volunteer Station staff will provide training deemed necessary and relevant to the volunteer's assigned duties. Also, RSVP staff will accompany the volunteer to their Volunteer Station on their first day of service.

Once placed, RSVP staff maintains regular contact with volunteers through site visits, phone conversations, and e-mails to ensure that the volunteer is satisfied with their experience. All Volunteer Stations will receive orientation, ongoing support, site visits and periodic conference calls for further training and engagement.

Recruitment of RSVP volunteers and volunteer stations in Volusia County is critical to success in our targeted priority measures. In order to reach a larger audience of potential volunteers, VCI will utilize an assortment of methods for volunteer recruitment. Volunteers will be recruited through newsletters, e-mail announcements, participation in senior *expo* events, health fairs, flyers, and community presentations. We will respond to requests from nonprofit organizations for volunteer assistance, to invitations from faith-based organizations, and civic groups to give presentations regarding RSVP volunteer opportunities. Our comprehensive volunteer recruitment plan ensures that VCI has a broad range of skill based volunteers who are ethnically, geographically, economically, and educationally diverse.

Volunteer retention is based on successful match of the volunteer's experience, energy, skills, and interests with VCI's volunteer opportunities. This ensures that those who volunteer one year continue to do so the next year. It is much more efficient and cost-effective to retain a volunteer as opposed to recruiting a new volunteer. Ongoing communication, evaluation, and surveys, enables VCI to assess the effectiveness of RSVP for each volunteer, station, and the overall community.

Recognition for the time and talent that RSVP volunteers invest in the community is of immense importance. Our annual Recognition banquet will formally honor the commitment of RSVP volunteers. In addition, year round outreach will be performed which includes individual birthday cards, a small gift or uniform, phone calls, site visits, their pictures on the website, thank you notes, and spotlight articles in the VCI and community newsletters.

### **Program Management**

Volunteer stations will be developed and evaluated based on critical community needs as identified in the work plans. Center Applications, Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's), and ADA

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Accessibility Checklists are completed by each Volunteer Station to ensure shared knowledge and understanding of station responsibilities, including but not limited to, the supervision of volunteers, evaluation of volunteers, and data reporting. Ongoing communication with volunteer stations is critical in order to maintain strong partnerships while continuing to meet agency and community needs. Volunteer stations will be routinely visited at least once per quarter to ensure that volunteer activities and assignments are appropriate and that stations are making progress towards mandated defined goals and reporting requirements.

All volunteers will serve in an RSVP assignment as outlined in the work plans. Existing RSVP volunteers in Volusia County have been moved into impact-based placements, eliminating the need to graduate existing volunteers and stations. Outputs and outcomes will be measured using the relevant Assignment Plans, surveys and log sheets.

Once an assignment has been identified, volunteers complete a Placement Form specific to their assignment which describes their duties to be performed and information on both where and when service activities will be fulfilled. Volunteers are trained in the areas of: methods for proper performance, tasks not to be undertaken, dangers to be aware of and avoid, and procedures in an emergency situation. Prior to commencement of their service, each volunteer receives a Volunteer Handbook which has been developed by RSVP staff.

Additionally, VCI has successfully managed the Foster Grandparent Program and RSVP throughout Central Florida since 1977. These programs have grown from one site in one county to nearly 1,000 volunteers serving more than 200 volunteer stations in five counties. With a strong infrastructure of volunteers placed in educational placements, reading, mentoring, and tutoring, best practices have been established for continued success in each of these areas.

Due to VCI's expertise and experience in this area, measures are currently in place and will continue to be modified to ensure each federal mandate as it relates to RSVP is achieved. This includes applications to ensure both volunteer and station eligibility, up-to-date MOUs as managed by the VCI Office Manager, and an engaged Board which currently serves as the Programs Advisory Council.

### **Organizational Capability**

As a result of Volunteers for Community Impact's (VCI) comprehensive experience, policies and

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procedures are in place to ensure proper governance of grant funds and requirements are met.

VCI's new Executive Director/Project Director was brought on staff in October 2013, and has demonstrated success in financial management, human resources, operational oversight, grant management and compliance, software design, quality assurance, training and technical support. The Office Manager has over five years of experience and serves as Human Resources as well as tracking expenditures according to policies and procedures. The Director of Programs/Program Manager has five years of experience in program evaluation and measuring outcomes, volunteer recruitment and training, and partnership development.

The RSVP Volusia County Volunteer Coordinator reports to the VCI Director of Programs/Program Manager. The role of the Volunteer Coordinator is to serve as the primary contact for mentoring and supervision of stations, volunteers, and the completion of assignment plans. The RSVP Volusia County Volunteer Coordinator has extensive experience in program development, volunteer recruitment, recognition, and special events. The Volunteer Coordinator conducts quarterly site visits and records observations.

VCI's Board of Directors is racially and ethnically diverse and geographically represents the communities we serve with representation from Orange, Seminole, and Volusia counties. The organizational structure does not include an Advisory Council. The Board of Directors Program Committee functions as the council.

Our independent auditor and bookkeeper assure our accountability and proper utilization of all funds. The Executive Director/Program Director must sign off on all outgoing expenditures. Cost centering is used for major funders. On a monthly basis, administrative staff reviews budget variances, and compares actual expenses to budgeted expenses. We provide funders with reports monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, or annually as mandated in grants and contracts.

Cost sharing is used with many of our stations, depending on the needs of the program and resources available from the stations. Many stations provide a meal, meeting space for training, and/or cash donations, ensuring the mandated match is achieved or exceeded annually.

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Other prominent community partners provide resources to the Program such as a community health fair hosted specifically for RSVP and Foster Grandparent volunteers, and retail stores that donate cash and gift cards. All cash and in-kind donations are documented and donors are provided a receipt.

Staff payroll is outsourced while business checks are written in-house. Accounting, bank reconciliation and monthly financial statements are completed by a contracted bookkeeper and auditor once a month, and then reviewed by the agency's Executive Director/Program Director and the Board of Directors. Additionally, an A-133 audit is conducted at the close of each year.

The A-133 audit serves to check and monitor our compliance with federal regulations. The Office Manager provides support for the purchasing procedures in place and supplies are ordered based on the budget and current operational needs. Internal procedures are updated annually and distributed to staff. Staff is reimbursed 45 cents per mile for local travel; long distance travel is planned and determined by the budget.

Outcome-based programming has been the basis for measuring our performance for more than ten years with the Corporation for National and Community Service and other funders. The organization's strategic plan was updated in July of 2014, with input from the Board of Directors and staff. This plan includes benchmarks and timelines in direct relation to the areas of staffing, facilities, technology, growth and funding. VCI is a Drug Free Workplace and has an up-to-date safety program in place. Individual job descriptions for each staff member have been updated and signed. VCI also contracts with Dr. Thomas McGowan, of McGowan and Associates, to provide a comprehensive external evaluation of the sponsoring organization, which was most recently completed in 2013.

### Other

N/A

### PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A