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Executive Summary

An estimated 141 RSVP volunteers will serve annually with RSVP of St. Johns County. Some of their activities will include: tutoring students in literacy and/or math; mentoring students in a one-to-one or small group setting; providing literacy enrichment activities to pre-school students; building homes through Habitat for Humanity; and providing meals to homebound individuals through the Meals on Wheels program. The primary focus area of this project is education. Many RSVP volunteers will promote literacy proficiency, as they provide instructional support at elementary schools, and literacy enrichment in Head Start classrooms and targeted child care classrooms (in partnership with the Early Learning Coalition of North Florida). Tutor services in math will be provided by a small group of volunteers. Mentoring services will be provided to students in the St. Johns County School District's (SJCSD) homeless program, students in the Take Stock in Children program, students identified with academic engagement challenges, and children of veterans and military families.

At the end of the three-year grant, 300 students will display improved academic performance in literacy and/or math (K-12 Success, Tutoring Public School). Three hundred sixty preschool children will display gains in literacy skills (School Readiness, Assisting in Classroom). Thirty students will display improved academic engagement from taking part in a mentoring relationship (K-12 Success, School Based Mentoring). Two hundred fifty students will display improved literacy skills after taking part in the SJCSD summer reading program (K-12 Success, Tutoring Public School). Sixty three economically disadvantaged individuals will be transitioned into housing (Housing, Building or Assisting Homes -- Habitat for Humanity). Thirty five individuals with disabilities will report increased social support (Aging in Place, Food Delivery).

The CNCS federal investment of \$60,769.00 will be supplemented by \$30,246.00 of non-federal resources. Matching funds will come from the SJCSD (cash and in-kind services), community sponsorships and in-kind services, and fundraising activities.

Strengthening Communities

Describe the community and demonstrate that the community need(s) identified in the Primary Focus Area exist in the geographic service area.

St. Johns County is located in the northeast section of Florida between Jacksonville and Daytona Beach. It is one of the state's two oldest counties, being established in 1821. The county is bordered on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, is 600 square miles and is home to more than 202,000 people.

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Persons living below poverty (2008 -- 2012) was 9.8%. There is a diverse separation of income and need throughout the county, with parts of the county having very serious socioeconomic challenges. Hastings, in the southwest portion of the county, is the most rural area of the county and is home to a seasonal and year-round farm worker population. Hastings and the surrounding areas also have a large minority population and a very high percentage of families living below the poverty level. St. Augustine is the county seat. Most social services that are administered to St. Johns County residents come through St. Augustine. There are sometimes satellite service locations in Hastings, the northwest and/or the northeast sections of St. Johns County.

Most of the volunteer service in the education area will occur in the west part of St. Johns County, including a large part of St. Augustine, and Hastings. The six Title I elementary schools in the county are located in these areas. The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) results for 2014 showed deficiencies in all of these schools. Five of these six schools showed scores below the school district and state average in at least two of the following areas: third and fifth grade reading and math, and fourth grade reading, math and writing. The remaining school showed a decline in scores (compared to 2013) in the areas of third grade reading and math, fourth grade math, and fifth grade reading. A study of data showing the number of students displaying early warning signals for school failure (low attendance, suspensions, school testing failure, statewide assessment failure) were significantly higher in this section of the county. Tutoring, preschool reading and mentoring are needed in these geographical areas, to promote academic engagement, and to help students struggling in reading and math.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Florida) defines homeless children as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." In the SJCSD, the number of students identified under this act has increased every year since services have begun for them. Eight hundred three students were identified during the 2013-2014 school year. It is anticipated that a 14% increase will be shown in this area for the 2014-2015 school year. The first priority for RSVP mentor placement will be with the students who are homeless, particularly the unaccompanied youth, who are older students that have no guardian with whom they can reside, and have many obstacles in attaining high school graduation. Mentors provide needed support to encourage school engagement.

Describe how the service activities in the Primary Focus Area lead to National Performance Measure

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outputs or outcomes.

Below are the service activities that will be provided by RSVP of St. Johns County volunteers, followed by the national performance measure outcomes, in the primary focus area of education.

Tutors/Literacy Enrichment volunteers will serve individuals or small groups of students with literacy or math challenges. They will meet on a weekly basis during the school year on the school campus.

The national performance measurement outcome that will be reached is ED5 -- number of students with improved academic performance in literacy and/or math.

School Readiness volunteers will take part in literacy enrichment activities with students in the local Head Start program, and students in child care centers that have literacy needs. The national performance measurement outcome that will be reached is ED24 -- number of children demonstrating gains in school readiness in terms of literacy skills.

Mentors will meet individually or in small groups with students to encourage success in school. They will meet weekly (or as student schedule allows). The national performance measurement outcome that will be reached is ED27 -- number of students in grades K-12 that participated in the mentoring or tutoring or other education program, including CNCS-supported service learning, who demonstrated improved academic engagement.

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

In the primary focus area of education, the RSVP director has a very good working relationship with teachers and administrators in the SJCSJ. Prior to receiving an RSVP volunteer, teachers and/or administrators and the RSVP director will agree upon the type of data to be collected to show outcome measurement success. Data may include standardized test scores, pre/post test results, and/or teacher survey results.

In the healthy futures focus area, Meals on Wheels staff will provide survey results from their independent living survey.

In the economic opportunity focus area, Habitat for Humanity will provide results of the Habitat for Humanity Affiliate Statistical Report, showing the number of individuals transitioned into housing.

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

In the primary focus area of education, RSVP will communicate with schools to seek out students of military families that could benefit from tutoring, mentoring, and/or literacy enrichment activities. St. Johns County has approximately 19,388 veterans (2008-2012 data). RSVP of St. Johns County has worked with veterans service organizations in the past. Partnerships will be developed in this area, to recruit reading assistants, mentors, and tutors for students in the county. RSVP will assist in special service projects for veterans and/or military families, such as the county's homeless stand down, where homeless individuals are given toiletries, clothing, showers, haircuts and other necessities. Many of these individuals are veterans, and this project takes place in partnership with St. Johns County's Veterans' Services Department.

RSVP volunteers will also take part in special projects during "service days" such as 911 Day of Service, ML King, Jr. Day and Senior Corps week. Past projects have included writing letters to deployed soldiers, reading about Martin Luther King, Jr. to preschool students, assisting preschool students in making cards for residents in the local veterans' nursing home, and providing beautification to Home Again St. Johns.

Recruitment and Development

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

All assignments for volunteers will have impact in the areas of education (tutoring, mentoring, reading support), healthy futures (Meals on Wheels), or housing (Habitat for Humanity). Service activities will give volunteers opportunities to interact with students, elderly homebound, and other community members that will benefit from their service. Utilization of their current skill base, as well as development of new skills through training, will culminate in satisfying volunteer experiences that benefit residents of St. Johns County in big ways.

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

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Primary Focus Area -- education: There will be an annual "kick-off" meeting for tutors, mentors and school readiness volunteers (three separate events) at the beginning of each school year. At this meeting, new volunteers will receive program orientation. Experienced volunteers will gather to receive training, but also to prepare for the upcoming school year. During the school year, at least two training/network meetings will be held in each of the three areas of education. While receiving best practice training at each event, this will also provide a means for volunteers to learn from each other, and network amongst those that provide the same type of service to students. These meetings have been very effective in the past, and have given the attendees a chance to learn, share, and be invigorated for continued successful service. For mentors, orientation/training/networking meetings will take place in collaboration with the school district's homeless program liaison and Take Stock in Children program director. For school readiness volunteers (Reading Pals), these meetings will take place in collaboration with the Early Learning Coalition. For school-based tutors, the meetings will take place in collaboration with various SJCS D employees, such as curriculum coordinators.

Focus Area -- healthy futures: The Meals on Wheels program is run through the St. Johns County Council on Aging (SJC COA). The SJC COA provides orientation, and training as needed for volunteers to successfully perform their service activities. Annually, RSVP will join SJC COA to meet with Meals on Wheels volunteers for training and networking.

Focus Area -- economic opportunity: Volunteers serving with Habitat for Humanity receive orientation, training and support from the organization. RSVP will regularly communicate with staff to assure that this continues. Annually, RSVP will host an event whereby Habitat for Humanity volunteers receive training and networking opportunities.

The demographics of the community served and plans to recruit a volunteer pool reflective of the community served.

This could possibly include individuals from diverse races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, or degrees of English language proficiency.

This could possibly include veterans and military family members as RSVP volunteers.

This could possibly include RSVP volunteers with disabilities.

There is a diverse separation of income and need throughout St. Johns County. Many residents in the

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northwest and northeast section of the county have higher incomes, and commute to Jacksonville, Florida for employment. Most of the families qualifying for free and reduced lunch through the SJCS D live in St. Augustine (particularly in West Augustine), and the west portion of the county (Hastings and surrounding areas). County statistics for 2013 show a minority population of 10.3%. This includes Black or African American alone (5.7%), American Indian and Alaska Native alone (0.3%), Asian alone (2.5%), Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone (0.1%), and two or more races (1.7%). 5.8% of the population is Hispanic or Latino. Both the RSVP advisory council and the RSVP staff have experience working with minority populations, as well as individuals with disabilities. This will assist in recruiting volunteers with various ethnicity and proficiency levels. All SJCS D schools provide accommodations for volunteers with disabilities. RSVP of St. Johns County currently has contact with various veteran support organizations in the county, and recruitment efforts will be made for veterans in some of these organizations to serve as mentors, tutors, and/or school readiness volunteers. With the availability of many volunteer opportunities taking place in the western portion of St. Johns County and the city of St. Augustine, residents from these areas will be targeted for recruitment. Serving those in your own "neighborhood" makes lasting connections. Volunteer recruitment happens in many ways, including: opportunities presented in print media, social media, radio and television; presentations to senior groups; presentations to civic and other community groups; and participation in community fairs. Utilization of these means of recruitment will continue, and the program will continue to look for new ways to recruit volunteers.

Your plan and infrastructure to retain and recognize the RSVP volunteers.

The biggest keys to successful volunteer retention involve timely communication and appropriate training. Utilizing email, regular mail, a program-wide phone system, and social media, it is crucial to ensure that volunteers are knowledgeable about current events involving RSVP. Volunteers also need to know that RSVP seeks to assist and support them when challenges arise during their volunteer experience. Dealing with problems as soon as possible is effective, and gives volunteers a needed sense of security. Appropriate training is vital for the service activities of RSVP of St. Johns County. The expectation of the SJCS D and the Early Learning Coalition is that RSVP volunteers begin with a basic knowledge of their service activity, and refine their skills as time goes on. This happens through volunteer experience, and relevant training. Close partnerships will continue, and be enhanced, to provide this necessary training.

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RSVP of St. Johns County recognizes volunteers in many ways. In addition to an annual luncheon where RSVP volunteers are honored, there is also a holiday event in early December where volunteers can enjoy food and fellowship with other volunteers. These two events are always popular, as they provide an opportunity to relax and speak with others serving the community. Social media is utilized during recognition events (live), for special volunteer achievements, and during gatherings such as service days, to boost community engagement. Birthday cards with an appreciation gift/s are sent to volunteers. There are opportunities to nominate volunteers for special service awards (outstanding school volunteer, L'oreal Women of Worth, CNCS awards, etc.). RSVP will continue to develop means to recognize volunteers in vital ways.

Program Management

Your plan and infrastructure to ensure management of volunteer stations in compliance with RSVP program regulations, such as preventing or identifying prohibited activities.

Your plan and infrastructure to develop and/or oversee volunteer stations to ensure that volunteers are performing their assigned service activities.

It is imperative that partnerships with RSVP volunteer stations are mutually beneficial. In St. Johns County, RSVP coordinates the recruitment of school volunteers which is paramount to its success. Finding mentors, tutors, literacy volunteers, and others who are well prepared for volunteering furthers the achievement and well-being of those students served. Continued communication throughout the year also enables station representatives and RSVP staff the chance to elevate the quality of the program, and deal with challenges as early as possible. In addition to basic required information being in print on the tri-annual memorandum of understanding, the RSVP Director will meet with each station representative annually to discuss program compliance. Informal communication will continue throughout the year. All volunteer stations will have at least one site visit per year by an RSVP employee.

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

A very concentrated look at the focus of RSVP of St. Johns County took place in 2011. At that time it was decided that the primary focus of the program would be in the area of education. Partnerships will be renewed with the Meals on Wheels program (SJC COA) and Habitat for Humanity of St.

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Augustine/St. Johns County, as both of these organizations are meeting critical needs in the county. The emphasis on the Meals on Wheels program will not be universal, but instead will be pointed to their biggest volunteer need -- recruiting service in the outlying areas of the county (Hastings, as well as the northwest and northeast areas). Emphasis with Habitat for Humanity will be two-fold. First, RSVP volunteers will be recruited to tutor students of Habitat for Humanity families. While college scholarships are available to these students, historically many of them have not qualified for college admission because of academic performance. Individual and small group tutoring will be of great benefit in preparing students for academic success. This service will be tracked with one of the tutoring -- public school work plans. Second, RSVP will assist in recruiting "core" Habitat for Humanity volunteers -- builders, committee members, etc.

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

The primary focus area for RSVP of St. Johns County is education. The SJCS D has sponsored the program for more than 20 years, and has the means to provide testing results, including standardized tests, pre/post-tests, and other grant data as needed. The RSVP Director has worked closely with SJCS D staff at both school and district levels for over 13 years, and they are very agreeable in sharing data that shows volunteer service success.

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

RSVP of St. Johns County currently has an advisory council consisting of local business leaders, those with experience in the not-for-profit arena, a county government official and current RSVP members. The members are from different parts of the county, and include a good representation of St. Johns County residents. RSVP staff will assure federal compliance with signed memorandums of understanding (MOU), and will assure that all volunteers meet eligibility requirements for RSVP membership, by conducting a semi-annual review of station and volunteer files. The compliance monitoring checklist will be a very important instrument used in the annual project evaluation.

Organizational Capability

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Your plan and infrastructure to provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight (both financial and in-kind) and day-to-day operational support to ensure compliance with RSVP program requirements (statutes, regulations, and applicable OMB circulars) and to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources.

Having been the local sponsor of RSVP of St. Johns County for more than 20 years, the SJCS D has sound programmatic processes in place to assure federal compliance. The RSVP grant proposal is approved by the School Board, and oversight of the program comes from the Chief of Community Relations/RSVP Executive Director. Daily operational duties are performed by the RSVP Project Director and Secretary. The program provides a volunteer handbook for all RSVP volunteers, and has an MOU with each volunteer station. The Project Director is responsible for following the monitoring compliance checklist, and staying up to date with all new and updated federal requirements. The RSVP Director will report to the Advisory Council (either the entire council or a special committee) three times per year, to verify appropriate progression with work plans. Programmatic and financial reports have historically been forwarded to the Corporation for National and Community Service in a timely manner, and will continue to do so. The SJCS D utilizes the SunGard Business Plus program to manage all fiscal requirements for the RSVP grant. For non-federal resource management, the RSVP Director and Advisory Council Treasurer will collaborate to ensure accurate and efficient record keeping. The Director will meet with a designee from the school district, to provide an additional resource for verification of validity and progression of maintaining non-federal and in-kind resources.

Clearly defined staff positions, identification of current staff assigned to the project and how these positions will ensure the accomplishment of the program objectives.

Christina Langston, RSVP Executive Director, is the Chief of Community Relations for the SJCS D. She is responsible for oversight of the RSVP program, including taking an active part in the RSVP Advisory Council as the sponsor representative. She works closely with the Project Director to assure success. Her background includes community relations, media outreach, fundraising, program management and special event planning.

Cheryl Freeman has been the RSVP Director for more than 13 years. She is responsible for the day-to-day activities of the program, including volunteer recruitment, community partnerships, and overall federal compliance. Cheryl has a background in social work, including working with developmentally

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disabled individuals, as well as young children and families through the federal Head Start program. Her experience yields more than 25 years working with volunteers in various capacities.

Donna Guzzo, RSVP Secretary, is responsible for support of the day-to-day activities, with special emphasis on communication (social media, newsletters), special events, and community partnerships.

Much of her experience lies in fundraising, technology (including social media), and volunteer management with a number of organizations throughout the country. RSVP will continue to maintain relationships with local colleges and universities to provide practicum students, interns, and volunteers.

Demonstrates organizational capacity to develop and implement internal policies and operating procedures to provide governance and manage risk, such as accounting, personnel management, and purchasing.

RSVP of St. Johns County is deeply immersed within the SJCSD. The district has strong operating policies and procedures, and the RSVP program follows all of the requirements set forth in each area. Accounting of the grant is found in the SunGard Business Plus program. Purchasing requirements are met through utilization of a purchasing card or purchase requisition (RSVP staff receive training for proper use of these functions). Receipts and updated expense reports are justified each month by district budget personnel, and available for review on the electronic system. School district staff will consult with the RSVP Director to maintain accurate reporting for in-kind and other non-federal resources. The Human Resources Department ensures that all personnel requirements (background screening, drug testing, educational and/or experiential requirements, etc.) are met for RSVP staff.

Demonstrates organizational capacity to manage capital assets such as facilities, equipment, and supplies.

RSVP of St. Johns County receives many resources from the SJCSD, including office space, electricity and water, internet technology support, pest control, custodial services, and telephone service (including the Alert Now system for calling all RSVP members at one time). Having skilled and experienced staff in the maintenance and facilities department, usage of these resources is always kept current and in good working order.

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Demonstrates organizational infrastructure in the areas of robust financial management capacity and systems and past experience in managing federal grants.

Professionals in the SJCS D complete many aspects of financial management for the program. The RSVP director uses generated information from the SunGard system to submit financial reports to the Corporation for National and Community Service and Payment Management System. The school district is also the sponsor for other federally funded programs, including the Head Start program, Title I Program, IDEA and other entitlement programs. The district's large accounting system, coupled with many years of experience with federal funds, makes them a highly efficient fiscal manager for the RSVP program.

Other

None at this time

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

Not applicable at this time.