

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

An estimated 400 RSVP Volunteers will serve under the Southern Wyoming Retired & Senior Volunteer Program. Some of their activities will include Providing Income Tax Help, Delivering Food to Homebound Older Adults, Assisting Department of Veterans Affairs Programs and Emergency Food Distribution. The primary focus area of Southern Wyoming Retired & Senior Volunteer Program is Healthy Futures. At the end of the three-year grant cycle, the program will help economically disadvantaged individuals submit properly completed tax returns and increased knowledge about personal tax issues. There will be an increase of social ties and perceived social support for homebound older adults and homebound or nursing homebound Veterans. Individuals who receive emergency meals to be used during a time of disaster will report increased food security. The CNCS Federal investment will be \$66,417.00 per year and will be supplemented by \$35,580.00 in local match funding, planned giving, fundraisers and assorted grants. Southern Wyoming Retired & Senior Volunteer Program's mission is to provide individuals over the age of 55 volunteer opportunities within the community enriching their lives and enabling them to help others through life experience and learning. Southern Wyoming RSVP Members volunteer in 8 Wyoming Communities which include Lincoln, Uinta, Sweetwater, Carbon, Albany, Laramie, Platte and Goshen. Main cities and towns include Evanston, Green River, Rock Springs, Rawlins, Saratoga, Laramie, Cheyenne, Chugwater and Wheatland, Wyoming. Sponsored by the Cheyenne Housing Authority, RSVP is governed by a Board of commissioners and advised by Councils located in each of the communities served by the program.

## Strengthening Communities

Community and area of need: Southern Wyoming Retired & Senior Volunteer Program's services area includes 8 rural Southern Wyoming Counties. These counties include Lincoln, Uinta, Sweetwater, Carbon, Albany, Laramie, Platte and Goshen. Main cities and towns include Evanston, Green River, Rock Springs, Rawlins, Saratoga, Laramie, Cheyenne, Chugwater and Wheatland, Wyoming. This area represents a WY population of 256,023 (44,345 over the age or 55) and an area of 35,751 square miles. Wyoming is one of the fastest growing states of people over the age of 55. Sponsored by the Cheyenne Housing Authority, Southern Wyoming RSVP provides volunteer opportunities that meet the needs of the community as identified in the 6 Focus Areas: Education; Healthy Futures; Veterans and Military Families; Environmental Stewardship; Economic Opportunity and Disaster Services. Volunteers, 55 and better, are encouraged to share their time, experience,

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abilities and skills for the betterment of their communities and themselves. The need for adding and maintaining senior programs and services is magnified by the ever growing population. Currently, 48% of Southern Wyoming Retired & Senior Volunteers provide assistance in the Primary Focus Area of ¿Healthy Futures¿.

Service Activities: Southern Wyoming RSVP Volunteers deliver services in the areas of H8 - deliver food to homebound older adults and individuals and providing transportation services for homebound older adults and individuals; H10 - Volunteers provide emergency food to individuals from food banks, soup kitchens and food pantries; and H11 - by providing support, services and education to alleviate long-term hunger. Outcomes are identified in H9 - by the number of homebound or older adults and individuals who report having increased social ties or perceived social support; H12 - by the number of individuals that report increased food security.

Infrastructure and Support Data: Local Advisory Groups are in place in each of the communities that Southern Wyoming RSVP provides volunteer services. The Advisory Group is made up of individuals, professional and retired, with adults from all ages. Advisory Groups meet on a quarterly basis to plan upcoming activities; provide staff support and assistance; and conduct on-going assessment. The Advisory Groups act as a liaison between the community and Southern Wyoming RSVP. The Advisory Council assists Program Staff in reviewing stations and volunteer placements to ensure that focus is in the areas outlined in the National Performance Measures. Inputs, Outcomes and output data is collected and managed by RSVP Staff using RSVP Reporter.

Activities in Service to Veterans: Cheyenne, Wyoming is home to a VA Hospital and VA Clinics are located in the other counties we serve. Assistance for Veterans is needed for housing, social services, medical and mental health. Southern Wyoming RSVP Volunteers help fill these needs by helping the VA with transportation of Veterans to medical appointments, helping with social activities in the VA, providing companionship to veterans and helping with the program "No Vet shall Die Alone". Just today, we visited the local VA to watch 4 Southern Wyoming RSVP Volunteers in action. The volunteers provided music, companionship, pie and ice cream for Vets in the VA Nursing Home. It was so nice to see the smiles on their faces. One of the volunteers mentioned that she was in the process of collecting items for homeless Vets that would be distributed during a meal set for later this month. The volunteer is 85 years old and said she has to keep going in order to care for Vets in need.

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## Recruitment and Development

High quality experience for volunteers: The Southern Wyoming Retired and Senior Volunteer Program strives to assure a high quality of experience for volunteers by developing a variety of opportunities for community service for older adults willing to share their experience, abilities and skills for the betterment of their communities and themselves. RSVP Staff and Advisory Council Members continually provide outreach to seek and recruit potential volunteers and volunteer stations. Once a volunteer is recruited, the relationship between staff and the volunteer is fostered with continued support and recognition. Recruitment is a continual process through word-of-mouth, public speaking engagements, attendance at community functions and local media. The Advisory Groups host 2 recruiting events annually in an effort to increase our volunteer base. Retention of volunteers occurs through orientation, and volunteer assignments are made consistent with the interests and abilities of the volunteers and the Areas of Focus in the communities served. Recognition is given to volunteers frequently throughout the year. Formal recognition events are held throughout the year in addition to informal recognition in the form of notes, phone calls and cards are given frequently. Appreciation is an ongoing, everyday process. Showing appreciation for volunteers is a good way to show respect, relate to each other's strengths and build mutual commitment. Volunteers give of their time, skills, knowledge, friendliness and love for many reasons. One reason is that it makes them feel good. People do not volunteer because they expect a reward, they see a job to be done, and they do it. Our volunteer recognition system is designed to be a valuable component of the volunteer support system. We strive to offer visible acknowledgement of significant service.

Training: Southern Wyoming RSVP Staff Members work hard to ensure that volunteers are provided orientation, in-service training and supervision for their volunteer service. During the initial orientation, volunteers are given an overview of the RSVP Program, the primary areas of focus that are covered and their role in providing much needed assistance in reaching desired outcomes. This training is provided on a case-by-case basis with each new volunteer placement. In addition to the training provided by staff, the volunteer station also provides ongoing instructions specific to the volunteer placement. Orientation, in-service instruction, supervision, support and recognition are not only provided for the volunteer, but also for project staff, advisory council members, stations and the communities we serve. RSVP Staff Members attend training provided by CNCS, training sessions are then provided to the Advisory Councils, ongoing training and instruction is provided for volunteer station who in-turn provide ongoing supervision and instruction for the volunteers.

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Volunteer Demographics: Currently the demographics of the volunteers serving under Southern Wyoming Retired and Senior Volunteer Program are as follows;

### Age

55-65 = 16%

66-74 = 37%

75-84 = 31%

85 + = 16%

### Gender

Female = 67%

Male = 33%

### Ethnicity

Hispanic/Latino = 2%

Native American = 0%

Not Hispanic/Latino = 27%

White = 71%

### Racial Group

Am. Indian/Alaska Native = (1 vol) 0%

Asian or Pacific Islander = (1 vol) 0%

Black or African American = (1 vol) 0%

Hawaiian = 0%

Hispanic = 4%

White = 95%

Veteran = 29%

Volunteers with Disabilities = 18%

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Recognition of Volunteers: As mentioned above, recognition is given to volunteers frequently throughout the year. Formal recognition events are held throughout the year in addition to informal recognition in the form of notes, phone calls and cards are given frequently. Appreciation is an ongoing, everyday process. Showing appreciation for volunteers is a good way to show respect, relate to each other's strengths and build mutual commitment. Volunteers give of their time, skills, knowledge, friendliness and love for many reasons. One reason is that it makes them feel good. People do not volunteer because they expect a reward, they see a job to be done, and they do it. Our volunteer recognition system is designed to be a valuable component of the volunteer support system. We strive to offer visible acknowledgement of significant service.

### **Program Management**

Management and Oversight of Volunteer Stations: Southern Wyoming RSVP Staff Members strive to develop volunteer opportunities that meet Primary and Other Focus Areas that have been identified by CNCS. Volunteer assignments are made consistent with the interests and abilities of the volunteers and the Focus Areas. Program staff work closely with RSVP Stations through regular communication and site visits to ensure that volunteers are performing the duties that meet the regulations of the program while addressing the needs of the identified focus areas. Staff members conduct site visits annually with each station to go over program goals, volunteer job descriptions and update the Memorandum of Understanding when needed. These site visits help us in identifying and preventing activities that are prohibited and not in line with meeting goals outlined in the Focus Areas.

Minimizing Disruption of Volunteers as we Change Focus: Southern Wyoming RSVP Staff and Advisory Council Members have been making small changes over the past 2 years in an effort to fall into alignment with the Focus Areas identified by CNCS. After looking at all of our stations and where volunteers are placed, we discovered that we naturally fell into the Primary Focus Area of Healthy Futures. As we obtained new volunteers, we placed them with stations that met the requirements identified in the Areas of Focus. We also have been providing education to volunteers and stations regarding the Focus Areas explaining program changes.

Track Record in the Primary Focus Area: This will be the first time that Southern Wyoming RSVP has submitted a competition grant. Although we have been working on changing our program to come into alignment with the Areas of Focus identified by CNCS, we had been working on goals identified in work plans prior to current performance measures.

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Project Compliance with RSVP Federal Regulations: The Southern Wyoming RSVP Program has been placing volunteers with stations to meet community needs for over 36 years. An Advisory Council in Laramie County has been in place since the inception of the program and additional Advisory Councils were established within each of the other 7 communities as we expanded our reach across Southern Wyoming. Volunteers are placed with stations that have signed MOUs and all potential volunteers are required to go through an Intake process and fill out an RSVP Volunteer Application to determine eligibility to serve. Records of all Active and Inactive Volunteers and Volunteer Stations are kept locked in the RSVP Offices. RSVP Staff Members utilize RSVP Reporter to store data and volunteer/station demographics.

### **Organizational Capability**

Sound Programmatic and Fiscal Oversight; Financial Management Capacity and Past Experience: The Southern Wyoming Retired & Senior Volunteer Program has been serving the needs of Laramie County, Wyoming for over 36 years. Fiscal oversight is provided by the Cheyenne Housing Authority and all receipts and expenditures are approved by the Board of Commissioners. The Cheyenne Housing Authority has not only manages the RSVP Federal Grant over 36 years, but also manages approximately \$12,000,000.00 through its various programs including Federal HUD and Aging Grants and has done so for the past 39 years. All expenditures must be approved, all checks require dual signature, and all payments are audited internally by the accounting department. An annual audit is performed by a private accountant and on-site assessments are conducted by Local Funding Sources to assure accountability, efficient and effective use of resources. Monetary resources are actively sought throughout the year to sustain and expand the project. Proposals are written and presentations are given annually to each of the communities and counties that we serve in an effort to secure local match funding. Additional grants are sought to help supplement the program. The Advisory Council currently conducts 1 large fundraising event in November and December of each year to raise funds and program awareness. In-kind resources are procured from time-to-time to help stretch the budget and create a quality program. Examples of in-kind include office, storage and meeting space, and donated materials.

Staff Positions: Two, part-time staff members are responsible for program management. These staff members include a ½ time Project Director who had education and pas work experience in the field of Social Service. She has been with the RSVP Program for 14 years and has successfully worked in

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programs relating directly with the elderly for the past 16 years. She has successfully written and managed millions in Federal, State, City, County and local grants. In addition to the Director, a ¾ time Outreach Coordinator has successfully helped expand the program into 6 additional Wyoming Counties. She has been with the program for 13 years and has an extensive background working with Non-Profit Community Service Programs. These two project staff and the Southern Wyoming RSVP Program are sponsored by the Cheyenne Housing Authority and governed by a 5 person Board of Commissioners. An RSVP Advisory Council is in place and works as the liaison between senior volunteers, volunteer stations, staff and the community. Together, staff, council, and sponsor ensure that program objectives are accomplished.

Policies, Procedures, Assets: Internal policies for programs and personnel for Southern Wyoming RSVP have been in place and regularly updated for the past 36 years. Procedures outline all aspects of the program including accounting, personnel management and purchasing. Program assets are inventoried annually to ensure proper program use of equipment and supplies. Equipment is updated and replaced as needed as outlined in the grant and approved by the Board of Commissioners.

### **Other**

N/A

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

N/A