

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

"The Bakken" as it is termed has brought prosperity to many; however our most vulnerable populations are silently struggling. Seniors on fixed incomes, disabled individuals, and jobless Veterans returning home after service can't afford to meet their most basic needs: housing, medical care, and food to name a few. Currently, Veterans are among the hardest hit group not to mention that the population increases regularly with Veterans seeking employment after their terms of service, but there are few resources to support Veteran needs.

An estimated 250 volunteers will serve our local Veterans and Seniors in an effort to aid fellow community members. Some of their activities will include food delivery, providing companionship for seniors, providing assistance to Veterans in rural areas, providing assistance to elderly Veterans, and assisting with other Richland County deemed Community priorities. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. At the end of the three-year grant, seniors and disabled individuals will be receiving companionship and staying in their homes, and Veterans will be receiving CNCS assistance.

We are requesting \$86,045 in funding today which will be supplemented by the County and Health Department with \$79,834 in funding to invest in the community's needs regarding Healthy Futures, Veterans and Military Families and Community priorities. With the current economic climate and it being influenced and changed by the oil boom, the need for services for seniors and veterans is greatly needed in our community and our projected for the end of the 3 year grant cycle include developing more Veteran work sites, recruiting more RSVP volunteers, and serving Seniors and Veterans and Military Families in our community.

## Strengthening Communities

Richland and McCone Counties are what are considered frontier due to population distribution, with less than 5 people per square mile. These two counties cover over 4,700 square miles in the state of Montana. According to the Census Quick facts, the estimated populations for Richland County in 2013 is 11,214 people. Also, between 2008 and 2010 there were 723 documented Veterans in Richland County. 13.2% of Richland County's population is made up of seniors aged 65 and older. McCone County had an estimated population of 1,709 residents, 22.5% of these being seniors over the age of 65 and from 2008-2012 there were 137 documented veterans in McCone County.

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Richland County had a Growth Policy put together and updated by Kadramas, Lee and Jackson, a local engineering and surveying firm. The Richland County Growth Policy was updated in August of 2014 and shows lots of important and interesting data on how the oil boom has affected Richland and McCone Counties immensely. To show how much the population has boomed, lets take a look at the recent numbers. According to the US Census Bureau and the Montana Department of Communication, Census and Economy Information Center, between 2000 and 2012, the population only increased by 0.8 percent. This was the first ten year period since 1970-2980 that the county had experienced growth at all. Richland County's population is projected to increase by 15 percent between 2010 and 2015 and another 9 percent between 2015 and 2020. This population increase is due to the availability of jobs in the oil and gas industry, which has caused a mass exodus of people from all over the country who are looking to be a part of the Bakken prosperity.

With the Bakken influence right in our county, in our current local economic climate, some people have flourished and some people have struggled. Many people have been able to find jobs with ease, purchase homes, provide for their families or begin a career. But not all of the consequences of the Bakken have been positive. Housing prices have skyrocketed, housing in many places is unavailable, food prices have increased, gas prices have increased, infrastructure has not kept up with the influx of people, and crime rates and traffic accidents have increased. One of the groups that has been hit hard by the change has been seniors. People over the age of 50 make up the largest portion of Richland County population. With increased costs on essentials like food, gas, bills and more and the housing prices that have skyrocketed, for many seniors it has been difficult to adjust. According to the Montana Department of Commerce, a Single Family home in 2012 had an average cost of \$220,358. Many seniors and disabled individuals who are retired or on a fixed income could only afford something in the range of 40,000 to 50,000, and for those renting, the median rental cost in Richland County in 2012 was \$1,313 and seniors and disabled individuals on a fixed income were only able to afford rent in the 300- 350 range, more than \$900 dollars below the median affordable rental price! These numbers further indicate the desperate need for assistance and resources by these groups and individuals.

With assistance from the RSVP program and RSVP volunteers, many seniors have been able to continue to live independently in their homes, get housing and food assistance, have access to necessary services such as legal assistance, exercise programs and more that keep seniors healthy,

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active, and able to live longer without being displaced from their homes. With SOS, Seniors Outreaching to Seniors, phone calls are made to seniors in rural areas to provide some much needed social interaction and to check on these seniors, and visits are made to seniors in their homes to assist with everyday tasks and provide companionship. RSVP partners with Commission on Aging to help distribute healthy meals to seniors through Commodities, Meals on Wheels, and Harvest for Seniors, helping to ensure seniors are getting the nutrition they need, and eliminating some shopping trips and grocery costs. RSVP also is a member of the Senior Coalition, a community group designed to address the needs of local seniors. This group has been responsible for providing medication setups, in home personal care and more for a fraction of what the private cost would be, reducing expenses for seniors on these much needed services.

Another group that has been affected by the oilfield economy is Veterans. After looking at general census data which shows the over 700 Veterans in our area, and the population growth over the past 10 years, it is safe to say that the number of Veterans is increasing as well. Montana's Veteran population according to the Veteran Affairs website is around 11% female and 89% male. In Richland County, the percentage of male population is over 52% of documented residents, not including temporary laborers and transient individuals called to our area by the idea of prosperity. With these documented numbers, It is safe to assume that the amount of Veterans will continue to increase, due to the availability of jobs and money. The issue with this is that in our area services for Veterans are limited. Mental Health services are virtually non existent, the closest VA resources are in Miles City or Plentywood, homeless shelter, food banks and clothing distribution services are limited, and transportation services are few and far between.

RSVP has participated in projects for Veterans in the past and with the influx of Veterans that have come to Richland and McCone Counties, RSVP has determined that assisting Veterans of all ages to be an important priority. By providing transportation assistance, helping Veterans find housing assistance, food assistance, mental health services and more, we will keep our local Veterans healthy and at home in Richland and McCone Counties, helping to alleviate the need to travel to find assistance.

### **Recruitment and Development**

The current RSVP program is dedicated to finding the right work station fit for every volunteer. Before volunteers are placed at a work station there is an initial conversation between RSVP staff and the

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volunteer. Their interests, experiences, and skills are identified. They are then matched with the appropriate workstation. This is the first step in ensuring a high quality volunteer assignment. Recruitment is an on-going process that will be continued. The RSVP program provides many opportunities for sharing experiences and identifying new skills and abilities to better meet the needs of the workstation and have the most effective impact on the community need being addressed. There are a few ways this assessment will be done: There will be volunteer representation on the advisory board to provide the board with information on their experiences and periodic evaluations will be done with the volunteers and worksites to ensure the needs are being met. Both the volunteers and the worksites will be aware of the community need they are addressing and the outcome that is needed. This will be part of the initial orientation for both the volunteers and the worksite. This is included in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the site and RSVP. Other important aspects of the MOU include:

- \* RSVP will provide volunteer orientation prior to placement.
- \* RSVP will periodically monitor volunteer activities to assess and discuss needs.
- \* The volunteer workstation will implement orientation, in-service or special trainings for their volunteers.
- \* The volunteer workstation will provide a job description for the volunteer positions along with supervision and guidance.
- \* The volunteer workstation will track and record volunteer hours and required outcome data.

RSVP has worked with many non-profits and local organizations on cooperative projects and trainings. These partnerships and collaborations include local county officials, Sidney Health Center, Richland County Job Service, VFW, Sidney Elks Club, and other community organizations. RSVP will draw on these partnerships for both volunteer trainings and access to volunteers that best represent the demographics of the communities we serve. Richland County Health Department, the sponsor agency, facilitates an annual community building process that continually assesses needs, develops plans and organizes action through several diverse groups representing various agencies and organizations in the counties we serve. RSVP is represented on several action groups and this gains access to diverse populations as potential volunteers and ensures that the RSVP work plan is aligned with the community needs, especially those that align with our primary focus of Healthy Futures and our secondary focuses of Veterans and Military Families and other Community priorities.

To build up our volunteer base and recruit the best RSVP volunteers possible RSVP will employ the

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following methods:

1. Write and publish articles in local newspapers pertaining to program promotion, volunteer recruitment, and volunteer recognition.
2. Participation and contribution to The Link, Commission on Aging's newsletter that is distributed to local seniors and RSVP volunteers.
3. Working with other volunteer agencies to promote community involvement and encouraging existing volunteers to help with recruitment efforts.
4. Promoting RSVP and volunteerism at local events and meetings of civic organizations such as Lions, Jaycees, Kiwanis, Elks and Faith based organizations and developing partnerships with these organizations.
5. Recruiting volunteers ages 55 and older to engage them in the community, keeping them healthy, active, and putting their skills to work for a good cause.
6. Participating in the annual Health Fair and having volunteers tell their stories and and share the benefits of volunteering with potential volunteer recruits.
7. RSVP will update the Richland County Health Department page with up and coming events, showcase volunteers, and sites where volunteers are needed. RSVP will also highlight volunteers and their work in other media venues such as radio, TV, newspaper and more whenever the opportunities arise.

To Retain our key RSVP volunteers who make the program a reality we will:

1. Make sure that each volunteer completes a detailed intake form in which they tell us specifically what they are interested in volunteering for and sit with the volunteer coordinator to discuss work stations that would align with their interests.
2. Follow up and the work stations will ensure that both volunteers and stations are happy with placements and if a volunteer is not happy they will be moved to a work station or volunteer position that more aligns with their needs.
3. A yearly survey will be taken to ensure that volunteers are still happy in their assignments and stations will be adjusted if volunteer feedback is negative.

Recognition is a very important piece of making the volunteer's experience unique and meaningful. RSVP will doing the following things to recognize our volunteers:

1. Provide at least two annual recognition events where RSVP volunteers are provided with a meal or

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a gift and are thanked for their service.

2. Articles, media and other community recognition of volunteers are made know through RSVP media such as Facebook etc. to acknowledge their recognition.

### Program Management

Key aspects of Richland and McCone County Program Management are developing and managing volunteer stations and volunteer assignments, assessing project performance, managing information and data, managing project resources, and securing project resources. Visit to McCone County to visit sites, check on volunteer status, and engage with volunteers with occur regularly throughout the year to maintain a good working area in McCone County.

To Develop and Manage Volunteer Stations and Volunteer Assignments, regular visit will be made to workstations and volunteers to assess that terms of the MOU are being met and that volunteers and workstations are happy with assignments. Visits to sites will allow RSVP staff to identify and prevent or eliminate prohibited activities. Relationships will be developed with local organizations, agencies and businesses to foster good working relationships and to collaborate as RSVP workstations or as partners on community based projects.

To Assess Project Performance RSVP will use the RSVP Project Self Assessment Checklist which will be completed yearly in November. The assessment checklist will be instrumental to the RSVP Advisory Board and staff to validate the impacts of RSVP and help set new goals for the program.

The Self Assessment Checklist includes:

1. Comparing beginning of the year data and end of the year data for performance management.
2. Ensuring the data collected pertaining to volunteer performance is mirroring work plan outcomes
3. Surveying work station supervisors to determine if work station needs are met
4. Surveying community members to determine if priority community needs are being met
5. Tracking the number of seniors receiving home visits, companionship, health education and services if they are a veteran.
6. Requiring work stations to provide data as stated in the MOU.
7. Updating and maintaining all volunteer and work station records annually.

To Manage Information and Data, RSVP will continue to use Volunteer Reporter, a software program

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that tracks and documents hours, volunteer placements, interests, and more and develops reports used for workstations, volunteers and the RSVP program itself. These reports are available to workstations and volunteers upon request for varied reasons ranging from taxes to non-profit paperwork.

To Manage Project Resources, RSVP will continue to use the system in place for all county programs to manage resources for accountability and effective use of resources. The RSVP Advisory Board and the RCHD Administrator oversee resources within the program including financial resources, in kind contributions, equipment, supplies and personnel management. Relationships with community partners will also be fostered and developed to garner support for the program.

To Secure Project Resources we will raise 20% of the total budget locally. The program has secured funds from the county and the remaining funds can be raised through corporate grants, documented in-kind donations, new funding sources determined by the RSVP Advisory Council, engagement of volunteers, staff, and collaborative efforts with other Senior Corps programs to raise funds, and exploring new donation and grant sources within the community.

RSVP participates in an annual Community Conference that determines community needs and what are the most important community priorities. By participating in this we can reassess the value of workstations and their importance in the community. After working with workstations to review their focus in aligning with community priorities and the priorities of RSVP work plans, RSVP can graduate stations that no longer meet current community needs or fit within RSVP work plans. Through partnerships developed as a result of the community conference, other aging programs have been developed through the county. In addition to RSVP, the Richland County Health Department (RCHD) sponsors several other programs that have a focus on those over the age of 55. They are medication set-up assistance, monthly senior center visits by a public health nurse, and diabetic foot care. In addition to these programs, the Richland County Commission on Aging is a fellow county program that collaborates closely on projects for seniors. RCHD also partners with Montana Job Service, Veterans Affairs, Economic Development, Sidney Health Center and other community organizations to assess the needs of local Veterans.

### **Organizational Capability**

The Richland County Health Department (RCHD) has been the sponsoring agency of RSVP since 2002. RCHD currently operates and manages 12 grants that range from private foundations to state

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and federal grants. RCHD's budget is approximately \$900,000 annually. RSVP is subject to the financial policies of the Richland County Health Department including the In Kind Donation Policy, Processing Expenditures and Claims Policy, and Documenting Staff Time Policy. The department maintains a grant file that includes contracts, notice of award, monthly expenditures with back up documentation. Financial reports such as FFR and progress reports in eGrants are completed with program staff, administrative support, and final approval is given per the Department Administrator.

The staff positions are as follows:

1. Sponsor Administrator provides leadership, supervision, and overall support of the program staff to maximize job performance. The administrator also provides direction in the development and implementation of the program, advisory board, reporting and financial requirements. The current Administrator of the Richland County Health Department (RCHD), sponsoring agency of the Richland and McCone County RSVP, has held that position for the past 17 years, starting in 1997. She holds a B.S. in Biology, an M.S. in Gerontology, and an M.B.A.
2. Program Director will manage the day to day activity and operation of the program including staff management, contract management, financial and reporting requirements, program evaluation/assessment, advisory board development, and oversight of recruitment, retention and recognition efforts. The program director will work with the program coordinator on volunteer assignments and work station development. The RSVP Program Director began this year in October 2013 and has a BA in Communications and Public Relations
3. Volunteer Coordinator will work with program promotion, volunteer recruitment, placement, work site development, volunteer orientation, recognition and retention. The coordinator provides support to volunteers and all RSVP projects, assisting the project director to carry out activities and operations of the program. The RSVP Volunteer Coordinator has held that position since December, 2006.
4. Administrative Support Staff performs clerical duties such as office organization, data collection, and financial reporting function. The support staff will assist with other duties including program promotion, volunteer recruitment and recognition on an as needed basis with direction from the program director.

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The Richland County Health Department, RSVP's sponsoring agency, has a yearly budget of \$900,000. RSVP has adequate facilities, equipment, supplies, purchasing procedures and personnel management support is provided through our sponsor, RCHD. RSVP staff are considered employees of the sponsor and are subject to its personnel policies and procedures including annual evaluation.

RCHD has a quality improvement process that each program is required to complete. A successful example of RSVP utilizing the PDSA to solve a community problem involves medical transportation. RSVP volunteers working with the Seniors Outreaching to Seniors (SOS) program were constantly getting requests to drive seniors to necessary out of town doctor appointments. While we did have public transportation in the town of Sidney 5 days a week, it only went to the other three towns in Richland County once a month and the busses were not allowed out of the county severely limiting the ability of people who don't/can't drive to get to their out of town doctor's appointments. After completing a PDSA on this issue and gather the right people and agencies together, we were able to successfully get weekly bus service to all towns in Richland County, as well as an agreement with a bus service in North Dakota to meet our bus system at the Montana/North Dakota border to insure people could get to their doctor's appointments in neighboring Williston, ND, a much larger town with more services in close proximity to Richland County.

### **Other**

We have chosen two primary focus areas and one secondary focus area. Our first primary focus area is Healthy Futures. This Focus Area encompasses many important issues and our primary objective within this to focus on will be Home bound Seniors and Disabled Individuals. It is important in our community to address the needs of seniors and provide them with inexpensive services and care so that they can continue to live in the homes that they have lived in for years and remain in the communities that they helped to develop. By focusing on SOS, partnering with Commission on Aging and Senior Coalition, and working with Sidney Health Center's Visiting Nurse Program, we will be able to help with many senior issues.

Our second primary focus is Veterans and Military Families. Montana has over 100,000 according to the Veterans Affairs website and there is a great need for many Veterans to be linked to care and services, especially in more rural parts of Montana where services are few and far between and getting to these services includes traveling many miles in many cases with the expense of travel. With our Christmas Stocking for Veterans Project, participation in the Honor Ride, and partnerships with the

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VFW and Job Service, we will look to solve the needs of our Community's Veterans.

Our third focus area will be Community Priorities. This will be a great way to encompass our other projects, participate in community event and partner with other organizations and be able to focus on what make an impact in Richland County and McCone County.

We will be participating in the CNCS National Days of Service and other required projects: 9/11, Martin Luther King JR Day, Winter Ready, Mayor's Day, Volunteer appreciation Week and Senior Corps Week. For 9/11, we will be distributing fresh produce to local seniors in need in cooperation with Commission on Aging's Harvest for Seniors. For our Winter/Summer Ready Projects we will be partnering with Karen O'Dell from Action for Eastern Montana and distributing Fire/Snow Emergency Kits to Tribal Elders on various reservations around the state. For Martin Luther King Jr Day, we will be partnering again with Action for Eastern Montana and going to Headstart in Glasgow and Headstart in Glendive and doing projects and education with the Headstart youth. These projects will fall into our work plans and will be tailored to meet the needs of our individual program.

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

N/A