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Executive Summary

Frontier life in Eastern Montana can pose many difficulties. Some of the difficulties that are frequently run into include availability of goods and services, transportation, and even something as basic as companionship. For many seniors and Veterans in these counties these are very real problems posed to them. RSVP volunteers have been filling a void in these counties and helping to bridge gaps in the communities, providing assistance and links to services that might be unavailable otherwise.

Roosevelt, Daniels and Sheridan Counties are in the heart of Montana frontier land. The definition of "frontier" is having less than 5 people per square mile. With expansive land and sparse population, services are often few and far between and 295 RSVP volunteers in Northeastern Montana have been able to close the gaps between individuals and services. In these three counties we have a large piece of federal reservation land, encompassing a large Native American population. There is also a large veteran population in these three counties

An estimated 300 RSVP volunteers will serve. Some of their activities will include assisting seniors and individual with disabilities, providing companionship to seniors and individuals with disabilities, serving senior Veterans, providing services to Veterans in rural areas, and participating in other community prioritized activities. At the end of the three year grant we anticipate seniors and individuals with disabilities living independently and having access to services and companionship, and veterans and military families receiving CNCS support. We are requesting \$105,000 which will be supplemented by the County and the Health Department with \$30,026 in funding to increase the counties' ability to address community needs of Healthy Futures, Veterans and Military families and other community priorities. The quality of life of residents of Roosevelt, Daniels, and Sheridan Counties in Montana will be greatly improved by the efforts of local RSVP volunteers. As a newer grant, the projected outcomes will be developing work stations, recruiting volunteers, educating and raising awareness about the RSVP, and engaging in projects benefiting Seniors and Veterans and Military families.

Strengthening Communities

By population and area, Roosevelt, Sheridan, and Daniels Counties are classified as "Frontier". The population of Sheridan County according to the 2013 Census QuickFacts was 3,668, with 21.2 % being seniors over the age of 65 and 337 documented Veterans between 2008 and 2012. Daniels County has

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a population of 1,791, with 25.5% being over the age of 65 and 213 documented Veterans between 2008 and 2012 according to the Census QuickFacts. Roosevelt has an approximate population of 11,125 with at 10.8% population of people 65 and older and a documented Veteran population of 517 from 2008 to 2012 according to the 2013 Census QuickFacts Data. So between these three counties there are an estimated 16,584 residents and the total square mileage of the three counties totals up to 5,503. That would put the population of these counties together at less than 3 people per square mile, more than meeting the definition of "frontier" which is less than 5 people per square mile.

The challenges that being a frontier area poses are lack of resources and services, physical distance between resources and services and lack of people to run these services and provide resources. For seniors, many have to leave the towns and communities that they have lived in their whole life because they need services to remain independent and they are not available so they are forced to move to larger places like Billings, or out of the state altogether. Veterans are forced to leave to find mental health services, financial assistance, rehabilitation services and housing because it is unavailable or not affordable.

These 3 counties have also been touched by some of the Bakken influences. Populations have increased, traffic on the roads has increased, housing prices have gone up and have effected these vulnerable populations in this way as well. Seniors and disabled individuals on a fixed income had available funding for rentals at between \$300 and \$350, and the median rental cost in Daniels, Sheridan and Roosevelt Counties were all well out of this range, at \$1,485 dollars per month. For a single family home, the affordable price range for seniors and disabled individuals on a fixed income is between \$40,000 and \$55,000, with prices in Daniels County being the cheapest at \$75,000 median cost, Sheridan in second with a median cost of \$169,500 and Roosevelt County the most expensive with median cost being \$187,500. All of these average housing prices are way out of the price range of most seniors and disables individuals on a fixed income.

Another dimension is the presence of the Fort Peck Reservation in these counties. According to the Fort Peck Tribes website," The Reservation is 110 miles long and 40 miles wide, encompassing 2,093,318 acres (approximately 3,200 square miles). Of this, approximately 378,000 acres are tribally owned and 548,000 acres are individually allotted Indian lands. The total of Indian owned lands is about 926,000 acres. There are an estimated 10,000 enrolled tribal members, of whom approximately

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6,000 reside on or near the Reservation". With a high population of tribal elders and Veterans alike, need for services is prominent on the Fort Peck Reservation as well.

RSVP has been able to close some of the gaps in services by reaching out to those in need and being the link to the services that are available or by providing the much needed services themselves as a volunteer. Some of the current areas where RSVP is assisting are through Council on Aging which assists senior citizens in the area, SOS volunteers make outreach visits and calls to local seniors, and Veterans from the Fort Peck Reservation were assisted through the Veterans Stand Down in Poplar last year where RSVP volunteers helped provide food, clothing, access to assistance and more.

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 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 training.

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These partnerships and collaborations include local county officials, Plentywood Hospital, Sheridan County Council on Aging, Roosevelt County Council on Aging, Glenwood, The Manor, and more . 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, works with other health departments in the region to assess needs, develop plans and organize 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 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:

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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 do the following things to recognize our volunteers:

1. Provide at least two annual recognition events where RSVP volunteers are provided with a meal or a gift and are thanked for their service.
2. Articles, media and other community recognition of volunteers are made known through RSVP media such as Facebook etc. to acknowledge their recognition.

Program Management

Key aspects of Sheridan, Daniels and Roosevelt 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.

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:

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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 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.

Organizational Capability

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

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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.

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.

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RCHD has a quality improvement process that each program is required to complete

Other

For this grant cycle our community focuses were reevaluated and refocused to align with the new CNCS performance measures and with the changing demands of our community. The focus areas that have been chosen reflect the community needs as they are important today.

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.

Our second primary focus is Veterans and Military Families. Montana has over 100,000 according to the Veterans Affairs website, with over 1000 Veterans in these three Counties, 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. This year Northeastern Montana RSVP will be participating in a Veterans Christmas stocking project in partnership with Action for Eastern Montana and Richland and McCone County RSVP where necessary items such as toiletries, non perishable food, small clothing items and other needed things will be collected, put into stockings and distributed to local veterans in need around the holidays.

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 Sheridan, Daniels, and Roosevelt Counties. Wolf Point and Plentywood have animal Rescues where RSVP volunteers foster animals, assist with spay and neuter clinics, help raise funds for food and shelters for these animals. This has been a huge impact on communities where abandoned and stray animals are in high volume.

We will be participating in the CNCS National Days of Service and other required projects: 9/11,

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Martin Luther King JR Day, Winter Ready, Mayor's Day, Volunteer appreciation Week and Senior Corps Week. These projects will fall into our work plans and will be tailored to meet the needs of our individual program. This year for Winter Ready, Northeastern Montana RSVP volunteers held a winter clothing drive and collected winter clothing to distribute to those in need and we will be partnering with Action for Eastern Montana and Richland and McCone County RSVP on another disaster kit distribution for tribal elders. For the Martin Luther King JR project, Northeastern Montana RSVP partnered with Plentywood School District to provide some education and mentoring to school age children about the importance of MLK and what he did for the county, and this winter the program will participate in the MLK event at Head Start with Action for Eastern Montana and Richland and McCone County RSVP. For Mayor's Day, Northeastern RSVP collected signatures from local Mayors and were featured in the Wolf Point newspaper for their good work and dedication to community service.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A