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Executive Summary

An estimated 200 RSVP volunteers will serve through the Tri County RSVP Program service area of Columbia, Union and Ouachita Counties, Arkansas, with 35% serving in the Primary Focus Area, Healthy Futures. They will serve in all three objectives under the Healthy Future Focus Area - Aging in Place, Obesity and Food, and Access to Care. The volunteer activities will include: providing transportation for older adults to medical facilities and the grocery store to promote independent living, preparing and delivering meals to homebound individuals, building wheelchair ramps and performing minor home repairs to elders' homes, assisting with collecting and distributing food items at local food pantries, and distributing information and assisting with access to health insurance and health benefit programs. Volunteers in other focus areas will provide: tutoring for K-3 elementary students learning to read and helping with homework, assistance with school readiness for children in preschool, tutoring for adult students who desire to improve their literacy skills and/or prepare for higher education, income tax preparation for low income individuals, support for the local recycling center and education for the public on environmental stewardship, and assistance to military veterans and families. At the end of the three-year grant, 75 citizens will be able to remain independent and age in place, 1500 families will have greater food security; 120 elementary students will have received tutoring for success in school; adults will have improved their literacy skills helping to secure employment; local veterans and military families will have received support and assistance; 350 low - income citizens will have received free income tax preparation; the community will have been encouraged to protect the environment and promote recycling; and local nonprofits will have received needed volunteer support. The CNCS federal investment of \$120,914 will be supplemented by \$79,649 in other resources.

Strengthening Communities

Q1. Community description and community need in Primary Focus Area

The service area for Tri-County RSVP is Columbia, Ouachita and Union Counties, Arkansas. Union County is located in the center of south Arkansas with a 2013 estimated population of 40,694; and it is the largest county in Arkansas in land mass (1039 square miles). El Dorado is the largest town (18,884) with the majority of people living in outlying, smaller communities in the county. Columbia County lies to the west of Union with an estimated population of 24,164, and Ouachita County is to the north of Union with a 25,002 population. The main office of South Arkansas Regional Health Center, RSVP Sponsor, is located in El Dorado; the Tri-County RSVP office is also

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located in El Dorado, Union County.

Over the past few years, we have seen major employers such as Georgia Pacific Pulp and Paper Company, Pilgrim's Pride Poultry Processing Plant and others cut back their workforce or shut down completely in Union County alone. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2011 the average unemployment rate for the three counties was 9.5%. The largest employers now are forest products, a refinery, Murphy Oil corporate offices, chemical producers and various manufacturing companies. Quick Facts from the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 22% of the three counties' total population is below poverty level.

The Primary Focus Area for Tri-County RSVP is Healthy Futures with 35% of total volunteers serving in this focus area. According to the State Plan on Aging for Fiscal Years 2012-2015 by the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Arkansas is ranked tenth in the nation for percentage of persons 60 years of age and over, with almost 20 percent of its residents in this age bracket. Of this number, 11.8 percent (67,881) are considered low income. Arkansas also has the highest percentage of senior adults (more than 1 in 4) facing the threat of hunger, according to the State of Senior Hunger in America 2012 Report.

The Census Bureau estimates that individuals over 65 years of age represent an average of 16.8% of the total population in Columbia, Ouachita and Union Counties, with 6% living alone. Because of the rural setting of our service area, these individuals face isolation, food insecurity and transportation barriers in getting to medical appointments and other essential places. The current Tri-County RSVP Director is a member of the advisory council for the Area Agency on Aging of Southwest Arkansas (AAA) which serves Columbia, Ouachita and Union Counties, plus nine other Arkansas counties. The Area Agency's main office is located in Columbia County. The Director of the Area Agency reported that due to state funding cuts there has been a 9.8% reduction in home delivered meals from 2008 to 2013.

Feeding America and the United States Department of Agriculture report that the rate of food insecurity in Columbia, Ouachita and Union Counties is 22%. This translates into 20,170 individuals of all ages who do not have access to food for healthy, productive lives. For children, the lack of food affects their learning ability and slows their growth and development; and for senior adults, it affects their health and quality of life.

This year in Union County, the local United Way was instrumental in forming a county Hunger Relief Alliance comprised of all concerned organizations and those providing food pantries to help promote food security and awareness of local resources. Current RSVP staff members are a part of the

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Union County Hunger Relief Alliance. United Way has also provided access to Charity Tracker software to help the organizations track the individuals receiving services and ensure that resources are distributed equally. One food bank, Interfaith Help Services in El Dorado, reported that in the first six months of 2014 they have already provided 1007 individuals (approximately 335 families) with food compared to 476 individuals in the first six months of 2013.

Q2. Service activities in Primary Focus Area and National Performance Measures.

For the National Performance Measure objective of Aging in Place, Tri-County RSVP (RSVP) volunteers will provide transportation in their personal vehicles to medical appointments and the grocery store as well as access to food and other health services. Volunteers will also prepare meals for elders in the community and supply supplemental food items for beneficial nutrition. Volunteers will build wheelchair ramps and complete minor repairs to elder homes to ensure safety and encourage independent living. All of these activities will provide the social support individuals over 65 years of age need to age in place.

In addition, RSVP volunteers will address the objective of Access to Care by providing information about eligibility requirements for Medicare Savings Program benefits that could help add dollars to fixed household incomes. RSVP has worked closely with Arkansas Senior Medicare Patrol and the Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) to provide information to Medicare beneficiaries in our service area on Medicare Savings Programs, Medicare D Prescription Drug Coverage, Extra Help for Drug Coverage, and awareness of Medicare fraud and abuse. We plan to promote the benefit programs through our newsletter, news releases, and one on one counseling with Medicare beneficiaries seeking information and assistance. Medicare Advocate volunteers will assist individuals with applying for benefits.

Under the objective of Obesity and Food, RSVP volunteers will assist local food pantries with the collection and distributing of food items. These services will help families below the poverty level have a better chance for a healthy future and also promote food security for these families and senior adults.

Q3. Data Collection

To ensure that National Performance Measure outcomes and outputs are measured and collected, Tri-County RSVP utilizes the RSVP Reporter computer software to track volunteer activities and hours reported on monthly timesheets. Volunteers also report the number of transports and meals provided for elder clients on their timesheet. This information is recorded in an Excel database, and a hard copy is kept in the program files. We also use the CareFree computer software which tracks

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clients assisted and the services they received. The tracking software is loaded on one computer designated solely for that purpose, and the data is backed up to a flash drive on a weekly basis. The Volunteer Manager oversees the data input of both programs to ensure that it is entered correctly and in a timely manner. The number of individuals and families receiving food items will be tracked with data received from the local food pantries where the volunteers are placed. The community Charity Tracker software will generate a report on the number of food units distributed and the number of families that received the food. The number of Medicare beneficiaries receiving assistance and/or help applying for Medicare Savings Programs will be tracked utilizing an Excel database and tracked with required monthly reports sent to Arkansas Senior Medicare Patrol and SHIIP.

Q4. Program Design. . . service to veterans and/or military families

Tri-County RSVP volunteers will offer free income tax preparation to retired military veterans through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. In addition, volunteer quilters from the Union County Night Owls Guild will create Quilts of Valor or banners to be presented to wounded veterans, military families of fallen soldiers or retired veterans in hospice or nursing homes. RSVP has four veterans who are volunteering in the area of Healthy Futures and five veterans serving in other focus areas. The Tri-County RSVP Program is committed to providing local veterans opportunities to serve. In addition, nonmilitary volunteers will be serving with the local Project South organization. Project South was established in Union County to give local military families the assistance and support they need during their loved one's deployment. Activities range from emotional and social support to help with household repairs and transportation issues.

Q5. Primary Focus Area, Healthy Futures, five Work Plans including Aging in Place, Obesity and Food, and Access to Care

Q6. Other Focus Areas: Education, three Work Plans including volunteers assisting with school readiness at HeadStart, tutoring in elementary schools in the El Dorado School District in Union County and at the Boys and Girls Club after school program in El Dorado; Economic Opportunity, two Work Plans, including Income Tax Assistance for elders and low income individuals in partnership with Central Arkansas Development Council, and Adult Basic Education; Veterans and Military Families, Environmental Stewardship & Community Priorities.

Q7. Percentage of unduplicated volunteers in National Performance Measure outcome work plans: 29% (58 volunteers out of 200)

Recruitment and Development

Q8. Plan to create high-quality volunteer assignments to share experience. . . .

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Volunteers are individuals who want to help in areas of service that they feel are worthwhile and will make a difference to the people they serve and to their community. Local RSVP volunteers are recruited through service opportunities posted on the Tri-County RSVP website and Facebook page, and we are registered with national programs, such as "Volunteer Match" and "All for the Good". Our website has been upgraded and is now easily found on search engines for those looking for volunteer opportunities in South Arkansas. The number of people interested in our website has increased, and more individuals are both signing up to volunteer and are reporting hours online.

A volunteer applicant is asked to complete the pertinent personal information on the front of the application form and then asked to mark their areas of interest on the back of the form. There are forty different areas listed to choose from, areas that will utilize their life experience and skills as well as offer an opportunity to discover new interests. With this information, the volunteer manager can place the individual where they will more than likely find fulfillment and satisfaction in their volunteer service. The information is entered in the Volunteer Reporter database, and every effort is also made to pursue service opportunities for volunteers to participate in community episodic events. We can access and mobilize these volunteers by utilizing our database. The new volunteer is given a Volunteer Handbook and an initial orientation by the Volunteer Manager. More extensive orientation workshops for new volunteers are given as needed. Workshops and/or specialized training are offered throughout the year to all volunteers regardless of their placements.

Newspapers are still a value in rural south Arkansas. Press releases and photos are often in the El Dorado News Times and South Arkansas Leader in Union County, and Banner News in Columbia County, including articles about the RSVP Program, upcoming trainings, opportunities to volunteer and photos of current volunteers in action. Our bi-monthly newsletter is also used as a recruitment tool. It lists new places to serve, and is mailed to volunteers, civic organizations, stations, community leaders and businesses. Recruitment activities will also include speaking at community organizations about RSVP and distributing information for the public at other community partner organizations.

Tri-County RSVP offers high quality volunteer assignments through the following programs: Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and the Union County Literacy Council in the Economic Opportunity Focus Area; Book Buddies tutoring program in the Education Focus Area; CareNet Independent Living, Senior Health Insurance Information, and Senior Medicare Patrol in Healthy Futures, to name a few. Volunteers serving in these programs are given the needed training and the knowledge that they will make an impact in their area of service. Volunteers serving with VITA will impact the lives of low income individuals by saving them money on income tax preparation. Book

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Buddie volunteers will help elementary students succeed in school; and volunteers at the Literacy Council will impact the lives of adults learning to read and find employment. CareNet volunteers will make a difference in the lives of elders who need transportation and assistance to help them age in place.

Q9. Plan to ensure RSVP volunteers receive training needed

Experienced volunteers are encouraged and given occasions to train and offer insight to volunteers who are new in their particular area of service. Professional partners provide training for specialized assignments. For example, the Senior Health Insurance Information Program provides training for Medicare assistance and prescription drug issues; tax volunteers are trained through the Internal Revenue Service's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA); literacy tutors are trained through the Union County Literacy Council, Senior Medicare Patrol provides volunteer training on Medicare fraud and abuse, and Senior Health Insurance Information Program gives training on navigating the Medicare website and the Arkansas state Department of Human Services site for applying for benefits. The South Arkansas Center on Aging is a resource for volunteers who are assisting elders who are aging in place. Other specific training is given by the volunteer station, such as for Hospice volunteers or Court Appointed Special Advocates for children.

Q10. Describe the demographics of the community served and plans to recruit a volunteer pool.

The demographic of the community served is estimated to be 61% Caucasian, 36.3% African American, 2.7% Hispanic, Asian or Native American. Currently, our volunteers are 79% Caucasian, 20% African American, and 1% Asian. Community networking with other organizations and nonprofits is valuable in finding new places and new volunteers to serve in the community. Current RSVP staff members are part of the Tremendous Opportunities for Union County Health Coalition (TOUCH) which is the local Arkansas Department of Health Hometown Health Improvement Coalition for Union County. TOUCH meets monthly and is a valuable tool in learning what is happening in the community and where the citizens can work together for the betterment of all. Plans are to also join and become a part of the Hometown Health Coalitions in Columbia and Ouachita Counties. RSVP staff is supportive of the local United Way and the nonprofits that are under its umbrella; attending meetings, receiving communications and staying connected with what is happening in the community.

We have nine volunteers who are veterans, and less than 1% of current volunteers are disabled. Plans are to reach out and recruit more volunteers from minority groups and volunteers who are military veterans as well as to inform individuals who are disabled that there are opportunities for

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them to serve. We ensure that all of our volunteer stations are handicap accessible and that volunteers who are disabled have what the tools they need to have a rewarding volunteer experience.

Q11. Retaining and recognizing RSVP volunteers

Thanking the volunteers and showing appreciation is one way of ensuring retention. Along with traditional yearly events, smaller event-related recognitions for volunteers serving for specific programs are also held. Some type of volunteer recognition is planned for each season of the year, such as a Fall Roundup (September is Arkansas Volunteer Month), Christmas Luncheon/Party, spring recognition event, and summer open house. We also provide token gifts of appreciation from the staff throughout the year, such as annual pocket calendars. Our volunteers have received statewide recognition from the Division of Aging, and three have received Community Service Awards given by the State of Arkansas, Division of Volunteerism, and the Arkansas Governor's office. Volunteers continue to serve with the RSVP Program because they feel their service is valued and appreciated. They also believe they are making a difference and impacting all ages and aspects of their community.

Program Management

Q12. Management of Volunteer Stations

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is explained, reviewed and signed by the Volunteer Station manager and the staff of RSVP whenever a new station is engaged. The signed MOU includes a section that lists the prohibited activities such as political activities and lobbying by volunteers, the requirement for accessibility and reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, and the prohibition of discrimination. Program staff does not participate in lobbying or political activities while being paid by grant funds and is in compliance with RSVP program regulations.

Q13. Plans to ensure volunteers are performing their assigned service activities

Volunteer stations are visited every three months to confirm that volunteers are serving in their assigned activities, and volunteers are asked to contact the program office if any of their activities change. The signed MOU also contains a statement that the displacement of employees by volunteers is not permitted.

Q14. Changing community needs and graduating volunteer stations

The RSVP Program is part of the El Dorado Connections Volunteer Center, which offers volunteer opportunities to individuals of all ages. Networking with other nonprofit organizations and staying informed by listening to others and reading news articles will help identify changing community needs. If a RSVP Volunteer Station no longer aligns with the focus of the program, then a verbal conversation will be held with the station manager thanking them for their many wonderful years of

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service and informing them about the change in focus and that the door is always open for them to come back to the Program if things change. The opportunity would then be given for them to align with the El Dorado Connections Volunteer Center and therefore minimize disruption of the volunteers who wish to continue serving there. The volunteers assigned to the particular station will be contacted and offered placement at another area of service, if they so desire. The verbal conversation would be followed up with a letter of record.

Q15. Organizational track record in managing volunteers in Primary Focus Area

The RSVP Program has been an advocate of aging in place for over eighteen years. In 1997, we developed a volunteer caregivers program which was named CareNet. A grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation was received which helped to establish this program in the community.

Volunteers were enlisted to transport elders to medical facilities and the grocery store and to provide meals and companionship. CareNet is still active and known in the community for its elder advocacy.

Area Agency on Aging has awarded the program a transportation grant for elders and disabled persons each year for the last twenty plus years. The Carefree software database reports the measured outcomes of these two grants for those years and shows the impact they have had on individuals in Union and Columbia Counties.

Q16. Ensure project is in compliance with RSVP federal regulations. . .

The RSVP federal regulations are being followed by the program and its volunteers, and the director reviews the rules periodically to be sure they are being followed. There is an Advisory Council in place comprised of twelve members from various aspects of the community. The Council is made up of diverse ethnicities and professions with various backgrounds and is a good representation of the demographics of this service area. Seven Council members are Caucasian and five members are African American. Members include a retired educator and a retired nurse, businessmen, senior center director, social security administration employee, Career Advisor with the State of Arkansas, a Librarian, and Adult Ed teachers at the local community college. The members also include individuals who are interested in and are knowledgeable about the capability of older adults, and are qualified to help meet the responsibilities of the RSVP Program administration. The Advisory Council meets bi-monthly, or a minimum of six times a year, and oversees all program activities and finances.

The Board of the South Arkansas Regional Health Center (sponsor) provides the governance for the RSVP Program. Volunteer Station information is entered into the Volunteer Reporter database which generates renewals every three years for the Memorandum of Understanding. The Volunteer Manager reviews the MOU list annually to ensure that each one is up to date.

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Organizational Capability

Q17. Provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight

The RSVP Program follows our sponsor's, South Arkansas Regional Health Center (SARHC), financial management system. A yearly budget is prepared by the RSVP Director, and is broken down by funding source. The budget is approved and monitored by the Chief Financial Officer of SARHC. RSVP funds are kept separate, and there is an accounting of federal dollars and nonfederal matching funds as well as in kind. Each purchase request with appropriate itemized documentation must be accompanied by a purchase order that has been approved by the RSVP Director, SARHC Executive Director and the Chief Financial Officer. The SARHC accounts payable staff issues checks; RSVP Program monthly expenditure reports and quarterly financial reports go to the SARHC Accounting Supervisor. The RSVP Program is also part of an annual audit performed by certified accountants for SARHC.

Q18. Staff positions

The RSVP Program staff consists of three full time positions, Program Director, Administrative Assistant, and Volunteer Manager. The Director is responsible for the day to day operations of the Program and supervises the project staff who report directly to her. The Director is responsible for program objectives and oversight of volunteer stations and volunteer placement. The Director enhances the project effort by being actively involved with community organizations, other national service programs, and other state and local senior adult and volunteer programs. She also maintains appropriate fiscal and program records and prepares reports for the Advisory Council, sponsor, and grantors.

The Administrative Assistant fulfills the duties of the Director in the absence of the Director, and assists in planning, developing and supervising programs to carry out objectives of the grant, such as the Book Buddies tutoring program and the VITA Tax Program. The current Administrative Assistant has a Bachelor of Science degree in business education and holds teaching certificates with the states of Louisiana and Arkansas. She assists in the development of new programs and writing of new grant applications. The Administrative Assistant also maintains office and personnel files and computer equipment and updates the inventory. An inventory of all RSVP Program equipment, furniture, and supplies is maintained in the Program files.

The Volunteer Manager fulfills the day to day operations of the program in the absence of the Director and the Administrative Assistant. She maintains the volunteer files and the Volunteer Reporter computer records including volunteer hours and statistical data entry. She is responsible for

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overseeing volunteer stations, keeping up to date Memorandums of Understanding. She maintains office supplies and printed brochures and publishes the bi-monthly newsletter. The current staff members represent a combined 25 years of experience in the nonprofit field and in working with volunteers. Each staff member completes a timesheet for each pay period that shows the amount of time charged to the RSVP grant. All current staff members have been through the national background checks and documentation is on file in the program office. RSVP staff takes part in the sponsor's employee surveys, as well as annual employee performance evaluations.

Q19. Internal policies and operating procedures and management of assets

South Arkansas Regional Health Center (SARHC), sponsor, is a community mental health care provider; and accepts Medicaid, Medicare, cash, and private pay insurance. The organization is located in all three counties of the proposed service area, and is accustomed to receiving federal and state funds, as well as managing federal grant awards. They are required to have a complete accounting audit each year. SARHC owns the office building for RSVP and provides insurance and some building maintenance through in kind support. The RSVP staff is governed by the policies and procedures of our sponsor. Each staff person is given a copy of the Personnel Operational Procedure Manual. Staff development includes the Corporation for National and Community Service national conferences, regional trainings, and an online, sponsor-required Essential Learning curriculum which includes safety, ethics, and diversity.

Q20. Organizational infrastructure and experience with federal grant funds

SARHC has received a five year CARF accreditation (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities). One of the purposes of CARF is to recognize organizations that achieve accreditation through a consultant peer review process and demonstrate their commitment to continuous improvement of their programs and services focused on the needs and outcomes of the people they serve.

SARHC has received and administered four Project for National Significance grants in the first decade of 2000 and has managed the federal grant for the RSVP grant since it was first awarded in 1973.

Other

Not applicable

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

Not Applicable