

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

LEGAL APPLICANT AND ITS MISSION: Volunteers of America, Dakotas is a nonprofit spiritually based organization whose mission is to reach out to empower people of all ages to become healthier, self-sufficient, productive members of their communities.

### SERVICE ACTIVITIES

325 RSVP volunteers will serve. Their activities will include

Meal delivery to the homebound, seniors, and those with disabilities

Assisting seniors with access to Medicare through the SHIINE (Senior Health Information and Insurance Education) Program

Companionship to the homebound through a Friendly Callers program

Emergency food services (food pantries, food boxes, the backpack program for children) to increase food security for those in need

Mentoring children in K-12 schools

The OUTCOME to be measured is the number of seniors, homebound, and those with handicaps who have increased social support or perceived social support as a result of getting their meals delivered to them, thereby allowing them to continue living independently in their own homes.

The PRIMARY FOCUS AREA of this project is Healthy Futures. At the end of the three-year grant, at least 80 individuals with disabilities will have increased social support annually, which in turn will lead to them continuing to live independently in their own homes.

The CNCS federal investment of \$113,750 will be supplemented by \$50,566 in local funding.

## Strengthening Communities

### DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMUNITY SERVED

The nine counties in the region are rural, with an economy heavily dependent on agriculture. The Santee Sioux Tribal HQ and Flandreau Reservation are within the region (Moody Co.), and the Crow Creek Reservation is partially within the region (Hyde County). The population of the nine counties is 51,900, with 35% age 55 or older. The population density is 7.3 persons per sq. mile, which demonstrates how rural these counties are. The region is 94% Caucasian, but a few counties have

## Narratives

significant minority populations. Beadle County has Karen refugees from Myanmar (4.9%) and Hispanic (9.8%). Moody County has 14% Native American and Hyde County has 8.5% Native American. 11% of the population in the nine counties lives below the federal poverty level. The largest towns are Huron (12,600) and Madison (6,500) (quickfacts.census.gov or factfinder2.census.gov-- 2010 census.)

### PRIMARY FOCUS AREA: HEALTHY FUTURES

Healthy Futures has been chosen as the primary focus area because of the needs of the communities in the service area. Aging in Place, one component of Healthy Futures, is a critical need in the service area. In the nine counties, there are 6,505 households with individuals who are 65 years or older, for a total of 11,100 elderly who are living at home (factfinder2.census.gov, 2010 data). In rural areas in South Dakota, there are 71.8 nursing home/assisted living beds per 1,000 population, compared to 44.1 beds per 1000 in urban areas, showing a bias toward residential care in the rural areas because it's more difficult for seniors to live on their own (SD Dept of Health 2011: <http://doh.sd.gov/statistics/MedicalFacilities/default.aspx>). However, seniors who enter nursing home care as the last stage of their life have a life expectancy of 22 months (Insurance industry study 2003), and one day in residential care costs the same as one nutritious meal per day for a year (SD Dept of Health, Office of Data, Statistics & Vital Records). The SD Dept of Adult Services & Aging reported 385 individuals in the nine counties received in-home services in the year ended June 2012, and that there was more demand for those services than they could meet ([dss.sd.gov/statistics/index.asp](http://dss.sd.gov/statistics/index.asp)--SAR Annual 2012.pdf). A March 2012 random survey by AARP South Dakota reinforces the belief that there are too few services for independent living. The survey of those age 55 and older living in rural areas found that 73% said it was extremely or very important to them to remain living in their community, but only 17% said their community was an excellent place for seniors to live. They listed the services they felt they needed to continue living independently, and some were congregate meals (86%), meal delivery (84%), Senior or Community Centers (86%), transportation (87%), respite for caregivers (81%), lawn care/snow removal (84%), help in completing government forms (79%), and help understanding their medical bills (76%). 53% of respondents (n=1,853) said they have no drug store in their town, and 63% have no stores where they can buy clothes or household items, further underscoring the need for transportation. When asked what transportation they use to do grocery shopping, go to doctor appointments, or to run errands, 24% said they ride with friends, 30% said they walk, 3% said they use public transportation, and 2% said they use special transportation services (AARP Survey of South Dakota Residents 50+,

## Narratives

March 2012, [www.aarp.org/states/sd/](http://www.aarp.org/states/sd/)). Rural areas and small towns have higher concentrations of elderly and low income citizens than other areas (Transportation for America). The people whose income is in the lowest 20% spend 42% of their income on transportation (Trans. for America policy brief rural, [www.t4america.org](http://www.t4america.org)). The seniors who are trying to continue living at home independently need assistance in order to do that.

There is also evidence of the need for obesity and food services, another component of the Healthy Futures focus area. The 2004 American Community Survey (American Fact Finder/US Census Bureau) found that 11%, or about 86,000, South Dakotans live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level, including almost 13,000 children. Individuals and families with such limited resources must make hard choices about which bills to pay and what necessities to go without. Food Research and Action Center for South Dakota reports that 9% of SD households have a lack of food security. SD TANF reports show that the number of needy families served has increased. There is a great need for services such as food pantries/food distribution programs as a result of "food insecurity," the lack of access to enough food to meet basic needs due to a lack of financial resources. Seniors and families with children are very vulnerable populations when it comes to food insecurity and the need for regular nutritious meals and food supplies.

### SERVICE ACTIVITIES LEAD TO NATIONAL PERFORMANCE MEASURE OUTPUTS OR OUTCOMES

As an activity in Aging in Place, RSVP volunteers will deliver nutritious, hot meals to the homebound, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. Those receiving meals will get one meal a day five days a week, as well as pre-packages, heat-and-serve meals for the week-ends. RSVP volunteers will check on the individuals being served, ask about their nutrition, and offer social support. Also as part of Aging in Place, RSVP volunteers will offer companionship to the same groups of people by calling them five days a week. They will check to see they're okay, see if they have questions, remind them to take their medication, ask about their nutrition, have friendly conversations, and provide any other services requested by the client's family. The output for these activities will be the number of individuals receiving independent living services. The outcome for the meal delivery activities will be the number of individuals with disabilities having increased social support.

In the area of Obesity and Food, RSVP volunteers will sort food and stock shelves in food pantries and food banks, and assist individuals to get food they need because of unemployment, low income, or other emergencies. Volunteers will also fill and deliver boxes of food commodities as part of the senior box/food box program, which will also assist individuals and families in emergency situations who

## **Narratives**

need food assistance. Another activity will be filling and distributing bags of food as part of the Backpack Program, where children in families who are low income or in emergency situations receive food for the week-ends or other times when school isn't in session. The output for this activity will be the number of individuals receiving emergency food from food banks or other organizations. All of the activities in the Obesity and Food category have as their goal increased food security for individuals and families.

In the area of Access to Care, RSVP volunteers will distribute health information in hospitals and clinics; and assist those on Medicare and Medicaid to determine the best options for their pharmaceutical coverage and insurance (SHINE, or Senior Health Information and Insurance Education).

**PLAN AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT DATA COLLECTION AND ENSURE NATIONAL PERFORMANCE MEASURE OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS ARE MEASURED AND MANAGED**

Volunteers of America, Dakotas has an excellent record of working closely with RSVP volunteer stations and RSVP volunteers to assure that activity logs are kept accurately and turned in for data management. The RSVP staff have spent the last two years studying the materials provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service and the work plan examples and sample instruments in the Knowledge Network. Staff have also prepared the volunteer stations for the types of data collection which will be necessary with the Healthy Futures and other work plans. Such data as individuals served will be kept concurrent with the service delivery, to assure the greatest accuracy. The outcome for the meal delivery activity will be measured once a year by using the survey provided by CNCS, surveying those who have been served and asking about their perceived level of social support as a result of the meal delivery. Volunteers of America, Dakotas RSVP project has extensive experience and an excellent return rate (generally 75-90%) when using surveys of those served by meal delivery. A follow-up system has been very successful, while keeping the anonymity of the respondents with the use of a code rather than names in tracking returns.

### **SERVICE TO VETERANS/ACTIVE MILITARY AND THEIR FAMILIES**

Volunteers of America, Dakotas has an extensive history of working with veterans and their families. The RSVP project has excellent relationships with numerous organizations serving veterans and active military, such as the VA and VA health care system, VFW, American Legion, Sea of Goodwill, Veterans in Law Enforcement, county-based veterans' services officers, the National Guard, and others. Often, it is veterans or their families who need assistance to continue living independently, and they will be an important focus of the meal delivery, emergency food, companionship activities, The

## **Narratives**

families of active military will be served with the PACH program. Besides serving veterans/active military and their families in the Primary Focus Area, RSVP volunteers will also serve them in the Other Focus Areas of Education-Tutoring; Economic Opportunity-Housing; and Disaster Services-Assisting with Preparation and Responding; as well as Capacity-Building and supporting veterans in rural communities.

### **Recruitment and Development**

#### **PLAN AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO DEVELOP HIGH-QUALITY VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERS TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCE, ABILITIES, AND SKILLS**

The Volunteers of America, Dakotas RSVP project began assessing its volunteer assignments and moving in the direction of high-quality assignments since it researched these nine counties in preparation for the RSVP competitive grant in 2012. The prior sponsor of RSVP for nine fourteen counties for over 35 years had placed an emphasis on the number of volunteer stations, with the result that some were involved in prohibited activities (in churches, for instance) and many were focusing on things like quilting, knitting, playing bingo or other games and counting it as volunteer time, etc. Volunteers of America, Dakotas has taken a planned, community-need approach to determining which volunteer stations offer the most enriching volunteer assignments. The number of 60 volunteer stations is the optimal level to assure that the community needs are met and emphasis is on the Primary Focus Area (Healthy Futures), Other Focus Areas (Education, Economic Opportunity, and Disaster Services), Capacity Building, and Veterans/Active Military and Their Families. It has not been necessary to "graduate" stations because the previous RSVP Project in this area ended in March 2012, and the Volunteers of America, Dakotas RSVP Project began in September 2012, so it was a whole new start. The project has taken time to explain the new focus areas and stations have only been recruited if they fit into the current plan. The areas for growth have been meal delivery; capacity building--garnering donations and food collection; education for K-12; obesity and food--food pantries and the Backpack Program (food sent home with children to get them through the week-end); and services to veterans/active military and their families. As a result of this emphasis, there are more of these activities supported now than in the previous 35 years of RSVP in this area. The area for new growth in 2015-2018 is the Friendly Callers Program, a type of Aging in Place--companionship program. The previous sponsor in these nine counties had a calling program, but there were no guidelines, training, screening of volunteers or clients, no measures of effectiveness. Volunteers of America, Dakotas has developed a calling program which has been carefully designed to assure clear

## Narratives

guidelines and proven results.

Another area of growth has been in giving volunteers opportunities for leadership. Volunteers take a leadership role in scheduling/managing other volunteers; represent the project in a variety of settings, including in-person presentations and appearances in the United Way videos and appearance on radio talk shows to represent the project; and take a role in advising the project and shaping future activities through membership on the Advisory Council. The project is committed to all of these ways that volunteers can share their knowledge and skills and grow into leadership roles, and intends to do even more in the future.

### PLAN AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO ASSURE VOLUNTEERS RECEIVE TRAINING TO BE EFFECTIVE MEANS TO ADDRESSING COMMUNITY NEEDS

The applicant is actively involved in providing training opportunities for RSVP volunteers. The Recognition event in the Fall of each year is used as a venue for training the volunteers (while keeping the focus on celebrating the volunteers and their accomplishments). The response has been very positive and the training opportunities are now part of the RSVP project. Project staff have worked closely with volunteer stations to assure that they are providing more training than in the past, usually specific to their agency mission and how volunteers can help them to meet their goals.

Volunteers appreciate opportunities to learn more about community needs and their role in meeting those needs and to build their knowledge and skills. In the past year, the training provided by the project has focused on Healthy Futures, Education, Capacity Building, and Veterans/Active Military

### VOLUNTEER POOL REFLECTIVE OF THE COMMUNITIES SERVED

The Volunteers of America, Dakotas RSVP Project has actively sought out opportunities to recruit minorities, veterans, and those with disabilities. Some examples are several presentations to groups of Independent Living Choices; displays at Veterans Appreciation events; and more. While the results of these efforts are still developing, there are now more veterans and those with disabilities serving as RSVP volunteers than ever before. Currently, 24% of the volunteers in the project are veterans, and many more are spouses of veterans. The data on persons with disabilities is anecdotal, since HIPAA regulations make it difficult to document disabilities in the database, but there are now more types of disabilities represented among the volunteers than before.

The Karen refugees and Latinos in Beadle County speak little or no English and have traditionally have been hard to recruit as volunteers. Volunteers of America, Dakotas has already established or is establishing excellent partnerships with local agencies serving the immigrants and refugees in the region. 1) The Huron Chamber & Visitors Bureau coordinates local business support of immigrants,

## Narratives

refugees, and veterans, including employment opportunities, translators, etc. 2) Heartland Region United Way is the leader in the "Backpack" program, where food is sent home with needy children each week-end to assure they have adequate nutrition when they're not getting meals at school. Many of these food supplements go to immigrant and refugee children, and Volunteers of America, Dakotas has sent inserts home in the backpacks over the last school year. The United Way is interested in getting more inserts translated into other languages so that the parents and grandparents can be made aware of services available to them as well as opportunities to volunteer. 3) Karen Memorial Day (Martyr's Day) is celebrated the first Saturday and Sunday of August each year. There are numerous fun and educational events over the week-end, and the organizers are offering the opportunity to recruit senior volunteers as part of the week-end. Last year, over 1,000 Karen from outside Huron (many from the 9-county region served by this grant) attended, in addition to the Karen in Huron itself. 4) The Multicultural Festival in Huron is held each May and is a large gathering of Karen, Latinos, and Native Americans from a multi-county area. It includes entertainment, educational presentations, and displays by agencies serving the multicultural population. Volunteers of America, Dakotas participates in this event. 5) The RSVP Project participates in the monthly meetings of the Huron Aging Coalition, and makes numerous contacts there with agencies serving seniors and minorities. 6) The Cornerstones Career Learning Center offers classes to assist immigrants and refugees with the U.S. Naturalization Test and Interview. They have translators, as well as access to these special populations.

The food services (congregate meals for seniors; meal delivery for the homebound; backpack program for children; food box program for those with low incomes) are examples of ways volunteers will work with those in poverty. In rural communities with few social services, faith-based organizations are often the primary service organizations, and RSVP will work closely with them. Native Americans on or near the Flandreau and Crow Creek Reservations will be a major part of both services and volunteering in Moody and Hyde counties.

### PLAN AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO RETAIN AND RECOGNIZE RSVP VOLUNTEERS

A major part of volunteer retention is the training and opportunities for growth/leadership which have been documented above. Volunteers are continually given opportunities to expand their volunteer involvement and to develop more skills. At the same time, the volunteers' needs for socialization are taken into account, often pairing them with their spouses or friends in their volunteer work. Volunteer recognition is a year-round activity. Some strategies for recognition are birthday cards; other notes and letters of congratulations or thanks; articles on the volunteers in the project

## **Narratives**

newsletter and other publications sent to the volunteers; pictures of the volunteers in local newspapers; and more. Once a year, recognition events are held in Huron for the four counties in that area, in Highmore for Hyde and Hand County volunteers, and in Brookings for the volunteers near that city. Volunteers are honored with Presidential Volunteer Service Awards (PVSA's) and length of service awards. At the events, all volunteers receive a small gift, and all volunteers are listed in the program by their date of enrollment. Wherever possible, pictures or articles are placed in local newspapers to honor those who have received awards. In the coming year, a new recognition strategy will be used to honor volunteers. Volunteer stations will be asked to nominate a volunteer for the "Caught You Making a Difference" award, given to one volunteer a month who has gone above and beyond expectations to provide exceptional service to clients and the community. When a nominee is selected for the monthly award, RSVP staff will come to the station, surprise the volunteer, and present a framed certificate, small gifts, and flowers. Station staff may arrange a special assembly or event to involve the clients in honoring the volunteer. Pictures will be sent to the local newspapers. Beyond the gifts, the awards, the newspaper articles, and the annual events, the best thing for the project to give and for the volunteers to receive is a simple "thank you," delivered verbally or in a simple note. In all that is said or done, the simple respect paid to a volunteer's experience, skills, and contributions is the key to both retention and recognition.

### **Program Management**

#### **PLANS AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENSURE STATION MANAGEMENT IN COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS**

There are always at least two members of staff, with one being the Director, in reviewing and signing all documentation in the station files, including an MOU which meets all federal requirements, proof of non-profit or government or proprietary health care status, proof of regular health and safety inspections, and volunteer assignment plans. The Volunteer Reporter database is used to track the station requirements and to assure that no steps are missed. Project staff always meet personally with the station manager, and often with other station staff, in order to explain the program requirements for volunteer orientation, training, health and safety checks, assurance of nondiscrimination, accurate recordkeeping of volunteer time and activities, etc. After the initial meeting and the signing of the MOU, project staff visit each station at least every two years, but often much more frequently. A station packet and handbook, orientation of station staff, and periodic station visits are key to establishing and maintaining good relationships with stations. RSVP staff offer frequent support and assistance. Stations are consulted in work plan design, to assure that the measurement is feasible and

## **Narratives**

convenient for station staff. Written record is kept of all station visits, summarizing the discussions and the results of the visit. Prohibited activities (promotion of a religion or political activity, for instance) are explained in detail when the MOU is signed, and reviewed on station visits. Project staff monitor the monthly volunteer timesheets, and other communications from the stations and volunteers to assure that no prohibited activities are being done,

### **PLANS AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO OVERSEE STATIONS TO ENSURE THAT VOLUNTEERS ARE PERFORMING THEIR ASSIGNED SERVICE ACTIVITIES**

Project staff have staff meetings and receive training at least once a month, and the topic of station oversight and volunteer service activities is a frequent topic for these trainings. (Since the project staff are placed near the counties which they oversee, there are three regional offices for this project, in Aberdeen, Brookings, and Huron, as well as the administrative office of the Project Director in Watertown. At least once every three months, staff meet face-to-face for two to four days, and in the other months there are Skype meetings/trainings.) The station visits by staff always check on the volunteers' activities, and between visits, the timesheets and other reports are reviewed by staff to assure that the volunteers are performing appropriate service activities. The Volunteer Assignment Plans developed by station staff and project staff are shared in writing with the volunteers so they're informed of the expectations. Any failure by a station to ensure the service activities promised or any confusion about prohibited activities is brought to the attention of the Director, and the station is given additional training. Stations unable to stay within the requirements after additional training are not continued as stations.

### **PLANS AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO MEET CHANGING COMMUNITY NEEDS AND TO MINIMIZE DISRUPTIONS TO VOLUNTEERS**

The RSVP Heartland Region project has a proven record of involvement in community coordinating groups and partnerships with other community agencies. Through this involvement and these partnerships, the RSVP project is part of community needs assessment/goal-setting and the development of changing community priorities. Some examples of these community groups are the local councils on aging, the Regional Aging Council, the United Way collaboration group, Chambers of Commerce, and others. The Advisory Council formed by the RSVP project includes important community members who help the project to understand the changing community needs. Volunteers are given many opportunities to learn about the changing community priorities and to take part in discussions about how RSVP can adjust to those needs, so they have time to adjust and to consider new volunteer assignments. The project has been actively working on "right-sizing" and adjusting its

## Narratives

priorities since the agency first applied for the grant in 2012, and this planned approaches with several stages has been very successful in minimizing disruptions to the volunteers. The simple act of making a call and explaining a need to a volunteer has resulted in many volunteers becoming involved in new volunteer activities. The project has developed a specific plan which includes changes to its enrollment form to emphasize the areas of greatest community need; a new volunteer orientation which details needs in the areas of healthy futures, education, veterans services, etc.; and targeted recruitment to bring in baby boomers or others with a special interest in veterans, disaster services, or other areas of need. The emphasis is on welcoming new volunteers and encouraging experienced volunteers to participate in new activities, so the disruptions have been minimized because the volunteers have made the choices themselves.

### ORGANIZATIONAL TRACK RECORD MANAGING VOLUNTEERS IN THE PRIMARY FOCUS AREA

Service in Aging in Place, Obesity and Food, and Access to Care have been part of the Volunteers of America, Dakotas RSVP project since its inception in 2009, and the experiences in those fourteen counties have shaped the direction of the RSVP Project in the nine counties covered by this proposal. Specifically, the agency has experience with meal delivery, emergency food services, and the SHIINE (Senior Health Information and Insurance Education) program. In addition, the agency is one of only a few organizations in the state with extensive services for veterans, including housing for homeless vets and a drop-in center. The project has expertise in meal delivery in the population center of Huron as well as the smaller communities of Wessington Springs, Wessington, and Howard. RSVP volunteers deliver meals in towns as small as a few hundred people and in rural areas. The RSVP Project has been coordinating with meal delivery sites since 2009 to gather data on the number of individuals served and to distribute and collect surveys from those served. The project also has a proven track record with emergency food services, including food pantries, food banks, and food box delivery. The RSVP volunteers who provide these services have a clear understanding of their contribution to ending hunger and increasing food security, and they are very dedicated to their work in these areas. Another aging in place strategy, companionship, is planned through a program called "Friendly Callers." The program was developed over several months by a VISTA volunteer assigned to the RSVP project. The RSVP project developed a calling program to check in on the homebound and seniors. The VISTA volunteer researched models from around the country, came up with the name "Friendly Callers," and wrote program policies and procedures under the supervision of the RSVP Director. She wrote a policy manual, a volunteer manual, a volunteer enrollment form, tracking logs,

## Narratives

an intake form completed the family member who wants the loved one to be called, and a training program for the volunteers. Included in the policy manual are requirements for volunteer screening, emergency procedures when the phone is not answered, and policies for referring community agencies. The next stage is to pilot the program with a few volunteers, then use that experience to do Friendly Callers throughout the RSVP project. The timetable is to do the pilot by Spring 2015, then go to a full-blown companionship program from 2015-2018.

PLAN AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REGULATIONS, INCLUDING ADVISORY COUNCIL, STATIONS WITH SIGNED REQUIRED MOU'S, AND ENSURING ALL VOLUNTEERS ARE ELIGIBLE TO SERVE IN RSVP

The project is assisted by an Advisory Council which includes members who are state legislators, station representatives, businesspeople, the Director and President of the Board of the Huron Area Senior Center, RSVP volunteers, the Chamber of Commerce, and staff from the state Adult Services and Aging Department. The Advisory Council meets quarterly and provides advice to the staff between meetings. It does an annual evaluation of the project and assist the RSVP staff to understand community needs and determine if the project is meeting community needs.

No RSVP volunteer is placed or continued in placement unless there is an active MOU with the volunteer station. The MOU contains the requirements specified by CNCS, such as the nondiscrimination policy, the human rights addendum, and the list of prohibited activities. The MOU is modeled after the examples provided by CNCS and includes the project responsibilities, the station responsibilities, and the shared responsibilities. The MOU is for no more than three years and is signed by the responsible person at the station and by the RSVP project Director. Station files are reviewed periodically to be sure that the MOU's are on file and are up-to-date, and the Volunteer Reporter database is used to track the MOU's and make sure a new one is signed before the last one expires.

Volunteer eligibility can only be determined by the RSVP Director, in writing. A state-issued ID is reviewed by staff as proof of age, and a copy is made for the file. Applicants are asked about any prior convictions, and they receive a volunteer handbook and orientation by staff. Volunteers of America, Dakotas policy requires that an NSOPW (National Sex Offender Public Website) check is done on all RSVP applicants, though not required by CNCS. All files are reviewed by two members of staff, including the Coordinator for the region and the RSVP Director. The Volunteer Reporter database is used to track all requirements and ensure that they have been met. Volunteers of America, Dakotas has been accredited by the Council on Accreditation, a national accrediting agency for non-profits

## Narratives

with stringent requirements in all aspects of agency management and program procedure. As part of that accreditation, 40% of all RSVP volunteer files are required to be randomly chosen and reviewed by an impartial reviewer every year. Volunteer eligibility and CNCS requirements are checked as part of the annual review, and if any deficiencies are found, staff must correct them, document the corrections, and get the signature of the Director. In all of these ways, volunteer eligibility is checked and double-checked, to assure 100% compliance with eligibility requirements.

### Organizational Capability

PLANS AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO PROVIDE PROGRAMMATIC AND FISCAL OVERSIGHT AND OPERATIONAL SUPPORT TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH REQUIREMENTS AND TO ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY AND EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE USE OF RESOURCES

The sponsor, Volunteers of America, Dakotas, has extensive experience in managing funds. The accounting system and qualified personnel assure that federal funds are safeguarded by tracking and reporting receivables and expenditures accurately. The sponsor keeps separate accounting records for non-federal and federal dollars, maintains project cost accounts separate from the grantee's cash account, provides a tracking system for all funds the project receives and expends, and accounts for all non-federal cash and in-kind resources. The bookkeeping functions (bank deposits, check preparation, supervisor approval of all expenses, check signatures, and statement reconciliation) are separated so that several personnel provide checks and balances within the system.

CLEARLY DEFINED STAFF POSITIONS, CURRENT STAFF AND HOW STAFF POSITIONS WILL ENSURE THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

There are written position descriptions for each staff position, and those include a detailed list of duties, an outline of the supervisory chain of command, and a list of the program objectives for which the staff member is responsible or partially responsible.

Dennis Hoffman, President and CEO of Volunteers of America, Dakotas, has an extensive background in business and finance, including over 20 years at Wells Fargo. Stephanie Graeb, Managing Director of Children and Family Services, supervises the Project Director and oversees project operations and policies. She is authorized as the sponsor representative for both the RSVP project and the Foster Grandparent Program. She has a BSW and an MSW (Masters in Social Work) with specialization in Child Welfare Policy and Administration. She is a Certified Social Worker in South Dakota. She has worked for Volunteers of America, Dakotas since 2002, and in her current capacity as Managing Director of Children and Family Services, she has oversight of regional offices in Aberdeen, Watertown, Brookings, and Huron, and the RSVP, Foster Grandparent, Family Crisis Intervention,

## Narratives

youth residential services, Transitional Living, and HIV/STD programs.

Kathleen Perry is the RSVP/FGP Project Director, and she has a BA in English, Masters in Teaching, and Masters in Social Work, with a concentration in Program Administration and Evaluation. Since 1980, she has worked in non-profit agency management and has handled all aspects of hiring and supervision, budgeting and financial management, program development and evaluation, and fund raising. From 2004 to 2009, she was Director of a Foster Grandparent Program in Kansas City, KS, supervising a staff of six and managing a CNCS grant authorized for 89 VSY's. In 2009, she joined the Volunteers of America, Dakotas Senior Corps team, and was promoted to Project Director in August 2010. She divides her time between the RSVP-VOA Project, the RSVP Heartland Region Project, and the Foster Grandparent Program. This staffing pattern has been approved by CNCS, and is an efficient way to manage RSVP/FGP staff and to have the two programs support each other in terms of recruitment, community involvements, etc. In addition to her role as the over-all Project Director for the two programs, Kathleen also manages the Huron office and directly supervises staff in the nine counties covered by this grant proposal.

Cindy Beard, RSVP/FGP Coordinator in the Aberdeen office, reports to Kathleen and is the direct supervisor of one staff member (RSVP/FGP Program Specialist Juli Schultz) and two counties (Hyde and Hand, which are geographically close to the Aberdeen office) covered by this grant proposal. She has eleven years of experience with Senior Corps programs. Her first six years were with the Foster Grandparent Program, but since 2009 she has been the regional coordinator for both RSVP and FGP. Juli Schultz, RSVP/FGP Program Specialist in Aberdeen has worked with RSVP for 5 years. She worked in child care centers for seven years prior to coming to RSVP. The Lead Program Specialist in Brookings is Stephanie Bultje. Stephanie has been RSVP Coordinator in Brookings for the past twelve years, working for a different sponsor through December 2011. Stephanie was promoted to Lead Program Specialist in 2012 because she staffs the Brookings office alone, without an on-site supervisor, and also works with a Brookings RSVP Advisory Council and the community at large. When she was promoted to Lead Program Specialist she increased her hours to 35 hours per week and took responsibility for three counties (Moody, Kingsbury, and Lake) in the Heartland Region. These three counties are geographically close to Brookings County, and Stephanie has contacts and a good knowledge of these three counties. Since the Program Specialist in the Huron office (covering Beadle, Jerrauld, Sanborn, and Miner counties in the Heartland Region) retired, Stephanie has traveled to that office two days per week in order to keep things running smoothly there while the hiring process is being conducted. Kim Routh is the RSVP/FGP Program Specialist in Watertown, with responsibility

## Narratives

for the Foster Grandparent Program of Eastern South Dakota. She also provides major support for the Huron office, assisting with events, mailings, etc, because she has special expertise in these areas. She works in partnership with the Program Specialist and Administrative Assistant in the Huron office.

The Sr. Corps structure is one example of an innovative approach in a sparsely-populated state. The offices in Aberdeen, Watertown, and Brookings (and the proposed office in Huron) assure that staff cover a manageable geographic area and are as close as possible to the counties served. All staff split their time between RSVP and FGP, offering efficiency in community contacts and station and volunteer recruitment. In addition, because of their rigorous travel schedules, it's important to have a second staff member in the office who can handle any questions or needs which arise for either of the two Senior Corps programs. This structure allows VOAD to staff two Sr. Corps projects with 2.5 less FTE's than the previous sponsors. As national priorities change, it's essential that RSVP has this kind of creative problem solving. CNCS has approved this staffing pattern.

The Program Specialist in the Huron office will be Jena Hall effective September 22, 2014, replacing the previous Program Specialist who retired. She has experience working with vulnerable populations, including those with disabilities, both in Huron and in Watertown, SD. She also has extensive experience in business. She will work 35 hours per week, including a few hours per week assisting Kim Routh with recruitment of Foster Grandparents in Huron. Her area of responsibility will be Beadle, Jerauld, Sanborn, and Miner counties.

The Administrative Assistant position in the Huron office is currently vacant, since the previous AA resigned in July to move to Rapid City, So. Dakota. A hiring process is currently underway. The AA position is 20 hours per week.

To ensure financial accountability for the program, Volunteers of America, Dakotas has designated a financial coordinator, Stacy Scholten, a CPA under the supervision of the Vice-President of Finance and Technology, Collette Johnson Bliss.

Volunteers of America, Dakotas, the RSVP/FGP Project Director Kathleen Perry, and the Sponsor Representative Stephanie Graeb all insist that all members of the Sr. Corps staff have extensive on-going training and regular staff meetings to assure that all staff understand the program objectives and are making sufficient progress in meeting those objectives. All-staff meetings (where staff from all three cities come together) are held at least four times per year, for two to four days each time. In the months between meetings, the staff meet by Skype at least monthly. The Project Director also meets with the staff she supervises (Lead Specialist Bultje, Specialists Delvo and Routh, and

## **Narratives**

Coordinator Beard) at least every two weeks, and sometimes more often. She travels to Aberdeen and Brookings frequently to see those operations firsthand. All staff complete monthly written reports, as well as six-month and annual summary reports of progress. The Volunteers of America, Dakotas Executive Committee and Program Committee review the Sr. Corps reports at least monthly and assess progress toward program objectives and goals.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT INTERNAL POLICIES AND OPERATING PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGE RISK (ACCOUNTING, PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT, PURCHASING, ETC.)**

The applicant is a private, 501(c)(3) corporation which is audited annually. The Chief Financial Officer is a CPA. State and federal agencies have found the fiscal system compliant with Generally Accepted Accounting Procedures (GAAP). The agency's computerized accounting system is compatible with federal requirements and follows FASB accounting procedures in reporting data for federal grants. In addition, the sponsor has detailed purchasing procedures, a professional Human Resources Department, and written internal policies for employees, purchasing, and employee travel.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY TO MANAGE CAPITAL ASSETS**

Volunteers of America, Dakotas has assured the resources needed for this project, including three handicap-accessible offices established and fully-furnished in Aberdeen, Watertown, and Brookings. The sponsor has provided all equipment and supplies needed. With over thirty different buildings (including several which house clients, such as adjudicated youths, homeless veterans, transitional housing for teens, etc.), the agency has extensive experience both in managing facilities and building structures to house programs. The Managing Director for Facilities Management is John Hart, and he has extensive experience with infrastructure, insurance, equipment, and risk management. The Managing Director for Finance and Technology, Collette Johnson Bliss, works with an outside consulting firm, Workplace IT, with twenty years of experience in IT. Workplace IT advises the agency and the Sr. Corps programs on equipment purchases, software, and efficient systems to manage agency resources. They also provide direct assistance with the Volunteer Reporter database as well as any other equipment or software problems which staff encounter.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE AREAS OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND PAST EXPERIENCE MANAGING FEDERAL FUNDS**

Volunteers of America, Dakotas is a nonprofit, spiritually based organization whose mission is to empower people of all ages to become healthier, self-sufficient, productive members of their communities. Since 1920, it has expanded to over 50 programs in 30 locations. It currently serves

## Narratives

over 40,000 people of all ages each year and is one of the largest multi-faceted social service agencies in the region.

Volunteers of America, Dakotas sponsored the statewide AmeriCorps\*VISTA program from 2006 to 2014; the Southern SD RSVP Program since 2006; and the Foster Grandparent Program since 2009.

The grantee's extensive history with CNCS programs has given it experience with required documentation,

Federal Financial Reports, and other federal requirements. VOAD manages federal grants for homeless veterans and provides services to veterans in collaboration with the Sioux Falls Veterans Administration and the Catholic Diocese.

As mentioned above, the applicant agency is audited annually, including an A-133 audit. State and federal agencies have found the fiscal system compliant with Generally Accepted Accounting Procedures (GAAP). The agency's computerized accounting system is compatible with federal requirements and follows FASB accounting procedures in reporting data for federal grants. In addition, the sponsor has detailed purchasing procedures, a professional Human Resources Department, and written internal policies for employees, purchasing, and employee travel.

### Other

NA

### PNS Amendment (if applicable)

NA