

Narratives

Executive Summary

Pomona Valley Community Services d.b.a. Community Senior Services is applying for RSVP Re-competition grant, opportunity number CA-12.

The mission of Community Senior Services is to "connect people, information, resources and communities to enrich the lives of older adults." The agency focuses on enhancing every senior's ability to live and age with dignity and independence, promoting self-sufficiency and quality of life, and supporting caregivers.

Regional health and senior services providers founded Community Senior Services (CSS) in 1975 when they saw the need for one entity to "connect" organizations and assist older adults and caregivers seeking a one-stop non-profit resource. CSS launched the nation's first multi-city Dial-a-Ride in 1975, and expanded in the 1980s with two federal programs, one to link low-income seniors and isolated elders (Senior Companion Program), and the other to promote volunteerism (Foothill Communities RSVP). In the 1990s, CSS created the Enrichment Center Adult Day Program and a no-cost information/referral program (I & R). In the 2000s, CSS grew with the additions of the Family Caregiver Support Program, Community Connections, and REAL Connections, a program to help seniors age well in their homes and communities.

Now in its 4th decade, CSS maintains an unwavering commitment to seniors, playing a unique role as an information resource and collaborator on senior issues throughout the Inland, Pomona and East San Gabriel Valleys. CSS is renowned for its multi-community and cross-county scope, with a strong history of working with community leaders and a variety of organizations, whose engagement and partnership has been essential to meet the growing needs of the senior population.

"Without volunteer service, we would not have a strong quality of life. It's important to the person who serves as well as the recipient. It's the way in which we ourselves grow and develop."

-Dr. Dorothy I. Height, President and CEO of the National Council of Negro Women

Strengthening Communities

The primary focus of the Foothill Communities RSVP for the 2015-2018 grant period is Healthy Futures. The growth in the number and proportion of older adults in the last twenty-five years is

Narratives

unprecedented in the history of the United States. Longer life spans and aging baby boomers will combine to double the population of Americans aged 65 years and older during the next twenty-five years to approximately 72 million. By 2030, older adults will account for roughly 20% of the U.S. population. The CDC's 2013 report, "The State of Aging and Health in America", focuses on several areas of concern that, if effectively addressed, will significantly improve the quality of life for this older adult population. The report found that at least 24% of seniors aged 60 and older anticipate that as they age they will need help in the following four focus areas: transportation, support managing health and wellness, nutrition and/or meals, and support to stay socially connected. This RSVP project will focus on these Healthy Futures areas with at least 60% of the 422 volunteers. There will be at least 178 or 42% of unduplicated volunteers in work plans with outcomes.

The Foothill Communities RSVP cities are located in eastern Los Angeles County covering 120 square miles in the San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys. The cities lie to the east of Los Angeles, to the north of Puente Hills, to the south of the San Gabriel Mountains and west of the Inland Empire. At one time predominantly agricultural, the San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys are today almost entirely urbanized and are an integral part of the Greater Los Angeles metropolitan area. The cities served are some of the most ethnically diverse. Pomona and Azusa are approximately 68% Hispanic while Diamond Bar and Walnut are approximately 58% Asian. African Americans make up approximately 5%, while other races are 4% to 6% in each city. The primary languages spoken, other than English, are Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

In California, 11% of the population is 65 years and older, and seven of the cities served are above this average. The three cities with the greatest number of residents over 65 are La Verne with 17%, Claremont with 17% and San Dimas with 16%. While the homeownership percentage for Los Angeles County is 47.3%, all cities exceed that with five cities being over 70%. Seven of the nine cities have a much lower percentage of children in their city than the state average. The low number of children and the high number of home ownership has led some to believe that the area served by this RSVP Program will continue to have a greater number of residents over 65 years old than many other California cities.

While several of the cities served have less than the average percentage of people below the poverty level (15%), Pomona (20%) and Azusa (19%), both coincidentally have lower senior populations.

Narratives

Pomona's population is 151,348, which is the largest and densest per square mile of the cities served. To put into perspective, 20% of the Pomona population (those below the poverty level), equals the entire population of Walnut or La Verne. The total population of all cities served by the Foothill Communities RSVP is 486,636. All of the demographic information obtained is from census.gov.

Mobility is fundamental to everyday life and central to an understanding of health and well-being among older and disabled populations. Impaired mobility is associated with a variety of adverse health outcomes. As the age of the U.S. population continues to increase, aging and public health professionals have a role to play in improving mobility for older adults. There are critical gaps in the assessment and measurement of mobility among older adults who live in the community, particularly among those who have physical disabilities or cognitive impairments. The United States of Aging National Survey found 39% of seniors 60 and older said that they would need support with transportation as they age. This increased to 53% for low-income seniors and 48% for socially isolated seniors. Age-related declines in vision and cognitive functioning, along with physical changes, may affect the driving abilities of older adults. While there are some cities within the Foothill Communities RSVP Project that have transportation options, many do not. The project is keenly aware of the challenges that the senior and the disabled population have particularly when trying to cross the Los Angeles and San Bernardino County lines.

Community Senior Services continues to be at the forefront of identifying and supporting transportation solutions for seniors and the disabled. Community Connections received the Spirit of Accessibility award in 2012 for working with its partners to provide an alternative form of transportation to meet the needs of the aging and disabled residents in Claremont, La Verne, Pomona and San Dimas.

Last year, Community Connections continued to grow, providing 432 riders in 16 cities with 162,000 miles of travel while the Get About Program provided 130,212 shared rides in a four-city area. In the most recent survey to Community Connection riders, 91% believed that they are more engaged in life as a result of the program. REAL Connections also provides comparable results in their transportation offerings. Throughout the grant cycle, transportation will be one of the focus areas with two stations and at least 80 volunteer drivers.

Narratives

Los Angeles County represents 17% of California's veteran population. However, the service area of the Foothill Communities RSVP project is dramatically different: veterans only make up 4% of the total project's population. This low percentage is likely attributed to two reasons: there is neither a Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital nor a military base central to the service area. The nearest Veterans Administration Hospital is across county lines and does not have easily accessible transportation options for seniors or the disabled. As a result, Community Senior Services recognizes that veterans have a special transportation need and provides a convenient transportation service through Get About and Community Connections, both of which have RSVP volunteers.

This past year, project staff delivered presentations focused on veteran outreach, sharing information on sponsor agency programs at the Loma Linda VA Hospital, Front Site Ministries, and the Pomona Homeless Coalition. While Rose Hills and the Loma Linda VA Hospital are not in the Foothill Communities RSVP service area, presentation attendees may live in the service area. Caseworkers and Social Workers from 14 area agencies that may work with veterans are also regularly updated on available services. RSVP volunteers participate in the Rose Hills Memorial Park's "Dignity Memorial Homeless Veterans Burial Program", providing dignified burial services for eligible homeless and indigent veterans to ensure they receive the honors in death that their service in life merits.

Living with one or more chronic diseases often can mean a diminished quality of life, generally reflected by a long period of decline and disability associated with their disease. Chronic diseases can affect the ability to perform important and essential activities, both inside and outside the home. Initially, there are difficulties with activities of daily living, such as managing money, shopping, preparing meals, and taking prescribed medications. The inability to perform daily activities can restrict engagement in life and enjoyment of family and friends. Lack of mobility in the community or at home significantly narrows the world and the ability to do the things that bring enjoyment and meaning to life.

The Cornell Institute for Translational Research on Aging has published an extensive review of studies on the subject of social support, social isolation, and social integration. They define social isolation as, "The lack of contact and interaction with people leading to feelings of loneliness, lack of companionship, or close and genuine communication with others." Additionally, social isolation is consistently associated with distress and poor health. The research indicated that social integration,

Narratives

the opposite of social isolation, is beneficial to health across adulthood into old age. Interventions effective in reducing social isolation, improving health, and promoting aging in place came in the form of personal contact within groups that included discussions, physical activities and exercise, education, skills training, and telephone reassurance.

The key is in providing social support, either on a one-to-one basis or in a group setting. The Foothill Communities RSVP will have five stations with 118 volunteers in Healthy Futures, with a focus on Companionship and Food Delivery, including Meals on Wheels, the Phone Assurance Line (PAL), and the Senior Helpline. The three Meals on Wheels Programs already within the project delivered over 33,000 meals in 2013. The Phone Assurance Line makes daily calls to seniors or disabled who have limited social contact, making nearly 1,600 calls in 2013. The Senior Helpline provides callers information or referrals on a wide variety of resources, replying to 2,000 calls in 2013. The helpline works closely with social workers, case managers and agencies throughout the area to ensure that callers receive information on housing, transportation, and food, among other resources.

The California Senate Select Committee on Aging reports that California's current aging and long-term care system does not provide for person-centered, individualized care or easy transitions between programs. The likelihood of becoming disabled in two or more activities of daily living (ADLs) or of developing cognitive impairment is 68% among those 65 and older, meaning that almost 7 out of 10 seniors will have substantial needs for supportive care. California was once a leader in providing services to support the full integration of seniors and persons with disabilities into community life. Despite these initial advancements, the long-term care system has been negatively impacted by system fragmentation, lack of system wide data or planning, capacity issues, and fiscal pressures. REAL Connections will have 40 RSVP volunteers who provide transportation and companionship along with ADLs to homebound or older adults and individuals with disabilities. The door through door transportation is provided to life-enriching and life-sustaining activities. They can include activities such as potlucks, concerts in the park, games, dancing, friendly home visits, and doctor's appointments. The volunteers are trained to identify and are mandated to report any verbal, physical, emotional, or financial abuse.

Regular physical activity is one of the most important things older adults can do for their health. Physical activity can prevent many of the health problems that may come with age. Strong evidence

Narratives

indicates that regular physical activity is safe and reduces the risk of falls among older adults. Older adults at risk of falling should do exercises that maintain or improve their balance. Research also shows that exercise increases bone density. Originally developed from the Strong Living Program of Tufts University, regular participation in Bone Builders provides many benefits in addition to improving balance and bone density. In satisfaction surveys to Bone Builder participants, the majority indicated improvement in many areas, most notably making new friends and enjoying social contact. These results suggest that Bone Builders also helps to combat social isolation. Survey comments included "Better balance!! Very enjoyable social interactions. Have made some dear friends. I look forward to the class." and "Less stress. Clearer thinking. More satisfied."

The Foothill Communities RSVP started the Bone Builder Program in 2010 with two classes in Azusa. There are now 11 classes in five locations in four cities with 20 volunteer instructors and 218 participants. These classes will continue through the next three years. The goal is to secure funding to cover the cost of weights and oversight of the program in order for expansion to additional locations.

In addition to the 20 Bone Builder Instructors under Healthy Futures/Access to Care, there are at least 25 RSVP volunteers engaged in Health Education activities through the Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center. The volunteers assist or train on topics such as car seat use, CPR, maternity tours, diabetes and cardiac wellness.

Over the next year, the Foothill Communities RSVP will start a Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP). Senior Medicare Patrol helps to educate Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries to avoid, detect and report fraud, recovering and avoiding the loss of billions of dollars each year. The patrol is more effective as face-to-face, in-person contact is a very effective way of sharing information to seniors. SMPs nationwide yearly recruiting program will help teach nearly 5,000 volunteers to help in this effort. Most SMP volunteers are both retired and have Medicare, and are in a good position to assist their peers in this effort.

SMP reaches out to Medicare beneficiaries in their communities by hosting group presentations, exhibiting at community events, answering calls to helplines and providing one-on-one counseling. Patrol volunteers teach Medicare beneficiaries how to protect their personal identity, identify and report errors on their health bills, and identify deceptive or fraudulent health care practices. Volunteers

Narratives

receive extensive initial and ongoing training. SMP volunteers serve at least eight hours a month.

Last year, Medicare paid out \$575 billion dollars in claims, of which an estimated \$60 to \$90 billion dollars is lost to fraud and abuse. California is the number one state for losses due to Medicare and Medicaid fraud and abuse. The theft of Medicare and Medi-Cal accounts leads to false claims and unpaid benefits. A compromised Social Security Number often leads to identify theft and theft of banking information. Having been a Financial Crimes Investigator for a major bank, the director has personally seen the effects of financial fraud and abuse on seniors. Many seniors are not equipped to identify a potential fraud or to handle the repercussions. The goal is to have a minimum of ten trained Senior Medicare Patrol volunteers during this grant cycle.

The Foothill Communities RSVP Project covers a community at risk. According to FEMA, the cities served are at risk for earthquake-related liquefaction, landslides, and damage caused by ground shaking. Many of the cities served are at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains, an area with thousands of acres of wilderness. As California wildfires burn through these forests, these cities no longer have the protection against flooding they once had.

RSVP volunteers are both trained and active in performing outreach to the community. Volunteers assist in providing home and business owners the tools needed to identify and reduce fire hazards and mudslide damage. Volunteers are also trained in search and rescue, the execution of emergency plans, and post-disaster emotional support. Many isolated seniors and disabled are not prepared for or able to respond in a disaster. Outreach programs are in place to identify vulnerable seniors in case of disaster, in addition to setting up treatment areas, providing triage, and basic medical treatment.

There are 65 volunteers assigned to four Police and Community Emergency Response Team stations. Last year, Foothill Communities RSVP teamed with the Committee on Aging to fundraise for emergency preparedness kits for vulnerable, isolated seniors. With the help of RSVP volunteers, memory-impaired seniors and their families assembled the kits. The Claremont CERT Team provided an in-home visit to nearly 90 identified seniors and provided them an emergency kit to be used during a disaster. During this grant period, opportunities to collaborate between stations or communities will continue to be explored.

Narratives

Digital inclusion is the ability to access and use information and communication technologies. This is not only access to the internet but also availability of computers and the need of training for digital literacy skills required for effective use. The cost of the opposite, digital exclusion, is great. Without access to computers and the ability to use them, seniors lack the ability to participate in significant aspects of society - from economic success and educational achievement to positive health outcomes and civic engagement. There is a well-known need in local libraries of the need for computer access and assistance. While libraries have computers, there is not staff to help those in need of assistance.

An excerpt from the Associated Press in June 2014: "Budget cuts have forced the Social Security Administration to close dozens of field offices even as millions of baby boomers approach retirement, swamping the agency with applications for benefits ... Better Internet access and more online services are easing the transition, said Nancy Berryhill, the agency's deputy commissioner for operations." However, Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, the top Republican on the Aging Committee stated, "The fact of the matter is, millions of seniors and disabled Americans are not accustomed to doing business online ... Even as computer and broadband technologies become more widespread, the idea that the Social Security Administration can serve beneficiaries primarily online ignores the very real needs of the senior and disabled populations."

Not only will helping people gain computer access provide them goods and services, there is value in computer programs that help those with dementia, those seeking health education, and those needing reminders for medications. This volunteer activity will fall under Other Community Priorities. The digital literacy pilot will begin in 2015. There will be at least 10 RSVP volunteers assigned to the Claremont and Pomona libraries that will assist computer users of all ages. A member of the project's Community Participation Board has interest in piloting this program at a low-income housing facility that has computers set up in the facility's Recreation Room. With lessons learned, this program can expand to other libraries or senior housing complexes that have computer access.

There are also at least 20 on-call RSVP volunteers on Community Priority Service Activities who are assigned to the sponsor. Activities include preparation of the monthly newsletter and leading support groups. While the activities can sometimes fall under Focus Areas such as Disaster Preparedness or Healthy Futures they are usually one-time events.

Narratives

Each year there is at least one event that engages on-call volunteers. Ability First, a local agency for mentally or physically disabled youth, and Yesteryears Cafe, a support group for seniors with mild to moderate memory impairment, help on-call RSVP volunteers build Emergency Disaster Kits. At Emergency Preparedness Presentations, these kits are distributed and delivered to locations such as Senior Housing Complexes or non-profits such as Eye-Das for visually impaired adults. These volunteers also may support one-time events such as the Rose Hills Veterans Resource Fair, the Los Angeles County Homeless Count, or a Caregiver Conference that Community Senior Services is hosting in November 2014.

There are 90 volunteers at the nine Senior Centers serving under Other Community Priorities. These volunteers are fulfilling needs such as being Greeters/Ambassadors, organizing special events such as 90th birthday parties or teaching classes. The Claremont Joslyn Center was recognized this year by the California State Park and Recreation Society CPRS for the volunteer-created After Work Program geared to young-Seniors who are 55 to 65 years old. Programming has included speakers from Caltech's Seismological Laboratory and a local artist who discussed the Hidden Art of Los Angeles. Senior Centers provide opportunities for lifelong learning that enhances the quality of life for older adults (Beisgen & Kraitchman, 2003). Attending a senior or community center is a lifeline for many people. Of particular importance is the opportunity for socialization, lifelong learning, recreation, and nutritious hot meal programs.

Performance measures are a priority of the sponsoring agency, Community Senior Services. Each year, the President/CEO, directors, and board members review and assess organizational progress and challenges, and update the Strategic Plan as necessary. A priority of the agency's 2013-2018 Strategic Plan is Healthy Futures, both for this project and the organization as a whole. Community Senior Services holds projects and program directors accountable for budgets, maintaining accurate and timely records, and achieving key metrics. Such metrics include service uses (clients, units of service) of which the project reports annually. The agency facilitates, surveys, and collects data in every program regularly to ensure that the delivery of service is providing otherwise unmet needs.

The new workplans for Foothill Communities RSVP are in complete accordance to the CNCS National Performance Measure outputs and outcomes. Measurement tools have been in place agency-wide prior to the new requirements. Community Senior Services and this project have an established record

Narratives

of outputs and outcomes in data collection and surveys. Methods utilized previously have included both electronic and physical mail, phone, and face-to-face. The project provides extensive training to data collection volunteers in order to maintain accurate and consistent results. The project has established a partnership with nearby educational institutions that provide data collection volunteers, including Social Work/Gerontology students from USC, Azusa Pacific University, the Claremont Colleges, and University of La Verne.

RSVP staff have completed the tutorial in preparation for the new data collection and tracking and will modify existing data collection processes to account for the changes. The staff will continue to participate in webinars and training to ensure a continued high level of success in grant management. Thus far, the project has utilized Volunteer Reporter to manage RSVP volunteer and station data, along with Microsoft Office, IRIS, Club Express, and TripTrak. These other programs assist in tracking volunteer hours and services delivered (i.e., number of trips/miles and recipients of service). More specifically, the three Meals on Wheels program have meal delivery logs by route used to report the number of meals delivered each day. While the number of meals delivered is not a requirement of the program, the volunteers are astounded each year when discovering how many meals have been collectively delivered.

The Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with the volunteer stations establish that one of their responsibilities is to gather and share any relevant outcome data and to work collaboratively to meet outcome and output goals. This agreement has led to many years of success in working with community partner stations. An increased commitment in Healthy Futures will further cement the important role in the cities served through RSVP.

Recruitment and Development

It is well known that volunteering has many health benefits. Three-fourths of seniors in the U.S. say that staying active through volunteering helps them manage their chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and depression, according to research conducted by the Home Instead, Inc. franchisor for the Home Instead Senior Care network.

The emotional benefits of volunteering are particularly relevant for seniors with chronic conditions. For example, 77% of seniors with chronic conditions say an important reason they volunteer is to overcome feeling depressed, compared with 63% of seniors without chronic conditions.

Narratives

Volunteering contributes to invigorated social networks with 74% reporting that they are able to overcome feeling isolated. There is no time when the risk of isolation is as great as the senior years. Volunteering gives many seniors a reason to walk out the door each morning. Seniors also have reported increased physical well-being, mental acuity and pain relief. In today's economy, volunteering increases one's chances of finding employment. The unemployment rate for all cities served by this project is 7.2%. The RSVP Director has been participating in a Job Club for seniors and presenting to the participants the Healthy Benefits of Volunteering. The discussion includes that volunteering is not only an opportunity to keep their current skills sharp but also can add skills to their resume. Currently, two seniors from the Job Club are volunteering.

It is for all of these reasons that the RSVP Director's recruitment efforts are not solely placed on finding volunteers for a specific task. The Healthy Benefits of Volunteering presentation provides the WIIIFM - What's In It For Me. The benefits of volunteering include lower blood pressure, keeping memory sharp and keeping weight in check. In the most recent Foothills Communities RSVP volunteer survey, 78% said that volunteering had frequently or definitely enhanced their health and well-being. 92% of the volunteers with Foothill Communities RSVP feel supported by the project and their fellow volunteers.

Many people do not volunteer until asked. Many seniors do not realize that they have skills, knowledge and abilities that will not only benefit others but themselves as well. Health Benefits presentations are done at Senior/Community Centers, Mobile Home Parks, Senior Apartments, Clubs and Support Groups in all of the cities served. As mentioned previously, only 4% of the population served by this grant is veterans. Pomona, which has the highest number of homeless in the area, published a report on "The State of Homelessness in Pomona 2013" stating that there were 630 people that were homeless, of which 1% were veterans and that 1% did indicate an interest in Veterans Affairs assistance. The identifiable veteran population is very low in the catchment area but the project will continue to do outreach for its programs and to identify veterans to volunteer.

Although recruitment efforts are in all of the cities served, there is not a proportionate number of Chinese volunteers in Walnut or Diamond Bar. Those two cities along with the sponsoring agency have attempted different recruitment strategies. On Academia.edu, there is a paper that offers insight

Narratives

- "Volunteer Behavior Among Asian American Groups in the United States" by Richard A. Sundeen, Christina Garcia and Lili Wang. The researchers write, "Due to the emphasis on obligations or responsibilities to close family members and friends in Chinese culture, informal and indigenous kinds of giving and voluntary activities are the most common forms of philanthropy in the Chinese American community. Also, it has been observed that Chinese Americans' charitable giving may be rooted in their allegiance to their hometown areas or regions in China. For the recent immigrant from a traditional society, to give his or her time to strangers may seem strange or inappropriate." Many seniors in these areas are foreign-born. The project will continue to educate and encourage all seniors on the value of volunteerism to themselves and their community.

Pomona also has a proportionately lower Hispanic volunteer participation rate. It has been suggested that this is partially due to the high number of households with children. Just over 37% of Pomona's population is under 18 years old compared to the state's average of 31%. Most of the other cities served have between 22% and 28% of their population under 18 years old. While Pomona is largely Hispanic, it is ethnically diverse. Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam -- famous for "Bowling Alone," his 2000 book on declining civic engagement -- has found that the greater the diversity in a community, the fewer people vote and the less they volunteer, the less they give to charity and work on community projects. It is believed that the Digital Literacy project that this RSVP Program is starting at the Pomona library will provide a unique opportunity to serve.

Foothill Communities RSVP uses a variety of other avenues for recruitment and public awareness. The sponsor's newsletter regularly runs an article on the Healthy Benefits of Volunteering. Articles run in multiple newspapers and information is disseminated at the 20 or more Health Fairs held in the project's footprint along with events such as the LA County Fair and Farmer's Markets. The sponsor posts volunteer opportunities on its Facebook page and website. In addition, volunteer opportunities are listed on Volunteer Match, the United Way volunteer website, and Craigslist. Foothill Communities RSVP contact information is listed in the Los Angeles and San Bernardino County 211. Flyers are also placed at Senior Apartments. This variety ensures that opportunities are reaching both the tech-savvy and those who may not have access to digital information. Approximately 50% of the RSVP volunteers have e-mail. When one-time volunteer opportunities are available, the RSVP Director will send them via e-mail to these volunteers and encourage them to share the opportunity with friends and family. The RSVP Director has participated in High School volunteer fairs and spoken

Narratives

at the Claremont Colleges and University of La Verne regarding the positive impact that volunteering makes on the individual and their community. It is common to hear students say that they need to get their parents or grandparents volunteering. The project has at least one event a year that engages disabled children and adults. Over the past three years, this has included the Glendora After Stroke Support Group, Ability First and Yesteryear Cafe. These successful and proven methods of recruitment are used on an ongoing basis.

The stations provide entry-level and ongoing education for their volunteers. The incoming Bone Builder Instructors attend a three day Bone Builder Instructors Course and all have ongoing education on a variety of topics such as nutrition or fall prevention that can be shared with Bone Builder class participants. The CERT members receive six sessions of training in areas such as fire suppression, light search and rescue, and first aid. Once trained, some volunteers go on to provide community outreach. The Senior Medicare Patrol receives 30 hours of Medicare training and 20 hours of internship to become a certified HICAP counselor and then receive two hours of Medicare Fraud training. They also receive ongoing training. The Meals on Wheels programs provide side-by-side training that can include learning the food delivery routes and how to package the food for safe delivery, how to make contact with participants, and how to report problems in the field. Some volunteers go on to become Day Captains or a member of one of the Meals on Wheels Boards. Volunteers are encouraged to speak with their Station or the RSVP Director if they are interested in learning new skills or tasks. In the last Foothill Communities volunteer survey, 95% indicated that they would continue to volunteer in their current site.

The RSVP Community Participation Group, Station Leaders and Community Senior Services are provided the results of the Volunteer Satisfaction surveys. These partners provide guidance and recommendations based on the results. The response rates are very high, so it is understood that the project is receiving good and candid feedback. Over the past three years, the project has been awarded grants from Tri-City Mental Health for the well-being of the Bone Builder Instructors. As reported in each wellness survey, instructors felt good about their contribution to the community's efforts as well as others' contributions. Bone Builder volunteers are extremely happy with their volunteering experiences, rating nearly every survey question 90% to 100% positive.

Recognition for their efforts is provided in a variety of ways. Each year there is the RSVP Volunteer

Narratives

Appreciation Luncheon. Community businesses and agencies support the luncheon by donating door prizes, the venue and lunch, and funds that go towards decorations, invitations and entertainment. A local mayor is invited who expresses his gratitude for the volunteers' efforts. During the recognition, the project shares the collective results of what the volunteers achieved. They are inspired when they learn how many lives they have touched. For those volunteers who are unable to attend, their names are placed in a hat and chosen for door prizes set aside. Newsletter articles recognize volunteers as well as local newspapers.

Local organizations, such as the local Symphony Orchestra, help to recognize volunteers. The volunteer and their family and friends are treated to a concert in their honor. Many of the stations also have volunteer recognition events. Articles run in the local newspapers and newsletters on the activities of RSVP volunteers. Spotlight articles appear in newspapers and/or newsletters commending volunteers on their service to the community.

Program Management

As the sponsor for the Foothill Communities RSVP program since 1982, Community Senior Services has a successful track record of program management not only for RSVP but for its many other programs. The sponsor manages over 30 funding sources and 10 programs each year. Independent yearly audits have reflected that accounting practices are sound. As described by an independent auditor, "The Organization receives grant funds from various agencies to provide transportation and senior care to its area residents thus promoting independent living and enhanced quality of life." Before there were National Performance Measures, the sponsor, throughout its many programs, has focused on Healthy Futures. The issues of transportation, companionship and food security are well-known needs in this area of the senior population.

The 12 employees of Community Senior Services keep current on community needs through ongoing education, participation in community boards, task forces and networking groups. Their collective participation in the community weaves through each program ensuring best practices are shared. Through these networking efforts, relationships are established and nurtured which leads to expanded awareness of the agency's many programs and increased potential for funding opportunities. Both the CEO and RSVP Director sit on Claremont's Committee on Aging Board. This very active volunteer board is developing programming that is beneficial to the broad spectrum of seniors in many of the cities served. While activities like Bingo are important to older seniors for companionship and

Narratives

cognitive stimulation, younger seniors want walking and biking groups or other stimulating activities that will keep them successfully aging in place. Community Senior Services was recognized as Non-Profit of the Year by the city of Claremont in 2013 and Outstanding Colleague of the Year by Change a Life Foundation in 2013. In 2012, the sponsor received the Spirit of Accessibility award for its volunteer transportation program - Community Connections.

The volunteer station and RSVP responsibilities and expectations are outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as described by the CNCS policies. These are updated every three years. In 32 years, the project has never had to terminate a station due to non-compliance of items in the MOU. Yearly, the stations provide a statement that there is adequate supervision and no safety issues. The Director completes the Civil Rights Compliance Evaluation. The items on the evaluation are important as they help to determine any barriers that a volunteer might have if assigned to a station, such as wheelchair accessibility.

The stations have oversight of the volunteers to ensure that they are meeting the goals set for that volunteer opportunity. When issues arise and a volunteer has acted inappropriately, which is rare, the volunteer is dismissed. Volunteer Reporter notes why that volunteer is not to be assigned to another RSVP station. In addition, this system is used to maintain all volunteer and station information along with hours. Volunteers are encouraged to contact the RSVP Director should they decide that their interest or availability has changed. The Director will then re-explore RSVP opportunities. If needed, they will be referred to United Way or other volunteer opportunities in the community.

The RSVP Director makes contact with the stations on a regular basis to collaborate on special event needs, clarify reporting, follow-up on site requests, or participate in activities. Many of the sites include project staff in their recognition events. The RSVP Director has ongoing communication with volunteers and stations through phone, personal visits, e-mails, newsletters, the sponsor's website and Facebook page. These activities help to ensure that the stations or volunteers are not involved in any prohibited activities.

Over the past three years, in anticipation of the RSVP Re-Competition, a couple of stations needed to be graduated. While the Director will refer volunteers that may be interested in volunteer opportunities at those graduated stations, they are not signed up as RSVP volunteers. This has not

Narratives

affected volunteer numbers as goals have always been exceeded, and there has been no negative impact to relationships with the stations or volunteers.

The RSVP program ensures that volunteer assignments maximize the potential of each volunteer and are meaningful. All stations are required to develop and provide job descriptions that address how the volunteer can contribute to the station or what skills the station can help the volunteer develop to be successful.

The RSVP Director interviews prospective applicant volunteers and provides them with advice, guidance, and assistance in exploring the options that will best suit their skills, knowledge, abilities, and availability. Part of the interview process is ensuring that volunteers are at least 55 years old and are interviewing for stations with signed MOUs. Potential volunteers may attend a station orientation or meeting prior to formal placement which lets them understand the environment and expectations before they actually make a commitment. This ensures a good fit and provides satisfaction for both the volunteer and the station. When Foothill Communities RSVP does not have an opportunity that an applicant is interested in, the project works with other organizations. The project has formed a partnership with United Way of the Inland Empire. Although they primarily seek volunteers for the San Bernardino County, they have a presence in the eastern Los Angeles County. Recently they had openings for AmeriCorps fellows in the CalPREP program and the Volunteer Infrastructure Program (VIP), and were specifically interested in recruiting seniors. These opportunities were shared with this project's sites and community partners. During the last grant cycle, the RSVP Director invited the United Way Director of Volunteerism to deliver a four-hour workshop on Volunteer Management and invited 58 non-profits to attend. These were not all RSVP stations but by having a mixed group, they were able to learn about practices in other organizations that they could adopt. The four RSVP Police/CERT stations had six representatives who, having never met before, were able to learn together. There were 34 attendees representing the 26 non-profits in attendance. Topics included among other things writing job descriptions and recognition.

The RSVP onboarding process includes providing the volunteer with information on the CIMA supplemental insurance and the Volunteer Handbook that is in accordance to CNCS policies. The station also has onboarding protocols that frequently include an orientation meeting.

Narratives

Community Senior Services also has a Senior Companion Program. The RSVP and Senior Companion Programs have a shared Community Participation Board that meet monthly. It is a mix of volunteers and community members who guide and advise both programs. Their range of expertise is invaluable and they have a firm grasp of the human and social needs of the community. Members reinforced the Digital Literacy issues being faced by low income and senior residents that have been compounded by the lack of technical support in the local libraries. The board has assisted with fundraising and event planning. A member of the Community Participation Board is also on the Sponsor's Board of Directors. As a professor of Gerontology at Chaffey College and a Social Worker for the City of Montclair, she is the perfect conduit between the two boards.

Organizational Capability

Community Senior Services (CSS), the sponsor of RSVP, was incorporated in 1975 when it was identified by the four local retirement communities and the Claremont Graduate University that the local communities needed a resource for "connecting people, information, resources and communities to enrich the lives of older adults." Thirty-nine years ago, CSS provided the first federal and city funded multi-city dial-a-ride program in the country. From its humble beginning of a borrowed van and volunteer drivers, Get About Transportation currently has 9,000 registered riders. In addition to this flagship program, CSS has developed and effectively implemented ten more programs and services designed to promote self-sufficiency, independence and a high quality of life for the aging population. The mission and activities fall directly in line with the mission of RSVP and the primary Focus area of Healthy Futures. With nearly four decades of experience working with government grants, CSS continues to have a proven record of accomplishment of fiscal management.

CSS has sponsored the RSVP program since 1982 and the Senior Companion Program since 1988 and has continued to meet or exceed all administrative and fiscal requirements set by federal guidelines. CSS uses the accrual basis for recording financial transactions. Under the accrual basis, revenues are recorded in the accounting period in which they are earned and expenditures are recorded in the accounting period in which they are incurred. CSS maintains a double entry accounting system with a general ledger, general journal, cash receipts journal, cash disbursement journal, and a payroll register. CSS uses QuickBooks for recording and reporting all financial activities. All records are maintained by the Director of Administration and the Finance Manager of CSS. Both these positions are paid for by the sponsor agency (in-kind) and are not charged to the Federal grant. A detailed financial review is presented bimonthly to the Board of Directors. Ongoing reviews of budget

Narratives

projections and financials are used by the project director, CEO, Board and accounting staff to ensure that all programs of CSS can operate successfully. Internal controls safeguard assets from misappropriation, misstatements or misuse. CSS maintains necessary written procedures establishing internal controls for its staff. CSS instructs all staff in these procedures and continuously monitors operations to ensure compliance. An annual audit is performed by an independent accredited auditing firm in accordance with Government Auditing Standards. The 2012 audit and all audits over the past 10 years state that there were no audit findings or corrective action plan required. All CNCS reporting is submitted on time and in accordance to CNCS reporting requirements.

The RSVP program has one federally paid staff director who oversees the program. Linda Chavez retired from a major bank after 35 Years. During her tenure, she worked in Human Resources as an Employment Officer and Training Officer, was a Financial Crimes Investigator, and spent most of her years as a Vice President managing 200 to 400 employees. Linda was very active in the bank's volunteer programs not only as a volunteer, but also as a Management Advisor for the Volunteer Environmental Network, Secretary for the Volunteer Diversity Network, and a Mentoring Program Leader. She holds a Six Sigma Greenbelt Certification.

CSS provides in-kind administrative and accounting staff to monitor the grant on a daily basis. The CSS CEO, Director of Administration and Finance Manager have a combined over 25 years of experience monitoring federal grants and they adhere to all regulations and statutes in the OMB circulars.

Floy Biggs, CEO, has more than three decades of experience in both the non-profit and for-profit sectors, managing senior and long-term care programs. Serving as CEO of Community Senior Services since 2006, Floy is well-respected and integrated into the regional senior services community. She is a licensed skilled nursing facility administrator and earned both an undergraduate degree in gerontology and a Masters in Public Administration from USC. In addition to her agency leadership, Floy is actively engaged in the community and currently serves on the boards of the Claremont Committee on Aging, the Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice of Southern California, and the Claremont Chamber of Commerce.

Abby Castillo has been with Community Senior Services since 2001, currently serving as Director of

Narratives

Administration, as well as coordinator of the Senior Help Line. In addition, Abby oversees agency involvement with the Get About Transportation program, all Federal programs, and is the editor of CSS' quarterly newsletter- Connections. Abby earned her bachelor's degree in Computer Science from Philippine Christine University. Abby serves as an Ambassador for the Claremont Chamber of Commerce and as a participant in the LeadingAge leadership institute.

CSS's 2014-2018 Strategic Plan, completed last May, focuses on advancing the mission to support seniors and caregivers, while strengthening capacity building and infrastructure. Broad goals are: 1) Integrated Programs, Knowledge and Expertise, 2) Community Awareness and Engagement, 3) Revenue Growth and Diversification and 4) Leading with Intention. Within each goal, strategic initiatives and related objectives are defined. Some initiatives grow programs and vital fundraising revenue to sustain the agency in the future. Others strengthen efficiency by better coordinating and leveraging resources, and governance and staff development.

Other

N/A

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A