

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. (WDEOC, the Agency) located in Independence, WI, is the legal applicant for the Western Dairyland Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). WDEOC was established June 6, 1966 to help disadvantaged individuals in Buffalo, Eau Claire, Jackson, and Trempealeau counties, located in West-Central Wisconsin, become self-reliant. The Agency's mission is to alleviate poverty related conditions and provide opportunities which enable people to advance economically and socially. RSVP has been operating since 1973. A total of 400 unduplicated volunteers will serve under the program. RSVP works by empowering individuals age 55 or older to perform acts of community service that make western Wisconsin a better place for everyone. As a result of their service, seniors gain a better understanding how their efforts contribute to the greater good of the community.

The Agency works with community organizations and individuals to improve the quality of life for all. Western Dairyland programs are developed in response to identified community needs and advocate for the interests of the economically disadvantaged.

The primary focus area for RSVP is Healthy Futures, with work plan objectives in the areas of Obesity and Food, and Aging in Place services which includes activities such as volunteer transportation, in home services, and food distribution. Other national focus areas the program will address include: 2) Education, 3) Economic Opportunity and 4) Veterans and Military Families 5) Environmental Stewardship.

A total of 256 (unduplicated) of the 400 RSVP volunteers will be serving in the in the primary focus area of Healthy Futures. The annual requested federal grant amount for this program serving the residents of Buffalo, Eau Claire, Jackson, and Trempealeau Counties is \$67,034 which will be supplemented in the amount of \$28,728 by non-federal sources.

## Strengthening Communities

The service area of RSVP is largely rural and includes the rural counties of Buffalo, Trempealeau, and Jackson, as well as the more urbanized Eau Claire County in west central Wisconsin. Four cities in the rural counties have over 2,000 residents, while the remaining 81% of the population is dispersed among 72 small towns and villages. The Eau Claire County population is much more concentrated, with nearly 80% of individuals residing in three cities Eau Claire, Altoona, and the Town of Washington, which are all geographically contiguous. With 66,000 residents, Eau Claire is by far the largest city in northwestern Wisconsin. Unemployment is about 6.5%, which is better than the state

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and national figures at present, however median household income is \$36,399 versus \$43,791 for the rest of the state.

According to the 2010 American Community Survey Estimates from the U.S. Census, the population of the four county service area is 161,588. The 2010 population by county is as follows: 13,587 residents in Buffalo County, 98,736 residents in Eau Claire County, 20,449 residents in Jackson County, and 28,816 in Trempealeau County. The service area includes a high percentage of individuals over the age of 65: 18.1% of Buffalo County (2,540 individuals), 13.8% of Eau Claire County (13,625 individuals), 16.2% of Jackson County (3,312 individuals), and 15.9% of Trempealeau County (4,581 individuals). According to Census Data, future projections show the 55 to 85 age group will grow the fastest.

RSVP serves these retired seniors by actively engaging them in meaningful community service-based activities. As the aging population increases in our service area, so will the need for supportive services. Both seniors and the rest of the population benefit from the services that RSVP volunteers offer. Examples of these services for seniors and veterans include transportation to medical appointments, friendly visiting, light housekeeping, companionship, shopping trips, and food pantry services. These activities align well with the primary focus area of Healthy Futures.

The dire consequences of prevalent poverty can be seen in the counties we serve, where the poverty rate rises as high as 18.2% in Jackson County. The impact of poverty on vulnerable populations is in keeping with the findings of a 2011 study commissioned by the AARP which indicates that poverty status can disproportionately affect the food security of the elderly and disabled (Ziliak & Gunderson, 2011). This food insecurity may be exacerbated in USDA classified food deserts as the decreased access to transportation of many seniors can inhibit their ability to find sources for fresh foods.

Healthy Futures was selected based on input from community groups, feedback from the RSVP Advisory Council, results from the Western Dairyland 2013 Needs Assessment Report, and other statistical data. Community feedback and reports have indicated that Food Security, Housing Services, and Independent Living Services are the most needed. An increasing number of families and elderly have incomes that are at or below the poverty level and continue to need assistance to meet basic needs. A high poverty rate and other factors have led many families to seek assistance from local food pantries just to make ends meet. The number of individuals served by food assistance programs has continued to increase over the last few years. As a result, food pantries have been struggling just to keep up with demand and depend on volunteers to help meet this basic need. Food Pantry participation has increased substantially the past few years. In 2013 a total of 14,753 households were

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served at partnering food distribution sites versus 11,788 in 2012. A difference of 2965 households. The number of Food Share participants in our service area also increased in 2013 to 29,963 versus 22483 in 2012. An increase of 7480 individuals. Local food pantry coordinators have stated that they would not be able to operate efficiently without RSVP volunteers.

According to a study conducted by Feeding America, poverty and food security are directly related. The following poverty rates from the 2010 census for all counties in our service area are as follows: Buffalo-12%, Eau Claire-16.7%, Jackson-18.2%, Trempealeau-12.6%, Average Wisconsin-12.5%.

According to the census, about one in five families experienced unemployment in 2010. Poverty increased with the number of weeks of unemployment. The poverty rate of the long-term unemployed was more than twice the rate of those with no unemployment in 2010. Without jobs, individuals and families are unable to achieve economic self-reliance. Jackson County has had an unemployment rate higher than the state and national average since 1990. Unemployed individuals and families living in poverty often have low food security or need for emergency food (Ziliak & Gunderson, 2011).

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, food security is defined as a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food. The USDA maps food deserts where there exists a disproportionately low-income population with limited access to food. There are several different measures of low-income/low-access areas, and they are mapped by census tract. According to these multiple measures, the Western Dairyland service area contains 10 food desert tracts (Tract 55035000600, Tract 55035001200, Tract 55035001101, Tract 55035001700, Tract 55035000100, Tract 55053960300, Tract 55121100400, Tract 55121100600, Tract 55053960300, and Tract 55053960100). While the sparse population of Buffalo County prevents any classified food desert tracts, Jackson County more than makes up for this, as, geographically and demographically, well over half the county lives in a classified food desert.

In another measure of food security, the Department of Public Instruction collects the number of children that are eligible for Free and Reduced Meals. This program's participant percentages are as follows (October 2013): Eau Claire County: Altoona 42.9%, Augusta 60.2%, Eau Claire School District 42.9%, Buffalo County: Alma 42.6%, Gilmanton 52.2%, CFC 37.7%, Mondovi 53.7%, Jackson County: Alma Center 55.9%, BRF School District 49.1%, Mel-Min 51.5%, Trempealeau County: Arcadia 56.7%, Blair-Taylor 42.9%, GET 29.7%, Independence 49.7%, Osseo 41.7%, Whitehall 51%

Based on projections, the number of individuals age 65 + will dramatically increase over the next 15 years. According to the US Census Bureau 2012 Data Release in December 2013, the percentage of seniors living in poverty in three of the four counties of our service area are well above the Wisconsin

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average of 7.6%. The data show the following: Buffalo 13.5%, Jackson 8.2%, and Trempealeau 12.5%. Many seniors living in poverty wish to remain living independently but can not afford to hire someone to perform essential tasks that they used to do themselves. It can cost on average \$12,000 per year to receive such services. There are a number of studies which have linked poverty, especially in rural areas to poorer mental and physical health status a higher prevalence of functional disability, increased sedentary lifestyle, less use of preventative care (Bacsu, Jeffery, Johnson, Martz, Novik, & Abonyi, 2012). Recent research by Davis and Bartlett (2008) found that rural seniors desire for independence is often hindered by isolation, distance, income and access to services. Through a new independent living focused project in Trempealeau County called RSVP Volunteer Caregivers, volunteers will provide friendly visiting, light housekeeping, and shopping assistance for seniors so that they may remain living in their homes independently. This is the only project of its kind in rural Buffalo and Trempealeau counties. Through partnerships with senior service organizations and Aging and Disability Resource Centers, volunteers will also provide transportation services to medical care services for seniors and veterans. This will result in a reported increase of seniors and veterans with improved social ties that are able to remain living independently. With an aging population in our service area, services such as home delivered meals, transportation, and food distribution sites have seen an increase in participation, and the need is only expected to grow.

There have been 8 key themes identified by Bacsu et al. as key determinates in whether seniors are able to find the support they need in their rural communities; a few are as follows:

Housing- This includes housing affordability, and variety. Many seniors in the study sought out condominium style housing options due to reduced house and yard work as well as increased social interaction. For many seniors in our area, condominium options are not available, necessitating assistance with household chores and social interaction

Transportation Issues relating to mobility faced by seniors in metro areas are compounded in rural areas with little or no public transportation access. Many seniors had instituted their own driving limitations and were not comfortable driving long distances to urban areas. This especially impacted their ability to schedule and attend medical appointments. In order to combat these issues, care givers will assist seniors in getting to medical appointments and with basic transportation needs.

Caregiving - Many seniors provide care for others, and with a lack of adult day care services the daily demands were too difficult to deal with alone. This need, which has also been very pronounced in our service area, was the impetus behind the creation of the RSVP Caregivers project. Providing these basic services to the elderly allows for their ability to remain living in their communities without fear.

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Support Systems - Many seniors rely on family and friends for informal support including transportation, house cleaning and yard work. Seniors, however, often refrain from asking for help in order to avoid being a burden. Those without family often do not have access to these services. This, again, documents the need for care givers in rural communities. The number of individuals served by food assistance programs has recently been on the rise. Over the past few years, local food pantries have reported a nearly 30% increase in participation. Resources are being stretched and service providers are looking to RSVP to help meet this critical need. In 2013, the Food Share program distributed \$26,355,608 in assistance which is a significant increase from 2012. The elderly aren't the only ones vulnerable to food insecurity, especially in rural areas.

In two of the four counties in our service area, the percentage of children living in poverty is greater than the Wisconsin average of 17.2%. (Trempealeau County 18.8%, Jackson County 27.3%, Eau Claire County 16.5%, and Buffalo County 13.0%). Since food security is directly linked to poverty, a new project called RSVP Weekend Food 4 Kids was started. This project will provide weekend food assistance to 125 children and is the only project of its kind in our area. Food Security will also be addressed through the coordination and distribution of food to 10,000 individuals through partnerships with five local food pantries. Food pantry clients will be encouraged to complete an annual survey and complete a personal interview to thoroughly assess change. This will result in a reported increase of food security for individuals and families. This will result in a reported increase of food security for individuals and families. Without the efforts of the RSVP Program and volunteers, these services would not exist. Western Dairyland RSVP works in collaboration with the volunteer stations toward achieving the desired national performance outcomes. RSVP staff meets annually with all stations to provide updates anytime a staffing change occurs at the site. In addition, staff meets with each station involved in our primary focus area every other month in regard to objectives, service activities, number of volunteers, and outcomes. This is essential in order to ensure good communication, and effective working relationships. RSVP staff and site supervisors meet at the beginning of each grant year for planning purposes. The program holds another meeting in the middle of the year to evaluate plan and make adjustments if necessary, and the end of the year to evaluate results. Performance measurement data tools such as surveys will continuously be developed to meet the needs of our clients and performance measurement requirements. RSVP will work closely with volunteer stations to track the number of clients being served and outcomes. RSVP will work with volunteer stations to collect performance measurement survey results. RSVP is able to manage information and track data through Volunteer Reporter, a specialized computer software package.

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Staff uses Volunteer Reporter to track and record volunteers, hours, station, and impact data. With this technology, they are able to access volunteer information such as hours served, and anniversary dates. Volunteer Reporter has proven an essential element in tracking and maintaining volunteer activity and performance measurement impact.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), there is a total of 409,419 veterans in Wisconsin. Of this number, 312,648 (76%) are age 50 and over. According to information collected from local senior service agencies, veterans organizations, and community feedback forums, the need for senior and veterans transportation is increasing. Since our area is largely rural, the closest VA Hospital is 70 miles away. With an aging veteran population, many are no longer able to drive and they rely on community resources to help meet their needs. These long distance drives often consume many resources and local aging units are having a difficult time keeping up with the service requests. Through a coordinated effort between RSVP, local Veterans Service Offices, and area aging units, veterans will receive transportation services to medical appointments at the Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital located in Tomah and Madison. The VA is providing a van that volunteers can use to transport veterans to medical appointments three times each week, making this unique partnership the only service of its kind offered in the community. Through our volunteer caregiver project, veterans are eligible to receive caregiving services such as light housekeeping, shopping assistance, and companionship so that they remain living independently in their homes. Veterans are also eligible to receive food assistance at food distribution sites. Through the program partnership with local Veterans Service Offices, RSVP has been able to connect with veterans and engage them in volunteering. Many veterans have expressed an interest in assisting less fortunate fellow veterans.

### **Recruitment and Development**

A study from the Greater Wisconsin Area on Aging in 2010 states that individuals in rural areas can often feel isolated and depressed. Volunteer service provides an avenue for volunteers to remain active, build confidence, make new friends, and meet critical community needs. Western Dairyland RSVP has an individualized orientation and placement process, during which volunteers are asked to share past employment and other skills, interests and availabilities.

RSVP empowers retired senior volunteers with opportunities to directly affect their communities and this sense of empowerment is mutually beneficial to both the individual and the community. In addition, RSVP provides solutions to a wide spectrum of community problems, but has one primary focus area called Healthy Futures. The Healthy Futures focus area encompasses food security and independent living services for seniors and disabled individuals. As a result of the program, RSVP is

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able to reduce poverty's negative impact, and make the counties of Buffalo, Eau Claire, Jackson and Trempealeau a better place for everyone to live.

RSVP staff ensures a high quality experience for volunteers by offering a wide variety of volunteer opportunities, leadership development, and skills enhancements. Through a collaboration of RSVP Staff and site supervisors, opportunities have been developed so that recently retired volunteers, such as retired educators, and medical professionals are given the opportunity to continue using their specialized skills to make an impact through volunteerism.

Volunteers choose an activity that best suits their personal interests, skill level, and schedule. In an effort to develop leadership potential, RSVP has many leadership opportunities available such as Food Pantry Coordinators, and Special Project Group Leaders. Many food distribution sites in our area are 100% operated by RSVP volunteers and require a Volunteer Coordinator. Volunteer Food Distribution Coordinators are responsible for the overall operations of the food pantry and management of its volunteers. RSVP Volunteer Coordinators are able to participate in a 4 week leadership training course. They will participate in courses such as management, diversity, civil rights, and organizational development. Volunteers who complete the training receive a certificate of completion. Without RSVP Volunteer Coordinators, many of these services simply would not exist.

RSVP staff feels it is important for volunteers develop their own meaning of service. Through the very act of giving their time, volunteers are able to reflect upon what volunteering means to them.

Volunteers have stated that through their service, they have become increasingly aware of critical community needs and how volunteerism helps to address these needs. RSVP Advisory Council members conduct annual site visits to ensure that volunteers are receiving the best possible volunteer experience.

Volunteers are given many opportunities to share their stories of volunteering and how it has enhanced the quality of their own lives. These stories are published by local media, used in the RSVP Newsletter, and shared on the RSVP website. Volunteers are featured in the Volunteer Spotlight section of the RSVP newsletter. RSVP staff makes every effort to inform its volunteers of community activities that are available to them. In addition to their volunteer placement, RSVP volunteers are always encouraged to participate in various community activities. Some examples of these activities are periodic community service days or nights that are sponsored by area businesses and organizations. One example is the quarterly Spirit of Giving Day where volunteers of all ages can come together and perform activities such as preparing fleece blankets and preparing shoe boxes filled with household essentials to serve the local homeless population and writing letters of thanks to

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veterans. RSVP volunteers are also encouraged to participate in events scheduled around select days of service such as Martin Luther King Day, Veterans Day, and 9/11 Day of Remembrance.

Prior to placement, RSVP staff works with volunteers and volunteer stations to form the best possible match, one that fits their skill level and experience while taking into account the needs and requirements of the volunteer station. If a volunteer is interested in a particular activity but doesn't possess certain required skills, RSVP staff works with the volunteer, local agencies, and volunteer stations to provide the necessary training and skills enhancement training they require.

Volunteer training needs are identified through volunteer feedback and communication between the volunteer, site supervisor feedback and the evaluation of each individual volunteer assignment. Every RSVP volunteer has multiple opportunities to receive training. Training varies from site to site and often depends on service activity. All volunteers receive site specific orientation and training. This training ranges from 4-40 hours. Advanced training courses can range from 16 - 40 hours. With an aging veteran population, many are no longer able to drive and they rely on community resources to help meet their needs. Recently unemployed volunteers are given the opportunity to network and learn new skills such as basic computer training, interviewing skills, and professional development. RSVP volunteers in leadership positions are offered essential leadership and management courses. In an effort to continuously improve, a survey was developed for volunteers to rate the quality of training they receive. Volunteers are able to communicate what types of training they desire. Based on volunteer feedback, we are able to develop new training curriculums. RSVP volunteers involved in our primary focus area of Healthy Futures receive additional diversity and sensitivity training. Western Dairyland RSVP and volunteer stations host periodic resource roundtables where volunteers can connect with area resources, volunteer opportunities, and the community needs.

RSVP staff utilizes diversity in recruitment efforts to ensure that the needs of the community are addressed and the demographic make-up of the community is reflected. The program recruits volunteer stations that address the direct needs of the community, are accessible to individuals with disabilities, provide opportunities for English Language Learners, and incorporate the diverse abilities, experiences and needs of senior volunteers. RSVP staff looks for new and unique opportunities within the community to link the youth and older individuals with intergenerational programming, and welcome individuals of from all ethnic backgrounds.

While the population of our service area is primarily Caucasian, one county in our service area has seen a dramatic increase in its Hispanic population in the last five years. According to the US Census, Trempealeau County has seen a 672% increase in its Hispanic population from 2000-2012 (240

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individuals in 2000, 1,615 in 2012). As a result, the need for translation services for area schools and food distribution sites have increased. RSVP volunteers and staff often attend multi-cultural focus groups to identify and address specific cultural issues to build stronger relationships with the Hispanic community and recruit volunteers to meet this growing need. RSVP information is available in Spanish and distributed at local Hispanic businesses and volunteer stations in an effort to recruit volunteers. Existing RSVP volunteers are also able to attend Spanish classes at local technical colleges at little or no cost to better serve our growing Hispanic population.

WDEOC RSVP has worked closely with community resources such as Veterans Service Offices to identify veterans and military families who may benefit from services offered by RSVP or its partnering volunteering sites. Veterans are encouraged to volunteer and share their common experiences in an effort to help other veterans and their families. RSVP has partnered with local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) groups to not only recruit volunteers but to identify local veterans that could benefit from services provided by the RSVP Program. RSVP staff works closely with sites to ensure that there are minimal barriers to a successful volunteer experience. We currently have volunteers in the program with physical and age-related disabilities. Many have reported that their personal quality of life has improved as a result of volunteering and have inspired other individuals with disabilities to volunteer. As RSVP volunteers age, many of them become homebound but still have the desire to contribute something to their communities. Many volunteer activities are created in an effort to actively engage these individuals. The RSVP Director also serves on the aging advisory councils in Buffalo, Jackson, and Trempealeau Counties. Her involvement in these councils has allowed RSVP to successfully establish new relationships in our service area. Additionally, council representation ensures that the program is informed about the current challenges facing the senior community. As a result of RSVP staff efforts, many local citizens have become RSVP Volunteers. RSVP is active in promotion and recruitment of all persons age 55+ through presentations, special events, and newspaper articles. The program also uses an online volunteer recruitment source, [www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org). Our volunteer match account is directly linked to our website, and when we post a new volunteer opportunity, the listing becomes automatically visible on our webpage. In addition to our website, volunteer match, and newsletter, RSVP uses social media sites such as Facebook to attract new volunteers. New opportunities and success stories are listed as well as a link to our web page.

Retaining volunteers is critical to the success of any volunteer program. In an effort to retain volunteers, RSVP staff work closely with volunteer stations to provide the tools and resources needed

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to create a meaningful experience for the volunteer. RSVP volunteers are fully aware that the RSVP office has an “open door” policy for suggestions, concerns, questions or any other comments that may enhance their volunteer experience. Volunteers are able to come in to the office for a number of support services including faxing information and making copies. Partnering sites and RSVP staff work together and encourage volunteers to seek guidance and support if they experience any issues as a result of their volunteer activity. If a volunteer expresses interest in separating from service, RSVP staff make all attempts to investigate and find solutions to any potential barriers that would prevent them from serving. To measure volunteer retention, RSVP staff tracks volunteers’ years of service. On average, our volunteers provide 15-20 years of service to RSVP. Every five years, volunteers receive a pin and certificate reflecting their years of service to the program.

WDEOC RSVP has several methods of recognition for members. The most prominent is the annual public recognition event which volunteers, staff, station supervisors, and community leaders are invited to attend. Presidential Service Awards are also handed out at the annual recognition event to thank our volunteers for their outstanding service to the communities. Area businesses support the program by donating new items that are distributed to volunteers at the ceremony. Every interaction with a RSVP Volunteer whether written or in person, involves an expression of appreciation. Birthday cards are sent to all RSVP volunteers and special greeting cards are sent when the staff hears that a volunteer has become ill or if an event worth celebrating has happened in their lives. With the assistance of the Western Dairyland Communications Coordinator press releases in local media regarding volunteer success stories have also proven to be a great way to recognize individuals and groups of RSVP volunteers. Volunteers and site supervisors also receive a quarterly RSVP newsletter that feature volunteer success stories and featured volunteer site station. The newsletter serves as not only a great communication tool but also a recruitment and recognition tool. Many volunteers have been recruited due to the featured volunteer stories in our newsletter.

Volunteer retention is directly linked to meaningful volunteer activities. A volunteer satisfaction survey is conducted annually by RSVP staff to ensure that RSVP volunteers are receiving a quality volunteer experience. Results from the RSVP volunteer satisfaction surveys have consistently shown that 98% of volunteers are extremely satisfied with their volunteering experiences and the positive impact their volunteering is making in their communities.

### Program Management

WDEOC RSVP currently has 45 local partners. Examples of local partners include Buffalo, Trempealeau, and Jackson County Aging Units, Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC),

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Veterans Service Offices, area school districts, Feed my People Food Bank, and food collection and distribution sites throughout our four county service area. Partnering sites must work closely with the RSVP Program to develop leadership opportunities, performance measurement, and identify needs in the community. Each volunteer station signs a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreeing to the terms and conditions of being part of the Western Dairyland RSVP program. The MOU includes a section that clearly defines the responsibilities of the station and RSVP. In addition to the MOU, each station receives a volunteer station handbook. The handbook and MOU define basic provisions of the RSVP Program which provides guidance on religious, and political activities, prohibition of discrimination, displacement of employees, and other program requirements. The MOU and handbook have been approved by the state CNCS office as meeting all RSVP requirements. Materials are reviewed at each annual site visit to ensure compliance with RSVP Program rules and regulations. Each site also completes an annual safety and accessibility form to ensure a safe working environment which is also accessible for individuals with disabilities.

A comprehensive registration process examines each volunteers previous employment, unique skills, other organizational affiliations, personal interests, and reasons for volunteering to ensure the member has a quality experience with RSVP. During the interview, staff explains each assignment and details the impact the volunteer will have on the Agency or person. After the registration forms and interview have been completed, staff contacts volunteer-site supervisors to provide the match information. After several weeks, RSVP staff follows up by contacting the volunteer and the site supervisor to ensure the placement is a good fit for both parties.

Any potential new volunteer sites and opportunities must be able to align with at least one of the national strategic focus areas and activities or meet other community needs as identified from community needs assessments and feedback. Volunteer sites that are part of Healthy Futures are considered our primary performance measurement sites. These sites receive extra visits from RSVP staff and monthly communication to develop and discuss current issues; ensure performance measurement and RSVP requirements are being met.

RSVP has recently added language to the station handbook and volunteer handbook to clarify that RSVP volunteers assigned to an activity cannot engage in other activities unless approved by the RSVP office. An annual site visit and specialized service schedule (hour log) also help to reinforce the importance of assigned service activities.

WDEOC RSVP has been operating since 1973 and has a wide variety of volunteer sites and opportunities. RSVP staff has maintained long term relationships and established new relationships

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with many community partners in an effort to build stronger community ties. Many non-profits depend on RSVP to coordinate and mobilize volunteers to meet critical community needs. Even though many of our sites and opportunities align well with the new performance requirements, a few will not.

Community partners are selected by criteria developed by RSVP Staff and its advisory council. In order to become a partnering site of RSVP, sites must be able to meet be able to align with at least one of the national focus area and activities or meet other community needs as identified from community needs assessments and feedback.

In an effort to provide minimal disruption to volunteers, we are planning informational sessions that volunteers and site supervisors will be invited to attend. The purpose of these sessions is to promote a clear understanding of why volunteering in our focus area and addressing unmet community needs are so critically important. Volunteers and site supervisors will also receive written and verbal communications explaining the rationale behind the changes. Graduating sites will receive a letter or face to face meeting to explain changes to the RSVP Program. Existing volunteers that are involved in activities no longer supported by our program will be encouraged to explore new opportunities that align with the National Strategic Focus Areas.

Newly recruited volunteers will only be offered opportunities that fit within the scope of our program. Early feedback has concluded that many will continue to volunteer at their current volunteer station and expand their volunteer service to include an activity that aligns with our focus areas. Volunteers are requesting that we make them aware of any opportunities that align with our focus areas so that they may still take part in National Service activities.

The MOU between volunteer sites and RSVP is renewed every three years. Sites that don't meet within the parameters of the program and whose MOU is due for renewal will receive communication from RSVP that the site will not be renewed with RSVP unless volunteer activities can be developed that fit within the parameters of the program. Volunteer stations which may no longer be part of RSVP will still have access to supportive services through Western Dairyland and other community organizations.

Though no change is completely free of disruption, we are working hard to mitigate the adverse impact on volunteers. WDEOC is looking forward to this opportunity to refine the RSVP program focus to meet the critical needs of the communities which we serve. It is only by constantly mining data from the US Census, local agencies, and our own Community Needs Assessment that we can continue to develop opportunities for volunteers that provide them the experience they deserve, but

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also provide the community the services it needs.

Western Dairyland has a proven 30-year track record of successfully managing the RSVP Program and volunteers in its primary focus area of Healthy Futures. A 28 member Board of Directors and RSVP Advisory Council provide primary oversight. Western Dairyland is also the administrator of the USDA Temporary Emergency Food Assistance (TEFAP) program in our service area, and has been for 28 years. The two programs complement each other very well. Due to this experience and visibility, Western Dairyland has become a leader in its community with regard to food security.

The WDEOC RSVP Program has collaborated with local food distribution sites and aging units for the past 30 years to develop performance measurement surveys and process community feedback suggestions. Western Dairyland participates in a variety of impact and outcome based programming, which works hand-in-hand with the performance measurement reporting that is required by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

As an administrator of TEFAP, Western Dairyland has access to many performance measurement tools through the USDA and has over 40 years of experience administering and measuring performance in our primary focus area of Healthy futures. RSVP volunteers often coordinate and distribute food that is received from the USDA through the TEFAP Program.

To ensure that RSVP has made progress towards and has reached our performance measurement outcomes, surveys will be developed by RSVP Staff, Site Supervisors, and members of the RSVP Advisory Council. These surveys will then be distributed to program participants by RSVP Staff and measured for effectiveness. The surveys are developed to assure that RSVP volunteer activities are impactful to both the volunteers and the individuals and communities that they serve. Food Distribution surveys from the past 15 years have consistently showed that 96 percent of surveyed participants have increased food security as a result of services provided by RSVP volunteers. Four of the five food distribution sites have been in operations for over 30 years. Western Dairyland and RSVP staff have effectively managed volunteers at these sites for over 25 years. Every three years, a Community Needs Assessment is conducted to identify the needs of impoverished members of the community. The results of the Community Needs Assessment are used to help determine the focus areas of the RSVP program. A full needs assessment in 2012 concluded that education, food security, community and economic development, housing, transportation services, and independent living services for seniors were the concerns that needed the most attention in our four counties.

RSVP ensures compliance and evaluation through an advisory council of 9 members. The advisory council includes representation from each of the four counties in the service area. Western Dairyland

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also has a 24-member board, representing a cross section of the community: eight members are local elected officials, eight members are representatives of the low-income population, and eight members are representatives of community groups and organizations. The Board of Directors is responsible for oversight and evaluation of the program. RSVP staff members are required to present a thorough performance goal assessment report and gain board approval every six months. WDEOC RSVP utilizes Volunteer Reporter software to efficiently manage volunteer, volunteer station, and cumulative program data. Volunteer Reporter is able to generate reports needed to fulfill requirements of the Corporation for National and Community Service. The RSVP advisory council takes an active role and reviews reports generated through Volunteer Reporter to ensure that eligibility requirements and other mandatory screenings are being completed on any new volunteer.

### Organizational Capability

Western Dairyland's financial management system is in full compliance with OMB Circular A-110 and is consistent with Generally Accepted Accounting Practices (GAAP) standards. The finance department currently accounts for more than 80 different federal, state, local and private foundation funding streams, with an annual budget of 11 million dollars. The Agency maintains a thorough fiscal management process that includes detailed financial policies, internal control structures, and independent and internal auditing procedures. The Agency has remained in good standing with all funding sources. Western Dairyland is audited annually and has had no findings in its audits since its inception in 1966.

To ensure all goals and objectives are met, the RSVP Advisory Council, Executive Director, and the Western Dairyland Board of Directors provide guidance, support, and direct oversight to the program. An annual assessment of the project is completed by the RSVP Advisory Council. Project resources are managed closely by following accepted office procedures. A separate set of income and expense accounts are set up for the RSVP program. Monthly statements of expenses and revenues are available two weeks after the end of the month. There is a written office procedure and standard form to complete and track receipt of in-kind and match donations. The Western Dairyland Board of Directors has responsibility for all aspects of the Agency's operations. The Board meets each month to ensure the Agency is being managed in a sound and efficient manner. The Board reviews and approves financial reports, discusses agency operations, reviews specific operational and financial information, sets priorities, approves grant applications, and personnel actions.

Anna Cardarella, Executive Director, has worked at Western Dairyland since 2003. She holds a Masters Degree in Business Administration. She provides overall direction and leadership in managing

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the business of a non-profit organization engaged in the provision of services to economically disadvantaged populations in the four county service area. Executive Director duties include oversight and management of the Agency's fiscal systems, program operations, infrastructure, planning function, human resources and contractual obligations consistent with federal and state contract provisions, generally accepted accounting procedures and allowable cost policies.

Cynthia Schaller, Finance Director, has been employed by the Agency for 30 years. Ms. Schaller holds a Master of Science degree in Business Administration and a Bachelors Degree in Business Administration. Prior to her employment with Western Dairyland EOC Ms. Schaller was employed as an auditor in the US Inspector General's office. Under Ms. Schaller's direction, agency audit reports have consistently been reported with no material internal control deficiencies, no questioned costs and no disallowed costs. Western Dairyland has consistently ranked as a "low risk" grantee. The Board of Directors reviews monthly finance reports from all agency contracts, reviews monthly credit card statements, and reviews the finance procedures manual annually. All changes to the finance procedures manual are approved by the finance committee and the full Board of Directors. Ms. Schaller also supervises the financial coordinator assigned to assist the RSVP Program.

Cheryl Padula, the RSVP Program Director, has over 15 years' experience in quality assurance, training, and volunteer program management. Ms. Padula has been the Director of the RSVP Program for the last 6 years. She is responsible for daily operations. Ms. Padula works at least 40 hours per week and spends 100% of her time providing overall direction of the program. Her duties also include program budget management, researching potential funding sources, supervising staff and volunteers, representing RSVP at local community meetings, and completing required grant and agency reporting.

One full time Finance Coordinator spends 10% of her time for RSVP. She has been with the agency for 19 years. She is responsible for financial record keeping, processing payments, and documenting and recording federal match requirements.

One part time RSVP Program Assistant is on staff and her responsibilities include general office practices, volunteer hour/data collection, new volunteer orientation, project development, survey collection, and volunteer outreach.

Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council (WDEOC) is an IRS designated 501(c)(3) established in 1966 that helps the community by empowering economically and socially disadvantaged individuals with opportunities to help themselves; focusing on long-term benefits, not quick fixes. In addition, the Agency provides people and communities with solutions to a wide

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spectrum of poverty problems, rather than focusing on one single issue. The Agency currently operates 15 unique programs that address the educational, vocational, health, and housing needs of impoverished individuals. The multiple programs work together, sharing information and monitoring results in order to improve services and maximize the positive impact the Agency has on the community.

An accounting system is in place that separates sources and uses of funds (i.e. federal, state, local, cash, in-kind, etc.). Western Dairyland follows extensive written financial policies which contain methods to determine the reasonableness, allowability, and direct allocation of costs. The Agency has incorporated technology into its trusted practices, utilizing computerized double-entry accounting software for tracking financial information. All practices are in line with the GAAP and OMB Circular A-110.

Each grant received from a funding source is a separate fund on the general ledger. These restricted funds are available, but are expendable only for operating purposes as specified by the grant awards. Costs that benefit all or multiple agency programs, such as maintenance, depreciation, and others, are allocated by method that varies on a case-by-case basis, and depend upon the type of joint cost. For example, the aforementioned joint costs (maintenance and depreciation) are allocated based upon the amount of space occupied by various programs. WDEOC ensures that the RSVP program has adequate space, equipment, and supplies to meet all the goals and objectives the program. Our computer hardware and software is regularly updated. WD has recently safeguarded its investment in technology by upgrading to a managed computer care system. Managed computer care services provides automatic virus and malware protection, troubleshooting, server and computer maintenance, information transfers, and installation services. WD has two locations, one in Trempealeau County to serve our rural population and one in Eau Claire to better serve our Eau Claire population. Facilities are properly maintained with approval of the WD Facilities Manager. Purchase orders need to be generated for supply purchases and signed by the program director. Any purchase over \$2000 needs executive director approval. WDEOC has successfully managed and met requirements not only of the RSVP program but also federal grant distribution and audit requirements for Head Start, Child Care Partnership, Energy and Weatherization, AmeriCorps, Job and Business Development, and Community Services Block Grant. The average length of employment for finance staff is over 15 years.

WDEOC is committed to the success of its programs and values the RSVP Program as a way to utilize volunteers to increase capacity to meet community needs. WDEOC is always looking for new ways to

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meet and exceed its non-federal share. It has secured many sponsorships from area businesses and has organized many fundraising activities such as an annual quilt raffle. Quilts are donated and lovingly handmade by volunteers.

The Agency maintains a fully-integrated modularized accounting system, with stringent checks and balances and internal controls in place. The WDEOC Financial Department has over 100 years of combined experience and assists the RSVP Program as well as other programs within the Agency. Each department within Western Dairyland has written policies and procedures in which they follow. WDEOC successfully manages on average about 11 million in federal funding each year and serves as a strong community partner.

### **Other**

N/A

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

N/A