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Executive Summary

Elder Care Services' RSVP program anticipates at least 300 volunteers will serve in numerous capacities throughout our 14-county service area. Most of their time will be spent assisting seniors to age in place. RSVP volunteer activities will include delivering hot meals to home-bound seniors, providing short distance travel assistance and telephone reassurance, assisting senior citizens with activities at senior and rehabilitation centers, educating children in local schools and libraries, and organizing and distributing food at local food pantries and congregate meal sites. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. At the end of the three-year grant, we anticipate assisting 170 home-bound seniors to age in place through delivered meals; providing short distance travel to at least 20 seniors so that they may stay independent while living at home; giving companionship to 200 isolated and vulnerable seniors through telephone reassurance, safety checks during meal deliveries, transportation visits, and senior center placements; mentoring at least 84 children in local schools and libraries; and offering nutritious food to 250 seniors each month at rural food distribution sites. The CNCS federal investment of \$112,219.00 will be supplemented by \$61,354.00 in non-federal resources.

Strengthening Communities

The region served by Elder Care Services, Inc., the grantee of the RSVP grant, is overwhelmingly rural and encompasses 14 of the 15 counties defined by the Florida Department of Elder Affairs as PSA 2. In 2012, the majority of people in this area were classified by the US Census Bureau as living in poverty (US Census Bureau, 2012). 12 of the 15 counties in PSA 2 have a poverty rate of over 20% (US Census Bureau, 2012). The Department of Elder Affairs documents PSA 2 as 70% rural and 24% of the population identifying as minority (Assessing the Needs of Elder Floridians, 2012). In addition, minority and low-income elders in this area are more likely to live alone which may negatively impact their mental health and quality of life (Assessing the Needs of Elder Floridians, 2013).

In order for elders to successfully age in place they must have access to good nutrition. Only 80% of elders in PSA 2 reported that they always ate all the food that they need (Assessing the Needs of Elder Floridians, 2013). Of the 20% who were without all the food they required, most said that they were not able to afford food or were too tired or weak to prepare meals. Many seniors in this group said that they were interested in getting information about congregate meal sites for seniors (Assessing the Needs of Elder Floridians, 2013). Congregate meals sites can offer hungry seniors a hot, nutritious prepared meal, socialization, and a chance to receive face-to-face health and benefit enrollment information. In addition to congregate meals, seniors can benefit from food offered by local food

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pantries. Food pantries can help seniors obtain food to be prepared at home, which reduces the senior's overall grocery bill. Many in-need seniors don't participate in benefit programs which compounds the problem of procuring nutritious food. The Department of Elder Affairs (2013) identified that of the total number of seniors in PSA 2 eligible for food stamps, only 44.8% are participating. This may be due to lack of enrollment or eligibility knowledge. RSVP volunteers assisting at food banks and congregate meal sites in PSA 2 will be a valuable resource to provide these seniors with information on the SNAP.

Of the seniors residing in PSA 2, 12% visit senior centers for events and activities. 16% of minority elders from that area attended centers (Assessing the Needs of Elder Floridians, 2013). The seniors who do visit senior centers often live alone (National Council On Aging, 2012) and have lower income than their cohorts, but enjoy higher levels of health, social interaction, and life satisfaction than their peers (National Council On Aging, 2012). Having senior volunteers at these centers ensures that the participants have available activities and support that will bolster their health and happiness.

Transportation is also a consistent issue for many seniors in PSA 2. The Department of Elder Affairs (2013) survey found that 50% of seniors in PSA 2 either drove themselves or were home-bound. An additional 21% rely on others- often a spouse, family member, or neighbor- for transportation. Low-income seniors and minority seniors rely on public transportation more heavily (9% and 18% respectively); however public transit infrastructure is either lacking or non-existent in many areas of PSA 2. A lack of transportation options prohibits a sense of independence and well-being for seniors in this area.

RSVP volunteers will assist home-bound seniors to obtain food, transportation, and other services in PSA 2. These activities would help seniors in this area age in place, remain independent, and improve their nutrition and quality of life. Food security and increased social support are major components of the Healthy Futures Primary Focus Area and RSVP volunteers in PSA 2 would have many opportunities to assist seniors in this regard.

RSVP volunteers in PSA 2 will help Elder Care Services, Inc. deliver hot and nutritious meals to home-bound seniors through the Meals on Wheels program. This program depends solely on volunteer assistance in driving 30 daily routes to reach seniors in need. These meals ensure that the senior receives at least one healthy hot meal a day, as well as a safety check by the delivery person which is often the only friendly contact a senior may have. Seniors enrolled in this program benefit with better health and a sense of increased social ties with people from their community. Specifically 78% of the seniors served by Meals on Wheels had an improved Comprehensive Risk Assessment

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Score within 6-months of service implementation.

RSVP volunteers will play a role at congregate meal sites in PSA 2. Congregate meal sites assist mobile seniors to obtain healthy, hot meals as well as socialization. RSVP volunteers participating at these sites would manage other volunteers and be able to provide information about how to access healthcare and SNAP benefits. Congregate meals sites are a great resource for the community as they are a cost and time effective way to provide seniors with nutritious meals. They also provide space and time for seniors to visit and provide support to one another through daily interaction and socialization.

Local food pantries also serve a primary role when providing food to at-risk seniors. Food pantries are often the beneficiaries of corporate and community donations of food. RSVP volunteers at these locations unload donation shipments, sort the available items, bag groceries for the clients as appropriate, and then distribute bags to those in need. Services provided by food pantries help seniors and their families to feel more food secure. Money that these individuals would have spent at the grocery store can now be redirected to pay for other basic needs such as housing and electricity. Food pantries also help ensure that the most vulnerable citizens - seniors and children - do not go hungry.

To alleviate long-term hunger, volunteers at congregate meal sites and local food pantries can provide education in regards to eligibility and enrollment into the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). As stated previously, the Department of Elder Affairs found that less than half of eligible seniors in PSA 2 are currently enrolled to receive food benefits.

Seniors in PSA 2 are often in need of transportation assistance to the grocery store, pharmacy, congregate meal site, or doctor. Many seniors do not drive themselves or are completely home-bound. To obtain goods and services, seniors often rely on others which could be an unreliable way to get transportation. The S.T.A.R.S. (Seniors Transporting At Risk Seniors) program is key to the well-being of many seniors who can no longer drive or cannot afford or tolerate public transportation. RSVP volunteers serving in S.T.A.R.S. provide friendly transportation to medical appointments, pharmacy, grocery shopping, essential errands, and other vital services that help at-risk seniors remain independent. The S.T.A.R.S. Coordinator will work with public transportation liaisons to supplement already established systems and provide transportation to seniors waiting to be enrolled in other transportation programs. The S.T.A.R.S. Coordinator will also expand new volunteer routes into the rural counties of PSA 2.

RSVP volunteers will place calls to home-bound and vulnerable seniors through the Elder Call Program. This program seeks to make contact to those seniors who are the most isolated and provide them with social support. RSVP volunteers complete training that instructs them to employ active

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listening skills, engaging techniques, and be able to recognize crisis and abuse situations. These seniors might not have any contact with others in their community save for the calls from RSVP Elder Call volunteers. These calls reach out and provide for those most in need in the community.

Elder Care Services, Inc. (ECS) has been the community leader in providing services to seniors in PSA 2 for over 43 years. The mission of ECS is to provide seniors in Leon and the surrounding counties with services that help them remain independent and age with dignity. ECS provides hot meals to seniors - both delivered and on-site, local transportation services, telephone reassurance, in-home care management, information and referral services, and volunteer opportunities for seniors. ECS is ingrained in the fabric of the local community and a civic leader when it comes to serving seniors in the Big Bend area of Florida.

Elder Care Services, Inc. currently employs a Director of Senior Volunteer Programs and six Volunteer Coordinators. Each Volunteer Coordinator will supervise RSVP volunteers for each station (or site) that ECS has an MOU with to provide services. The Coordinators would ensure that data collection would be done with each site and each volunteer, and the Director would guarantee consistency and compliance in this process. Outputs would be tallied by the Director and then reported to the grant providers as required. An Administrative Assistant is available to the program and would also assist in the collection and reporting process.

The ECS Director of Senior Volunteer Programs will also create, implement, and distribute tools for data collection to each Coordinator. Each Coordinator would have explicit instructions on how to administer each tool to ensure consistency and reduce bias. The Coordinators would then administer the tools to their volunteers and/or volunteer stations as appropriate. Once data has been collected, the Director and Administrative Assistant will work to compile this information into complete reports.

Elder Care Services, Inc. is interested in providing targeted outreach to veterans in Tallahassee and the surrounding counties. Veterans in this area typically face difficulties in finding transportation and accessing resources that can improve their quality of life. ECS is committed to increasing volunteer presence throughout the PSA 2 area to assist veterans in finding services, getting meals and/or food, procuring short distance travel, and finding meaningful and satisfying volunteer opportunities.

Elder Care Services, Inc. will continue to work in collaboration with local non-profit, faith-based, and civic organizations that support veterans to ensure that the available information, referrals, and resources address veteran-specific issues and challenges. One goal of the RSVP program is to improve the STARS transportation program which will be able to offer veterans rides to local VA facilities

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among other destinations. Further outreach for veterans will include enrollment into nutrition programs and information about benefit eligibility. Another major priority is to find enriching and significant volunteer opportunities for veterans. Volunteerism promotes social interaction as well as a sense of accomplishment and determinism, from which everyone, including veterans, can benefit.

RSVP volunteer recruitment will aim to reach veterans by attending VA events, providing outreach to VA clients, and using word of mouth with already enrolled veterans. ECS currently screens RSVP applicants to determine if they are a veteran and will work with enrolled veteran volunteers to recruit more veterans to the program. Collaborations with local veteran organizations will identify who are the veterans in the community. Once it is established where veterans are, ECS can reach out to encourage enrollment into various ECS services.

Recruitment and Development

The key to a successful volunteer experience is to provide a meaningful and personalized volunteer placement. Each Volunteer Coordinator meets with prospective volunteers to conduct an interview and assessment to determine what the volunteer is most interested in and capable of doing. Potential volunteer knowledge, expertise, and passion are taken into account to determine an arrangement that would suit both volunteer and station. Coordinators review job descriptions, policies and procedures, supervision expectations, and placement benefits with the volunteer. Volunteers are then interviewed by the station supervisor to determine if the arrangement would be a good fit for both parties. Based on this intake and interview process, volunteers are placed at stations that will benefit from their service as well as provide a long-term, fulfilling volunteer experience. Finding a satisfying and rewarding placement is also one of the main components of volunteer retention and a thorough placement process ensures volunteers will have a lasting commitment to the program.

The RSVP program is often how an individual first learns about opportunities for seniors to serve in their communities. Volunteers are recruited, interviewed, and matched with assignments according to their skills, the amount of time they can commit, their availability, and their interests. Orientation is provided by both the RSVP Volunteer Coordinators and the agency (station) in which volunteers are placed. RSVP handbooks, policy and procedure manuals, and site guidelines are reviewed with the volunteer. Monthly in-service attendance is encouraged and covers topics such as RSVP policies and procedures, the RSVP volunteer handbook, and subject matter pertaining to the individual's volunteer placement. A quiz is often provided at the end of the in-service to gauge the participant's knowledge retention. These trainings support and promote success in a productive volunteer role. Additional volunteer training opportunities are made available from The Corporation for National and

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Community Service to ensure the highest quality volunteer experience. This program is designed to meet the personal growth objectives of every volunteer and the needs of the station they serve.

Several methods are used to reach out to seniors interested in investing their time with RSVP. Community interaction is one of the most important elements for recruitment. ECS presence at community events such as health fairs, employee presentations, outreach events, lunch and learns, and veterans affairs has led to a diverse and representative volunteer base. Attendance at local events and word of mouth are useful tools for recruitment since the majority of PSA 2 is rural. Coordinators always strive to recruit a diverse volunteer base and attend events that would assist them in that pursuit. Interaction with the already established volunteer stations has also been beneficial for the ECS volunteer recruitment process. In addition, innovative and creative recruitment measures are always encouraged. Recently, a Coordinator provided recruitment flyers to teachers in a rural school. The teachers were permitted to then put the flyers in the children's backpacks in the hopes of reaching interested parents or grandparents. This is one example of trying to reach volunteers through varied and inventive means.

The ECS staff will conduct presentations and/or have a presence at professional organizations and conferences such as the Coalition on Aging in Tallahassee, the Southeastern Association of Area Agency on Aging Conference, Kiwanis, Rotary, Savvy Senior, Choose Tallahassee, Florida Council on Aging, Florida Aging Network, and others. Through this exposure, ECS hopes to involve others working with seniors so they can tout the benefits of volunteering with RSVP to their clients.

Recognition for volunteers is an ongoing and important part of ECS. Each Volunteer Coordinator makes contact with their volunteers on a monthly, or more, basis to ascertain satisfaction in the placement. Small tokens are presented to the volunteers throughout the year such as birthday cards, certificates of appreciation, thank you cards, and invitations to National Volunteer Week events and activities. At the end of each year, ECS hosts the Annual Volunteer Gala, a formal recognition luncheon where RSVP volunteers come together to learn, share, and appreciate their contributions and time served. At this luncheon, volunteers are recognized for milestone years of service, with special agency-supported awards, and with certificates of appreciation from the Board of Directors.

Program Management

Stations are vetted for appropriateness based on the CNCS supported services they provide, their capacity for volunteer management, and the expected positive volunteer experience. Both the Volunteer Coordinators and the Director of Senior Volunteer Programs work together to ensure that all of these components are being met before entering into an agreement with the station. A Station

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Assessment Form will be utilized to evaluate each new station's suitability for the program. This form will document the station's need for volunteers, the nature and scope of the station and proposed volunteer activities, what supervision can be expected at the station, and what outcomes are anticipated from using volunteers.

During the initial training, the acceptable and prohibited volunteer activities are reviewed with each new volunteer. Volunteer stations are also provided with the list of acceptable practices. An MOU is drawn up for each station and states the policies for station and volunteer interaction as indicated by RSVP guidelines. The MOU outlines what Elder Care Services Inc. will provide, what the station agrees to provide, and what both the program and the station mutually agree to provide. The station representative (often the Executive Director of the station), and either the Director of Senior Volunteer Programs or President/CEO of Elder Care Services, Inc. sign this agreement. A copy is retained by both parties for review.

Coordinators conduct monthly station visits and document their findings using a Station/Site Visit Documentation Form. Coordinators review with both the station and the volunteers their findings of compliance or noncompliance of RSVP program regulations. This check-in ensures that the volunteer is performing appropriate tasks, that volunteer duties are addressing community needs, and that activities are in compliance with all laws and regulations. This information is shared with the Director and follow ups are completed as needed.

Elder Care Services, Inc. has many community partnerships and keeps abreast of changing community needs. When an unmet need is identified, Volunteer Coordinators are able to vet a station for suitability and place volunteers as appropriate. This flexibility allows ECS to address various changes in community hardship, be it economic, environmental, or pertaining to the citizens of our area. At the present time, all ECS RSVP stations and volunteer assignments fall under the new Performance Measures as described in the RSVP grant application. ECS does not anticipate having to graduate any stations or move any current volunteers to meet the new requirements. If in the future, it is required to graduate a station from the RSVP program, ECS may be able to supplement the station's volunteer need with either Foster Grandparents or Senior Companions. If that is not a possibility, ECS has a very strong working relationship with Volunteer Leon and Volunteer Florida and would assist any graduating station with finding a suitable volunteer provider. ECS would also work diligently to find the graduating station's RSVP volunteers a comparable and meaningful volunteer opportunity elsewhere.

Elder Care Services, Inc. has been the leader in providing seniors in PSA 2 with services to help

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them age in place. ECS' Nutrition Service Programs have been serving seniors since 1971 by providing meals that meet one-third of the recommended daily nutritional requirements. The Nutrition Service Programs encompasses the Meals on Wheels program, delivered frozen meals, congregate meal sites, and transportation to congregate meal sites. ECS operates or assists with food pantries in the most rural areas of PSA 2 in order to provide food security to residents in need. ECS' RSVP volunteers also have a long standing relationship with many of the senior centers and retirement homes in PSA 2. ECS has a visible presence in the community for other aging in place assistance such as the transportation and elder reassurance phone call programs. Performance in all programs is documented by the amount of material that is distributed, the number of hours served by RSVP volunteers, and the number of individuals served by each program.

Elder Care Services, Inc. has an established and active North Florida Senior Services Corps Community Advisory Council. There are 14 members on the council, directly representing 4 of the counties served. This council meets quarterly to discuss compliance with program guidelines; receive updates from the Director of Senior Volunteer Programs and Volunteer Coordinators about their accomplishments, challenges, outcomes, recruitment statuses, and trainings; committee activities, and other program topics as needed. The Council is comprised of former volunteers and employees, those that have served in social work roles in the community outside of ECS, and professionals who assist in meeting the organizations fund-raising and public relations needs. The Council is representative of the area served and is always looking to recruit new members who represent the varied population of PSA 2.

The Director of Senior Volunteer Programs will retain the original of all MOUs and assist Volunteer Coordinators in keeping them current. MOUs will be streamlined so that all Coordinators are implementing the same document and will be updated at the same time each year as needed. Each Volunteer Coordinator performs a criminal history and National Sex Offender Public Registry check on proposed volunteers. A formal pre-service orientation and training follows the initial application and ensures that the volunteer is informed about program mandates and regulations.

Organizational Capability

Each ECS Volunteer Coordinator is trained and well versed in program requirements, regulations, and practices. All interaction with stations and volunteers is documented and submitted to the Director for review. A Volunteer Program Administrative Assistant is available for correspondence and record retention as needed. The Director approves all small (\$100 or less) variable costs to the program. The President/CEO approves any larger variable expenses to the program. The Director of Finance

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reconciles the grant budget at least quarterly to ensure that all expenses are coded to the appropriate budget line and fund.

Staff working on the RSVP program will include: The ECS Agency President/CEO, the Director of Senior Volunteer Programs, six Volunteer Program Coordinators, one Administrative Assistant, the Director of Finance, one Senior Accountant, the Director of Development and Communications, one Office Manager, and one Office Receptionist.

The ECS President/CEO will direct and advise in the overall goals of the program. They will also check for compliance and quality assurance including the fiscal operations of the program. This position is responsible for agency-wide policies and operating procedures, facility and equipment management, minimizing financial and legal liability, managing personnel issues such as hiring and termination, and all major purchases.

The Director of Senior Volunteer Programs will report directly to the ECS President/CEO and manage the Volunteer Program Coordinators and Administrative Assistant. They will be responsible for preparing the grant applications, monitoring and retaining all station MOUs, developing outcome tools and training Coordinators on how to administer said tools, budget adherence, progress reports, and overall coordination of the program. The Director will run monthly staff meetings with all Coordinators. These meetings will be a chance for each Coordinator to check in and share any successes or challenges they are facing in the program. Each meeting will also have a professional development piece as well as any training on quality assurance tools as necessary. The Director will also be the main point of contact for the Elder Call Program and the annual Volunteer Recognition Gala. The Director will also be the liaison to the Advisory Council.

The six Volunteer Program Coordinators will recruit volunteers, conduct interview and orientation sessions with applicants, provide initial and on-going volunteer trainings, offer volunteer recognition, and serve as the liaisons between the stations, the volunteers, and ECS. They will also be responsible for learning how to administer outcome tools effectively and efficiently and collect the findings in a consistent and accurate manner.

The Administrative Assistant will oversee the day-to-day functioning of the STARS program, will attend all meetings, and coordinate meeting minutes. In addition, they will be available to the Director and Coordinator on a project-by-project basis to serve in an administrative function. The Office Manager and Office Receptionist will be available to coordinate basic office functions and direct any incoming queries about the program.

The Director of Finance and the Director of Senior Volunteer Programs will monitor the program

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budget and provide all grant financial progress reports as well as initial budget projections. The current Director of Finance has worked with federal grants in the eGrants system before with much success and has years of experience in budgeting and finance. The Senior Accountant is also available for all report gathering and budget tracking as deemed necessary.

The Director of Development and Communications will work in collaboration with the Director of Senior Volunteer Programs and the Volunteer Program Coordinators to obtain and report impacts in our PSA 2 service area, recruit new RSVP volunteers, share stories and testimonials pertinent to the RSVP program for increased awareness and outreach. They will also gather data on accomplishments/outcomes to be reported through eGrants, annual reports and other supplemental materials to support the RSVP program.

Other

NA

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

NA