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Executive Summary

The Fort Madison Area United Way recognizes the importance of the RSVP program in Fort Madison Iowa. RSVP has been a part of this North Lee County community for over twenty five years. The RSVP program is very well respected and looked upon with high regard by local service organizations, businesses, and individuals. There are approximately 100 RSVP volunteers committed to making a difference in our community. The United Way respectfully requests \$16,763 from the Corporation for National and Community Service for the RSVP Program.

The City of Fort Madison is no longer in a position to sponsor the program and without the CNCS grant the United Way cannot provide sponsorship. The RSVP volunteers in our community deserve to continue the good works they have historically provided and the Fort Madison Area United Way will empower them to achieve even more.

The United Way is prepared to sponsor the RSVP program by hiring a part time Project Director and devoting 25% of the Executive Director's workload to the program. The United Way Board of Directors and the RSVP Advisory Council stand firmly behind the Executive Director in pursuing this and additional funding for volunteer service initiatives.

Displacing the existing RSVP volunteer base would be a great disservice to the city of Fort Madison and the rest of the surrounding area. Kindly consider awarding the CNCS grant in the amount of \$16,763 to the Fort Madison Area United Way.

Strengthening Communities

Lee County, Iowa is located in the farthest southeastern corner of Iowa and is a non-metropolitan county made up of eight (8) incorporated cities and 11 unincorporated cities, the majority of which are located in the northern half of the county. The northern half of Lee County is the geographic area served by the Fort Madison Area United Way and North Lee County RSVP with a 2010 estimated population of 17,841 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The residents of this area are comprised of the following races: Caucasian 94%, African American 3%, Hispanic 2%, all other nationalities 1%. Fort Madison, Iowa, is the largest city in the geographic service area with an estimated 2013 population of 11,043 of which 15.7% are age 65 and over.

Based on data from the Iowa Workforce Development Lee County Iowa Laborshed Study (2014), the economic and employment characteristics of the service area are comprised of the following: Manufacturing 18.4%, educational 16.8%, health and social services 14.6%, retail trade 13.2%, arts, entertainment recreation .3%, construction 4.4%, all other industries 32.3% (including

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1.3% agriculture). The median household income in Lee County from 2008-2012 is \$41,954 which is \$9175 less than the average for the state of Iowa as a whole. According to information from Iowa Workforce Development, the July, 2014 unemployment rate for Lee County was 7.0% or 2.5% higher than the state-wide average of 4.5%. The poverty rate in Lee County is 14.8%, which is 2.6% higher than the state average of 12.2%.

North Lee County is an area that needs to use every possible resource available and relies heavily on senior volunteers to achieve community goals while operating on tight budgets.

The Fort Madison Area United Way has been in the community for over 40 years and collaborated with the existing RSVP program for over 25 years on many worthwhile projects. The existing RSVP program is very well respected and looked upon with high regard by organizations, businesses, and individuals. Leaders in the community recognize the importance of the RSVP program in the community and have advocated for a sponsorship of the program by the Fort Madison Area United Way.

United Way/RSVP community partners will be selected based on a wide variety of criteria, including effectiveness of current programs, the impact programs have on the community, and the organizations willingness to work with RSVP to provide meaningful and rewarding experiences for the volunteers. The United Way currently collaborates with eighteen funded partner agencies to implement and develop collaborative relationships that are beneficial to the organizations as well as RSVP and its volunteers. A primary element for development of United Way community partners is the measurable impact the relationship is anticipated to make on the community. For example, the United Way is partnering with the local food pantry, the Lee County Department of Health, local growers, and RSVP volunteers to achieve measurable results with the Food Systems Project. The Food Systems Project will help reduce the food insecurity levels of the citizens of North Lee County and ensure educational opportunities are available for those needing nutritional guidance throughout Lee County.

This year the United Way secured a location for a United Way Resource Center (UWRC) which houses several agencies and United Way programs in one building. Currently, the Community Services Food Pantry and Big Brothers Big Sisters have moved in and have started seeing clients. The next phase of the project is getting the RSVP Volunteer Center and the Reading, Tutoring, Mentoring Center ready for use. Thus far, the project has been funded solely through community grants and individual donations. The United Way intends to apply for any state and federal funding available that may help to ensure the success of the United Way Resource Center and the programs involved.

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Lee County is typically split into North and South Lee County for most purposes. South Lee County has Big River United Way working on their community needs. Although each United Way is independently governed by separate boards there is ongoing collaboration to address countywide concerns. Specifically, the Big River United Way will be collaborating with the Fort Madison Area United Way to provide training on volunteer management and best practices. Big River will also be involved with the literacy project planning and engaging our senior volunteers in VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance). The Fort Madison Area United Way is piloting the Food Services Project for the County and expects collaborative efforts in the Southern part of Lee County in the future.

The primary focus areas for this RSVP grant will be the Food Systems Project and the Reading, Tutoring, Mentoring Initiative. There is a demonstrated need for both of these projects and the existing RSVP volunteers' skill sets and interests fit well into both programs.

Lee County is ranked 99 of 99 counties for health factors such as food security [County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2013 Iowa Rankings, Robert Wood Johnson FDN. pg 5-8]. The unemployment rates coupled with a lack of fresh foods has led to an environment of food insecurity that is threatening the health and wellbeing of our citizens. The Fort Madison Area United Way is working closely with the Lee County Health Department and local growers to aid in the implementation of a pilot food systems project that will be a model for the state of Iowa. Together along with many other service groups, corporations, and agencies, they hope to improve the quality and quantity of fresh foods available to our citizens and ultimately reduce the food insecurity levels in our county.

The first step in the process was to restructure the food pantry system in Fort Madison. The existing location at 510 N. 9th street was very small, inaccessible to most and lacked equipment and space to accommodate the county's growing need for food. The new Idol Rashid Memorial Building is already handicap accessible, has plenty of space, and is highly visible from the highway. The Community Services Food Pantry Board of Directors will continue to be the primary governance for the pantry. Currently, the Community Services Food Pantry uses about 60 RSVP volunteers to assist clients on a regular basis. RSVP will also be heavily involved by providing volunteers for the off-site gardens, on/off site nutrition classes, and events at the resource center.

In the future, educational classes will be provided on how to prepare fresh foods, how to incorporate them into your diet, and how to stretch your budget while including nutritious items. Many of the people using the food pantry are reluctant to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables because it is cost prohibitive. The Food Systems Project hopes to educate those individuals on how to budget, shop for,

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prepare and preserve those items in season to allow for a healthier lifestyle.

Local growers are already dropping off fresh produce at the new location so that more people can benefit from their surplus crops. The United Way intends to incorporate off site garden crops into the summer month's offerings at the food pantry. The United Way and their partners will have a farmers market set up in the parking lot free of charge for clients during harvest times. Encouraging healthy eating will benefit our community in many ways far beyond just food in stomachs. Promoting healthy eating education can empower those in need to "help them self" rather than just accept a hand out.

The average Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) rates in reading for Fort Madison students shows a decline from 80.3% in 3rd grade to 71.8% in 5th grade. [Iowa School District Profiles 2 Fort Madison, Iowa State University Dept. of Economics, pg. 4] Studies show that 3rd through 5th grade are critical learning times in a student's life. Children must learn to read in order to read to learn. Although the school district currently has some volunteers in the elementary grades there is always room for improvement and more specialized programs. The reading, mentoring, tutoring program would provide an outside resource for parents and educators. The program will be based out of the United Way Resource Center and consist of qualified volunteers matched with a student that are committed to a specific curriculum of reading and comprehension. The adult volunteer would then follow the students progress and continue to mentor the student for 2-3 years depending on the needs of the student.

The United Way has approached the Fort Madison School District to implement the program and gain knowledge of students who might benefit from the additional help. The School District is excited to collaborate with the United Way and has offered support to get the program started. The Fort Madison Public Library will also be a huge resource for the program. There will be multiple locations for the access to the program including the United Way Resource Center, the Public Library, and the grade schools.

RSVP in this area has many retired educators who are willing to become mentors to a specific child or multiple students. Not only will this program help the child learn but also provide a positive role model that is consistently involved in their learning process. This program may also prove to be a multigenerational learning experience for all the parties involved. Many RSVP volunteers are less inclined to be computer savvy but if they mentor a student in a technology based setting they too are likely to learn more from their student about technology that one can imagine. This program should

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provide both the student and mentor with a rewarding learning experience.

The existing RSVP volunteer base will continue to work in the community in many other workstations. Although the other workstations will not be the primary impact focus of the program they are no less important in ensuring that every existing RSVP volunteer has a position in which they feel rewarded serving. Some of the Community Priority Service Activities will include working at the local Salvation Army Thrift Store, providing home delivered meals, grocery shopping assistance, and helping community organizations like the art center and historical sites.

Many of the existing RSVP volunteers have been working in one or more of those locations for several years and the United Way is committed to ensuring no disruption in their current workload. All of the existing RSVP volunteers will be contacted to join the focus area projects if they so choose. As new recruiting efforts are made, volunteers will be matched with programs that match their talents, interests, and time commitments.

To accomplish these goals, the United Way will hire a part time Project Director. The RSVP Project Director will work 25-30 hours per work under the direction of the United Way Executive Director to achieve the best results for the program. Funds from this grant will cover nearly thirty eight percent of the overall cost of the program.

Recruitment and Development

Based on the information provided in the Strengthening Communities narrative, there is very little race diversity in this community. Therefore, the United Way will strive to provide a wide variety of volunteer services, along with development of partnerships with organizations throughout the community to provide assistance to a diverse group of people including youth, seniors, low income, homeless and the disabled. Essentially the RSVP program will be bringing together people of diverse backgrounds.

The Fort Madison Area United Way will recruit RSVP volunteers through a variety of ways including but not limited to volunteer referrals, volunteer stations, community networking, local health fairs, and personal contact. The most successful tool thus far in the existing RSVP volunteer base has been when current volunteers share their experiences with others. Word of mouth is a very powerful tool. By speaking with other seniors about their volunteer positions, personal gratification, and camaraderie they share with the other volunteers they entice other seniors to join RSVP.

As part of the capacity building focus area the United Way will enlist long term RSVP volunteers to assist in recruitment of new members. The new United Way Resource Center will allow individuals to simply "walk in" and learn about volunteer opportunities in our community- that is a service that has

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not been available to the public thus far. The visibility of the new center and media coverage that the project has received has created a great deal of positive publicity for the center and the program involved.

Upon completion of an RSVP enrollment form, the Program Director will ascertain the interests and skills of the potential volunteer. Volunteers will be asked to indicate volunteer activities that they feel will bring them the greatest amount of satisfaction and personal reward. One of our primary goals is to provide volunteer activities to that will be enjoyable and fulfilling experiences for the volunteers.

Some volunteer activities will require volunteers to attend specialized training or have background checks before taking part in the activity. In compliance with Corporation standards, all background checks will be performed and documented prior to assignment. We will encourage our volunteers to attend training sessions in hopes that they will increase their skills and decide to try new volunteer activities. A staff member will follow up with volunteers after training to ensure that the volunteer is comfortable with their skill level in the particular activity as well as providing feedback for future training sessions.

The United Way will make a very conscious effort to thank our volunteers for the service they provide whenever possible. A personal "thank you" means a great deal to volunteers and is the best way to truly show them how much their volunteer service is appreciated. The majority of the existing RSVP volunteer stations provide some type of recognition for volunteers ranging from birthday lunches to appreciation receptions and annual dinners.

The United Way will have an annual volunteer recognition luncheon held in the spring or summer. Ideally, having the recognition luncheon during National Volunteer Week in April will be a way to recognize the volunteers and get press coverage for the program. We will also have monthly luncheons with smaller groups of volunteers who may not be able to make the annual luncheon. We feel this will allow more volunteers the opportunity to attend a lunch and provide more flexibility for them in terms of their volunteer schedules. Appreciation gifts will be presented to volunteers during the luncheons or one on one if the volunteer is unable to attend the scheduled events.

Building public awareness and support for RSVP will be an ongoing activity. Involvement by the program director in various groups, organizations, and forums will allow for interaction with individuals from other area organizations. In addition, members of the United Way/RSVP Advisory Council will promote RSVP through various channels including civic, religious, and social organizations.

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Special projects and/or celebrations will be scheduled concurrent with nationally recognized holidays or dates that the CNCS recognizes as important for their volunteer base. Specifically, Martin Luther King Day and September 11 recognition closely aligns with the national corporation's goals and locally with the existing RSVP volunteer base. The Advisory Council and staff will determine what projects or celebrations are appropriate for our community.

The RSVP director will provide community presentations to groups on a regular basis. On average, the United Way currently makes four to six presentations annually for groups ranging from local service organizations such as Lions, Rotary and Kiwanis to church groups, local senior housing, and assisted living residents. Information regarding RSVP will be included as part of these regular presentations.

New and exciting projects will lead to more inquiries for presentations and the RSVP director or United Way Executive Director will be made available to meet those needs. The quarterly RSVP newsletter will include highlights of volunteer projects, biographies of long term volunteers, and special recognition of exceptional good works. The United Way promotes an environment of teamwork and will include RSVP volunteers in communications through newsletter, social media, email and press coverage.

Providing volunteer opportunities at several different volunteer stations allows our corps of volunteers a wide variety of volunteer service activities to choose from. This variety of diverse, meaningful, and worthwhile activities helps assure a high quality experience for all our volunteers, thus keeping them interested in volunteer service. Currently the program has eight (8) active volunteers who have belonged to RSVP over 20 years and 16 volunteers with over 15 years of service to the program and the community. Those numbers speak highly of the quality volunteer experiences these long-term volunteers have been provided over the years. The primary reason volunteers leave the program is due to deterioration in their health that prohibits them from performing volunteer activities and volunteers relocating to another part of the country in order to be closer to family members.

In the instances of relocation, the United Way will refer an active volunteer to an RSVP in the area where they are relocating in an effort to keep the volunteer active in community service.

Program Management

The RSVP program will be managed in part by the United Way Executive Director (25% of total hours) and a part time RSVP Project Director (25-30 hours weekly). The Executive Director will oversee the overall program management, and the Project Director will implement specific strategies

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to ensure compliance with RSVP grant requirements.

The United Way Executive Director has been the only staff position at the Fort Madison Area United Way since January 2011. Since assuming the role as Executive Director, the results of the annual fundraising campaign and impact projects have increased significantly and the Executive Director has nearly doubled the amounts of grants awarded from local community foundations. The Executive Director is solely responsible for all the daily operations, campaign, impact programs, and financial reporting for the Fort Madison Area United Way. The United Way Board of Directors has evaluated the Executive Director yearly and has rated her performance as outstanding.

In 2013 The Executive Director negotiated the collaboration with the City of Fort Madison, Lee County Department of Health, and other organizations to use a vacant building for the United Way Resource Center. The Executive Director organized the first "Day of Action" this year and worked with several organizations to complete projects at three different locations in the community. Implementing these volunteer opportunities opens the door for future volunteerism and promotes a sense of teamwork in our community. The Executive Director has strong ties to the community and has a vast network of professional and personal relationships which have proved beneficial to the organization.

Upon receipt of a Notification of Grant Award an RSVP Project Director will be hired. The United Way will be looking for a candidate with experience working with seniors or volunteers in general. Ideally, the candidate will have an associate or bachelor's degree in a related field and possess good management skills. The successful candidate will be chosen by the Executive Director and Advisory Council Members to represent the United Way and RSVP Program.

Both the Executive Director and RSVP Project Director will attend any and all necessary training events to familiarize themselves with the management of federal funds and adherence to Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) standards. These trainings will enhance their knowledge of RSVP, Senior Corps, and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and benefit both the individual as well as the program. Specifically, the program director will attend all upcoming statewide leadership training opportunities held in Des Moines, Iowa, as well as the Points of Light Conference on Volunteering & Service Non-Profit Summit.

The Executive Director has already built a network of qualified individuals and organizations to assist in the implementation of the RSVP program. RSVP sponsors such as the United Way of Wapello County, Iowa have offered advice and support for collaborations on projects. The City of Fort Madison, who is the 2014 RSVP sponsor, has offered support in the form of initial grant cycle funding

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and personnel support for a smooth and successful transition of sponsorship.

Training and technical assistance will be provided to project staff, volunteer station supervisors, volunteers and advisory council members as needed. The RSVP Project Director will be responsible for training and documentation of training efforts. Training will be provided through workshops and training in-service events as needed for various volunteer activities. For example, volunteers participating in the Reading, Tutoring, and Mentoring program will have a minimum of a two-hour in-service prior to placement and again at the start of each school year to review the methodology and goals of the program. Training for our grocery shopping assistance program is less demanding but involves new volunteers receiving *on the job* training for one to two weeks with an experienced shopper.

The United Way will provide training and technical assistance to volunteer station supervisors when requirements and/or changes are implemented that have a direct effect on them. This will typically be provided by the RSVP Project Director and primarily cover areas of data collection and reporting for the purpose of Performance Measurements. Big River United Way will be collaborating with the United Way to provide DOVIA (Directors of Volunteers in Agencies) training for United Way and RSVP partner agencies throughout the county. Promoting best practices of training for those training our volunteers is paramount for both United Way organizations.

Advisory Council members will be provided with training prior to their first meeting and when continuing education opportunities are available. They will meet with the RSVP Project Director and United Way Executive Director and will be provided an Advisory Council handbook.

Maintaining current technology needs is vital to the success of the United Way and North Lee County RSVP. Therefore, annual Volunteer Reporter software upgrades will be maintained which will allow for technical support throughout the year and data management that is compliant with CNCS standards.

The United Way Executive Director will be the primary manager of all project resources both financial and in-kind. Bookkeeping is completed in house using QuickBooks software. The United Way Finance Committee performs quarterly audits of statements and accounts. The Executive Director provides the Board of Directors with financial statements at every monthly meeting for approval. Every check issued from the Fort Madison Area United Way has two signatures from members of the Executive Committee. To date there is no use of petty cash. The Executive Director submits monthly receipts for reimbursement which require approval from a member of the Executive Committee.

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A complete yearly financial audit is contracted to an outside accounting firm with primary auditors changing every two years. Following the audit, the accounting firm presents the audit recommendations to the board of directors for questions and/or clarification. The auditing firm enters any general journal entries necessary into the QuickBooks software after the audit and files the Federal Form 990 with the Internal Revenue Service. Any additional audit requirements associated with the receipt of federal funds will be incorporated into the annual audit of the Fort Madison Area United Way.

The United Way is committed to running the RSVP program with clarity, transparency, professionalism, and enthusiasm. The volunteers of this community and those they help deserve nothing less.

Organizational Capability

The Fort Madison Area United Way is an IRS 501(c)(3) not-for-profit established in 1974 whose mission is to "identify community needs, develop plans to meet those needs, and bring together the resources to improve lives in North Lee County". The United Way actually began in the Fort Madison community in 1943 as a Community Chest before being incorporated as a United Way in 1974. With over 70 years of community collaboration, the Fort Madison Area United Way is a solid organization with a good reputation for improving the quality of life for citizens of the area. The United Way office is located in the historic downtown district of Fort Madison, Iowa.

United Way is advancing the common good by focusing on the building blocks of a good quality of life - income, education, and health. During the 2013 self-assessment, the organization set forth specific goals for increasing impact projects in the community. The Board of Directors and committees see the importance of increasing the number of volunteer opportunities and volunteers that make an impact in the communities we serve. The United Way is working hard to make the balance of fundraising and impact projects closer to equal. Traditionally the United Way has focused on fundraising and allocating funds to partner agencies. The new model is to incorporate more projects that are community collaborations rather than solely funding projects. Incorporating the talents of board members and staff with a network of agencies to accomplish goals is rewarding and more visible to general public.

To accomplish these goals requires collaboration across all sectors -- corporations, small businesses, elected officials, nonprofits, academia, service groups, the faith community, the labor movement, media, parents, seniors and neighbors. By enlisting support across our community, we can accomplish things that no one organization and no individual can accomplish on its own.

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The United Way has recruited individuals and organizations from across Lee County and Southeast Iowa who bring the passion, expertise and resources needed to get things done. The Fort Madison Area United Way has deep roots in the community with volunteer leadership on the ground, but we also have the broad reach of United Way Worldwide which allows United Way to leverage resources in a way that no other organization can.

Annually, the Fort Madison Area United Way certifies to United Way Worldwide that we adhere to standards that include comprehensive requirements for financial reporting, governance, ethics, diversity and operations.

The United Way Board of Directors is a strong diverse group of professionals who are active in assisting the Executive Director when the need arises. The Executive Director often relies on the financial expertise of the highly qualified board members to assist in drafting the yearly budget and developing financial plans for projects. The United Way tries to recruit board members from different sectors of business so that the community is well represented. Currently there are twenty two board members on the Fort Madison Area United Way Board of Directors.

The addition of the RSVP Advisory Council will be a welcome facet of the organization. There are highly qualified individuals willing to be advisors. Many of them have a vested interest in the success of one or more of the RSVP focus areas.

The United Way strategically engages and builds relationships with diverse community stakeholders and partners to identify community goals and concerns, we choose a limited number of critical issues, develop impact strategies that change community conditions, implement those strategies in partnership with others, and we measure and communicate results. United Way is dedicated to improving lives by connecting community members to volunteer opportunities that provide the greatest impact in mobilizing the caring power of the community.

Other

n/a

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

n/a