

Narratives

Executive Summary

Mason County Interagency Council, Inc is an IRS 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization who is the incumbent sponsoring agency of Mason County RSVP/Opportunity #KY-07. An estimated 260 RSVP volunteers will serve in the Mason County RSVP. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. Volunteers will serve through assignments with food pantries/food programs to provide services to eliminate long-term hunger for the economically disadvantaged in our community. At the end of the three-year grant 85% of the food insecure people we serve will report increased food security for themselves and their children. Other service categories we address in our work plans are Education , Veterans and Military Families, Capacity Building and numerous Community Priorities. The CNCS federal investment of \$84,491 will be supplemented by non-federal resources of \$45,195.

Strengthening Communities

Mason County Interagency Council, Inc. has been the grantee for the Mason County Retired & Senior Volunteer Program for 42 years. Mason County is the geographical service area for the Mason County RSVP, whose offices are located at 115 1/2 East Third Street, in Maysville, the county seat of Mason County.

Mason County began as a frontier town and river port in 1788. It is a historical community, boasting Simon Kenton and Daniel Boone among its early founders.. The area was a slave center in its early years. The abolitionist author Harriet Beecher Stowe visited the area in 1833 and witnessed a slave auction in Washington, a frontier village south of downtown Maysville. Appalled at what she witnessed, she included the scene in her novel Uncle Tom's Cabin, published in the mid 1800's.

The county has a total population of 17,586. Its land mass is 210 square miles and it positioned in the northeastern part of the state. It is bordered by Lewis County on the east, Robertson County to the south, and Bracken County to the west. Fleming County is its southeastern neighbor. Mason County and its four neighboring counties are in the state's Buffalo Trace district, named for the massive buffalo trails that ran from the Ohio River to Lexington, KY, 70 miles northeast of Maysville, when the area was first founded. Mason County's northern border is the Ohio River..

It is a beautiful area. It has rural values. It also has poverty, unemployment, substandard housing

Narratives

and drug problems. Its poverty rate is 17.9% among the elderly population. With the county's economically disadvantaged growing because of a decelerating economy, our program decided to focus on Healthy Futures as our primary focus area. We want to be able to provide the food and services the elderly and food insecure population needs. We will partner with five food programs to better serve our target group. Our goal is to prevent food insecurity among the area's most vulnerable. We also will offer transportation services to veterans and the disabled needing transportation for medical attention, and engage the isolated elderly and disabled in a healthier lifestyle.

We will be concentrating on improving reading skills in our schools, and serving abused/neglected children relocate to better home situations. We will help agencies deliver services, and provide clothing to the needy. We work with the Red Cross bloodmobile, and serve hospice clients and we will work with all age groups to increase better health outcomes.

Recruitment and Development

High Quality Volunteer Assignments

High quality volunteer assignments are in place at all stations where RSVP volunteers serve. If an assignment can benefit a segment of the community that we have set as a priority RSVP staff, advisory council members and stations supervisors work together to design its scope to align with local or national priorities. Each station supervisor is responsible for utilizing volunteers based on the skills and abilities they list on their skills forms. The RSVP staff and station supervisor refer to these forms when initial placements are being considered. RSVP staff members visit stations quarterly to assess volunteer satisfaction and performance, and to discuss with the station supervisor any problems or changes occurring at the station. From these visits or sometimes from a call to the office from a volunteer the staff is made aware of any dissatisfaction the volunteer has with their assignment. If their assignment doesn't fully utilize their abilities and skills, RSVP staff and the station supervisor will discuss and implement ways to improve the situation. Station supervisors routinely call on volunteers to share their volunteer experiences. Some incorporate the volunteer's skills in leading training classes where they freely share their experiences with other volunteers and new trainees. Some ask volunteers to share their volunteer experiences with a funding source or potential supporter to highlight the value of the station's program. RSVP finds this approach equally useful at public speaking events. Community groups much prefer to hear about experiences from volunteers. It makes the experience more real and relatable. Volunteers are invited to share their experiences at

Narratives

RSVP recognition events, volunteer trainings and in recruitment of new volunteers. Other opportunities for volunteers telling their story include serving on aging-related committees, the advisory council and participating in our monthly radio program. An annual volunteer satisfaction survey conducted by the advisory council is designed to gather this information, and gives volunteers an opportunity to reflect on the positive impact they make on the community.

Volunteer Training

RSVP staff provides orientation to new volunteers. This is done one-to-one or in a group setting. A skills and interests form is completed for the staff to evaluate volunteer opportunities best suited for the volunteer. A one-to-one follow-up is scheduled to plan the volunteer's assignment(s). All station supervisors are responsible for training volunteers assigned to their station. The training includes information on how to do specific assignments, supplying volunteers with policies and handbooks, discussing all policies with the volunteers, and assigning a volunteer or staff member to shadow the volunteer for a two week period to demonstrate what is required to do the assignment. Annual training is provided by the station to refresh and update volunteers on policies, changes/additions to assignments and any new assignments available to volunteers. Volunteers selecting placements with the schools, CASA, hospice, museums, tourism, aging program, nutrition programs and the community college require specialized training in numerous sessions before they can assume assignments.

Demographics

The Mason County RSVP recruits volunteers from all populations in the service area regardless of race, color, national or ethnic origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability and age, striving to reflect the community's demographics. The 2010 US Census gives the following breakdown of demographics for Mason County: 89.5% Caucasian, 6.6% African American; 1.8% two or more races, 1.5% Hispanic. Our volunteer enrollment reflects the county demographics except for the Hispanic population. We serve numerous individuals in this population, but cannot build a volunteer base from it. Special recruiting efforts will concentrate on engaging Hispanics and more veterans, their families and disabled individuals in volunteering to increase their involvement in community problem-solving.

Volunteer Recognition and Retention

Volunteer recognition is planned and implemented by board and advisory council member and RSVP staff, with input from volunteers and station supervisors. One recognition banquet is scheduled each

Narratives

year. A second one is sometimes planned when there are adequate funds. At this event volunteers receive RSVP service awards, pins, keychains, pendants, awards from the governor's office and door prizes donated by stations and supporters. Informal recognition is on-going. Volunteers are sent birthday cards, notes and phone calls are made to acknowledge special contributions, and staff calls are made to every volunteer every six months to gauge their satisfaction with their assignments, inform them of new assignments and activities and to garner any information regarding problems they are experiencing. Volunteers value these personal contacts, which give them an opportunity to talk freely with staff about concerns, offer suggestions relevant to recognition ideas, volunteer assignments, special events. These personal contacts also give them the sense that they are part of an organization that values them. These recognition efforts and placing and supporting them in volunteer assignments that challenge and fulfill them are the most effective ways we have found to retain our volunteers.

Program Management

The RSVP Director is responsible for assuring station compliance with RSVP regulations, which are explained when the MOU is negotiated, and revisited each time the MOU is renewed. Renewals are scheduled every three years. MOU agreements form the basis of our working relationships with station supervisors. If a personnel change occurs at the station before the scheduled renewal the MOU is negotiated with the new station supervisor immediately. RSVP staff visit the stations quarterly to check on volunteer assignments and meet with station supervisors. A review form is used during the informal visit. Supervisors are asked about any changes in volunteer assignments, performance questions regarding the volunteers, check to see if in-kind (if applicable) is being provided per the MOU, if volunteer recognition events are being planned, and if there are any new volunteer assignments at the station. Volunteers are requested to contact the RSVP office if operations change at their station(s), and they are excellent sources for letting the staff know of situations that need clarified.

Information on volunteer performance is checked on quarterly with the station supervisor. The station supervisor is asked to call or email the RSVP Director if a situation arises needing immediate attention.

Graduating stations has been discussed with incumbent programs in the past. RSVP staff and advisory council members addressed this need in 2013 by eliminating 3 underperforming stations. It

Narratives

was a good step for the program to take. It affected 6 volunteers in all. 5 volunteers were successfully transferred to a Primary Focus Area station. 1 made the decision to resign from the program, remaining a volunteer at their graduated station. There are no plans to graduate any additional stations this year.

RSVP volunteers have served in the Primary Focus Area (Healthy Futures) for a number of years, and are the primary service supporters of the area food banks/food programs. They pick up donated items and deliver food to the pantries, collect boxes from all over town to package food for clients, sort and stock the shelves, check expiration dates on donated foods, organize food drives and fill boxes with food for clients. The food programs have been evaluated in the past, but not satisfactory. They lacked computers at the time, and getting reliable information was difficult. Now, fully computerized, it will be exciting to measure the impact of these services.

The Executive Board, RSVP Director and advisory council members are responsible for seeing that the RSVP program is in compliance with RSVP federal regulations. The regulations are included in a training manual given to all board and advisory council members. Program decisions are based on compliance with all regulations. The project has an active Advisory Council. The by-laws require an 8-member council, however, we recently lost two members. One to serious illness; one relocated to another county. The council's nominating committee is currently doing a members-search and should have suggestions to be voted on in the near future.

The RSVP Director negotiates all station MOU agreements. The practice of having a signed MOU prior to placing volunteers with a station is strictly complied with. All volunteers serving in the program are 55 or older. Age verification is required before the volunteer is enrolled in the RSVP. Acceptable forms of verification include a drivers' license, birth certificate or government ID

Organizational Capability

Mason County Interagency Council, inc. is a small, non-profit agency that formed in 1973 to bring the RSVP program to Mason County, KY. As the name implies, the board is made up of agency members, who are dedicated to senior community service. Sound programmatic streamlined practices are what work best for this small agency.

RSVP is the only program the Board sponsors. The funds intended to operate the RSVP are the only

Narratives

funds managed by the group. The Board Executive Committee includes all elected officers: Board President, Vice-President and Secretary/Treasurer and two non-officer members. Policies in place for fiscal oversight include: Policy regarding deposits: the Board Treasurer is notified of any non-CNCS federal checks issued to the RSVP program for operating expenses; CNCS funds are electronically deposited. The Treasurer records the amount and source in a journal. Two members of the RSVP staff are responsible for the deposit; one prepares the deposit slip; one makes the deposit. All deposits are recorded on a transmittal sheet for the Board to review at its quarterly meetings. The Board contracts with a local accounting business for preparing payroll checks, making payroll tax payments, posting and reconciling the general ledger, reconciling monthly bank statements and producing a monthly statement of expenses and balances. The Board President approves the RSVP Director's timesheets; the RSVP Director approves the remaining staff timesheets. The RSVP Director is authorized to pay routine monthly office bills. Any invoice over \$2,000 requires the approval of the Board President prior to payment. Two signatures are required on every check written. The RSVP Director approves invoices and prepares payments. The Board President and RSVP Director sign each check. The Board Treasurer is authorized to sign checks if the Board President is unavailable. Volunteer meals and donated office space are the 2 regular in-kind sources the program has at this time. In-kind for meals is variable, and depends on how many lunches were donated; office space is not. It is figured at the rental market rate for the amount of space donated, with utilities included. An in-kind form lists the donated goods and their value. The donor and RSVP director sign the forms, verifying that the donation was made. An in-kind record is maintained at the RSVP office. Any currency handled by the program comes from local fundraising. The Board Treasurer and Advisory Council Chairman count fundraising currency and prepare it for deposit. The Board meets quarterly to review financial reports, discuss fundraising and other programmatic concerns. The Board plans fundraising events, sets salary and travel reimbursement rates, ensures the program has required insurance coverage, reviews and updates personnel policies as needed, determines fringe benefits plans, develops and adheres to its by-laws and personnel policies, monitors the RSVP program budget and volunteer activities, and plans and approves the annual budget. The Board President and the RSVP Director work closely together in following and monitoring compliance policies. The Board does not have assets other than funds it secures for the operation of the RSVP program. The program's assets include vehicles and office equipment, which are on inventory at the project's office. The Board has managed RSVP federal funds for 41 years. Its management style serves the needs of the program. The layers of accountability it has in place adequately reduce risk and exposure for

Narratives

mismanagement of funds.

Pat Stephenson is the RSVP Director. She has been the director for 41 years, and has plans to retire June 1, 2015. She attends conferences and training to keep current on program requirements. She trains and supervises other staff members and operates the day-to-day operation of the program. If this application is funded, a new director will be recruited and hired by May 4, 2015. Ms. Stephenson will train the new director, and closeout the 2014-15 fiscal year before her June 1 retirement date. When the program lost \$40,000 in CNCS funding in 2011, all staff members had to make sacrifices to continue being employees of the RSVP program. Salary reductions came first. Soon after, we lost a long term clerical employee to cancer. With reduced federal funding that staff member was not replaced. Instead, existing staff took over those duties, making it difficult to describe their positions. Carolyn Dwyer, a part-time employee, spends 30% of her time doing clerical work. 70% of her time is spent as a Volunteer Coordinator, primarily with our reading program initiative. Ron Walch is our Volunteer Recruiter. He is a part-time employee, spending 25% of his time transporting volunteers to volunteer stations; 20% of his time as a Volunteer Coordinator; and 55% of his time as our Volunteer Recruiter. Sue Gifford works 1 day a week, working 50% of her time transporting volunteers to their stations; and 50% of her time as Office Coordinator. These staff members are long term employees. They are familiar with the routine of running the office and capable of excelling in their blended capacities. If this application is funded, we anticipate having a slightly different staffing plan.

Other

None

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

None