

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The Community Renewal Team, Inc. (CRT) is the largest community action agency in Connecticut with more than 50 years experience & 60 programs that serve 45,253 families in central Connecticut, & at times, statewide. Specifically, the agency's catchment area encompasses the greater Hartford area, & parts of Tolland and Middlesex counties. Regarding RSVP operations in CT-01, an estimated 197 RSVP volunteers will serve central CT & CNCS. Some of their activities will include CATCH Healthy Habits (intergenerational nutrition & fitness) starting in New Britain; medical transportation in Southington & New Britain; calls and visits to inbound seniors; & various military programs. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. At the end of the three-year grant, RSVP programming in central Connecticut will be streamlined throughout the county (CRT's current RSVP-Hartford program and RSVP-CT-01 five town areas); & measurable results regarding health & wellness for K-5 children and adults 55 years and older will be available, detailing (CATCH example) improvement in health knowledge, attitudes, & behaviors among children & adults; meeting or exceeding CDC recommendations for moderate to vigorous physical activity; increasing consumption of fruits & vegetables; decreasing screen time; & feelings of high satisfaction with program delivery. The CNCS federal investment of \$50,813 will be supplemented by \$18,593 in non-federal resources. CATCH addresses the obesity epidemic among at-risk & economically disadvantaged populations, particularly children. The evidence-based, intergenerational nutrition & physical activity program is delivered as an after-school or summer program at elementary school or local Boys & Girls Clubs. Adult volunteers are recruited, screened, trained & supported by paid staff, utilizing a range of program resources & approaches in order to lead.

Other Community Priorities include Red Cross Service to the Armed Forces (SAF) veteran family phone calls; veteran resource guide distribution; veteran Pets on Wheels re-entry socialization; literacy and tutoring for children (America READS); literacy and tutoring for adults; tax preparation; consumer advocacy; and TV and radio opportunities that help individuals with disabilities. At the end of the three-year grant, the ultimate benefit of this work will be volunteers 55 years and older serving in a diverse range of activities that meet specific local and regional needs, while responding to CNCS national performance measures. This is an essential step in the process of helping retired seniors to engage in the community around them - preparing themselves and others to meet life's challenges - which is CRT's mission.

## Strengthening Communities

## Narratives

"CATCH Healthy Habits" sets the stage for this proposal for the Primary Focus Area of Healthy Futures. This effort follows suit with CRT's current, new health initiative rolled out in summer 2014, the "I Am Healthy!" Campaign. Fighting adult obesity starts with today's children and their daily habits and interest in the "fun" factor for healthy lifestyles. According to "F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America's Future 2012," a report released in September 2012 by Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the number of obese adults - along with related disease rates and health care costs - is on course to increase dramatically in Connecticut over the next 20 years.

For the first time, the annual report included an analysis that forecasted 2030 adult obesity rates in each state and the likely resulting rise in obesity-related disease rates and health care costs. By contrast, the analysis also showed that states could prevent obesity-related diseases and dramatically reduce health care costs if they reduced the average body mass index of their residents by just five percent by 2030 i.e. two futures for America's health. For Connecticut, if obesity rates continue on their current trajectory, by 2030, the rate would reach 46.5 percent. The Center for Disease Control reported in 2011, that the state had 24.5 percent of obese adults. Consider their poor habits and choices related to nutrition and physical activity levels, and combine it with a low-income, urban, single mom who works two jobs and can barely put food on the table. When these individuals don't have time to think about where their food is coming from, children become unaware about their choices.

According to a study (2010-11 with 74 elementary schools) by the CT State Department of Public Health, about one in three CT kindergartens and third graders are overweight or obese; and about one in seven are obese. The study found disparities by race and income, with 41 percent of black and 43 percent of Hispanic children considered overweight or obese, compared with 27 percent of white children. Additionally obesity rates were higher in school in lower income communities. The study was released in October 2012.

Through CATCH Healthy Habits, older adults are engaged in the fight against obesity. The program unites adults age 55+ with kids in grades K to 5. The adults lead the children in a series of up to 25 one-hour sessions, learning good eating and physical activity habits. CATCH is the only program of its kind in Connecticut (1 of 19 in the nation), an evidence- and community-based health program with a nationally recognized curriculum proven to impact child obesity (developed by researchers at the

## **Narratives**

University of Texas Health Science Center, in conjunction with experts from Tulane University, the University of California at San Diego, and the University of Minnesota - under the auspices of the National Institutes of Health). This project is unique compared to other regional wellness models for at-risk children because it benefits two generations. The after-school program leads to CNCS National Performance Measures outputs by providing for a number of intergenerational individuals receiving support, services, education, and/or referrals to alleviate long-term hunger.

In supporting data collection and evaluation, the CATCH program has several outcomes that are likely to be achieved through the program: 1) Child behavior change outcomes include increased ability to correctly identify healthy versus unhealthy foods; increased interest in healthy foods and decreased interest in less healthy; high levels of moderate to vigorous physical activity during CATCH sessions; and decreased amount of time spent watching/using media. 2) Comparable healthy eating and active living results are expected among the older adult volunteer program facilitators.

Overall, the CRT RSVP program for the five town area in Hartford and New Haven counties will provide various opportunities over three-years for 197 RSVP volunteers. CRT's congressionally assigned service delivery area corresponds to the proposed affected areas with services in one town - New Britain - providing eviction and foreclosure prevention services, case management, senior programs, health and wellness, and community corrections. Additionally, New Britain and Meriden are designated by CT as "priority school districts" (areas of greatest need), thus providing the ideal framework for delivery of CATCH Healthy Habits to low-income and/or disadvantaged children.

Southington had a population of 43,069 in 2010 and is expected to increase by 2% over the coming decade. A slightly higher proportion of its residents are over age 65 compared to the state and the country. It is an affluent community, with high education levels, and a higher median income and lower poverty and unemployment. Two challenges for the community are affordable housing and transportation, hence the proposed continuation of medical transportation services in this area.

Wallingford had a Census 2010 population of over 18,000 and the median income for a household in the town was \$57,308, and the median income for a family was \$68,327. About 2.4% of families and 3.6% of the population were below the poverty line, including 5.0% of those under age 18 and 4.4% of those age 65 or over.

## Narratives

Residential and industrial, Berlin had a Census 2010 population of almost 20,000. The population is 95% white. The median income for a household in the town was \$68,068, and the median income for a family was \$76,756. About 1.4% of families and 2.5% of the population were below the poverty line, including 0.9% of those under age 18 and 6.8% of those age 65 or over.

Moving attention to other Healthy Futures focus areas, CRT will provide volunteer services with medical transportation needs of seniors in New Britain and Southington. Mirroring any other community in America today, the availability of non-emergency, medical transportation is a determining factor in seniors' ability to access the health care system for necessary medical care. Whether trying to reach life sustaining dialysis treatments or ensuring a healthy future with routine screenings, older Americans must have a way to get to their medical appointments. Specifically, CRT will assess the current volunteer station and processes, then make recommendations for moving forward under a CRT-RSVP program (perhaps expanding to additional towns). Categories to address in setting-up/transitioning/revitalizing this service: leadership, community awareness, capacity assessment, liability, risk management, volunteers general and vehicles, marketing, service eligibility, and service coordination (proposed new part-time position/program assistant-transportation coordinator in the CRT RSVP office). Evaluation would include surveys on quality of delivery, and tracking of client frequency and travel locations.

Finally, CRT volunteers will make calls and/or visits to inbound senior citizens. The Web resource, eCaring (the heart of better care management), advocates that senior companion care is for providing emotional support and encouragement to stay as healthy as possible. This wellness team notes that circumstances limit seniors' ability to get together with friends, travel, or drive a car & often results in losing touch. For many seniors, companionship care fills a gap created by growing older. It provides a crucial link for seniors who live alone & may be isolated from others. Companion care is an ideal solution for a senior who would otherwise spend most of the day alone & for those who require light assistance.

The above two primary focus area points lead to CNCS National Performance Measures outputs by providing a number of homebound or older adults and individuals with disabilities receiving transportation and wellness services that allow them to live independently.

## **Narratives**

Rounding out CRT's Other Community Priorities are the following: child (America READS) and adult literacy; financial literacy and tax assistance/preparation via VITA tax filings; NUTMEG TV/CRIS Radio to help individuals with disabilities hear and see content; consumer advocacy based in the Hartford Attorney General's office; and support for Veterans and Military Families.

A new veteran program operating under CRT's Hartford-RSVP program is volunteers working with the American Red Cross in order to serve military families. It would be ideal to boost this program with additional support from central Connecticut. RSVP volunteers make follow-up phone calls to military families to inquire about their satisfaction with using the Red Cross Service to the Armed Forces (SAF) emergency messaging system in order to contact their deployed family member in the event of an emergency. These phone calls assess family satisfaction as well as obtain any information that the family may have to help improve the system (ex. would they use the system again and/or recommend it to a friend, etc.). This program builds on CRT's already established relationship with the Red Cross and the various volunteer capacity roles utilized for CRT's RSVP volunteers.

A second military effort includes CRT tapping the Resource Manual for Veterans in Connecticut that an Americorp VISTA employee researched and compiled in 2012-13. The manual is a "resource guide" for veterans that are looking for any range of services, including housing, benefits, counseling, employment, and related items. Currently, CRT's Hartford-RSVP volunteers are being trained in the use of the manual and will present it at various senior centers, health fairs, and other appropriate venues. The volunteers also will set up one-on-one meetings with veterans, as needed to help them obtain referrals for needed services. CRT will seek any additional opportunity measures to collaborate with organizations to provide further outreach and referral services in this focus area. Again, it would be ideal to boost this program with additional support from central Connecticut.

A final military effort includes Pets on Wheels, a socialization upon returning home, providing environments that encourage reconnecting and community, as well as individual purpose.

In all, the Community Renewal Team plans to strengthen central Connecticut so progress is made in vital issue areas.

### **Recruitment and Development**

If awarded this new area, CRT would be partnering with new volunteer stations and perhaps, an

## **Narratives**

existing volunteer base; therefore, initial - timely - assessment of current volunteers' alignment with the proposed stations will be performed, as well as development of a plan for orientating and re-energizing current volunteers, and recruitment of new volunteers.

Most important, keeping the volunteer stream steady, inspired, and engaged is key in order to minimize the disruption of volunteers schedules and contributions. If graduating a station, or attempting to market new opportunities to volunteers, CRT staff keeps communication consistent and open, making sure they know the volunteer, their professional background and interests, and likes and dislikes. Times such as these fall back on the volunteers' experiences with RSVP to date - were they recognized for their work? Does staff know their name and make a point to stay in touch? Was follow-up provided when they had questions/ comments? CRT staff are trained to look at the volunteer from day one and keep notes, stay in touch, and make the experience as personable as possible so when things need to shift, willing volunteers stay with RSVP.

CRT, if awarded this opportunity, would look to have RSVP-Hartford and RSVP-five new towns combined into one grant/project period. This would streamline much work, and keep central CT services focused, tight, and easy to present as a CNCS territory, while maximizing our ability to provide high quality volunteer services, programs, and resources.

Development of our RSVP Hartford program is a continuing process in conjunction with the volunteer stations; and the RSVP Manager would plan to do the same in the new areas. The program assures a high quality experience for volunteers that offer opportunities for building new skills, developing leadership, and enhancing volunteers lives. Through continuous on-site training, station staff provides education and development that allows volunteers to acquire new knowledge and skills. For example, CATCH volunteers receive regular orientation and booster training on health and nutrition on a regular schedule; and the Red Cross provides very specific, sensitivity training on phone calls. Furthermore, there are conferences and networking sessions that require attendance from volunteers which help us to remain current on upcoming and new trends in volunteering. It is increasingly important that the quality of stations and volunteer work requested provide meaningful volunteer experiences and utilize the best skills from CRT RSVP volunteers. Note that CRT is actively engaged in efforts to develop initiatives that meet the varied needs of the "boomer generation" that are now either in or nearing retirement age.

## Narratives

Professional development training is offered on a periodic basis to all CRT staff. As funding and space is available, volunteers are encouraged to attend CRT sponsored training sessions. Staff and volunteers also take advantage of locally sponsored "free" workshops and trainings to further professional development. Volunteers attend volunteer station sponsored training as they pertain to their duties. Here, RSVP regulations and preventing/identifying prohibited activities are reviewed and discussed. Finally, RSVP staff attend relevant local, state and national trainings and conferences as applicable (ex. winter 2013, Oasis Institute in St. Louis for CATCH training).

Right now, CRT's outreach and community development are the basis for meaningful volunteer opportunities that impact community needs; and CRT's RSVP Program is doing just that - for its volunteers - and for the community. The agency's Hartford RSVP has built a solid reputation, and CRT is confident that it can do the same in the expanded new areas. Recruitment is an on-going process and RSVP staff utilizes CRT's connections with local grassroots pockets, faith-based organizations, and key regional partners to help recruit senior volunteers, as well as the growing number of baby boomers. Recruitment also is supported through other CRT program venues such as senior community centers, senior housing, and congregate meal sites via distribution of flyers, bulletin announcements, and combined partner communication pieces. Most notable, the volunteers themselves are the best recruiters; however, in today's media environment, even for seniors, CRT plans to incorporate more of the CRT Website and social media postings into its recruitment and recognition efforts. Also, driving expansion plans are CRT's work develop new programs for younger and experienced volunteers, and increase the number of total bay boomers volunteers.

Many of CRT's RSVP programs are self-sufficient, however station site personnel and volunteers are involved in the recruitment process through community word-of-mouth. The agency also utilizes an on-line recruitment tool called "Volunteer Match." Here, CRT registers RSVP volunteer opportunities online and seniors who are interested can use the tool to contact us.

Regarding reaching out for more diverse volunteers in CRT's RSVP Program, the RSVP Manager is committed to planning differently about how CRT recruits. Here are some items CRT currently is working to implement in Hartford, and would apply to the new areas too: recruit at neighborhood agencies and community centers in diverse areas; partner with multicultural-based associations; place

## **Narratives**

fresh advertisements in ethnic publications; print some program materials in Spanish; connect more with different religious centers; share RSVP information with ESL classes at local schools; and perhaps place ads on a Spanish-language radio station. In addition, information on volunteer opportunities will be shared with state disability associations, such as the American Disability Act Coalition of Connecticut (ADACC). CRT certainly wants the region to know that the RSVP Program is committed to multi-culturalism.

Volunteers are formally recognized annually for their efforts through recognition events, as a way to publicize and acknowledge volunteer efforts and to promote retention of volunteers. At these events, volunteers are often presented with certificates and/or gifts of appreciation. CRT leadership certainly applauds the RSVP staff with inspiring and empowering volunteers to impact CRT's mission, however, in the near future, CRT plans to have its CEO and appropriate vice presidents at the RSVP recognition events in order to take visible and tangible action to support the engagement of the volunteers.

Many volunteers also attend individual station recognition and may be given letters or certificates of appreciation for their dedication, time, and efforts. Meanwhile, volunteers are recognized during the year through regular station site visits and special meetings and/or training events. The RSVP project staff works to keep in regular contact with volunteers through e-mail blasts, always letting them know how much they are appreciated and their dedication to volunteering is valued and recognized -- showing that even the little things done can be the most significant in volunteer retention.

Regarding volunteer satisfaction, the RSVP Manager will work with the CRT Research Director to develop volunteer surveys to measure volunteer satisfaction.

### **Program Management**

CRT views this CT five town (Hartford County/3 and New Haven County/2) RSVP opportunity as a natural expansion of its current RSVP-Hartford program. First and foremost, moving CATCH Healthy Habits into New Britain School District and Boys and Girls Clubs allows this nationally accredited nutrition-fitness program, that is fighting childhood obesity and chronic diseases, gain more momentum. This is a signature program for CNCS to highlight, as CATCH is only operating in CT under CRT -- serving as 1 of 19 cities across 15 states; and contributing to more than 1,600 volunteers and 10,000 children having benefitted from the program since 2011. Recent CATCH in greater

## Narratives

Hartford shows five after-school sites and three summer sites served since August 2013, with 15 volunteers who served 340 students, grades K-5.

CATCH program outcome data is collected through two methods: pre- and post-program surveys, and the System for Observing Fitness Instruction Time (SOFIT). CATCH Coordinators measure program outcomes by having children in grades 3-5 and older adult volunteers complete written surveys at the beginning and end of the program. The survey was adapted from the After-School Student Questionnaire, a validated, reliable survey. Items on the survey include assessing physical activity, nutrition behaviors, screen time, and program satisfaction. It measures changes in self-reported knowledge, attitudes, and behavior pertaining to nutrition and physical activity as a result of participating in the program.

SOFIT is a tool that measures physical activity levels in order to assess the effectiveness of fitness programs. Trained observers follow SOFIT cues via an MP3 player. Additionally, process evaluation also is completed to monitor program implementation.

Over the last few years, various media outlets have profiled CRT's CATCH program with articles in the "CT Mirror" (March 2013); "CT LIFE/Mature Life" section (July 2012); "WEST HARTFORD LIFE" (June 2012); and a family segment on Better Connecticut's WFSB CHANNEL 3 (July 18, 2012). Visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L06RWWZCBMQ> for a live experience.

Additional notes on Healthy Futures includes CRT's RSVP Manager's past experience in supervising a Dial-a-Ride at a senior center, thus she is prepared to help set-up, assess, and plan for medical transportation in Southington and New Britain. CRT also used to coordinate a large group of knitters who made items for sick hospital patients. Considering this, CRT is comfortable and knowledgeable in assessing/implementing calls and visits to inbound seniors for companionship.

What highlights many of the reasons why Community Renewal is effective with senior services? The agency offers these programs/services: current RSVP-Hartford program, affordable housing with targeted programming such as massage therapy and medical transportation, and elderly nutrition (Meals On Wheels and congregate sites - the oldest CT program). All of these are key advantages for a pathway to success in the proposed areas.

## Narratives

To prepare central Connecticut to meet life's challenges, CRT works daily to increase opportunities for low-income and/or disadvantaged individuals to receive services, as well as provide opportunities for individuals to help.

CRT's RSVP program is assessed for quality assurance through a survey administered by the RSVP Advisory Council for its accomplishments and effectiveness. The Advisory Council consists of RSVP Volunteers, representatives from various stations, Directors of Volunteers, and community leaders. The Advisory Council (currently 12 members) meets regularly and takes an active part in all programs and recognitions. The data from any surveys conducted are used to assess the effectiveness of our efforts and assurance compliance with program goals and community needs. CRT's program also uses the National RSVP Reporter software to collect and report on the number of volunteer stations, number of volunteers recruited for each station, and number of volunteer hours. The RSVP Manager, Supervisors of Volunteer Stations, and Volunteers themselves collect the data for the National RSVP Reporter.

RSVP-Hartford has key partnerships with various organizations, including: Connecticut Radio Information System, State of Connecticut Attorney General's Office, public school districts, various Connecticut hospitals, veteran groups, American Red Cross, and the OASIS Institute (WellPoint Foundation/Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield), which the CATCH program originates from. All of these stations sign MOUs, and ensure all volunteers are eligible and prepared to serve in their program. CRT certainly knows how to manage the system, and will have no difficulties establishing systems in the new areas.

Partners are selected by the information that they provide as well as the availability of meaningful volunteer opportunities. The partnerships help CRT contribute to the health of seniors and children, coordinate vital community services, disseminate educational information, provide tutoring to school-aged children, and work with our country's military families and those who have served. Simply, volunteers are our agency's front lines to making an impact for social justice; enhancing the capacity of CRT by improving the quality of services; increasing the number of individuals served, and sharing meaningful human relationships - experiences that provide expertise and a caring heart.

## **Narratives**

As CRT's RSVP Program continues to grow and evolve in order to meet the needs of central Connecticut, leadership (with input from station managers and others) decides when to graduate work stations because they no longer align with the priorities set forth by CNCS or interest simply has not flourished. CRT recently went through these decisions with a few Hartford RSVP programs; and will apply the same thoughtful and informed assessments moving into new affected areas. CRT's RSVP program would welcome these programs in New Britain, Berlin, Southington, Meriden, and Wallingford: CATCH Healthy Habits/primary focus area of Healthy Futures; Medical Transportation/primary focus area of Healthy Futures; Calls and/or Visits to inbound seniors for companionship/primary focus area of Healthy Futures; followed by other need areas: tutoring in literacy for children and adults; preparing taxes; serving military families and veterans; engaging in services to help individuals who are blind or deaf; and advocating for consumers.

Regarding agency-wide support for RSVP, CRT's Research Office undertakes a community needs assessment every three years and organizational self-assessments annually. Through surveys, focus groups, and interviews, information is gathered from selected individuals living within the community and representatives of service agencies. The assessment is used to evaluate CRT programming, including RSVP, and to improve on services. In addition, the community is represented on CRT's Board of Trustees that sets agency policy and provides direction to the President and Senior Executives. CRT's board structure is a tri-partite composition with members representing public and private sectors of the community and neighborhood representation. This helps to ensure that all CRT programming is geared towards the actual needs as expressed by the community itself. On top of the Community Needs Assessment and per our Federal and State Guidelines, RSVP conducts regular survey that assesses volunteers, volunteer stations, and programs and projects for their impact on the on both the community and volunteers.

Regarding financials, CRT's infrastructure is discussed in the Organizational Capability section of this application. Note, RSVP staff has experience with reaching various donors and requesting in-kind contributions such as food, space, and program materials, as well as cash donations to sustain the program.

### **Organizational Capability**

The Community Renewal Team (CRT), headquartered in Hartford 's Enterprise Zone (meets certain criteria related to social and economic conditions), has more than 50 years experience in delivering

## Narratives

community-based social services to central Connecticut, as well as to persons 55 years and older. Most important, CRT has been affiliated with and facilitating the RSVP program (greater Hartford) for more than 20 years. Last year RSVP-Hartford engaged more than 325 volunteers at 35 different sites.

The human services organization provides about 60 programs and services; employs 540 full-time workers and 178 part-time employees; and serves 45,253 families/114,563 individuals. CRT engages more than 1,000 volunteers annually between RSVP and general organization support (Early Childhood Education, FoodShare, Earth Day celebration, Meals on Wheels, National Arts program, etc.). The community action agency (CAA) has a proven track record of innovative community solutions through flagship projects, including an urban, affordable assisted living residence (\$17M, 2004); grandparents raising grandchildren campus (\$10.5M, 2007); and affordable assisted living for aging veterans and their spouses (\$33M, groundbreaking 2016).

CRT has an annual operating budget of \$64 million; and has multiple layers of internal control procedures beginning with program managers all the way through financial controls monitored by the Chief Financial Officer (CFO). These processes ensure that all program funds are spent within the designated program.

Specifically, the agency's administrative infrastructure offers a strong base for RSVP and CRT's other programs, which can leverage these functions without incurring additional, higher administrative costs. In order to provide the necessary supportive services to all program participants (while complying with all Federal and state cost standards and regulations), CRT has an automated financial accounting system that is specifically designed to track large numbers of grants and contracts on a fund basis of accounting. In fact, an upgrade in software (moving to Blackbaud's FinancialEdge) is currently being planned by the Finance Department and Information Technology Department for 2015 in order to provide more options in tracking and reports. Testing and planning phases will be executed in order to have a seamless transition.

In 1983, CRT was the first non-profit in CT to subject itself to the new federal single audit under draft federal guidelines based on requirements of OMB Circular A-110. More recently, in the last two years, CRT has been the subject of more than 40 routine audits by funders and accrediting bodies, all resulting in excellent ratings. Upon completion of annual audits, conducted by independent certified

## Narratives

auditors/business advisors of Grant Thornton of Glastonbury, CT, reports are issued in accordance with OMB Circular A-133 and other accounting standards.

CRT tracks approximately 150 funds which the system reconciles daily and closes monthly. Additionally, CRT has served as the fiscal agent for community partnership projects. The agency's current financial system (American Fundware) is such that it controls and safeguards funds by funding source, specific funding agreement or contract, and cost category related to a contract. It ensures adequate expenditure levels and audit trails. CRT's financial software can separately and accurately track and record on multiple funds on a grant (program) fiscal-year basis as well as CRT's fiscal year (January 1-December 31). The system tracks accounts payable and accruals according to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and allows the separation of funding among direct, indirect and administrative funds.

CRT receives numerous federal/state grants for its 60 programs. Here are three samples of federal grants the agency manages:

1) North Central Area Agency on Aging (NCAAA), Hartford, CT - via CT Dept. of Social Services & U.S. Health & Human Services for Elderly Nutrition, \$1,874,124 (10/2013 to 9/2014); U.S. Housing & Urban Development, support HUD Housing Counseling Services, \$14,015 (2014-15); and U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, Supportive Services for Veterans Families, to increase staff resources and expand our territory, \$519,000 (2013-14).

Incorporated in 1963, one year before the War on Poverty and Economic Opportunity Act, CRT is a 501(c)3 organization. The organization's mission is to prepare our community to meet life's challenges. The agency's vision is for individuals and families to be strong, stable and connected to opportunities in communities where everyone wants to live.

CRT is 1 of 12 CAAs in Connecticut and one of 1,000+ in the United States that fights poverty and social injustice during crisis or when basic needs are not being met. Program and service categories include: Basic Needs (one stop neighborhood resource centers, case management, weekly food bank); Energy & Weatherization; Early Care & Education (Head Start, infant & toddler); Employment & Training (YouthBuild, Fatherhood Initiative, SNAP, & summer youth employment); Individual Development Accounts & Financial Literacy; VITA Tax Preparation; Veteran Services; Community

## **Narratives**

Corrections; Mental Health & Wellness; Senior Services; Elderly Nutrition (oldest program in CT, summer meals, Meals on Wheels, etc.); Eviction & Foreclosure Prevention; and Affordable Housing & Shelters.

Under Senior Services, CRT's greater Hartford RSVP program operates with a full-time Manager, Theresa Strong, who has more than 25 years of experience directing all operations, including volunteer management and Dial-a-Ride, of a multi-service, nationally-recognized senior center within the State of Connecticut. Strong has worked in the public sector and community services sector; and has extensive financial and grant management experience. Ultimately, she is responsible for the overall RSVP implementation, as well as supervising staff and volunteers; completing program reports; attending meetings with funders and volunteer station coordinators; assisting with the recruitment and development of volunteers; and managing the volunteer stations. Strong has extensive ties to allow coordination of services with various public entities in our service areas that include town halls, senior services/centers, local schools, and community/civic organizations to develop meaningful volunteer placements based on an assessment of the volunteer's knowledge, skills, and talents. Strong started with CRT in July 2013 and has plentiful contacts and resources within the communities CRT serves. This will help facilitate collaborations on an on-going basis to support program assessment and implementation. She has quickly gained the knowledge of the rules and regulations associated with the program, and has the full support of CRT's Vice President of Senior Services Gus Keach-Longo. Most notable is Strong's recent invitation (and acceptance) to serve on the National Senior Corps Association (NSCA) Board of Directors.

A full-time Coordinator, Delores Wisdom, assists the RSVP Manager by collecting data, administering surveys, and providing technical assistance to station coordinators. She also coordinates the CATCH Healthy Habits program.

Note that CRT is proposing in this application, the hiring of a new, part-time program assistant/transportation coordinator. This person's responsibilities would include: clerical, reception, data entry/program tracking, research, and medical transportation scheduling. Adding this position, allows Strong and Wisdom to stay focused on volunteer recruitment and nurturing; field activities; and quality programs and delivery.

## **Narratives**

The above personnel occupy/would occupy the RSVP office, which is located at CRT's "The Retreat," an affordable assisted living complex for seniors aged 55 years and older, in Hartford. Strong and Wisdom are responsible to develop new volunteer work plans and identify/negotiate new work stations by leveraging community involvement and partnerships. RSVP operates/will be operating various programs outside of its primary focus area of Healthy Futures. The design of these programs is a multi-faceted effort to ensure that the volunteer opportunities are feasible and slated for success and growth. These programs are designed to meet the ever growing needs of central Connecticut, as well as the volunteers CRT places.

Regarding staff and volunteer stations, all stations would be assessed/identified and given a CRT-RSVP orientation. Moving forward, the stations would be monitored on a regular basis to ensure that the appropriate rules are being followed and volunteers are following the prescribed activities set forth in each individual RSVP Work Plan. Strong and Wisdom are experienced with collecting and measuring program outcomes; and will work diligently to ensure that performance measure outcomes and outputs are tracked properly, and either met or exceeded.

CRT's RSVP Hartford Program has had great success with requests from various donors providing in-kind contributions such as food, space cost, and program materials, as well as cash donations to sustain the program service lines. These relationships and efforts will be worked upon in this proposal's areas affected.

Note that CRT has a 16-person Planning and Communications Department that supports CRT programs by maintaining funding resources, locating new funding streams, providing budget support, and assisting with marketing and public relations. RSVP-Hartford receives additional funding from the Connecticut Department of Transportation, and from The Oasis Institute/Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield. Additional Oasis Institute funds are pending to meet this proposal's match funding.

Finally, CRT's Quality Assurance (QA) Department assists in establishing program measures and providing tools to monitor, evaluate, and guide progress toward achieving goals and objectives. Current staff includes a Director of Quality Assurance, four program monitors and a Corporate Librarian.

## **Narratives**

Regarding policies, the CRT Purchasing Policy was last updated in October 2007 to maximize the effective use of agency resources through acquisition of high quality products and services at competitive prices. The policy is for all purchases of \$2,500 or more. If \$10,000 or greater, a formal bid or RFP is required. A Vendor Conduct Policy also is in place.

Regarding internal policies and personnel management, an Employee Handbook (last updated January 2012), outlines all appropriate organizational items, such as: mission, for our customers, purpose, history, business conduct, employee standards, equal opportunity, non-harassment, violence, introductory period, agency news, licensure/certification/ accreditation, orientation, photo ID badge, complaints, employment status, non-benefitted, per-diem/substitutes, regular full-time, seasonal/temporary, reporting times/hours, layoffs, overtime, paydays, performance management, reporting change of status, benefits, earned time, insurance, holidays, open enrollment, COBRA, pre-tax contributions, termination, leaves, retirement savings, accidents, IT computer and voice communications usage, inclement weather, infectious disease, rehire, no solicitation, probation, performance reviews, limited English proficiency, appearance/dress, smoking, recruiting, transfers/promotions, political activities, and whistleblower policies.

### **Other**

N/A

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

N/A