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Executive Summary

A total of 280 RSVP volunteers will serve the Kern County area during this grant period. Activities will include delivering food, encouraging seniors to avoid isolation and actively engage in community activities, monitoring healthcare facilities and individual homes for potential elder abuse situations, provide support to local non profit and public agencies, providing additional manpower to law enforcement agencies and judicial support through the docent program and volunteer efforts dedicated to enhance healthcare for local residents.

The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. At the end of the three-year grant, individuals will receive needed support to maintain independent, healthy lifestyles. This will include food deliveries, nutrition information, companionship and identification and monitoring of potential elder abuse situations.

The Volunteer Center of Kern County was established in 1972, dedicated to serving the needs of our community through the

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utilization of volunteers. Working on behalf of the agencies and the volunteers, the Volunteer Center contributes more than \$78 million dollars of volunteer services to Kern County on an annual basis.

The Volunteer Center of Kern County prides itself in providing more than FORTY YEARS of 100% COMPLIANCE SPONSORSHIP experience with the RSVP Program of Kern County and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Mission Statement: To mobilize people and resources to deliver creative solutions to address Community Issues.

Strengthening Communities

Kern County lies in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley of Central California, approximately midway between San Diego and San Francisco. Kern County is, geographically, the third largest county in California and has an ethnically diverse population of 839,631.

Almost 17%, or 142,738 residents, are age 55 and over.

Agriculture and oil are the greatest contributors and employers in the area. Aging and Adult Services needs assessment 2013

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indicates that Kern County seniors identify the (1) lack of adequate nutrition on a daily basis, (2) isolation, and (3) elder abuse as the primary contributors that threaten their ability to live independently.

Primary Focus Area: Healthy Futures/Food Delivery

Kern County ranks as the 9th highest rate of food hardship in the United States and 21% of Kern County residents lack availability to adequate daily nutrition. Kern County's RSVP Program, in partnership with local Meals on Wheels Programs, Senior Nutrition Sites, Kern County Aging and Adult Services and Kern County Public Health Department will address the subject of hunger and the lack of availability of nutritious meals by providing food delivery, client assessment and nutritional information to those individuals living alone. Kern County Aging and Adult Service Department's Needs Assessment 2013 indicates that 84% of Kern seniors report some degree of difficulty with meal

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preparation, 84% with shopping and 74% with transportation.

Kern County's Meal on Wheels Program delivers 500+ meals on a

daily basis and maintains a list of those waiting to be served due

to the lack of volunteers available to serve those clients. Meals on

Wheels Site activity logs related to volunteer/client participation

will be provided to the RSVP Program on a monthly basis. Senior

clients will be given a survey to provide their assessment related

to (a) the personal effect related to the availability of daily meals

(b) program satisfaction. It is anticipated that seniors will report

that they have increased opportunities to receive nutritious meals

on a daily basis and the positive impact on overall health.

Surveys will be submitted by clients to the RSVP Program who will

then evaluate and document results for reporting/evaluation

purposes.

Primary Focus Area: Healthy Futures/Companionship

Results of the 2014 United States of Aging survey, that 8% of

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seniors nationally defined as socially-isolated seniors, those living alone who report feelings of loneliness, express more concern about aging in place and are more likely to need help from community programs than seniors nationally. Isolated individuals are at a higher risk of experiencing depression, physical illnesses, unresolved grief, mental confusion, suicide, dementia, elder abuse, psychosis and substance abuse. Kern County Mental Health Department states that successful aging requires relationships with people, consistent interaction with others and mental and physical stimulation. Engaging in these activities gives seniors control over their independence, quality of life, and dignity. RSVP volunteers will receive training in preparation for their assignments. The goals of this program are to reduce isolation and to promote autonomy and independence, while empowering seniors to age in place. RSVP volunteer participation will be documented by each site and submitted to the RSVP Program on a

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monthly basis for reporting/evaluation purposes.

Primary Focus Area: Healthy Futures/Preventing Elder Abuse

In Kern County, the adult protective services hotline fields an average of 3,000 suspected abuse referrals per year. Volunteers will visit clients identified by Kern County Mental Health, Kern County Adult Protective Services to establish ongoing relationship and opportunity for direct observation/assessment of expected occurrences of elder abuse. RSVP volunteers will be trained to identify and report elder abuse situations through their involvement in the Ombudsman Program. Volunteers will advocate on behalf of the client to provide a safe and healthy environment free from the possibility of abuse. RSVP volunteer participation will be documented by each site and submitted to the RSVP Program on a monthly basis for reporting/evaluation purposes.

Service to Veterans and/or Military Families

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The RSVP Program participates in activities with California Veterans Assistance Foundation, Kern County Veterans Collaborative, Kern County Veterans Administration and the Kern County Stand Down Committee.

Activities include companionship activities with the California Veterans Assistance Foundation (facility for homeless vets), participation in the Veterans Collaborative and the annual Veterans Stand Down. Activity Logs will document participation.

Recruitment and Development

RSVP of Kern County assures a high quality experience for willing senior volunteers by both recognizing and validating their skills and experience and also assessing their interest in expanding those skills or building new skills in volunteer service.

The Project Director, Elena Rizo, continues her commitment to ensuring that those involved in RSVP have meaningful and valuable volunteering experiences. Communication between the volunteers and the Project Director continue to be a priority.

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RSVP provides one-on-one intake/orientation interviews with interested adults 55 and over. Conducting these types of interviews allow the Project Director to explore service opportunities, volunteer assignments that are appropriate for the volunteer which can allow the new volunteer to share their experiences, abilities and skills to assist agencies with addressing the needs of individuals and families in our community. All new volunteers receive a welcome/information packet which includes an RSVP brochure and specific information on Kern County RSVP.

Volunteers identified for Primary Focus Areas or in Other Focus Areas will be provided training appropriate to their positions, include skill set building needed, assessment and identification of specific areas requiring outside intervention.

Information/Education related to Kern County's Community Needs and the relationship between RSVP's dedication to addressing those needs will be a priority. Volunteer training will be conducted

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by RSVP and Volunteer Center staff, agency volunteer management staff and/or other professionals knowledgeable of the volunteer assignment prerequisites. Those volunteers working directly with staff/management to assume more responsibility in the agency are encouraged to develop additional leadership skills. By identifying clear community needs and discussing the meaning of volunteerism with volunteers and stations, we empower individuals and support stations in their efforts to impact those served and our community. The Project Director concentrates effort on identifying stations that are in the Focus Areas identified by the Corporation for National and Community Service and recognizes the importance of RSVP's role in addressing community needs through this program. Those stations identified will utilize volunteers according to RSVP guidelines and will be supported by volunteer management staff that recognizes the value of the volunteer and the need to

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concentrate efforts in identified focus areas. Successful volunteer placement will be a win-win situation for the volunteer, the agency and the client, enhancing the quality of the volunteers' lives as well as others involved.

Sponsoring agency, RSVP staff and community professionals are available for additional training opportunities are available for Volunteer Station Supervisors, RSVP Advisory Council Members and Community participation groups.

Demographics:

Kern County's population is extremely diverse with populations representing Caucasians, African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander and Middle Eastern populations. Involvement with the various Veterans' organizations has resulted in a larger number of Veterans becoming RSVP volunteers. All of the RSVP volunteer sites involved in the program are ADA compliant and have the ability to accommodate

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all levels of disabilities experienced by the RSVP volunteers. Many RSVP volunteers currently have disabilities but due to the commitment of RSVP and agency staff to provide a quality experience for the volunteers this has not been an issue.

Recruitment (Building a Pool of RSVP Volunteers):

Active recruitment in all areas of Kern County produce a volunteer pool reflective of the communities served. The recruitment of volunteers is an ongoing process, changing to meet the guidelines set by CNCS. Current recruitment tools include: Volunteer Match, Volunteer Center website, local media and the utilization of social media. Agencies recruiting volunteers have voiced their approval and appreciation of the ability to recruit volunteers through the web and social media. The Project Director is involved in recruiting volunteers at senior health fairs, presentations with community organizations and participating in special events such as the Kern County Fair Senior Day held each

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year in September. According to community need identification and site requests, existing volunteers are also informed of potential volunteer opportunities through phone calls and mailings. Ongoing communication with local aging organizations continues to add to the volunteer base maintained by this project and is often sources of recruitment successes.

Retention:

Peer recruitment and satisfaction with volunteer assignments promote increases in the number of volunteers and a high retention rate. Communication with volunteers, notification of new opportunities, socialization with other volunteers, ongoing expressions of appreciation for service contributed and the impact their work has on the quality of life in our community are all positive reinforcement efforts in retention. The volunteers' awareness of improved health resulting from volunteer efforts, a more positive outlook on their quality of life and increased

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opportunities to "get out" and share their experiences also encourage continued involvement.

Recognition:

This year's RSVP Recognition Event, a Continental Breakfast and Program, were held on April 25, 2014. (Next event anticipated Spring 2015) In past years the volunteers were invited to attend a luncheon event but due to a lack of funding (private and CNCS based) the event was reorganized as a continental breakfast event. It is extremely important to recognize the efforts and personal contributions of volunteers, promote recognition of their accomplishments and to increase the support from outside businesses and funders to continue recognition events. Those events, based on underwriting, and support from CNCS and the sponsoring agency will continue to highlight our volunteers, this program and the impact they are having on Focus Areas related to our community needs. Recognition events attract media attention

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allowing RSVP to educate the public on the (1) Program, (2) Primary Focus Areas and Other Focus Areas identified by CNCS, (3) CNCS involvement in Kern County, and (4) accomplishments of the program and individual volunteers. RSVP Volunteers look forward to the recognition events, begin calling regarding dates and locations months in advance and literally line up several hours prior to the opening of the doors in anticipation of the event. RSVP Project Director recognizes volunteers' birthdays on a monthly basis at the RSVP office.

Program Management

There are several different sources that assist RSVP of Kern County in identifying community needs: Kern County Office of Aging and Adult Services Needs Assessment, State of the County reports, Kern County Public and Mental Health Assessments. Using reports, suggestions and advice from CNCS State Program Staff, CNCS guidelines relating to volunteer station compliance issues will assist us in preventing or identifying prohibited activities

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by stations or volunteers. Due to the Volunteer Center's history of 40+ years of RSVP sponsorship with consistent 100% CNCS compliance and the longevity of this program in the community, a great number of volunteers and site volunteer management staff are knowledgeable of policies and procedures related to the RSVP program. Advisory Council members and the RSVP Project Director will be instrumental in assessing project and volunteer performance. Site evaluations at each agency will be conducted on an annual basis involving RSVP Director, Advisory Council members, and site staff. In assessing how RSVP of Kern County addresses community needs, the Project Director receives feedback from the volunteer sites as to how well the RSVP volunteers are assisting the stations. If the site is not providing a quality experience for the volunteer, not adhering to guidelines or performing prohibited activities the site is either terminated from the program or graduated to the Volunteer Center of Kern County

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program roster, if applicable.

Volunteers submit timesheets, signed by station coordinators, on a monthly basis and each time sheet is reviewed for submission per RSVP guidelines. If there is a problem identified at that time, the volunteer is contacted to discuss specifics and if necessary the site coordinator is also contacted and changes discussed.

MOUs are established with each site that meets RSVP program criteria and must be current on file to be considered an active station. Due to the change of Focus Areas identified it is critically important to focus RSVP volunteers' efforts in those areas. It is not the intent of the RSVP Program to disrupt current volunteers that are assigned, but to encourage redirection through education of current community needs and CNCS Focus Areas, \ exploring new ways to utilize their time and talent to obtain maximum outcomes. If volunteers choose to relocate or redirect their efforts in Focus Area assignments the Volunteer Center of

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Kern County will recruit volunteers from the Volunteer Exchange Program to fill those vacancies. If a volunteer chooses to continue with their current agency and assignment, they will be informed that they are being graduated to the Volunteer Center of Kern County's Program and will no longer be considered an RSVP volunteer, relinquishing the RSVP benefits available to them (mileage, insurance, etc).

Any agency that does not qualify to participate as an RSVP site according to new guidelines will be notified that that are ineligible to request volunteers from the RSVP Program and any current RSVP volunteer that actively engages in activities in their site will not be considered an RSVP volunteer. The Volunteer Center of Kern County will graduate these agencies to the Volunteer Exchange and will continue to support that agency with training, volunteer recruitment opportunities and guidance.

Organizational Capability

RSVP has 40 years of experience in the Kern County area

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under the sponsorship of the Volunteer Center of Kern County.

Many stations that use our volunteers have been with RSVP for many years and often convey their trust and dependence.

The Volunteer Center of Kern County has an Executive Director with over 23 years of experience with the organization, including 7 years as the RSVP Director. Oversight of the Executive Director and Volunteer Center is provided by a Board of Directors.

The Project Director, (hired August 2012), has 21 years of successful experience in leading seniors in the community. She is focusing on competency in volunteer support, recruitment, retention and recognition of volunteers, identification of community needs, opportunities to promote RSVP, partnership building, and reinforcing the strong presence of RSVP in Kern County.

RSVP Project Director, has dedicated efforts in making the RSVP office "open" to current RSVP volunteers, potential volunteers, community partners and others, increasing the number of

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"visitors" to the RSVP office dramatically. Part-time bookkeeping support is provided by a former RSVP volunteer, now a part-time paid staff member, who has served in this capacity for over 23 years. An additional bookkeeper familiar with the needs of the program (and a current RSVP volunteer) contracts her services to the sponsoring agency to ensure the accuracy of the fiscal records for the Volunteer Center and RSVP Project. The bookkeeper also prepares reports as needed. The sponsoring agency also contracts an independent CPA firm to conduct year end reports. **RSVP Project Director, Elena Rizo, attends monthly board meetings of the sponsor with opportunities to directly report and discuss all aspects fo the RSVP Program with board members. This includes: finances, proposed projects, challenges encountered and direct requests for specific board member involvement with RSVP activities.

Volunteer Center RSVP grant began in 1974. Our bookkeeper,

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Executive Director, sponsoring agency's Board of Directors, and the Project Director manage the finances. All transactions go through the sponsoring agency's accounting department, which ensures accountability. State and Federal regulations guide the sponsoring agency. They maintain and enforce policies and procedures, such as personnel policies, travel and expense procedures, thus checks and balances are maintained. All transactions require at least two signatures. Checks are prepared by sponsoring agency's accounting department. The Board of Directors for the Sponsoring Agency oversee the monthly expenses. A monthly transaction accounting is provided to RSVP, so expenses can be monitored in an efficient manner. Open and ongoing communication relating to all financial matters is encouraged to maintain an excellent working relationship between sponsoring agency and project staff. The Executive Director and RSVP Project Director also meet regularly, even on a daily basis ,

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to discuss ongoing ideas and future goals for the project.

The Volunteer Center has over 42 years of experience in the development of volunteer-based programs in Kern County. The ongoing association with the California Volunteers office have provided additional training and updated support in volunteer management skills, awareness of statewide trends and current issues. The Volunteer Center of Kern County has focused on impact-based accountability and performance measurement to provide optimal levels of success in our programs including RSVP. RSVP of Kern County has been a valuable presence in the community for 40 years and now has 280 volunteers serving monthly. It has proven to have a positive influence in the life of community seniors and in the soundness of our volunteer stations as well. The program allows them to enhance or maintain critical human services, particularly in light of the tight budgets faced by so many human service programs. The Volunteer Center of Kern

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County is committed to continuing to increase our focus on impact-based programs, with needs identified by the community, Kern County Office of Aging and Adult Services, and the Advisory Council.

Due to the security of the sponsoring agency, the RSVP of Kern County's capacity to assure facilities, equipment and supplies are more than adequate. The facility currently being used has an anticipated annual projected rent increase and the Volunteer Center is in the fourth year of a five-year lease renewal, a continuation of the first five years lease completed in April 2010. The Project Director will be directed to fulfill the responsibilities outlined in the job description, which include the day-to-day operations of the project. The Executive Director will continue to supervise the Project Director and will provide an annual performance evaluation. The sponsoring agency Board of Directors will oversee the Executive Director. The Executive

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Director and Board of Directors will provide fiscal control and hold the Project Director accountable by reviewing the Project Director's quarterly, bi-annual and annual reports and fiscal reports prepared by the contracted bookkeeper and year end reports submitted by the CPA. The Volunteer Center has clearly defined roles for staff and administrators, internal policies including a travel policy as outlined in the Personnel Policy Handbook, established and reviewed for updates by the Board of Directors.

RSVP of Kern County relies upon several volunteer members and the Advisory Council who focus on the evaluation and assessment of the project in an ongoing effort, using current tools that have been developed and will provide measurable outcomes.

The Executive Director and the Sponsoring Agency's Board of Directors also spend time evaluating the success of the RSVP Program and the effectiveness of the Project Director.

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The State Office for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) provides assessment, evaluation and suggestions for continuous improvement for the RSVP program.

Budget performance for the RSVP program is assessed monthly by the RSVP Director, Sponsoring Agency and Board of Directors.

The Project Director will be responsible for scheduling visits to other RSVP sites in the state that are successful in their implementation of program requirements and assessment, budget allowing.

The Project Director will actively participates in opportunities to be obtain additional training through attending conferences, webinars and meetings held by the RSVP Director's Association.

By sharing best practices at the meetings and gaining new insight in to other programs, the Director gains new perspectives on improving the program.

Other

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PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A