

Narratives

Executive Summary

FOCUS on Senior Citizens of Tuscaloosa County Inc. is a not for profit organization, with 501(c)(3) tax status, offering a broad spectrum of programming and social services, including: low-cost nutrition, county wide transportation, representative payee services, and a Foster Grandparent program also through Senior Corp. Additionally, we maintain a full service senior center with a gym, weight room, swimming pool, nutrition center and several large programming rooms.

We were incorporated in 1972 and originally funded through the local Community Chest (the predecessor to the West Alabama United Way) and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program. We have maintained and operated a successful RSVP program since 1973 which speaks well of our expertise, capability and longevity as an organization. RSVP is intertwined in the fabric of our community and is the primary reason for our founding.

Our work plan addresses the areas of Disaster Assistance (primarily), Financial Literacy, Aging in Place, and Veterans & Families served. These plans correlate well with the needs of the local market which include 1.) A geographical location in a region with a high frequency of extreme weather events 2.) A large percentage of the population living at or below the poverty line (26.6%) 3.) A large extended stay Veterans Administration Hospital located adjacent to our facility 4.) An ethnically diverse population base, including large percentages of minorities relative to the national average.

More specifically, 223 unduplicated Volunteers will be placed in our focus areas including but not limited to: staffing a volunteer registration center in the event of a disaster, preparing taxes and counseling senior clients with regard to income tax, serving as programming and light exercise instructors at our senior center, and assisting with staffing at two local food banks. Of these 223 volunteers, 105 will be placed in outcome oriented tasks and at the end of the three year grant period we project to achieve 2,760 favorable outcomes. The total annual budget for the program is \$83,114, of which our non-federal investment will be \$26,321, or 31.7%.

FOCUS has the organizational capability to manage this ambitious program both from a financial and compliance perspective. RSVP will have access to a centralized accounting function a dedicated IT support person and will be able to leverage its programming to take advantage of other FOCUS activities outside of RSVP. Proper oversight exists in the form of several layers of management as well

Narratives

as both program specific and organizational-wide governing boards.

FOCUS on Senior Citizens of Tuscaloosa County is now in its 43rd year of operating an effective RSVP program. Our tentacles run through a high percentage of local not for profit organizations via the placement of our volunteers. With approval of this grant request, we expect to continue to achieve favorable results and impact the lives of local residents in way that compliments the vision of Senior Corp.

Strengthening Communities

Local Market - Tuscaloosa and Hale Counties are located in West Alabama, approximately 50 miles southwest of Birmingham, 95 miles to the north west of Montgomery and 200 miles north of Mobile. At least 62 percent of the population lives in the cities of Tuscaloosa and Northport. The remainder of the county is rural with 5 incorporated towns.

Tuscaloosa has a diverse economic base with the largest employers being DCH Regional Health System, The University of Alabama, and Mercedes-Benz U.S. International, Inc. and Nucor Steele. Others include smaller industries, colleges, city and county public school systems.

Tuscaloosa County is the second largest in the state geographically with an area of 1,340 square miles. Total population of Tuscaloosa County is 194,656 according to the 2010 Census. 54,061 residents are aged 50 and older. Approximately 30,354, or 27.7%, are 60 and older. There are 12,198 veterans living in Tuscaloosa County.

The race population statistics for Tuscaloosa County are listed below:

Caucasian	129,004
African American	57,611
American Indian and Alaska Native	526
Asian	2,306
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	117
Two or more races	2,099
Hispanic or Latino	5,949

Hale County, adjoining Tuscaloosa County to the south, has a population of 15, 760 with two

Narratives

predominant towns: Greensboro, population of 1,731 and Moundville, population of 1,809.
Hale is a rural county.

Out of the 15,760 population, 17.3% are aged 60 or older.

There are 995 veterans in Hale County.

The race population percentages for Hale County are listed below:

Caucasian	40.8%
African American	58.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.2%
Asian	0.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	Z
Two or More Races	0.6%
Hispanic or Latino	1.3%

According to the Alabama Poverty Data Sheet 2015, Alabama is the nation's sixth poorest state with nearly 900,000 living below the poverty line. 26.6% of Tuscaloosa County lives below the poverty line, with Hispanics or Latinos and African Americans comprising the largest ethnic groups.

RSVP is very supportive of the West Alabama Food Bank and the East Tuscaloosa Soup Bowl to assist these organizations in providing food for residents in need.

Disaster Services

Need - Address the basic needs of citizens impacted by extreme weather events. Tuscaloosa is located in Alabama's "Tornado Alley" due to the frequency of extreme weather events. In addition to Tornados, there is a propensity of large thunderstorms producing high winds and frequent power outages. RSVP volunteers logged 1,833 and 1,627.75 during Tuscaloosa Tornado events in 2011 and 2014 respectively.

Program Impact - Our program is designed to: 1.) Distribute Meals 2.) Provide First Aid Services 3.) Set up and staff Shelters 4.) Set up and staff call centers to disseminate information 5.) Transport Victims 6.)

Narratives

Outcome - Lessen the impact upon local Citizens from the effects of extreme weather events.

Emphasis will be upon quick response, i.e. within the first 48 hours. Outcomes will be measured by 1.) meals distributed 2.) Calls received 3.) Volunteer hours worked 4.) Number of first aid services provided.

Financial Literacy

Need - Based upon statistics cited above approximately 4,192 Tuscaloosa County residents aged 60+ live below the poverty line. In addition, the increasing complexity of Federal and State tax codes make it very difficult for all seniors to file income tax returns affordably.

Program Impact - Provide a tax preparation program staffed by RSVP volunteers during the months of January, February, March, and April. Additional hours will be logged through follow up and correspondence with senior tax clients in the months outside tax preparation season and in preparing for the next tax filing season.

Outcome - 16 trained unduplicated volunteers, or 22 volunteers total, will prepare a target of 650 federal and state income tax returns free of charge.

Aging in Place

Need - Assist seniors in maintaining both physically and mentally active allowing them to remain independent and self supportive.

Program Impact - Reduce the effects of arthritis, fatigue, depression, and generally improve the quality of life for senior citizens. Programming will be delivered by senior volunteers and instructors via light exercise, line dancing, Tai Chi, Chess, Dominos, Bridge, Canasta, singing and basic human interaction.

Outcomes - 89 unduplicated volunteers will serve approximately 1,920 local senior citizens at FOCUS's senior activity center, the local Veteran Administration hospital and a various other places in the community. Results will be measured via registrations, class rolls and bi annual surveys.

Narratives

Veterans & Families Served

Need - Tuscaloosa and Hale Counties are home to greater than 13,300 veterans and their families. Veterans realize a higher degree of depression and loneliness, especially those involved in combat roles.

Program Impact - Our RSVP program is conveniently located on the grounds of the Veterans Administration Hospital in Tuscaloosa. RSVP volunteers spend 15 - 25 hrs/month with veterans who live at the VA. The volunteers provide companionship, play games, entertain with music and help with basic paperwork, letters and forms. An RSVP instructor spends 4-6 hours weekly at the VA to teach veterans the game of Chess. The chess program addresses the need of providing recreational activities while increasing the quality of living for patients at the VA. The outcome is measured through surveys and feedback from VA employees.

Outcomes - Output is measured via Volunteer logs which track number of veterans contacted at the local veterans Administration hospital, volunteer stations at the Compassion Coalition, Salvation Army, VFW Post 6022, and through community events such as the Veterans Health Fair and Veterans and Memorial Day events.

Food Distribution

Need - 26.6% of Tuscaloosa county residents, or approximately 51,789 persons, live below the poverty line. Poverty effects citizens in the most basic ways, i.e., it severely impacts a person's ability to procure the basic quality and quantity of nourishment required for healthy living.

Program Impact - RSVP volunteers support the West Alabama Food Bank in the following:

- * Delivers approximately 250,000 pounds of food across nine counties each month
- * Provides bags of "weekend food" to 1,000 elementary school children through the Secret Meals for Hungry Children Program
- * Make four deliveries to housing authority locations each week
- * Packages and delivers food to 500 senior citizens each month through the Brown Bag Program
- * Salvages approximately 2,200 pounds of unused "stadium" food from each UA Home Football Game
- * Serves approximately 98,000 individuals each year

Narratives

Outcomes - RSVP volunteers will have a direct impact to reduce hunger and obesity through the contributions, in the areas listed above. 13 unduplicated volunteers (33 total) will be assisted at two stations, The West Alabama Food Bank and The East Tuscaloosa Soup Bowl. Outcomes will be tracked based on volunteer hours served at each of these local partner agencies. Data will be tracked through Volunteer Reporter.

Community Volunteer Opportunities

RSVP offers all volunteers opportunities to help with community events, charity events, and any special event that may occur throughout Tuscaloosa and Hale Counties. Examples include: Moundville Native American Festival, Alabama Yellow Dot Program, VFW POW/MIA Program, Salvation Army Angel Tree / Application Assistance, The Tuscaloosa Mental Health Association Hot Hundred Bike Ride, Toys for Tots, Be Ready Tuscaloosa Day, Patriot Day Project, MLK Day Project of Farmers Market Vouchers, Veterans Day Projects, Tax Counseling and Preparation, Kentuck Festival of the Arts, Holiday Food Boxes for seniors in need and local food drives to support the West Alabama Food Bank and local food pantries.

Special events are great opportunities to expose and educate other not for profit agencies to RSVP and educate these organizations about the program. Additionally, these events present us the opportunity to recruit new Volunteers and educate the public.

Recruitment and Development

Recruitment - RSVP volunteers are the best recruiters as they often tell others about their involvement in community projects and volunteerism. Recruitment for RSVP volunteers is often done at local health fairs and special events where an RSVP booth is managed by volunteers. Current volunteers actively recruit new volunteers and the demographics of our local market make it easy to recruit across ethnic, racial and economic spectrums. Our current roster of volunteers reflects this.

Presently, Volunteer Reporter shows the following demographics for RSVP Tuscaloosa/Hale Counties volunteers:

- 1 Native American
- 4 Asian or Pacific Islanders
- 61 African Americans

Narratives

167 Caucasians

All volunteers are at least 55 years of age.

183 of them are female and 50 are male.

29 of them are veterans.

Presently there are 223 unduplicated, dedicated, and active volunteers in the RSVP Tuscaloosa/Hale Counties Program. We anticipate this number to grow as more people become aware of the benefits and importance of volunteering. Our program development is structured on the needs of Tuscaloosa and Hale Counties. While Tuscaloosa County is predominately urban, Hale County is not. When recruiting volunteers, we make every attempt to place volunteers in areas of interests and in the geographic region where they are comfortable. We collaborate with other Senior Corps Programs, The University of Alabama, Shelton State Community College, United Way of West Alabama, Tuscaloosa County VOAD, local law enforcement and fire departments, and several other non-profit organizations to work on special events, projects, and outreach.

Training - New volunteers must complete a Volunteer Enrollment Form and a Volunteer Interest Form. This includes contact information, a social media authorization, and a confidentiality statement. The RSVP staff meets personally with new volunteers to talk about job placement, schedules, station expectations and keeping track of volunteer hours. The volunteer also receives a volunteer handbook to help them learn more about RSVP.

Retention - The Retention Plan for volunteers is based on strong communication via newsletters, social media, telephone calls, and face to face. We express appreciation for their volunteer work and continually present them with meaningful volunteer opportunities. Small tokens of appreciations are distributed throughout the year and a special appreciation meal and award ceremony takes place during Senior Corps Week each year in May. This form of engagement is an effective means of retaining volunteers.

Program Management

Monitoring - Station visits are made throughout the year to check on the volunteers and the station to ensure that both are still working together and are in compliance.

Narratives

Special attention is focused on safety and comfort for the volunteer, especially if they have a disability. RSVP staff is careful to place volunteers with a disability where they can have access to handicap parking, rails, restrooms, ramps, and water fountains.

The RSVP Director is able to monitor program effectiveness, quantitatively through the use of the software package Volunteer Reporter. Data is entered into the system allowing effective monitoring of program performance measures and adjustments can be made quickly and efficiently.

Qualitatively, the Executive Director attends local agency director's meetings and gains feedback with similar persons at station agencies. This is a valuable source of information and feedback relative to volunteer and programming effectiveness.

Compliance - RSVP management diligently insures that volunteers adhere to program guidelines. All new volunteers receive a handbook and are briefed about the program rules and expectations prior to being placed in the field. RSVP management engages all volunteers to determine the proper work station based on each volunteer's individual skill set.

Every 3 years station information and memorandums of understanding are updated. Volunteers are informed of RSVP news and events through email, letters, social media, and station visits from staff. The RSVP Director communicates the requirement of the station being in compliance before the MOU is signed.

The RSVP director and staff attend state, regional and national trainings provided by CNCS and the state director and state or FEMA sponsored disaster training opportunities when offered. Our sponsor's executive director also attends these when possible. Volunteers interested in special trainings are highly encouraged to attend.

Organizational Experience - FOCUS on Senior Citizens has maintained an RSVP program since the inception of our organization in 1972. Our agency, and its management and volunteers, have evolved with the program. The RSVP program is at "the Core" of FOCUS' culture and this is reflected in the continuity of the program as well as the fact that many staff members (not mentioned in other parts of the this grant application) have experience working in RSVP at some point. Our organization has a

Narratives

depth and breadth of personnel and experience options as it relates to RSVP.

We prohibit Volunteers to share, speak, or display Religious and/or political views or affiliations while representing RSVP.

Organizational Capability

FOCUS Structure - RSVP is housed within FOCUS on Senior Citizens of Tuscaloosa County, Inc., a broad senior oriented social services agency in Tuscaloosa County. The RSVP director reports directly to the Executive Director and has access to a centralized accounting function. The Executive Director, along with the RSVP Director, tracks deadlines for all RSVP program related reporting, both financial and regulatory. FOCUS has a board of directors, and RSVP has a specific advisory council to provide oversight to internal management.

Organizational Capacity - FOCUS manages a Federal Foster Grandparent program through Senior Corp. Additionally, we are funded, through to state of Alabama, via Title III and provide transportation services, low cost nutrition, and other social services such as Medicaid Waiver, in Home Assistance and representative payee through Social Security. As such, our organization has a wealth of knowledge and experience in managing and monitoring programs with similar compliance requirements. The fact we have been a RSVP sponsoring agency since 1972 speaks to this.

FOCUS is subject to an annual financial statement Audit. We have not been subject to OMB-133 requirement as our total federal funding has always been less than \$500K. We have developed and maintained an internal control policy.

Staffing - RSVP Tuscaloosa/Hale Counties staff includes 1 Full-Time Project Director, 1 Part-Time Veterans Outreach Coordinator/Driver, 1 Rural Outreach/Social Media Coordinator and 1 Part-Time Staff Accountant. In addition, RSVP is a program under a broader umbrella of Senior Social Services with oversight from an Executive Director, and a FOCUS board of Directors. Further, we are a United Way funded agency and subject to their thorough grant approval process.

The Executive Director of the sponsoring entity, FOCUS on Senior Citizens, has a master's degree in business administration and carries a CPA license. He oversees all functional areas and monitors all expenses for RSVP. A "Request to Purchase" form must be completed, submitted and signed by the

Narratives

Executive Director in order to incur any expenditure under the RSVP program.

The Executive Director conducts an annual assessment of all staff through evaluations and individual interviews regarding program success. Goals are evaluated during this time and new goals may be formed.

Financial transactions are entered into the general ledger by the Staff Accountant and are classified both by type of expense and assigned a "Class", i.e. either federal or non-federal. This allows management to easily monitor expenses versus those budgeted, and track the ratio of matching funds and program funded expenses to total expenses. Expenses are monitored by the Executive Director and Board of directors at least bi-monthly, and adjustments are made accordingly.

Direct Management/Oversight - The Director of RSVP Tuscaloosa/Hale Counties has worked at FOCUS on Senior Citizens for eight years and served as RSVP Director since May of 2012. The director has a background in Computer Information Systems Technology, Art History, Public Speaking, Early Childhood Education and Volunteerism.

Our part-time Rural Outreach Coordinator is a published writer and has extensive experience in Social Media Communications. She has successfully organized a Facebook Page and Twitter Account for RSVP. In this position, she also meets monthly with six groups of senior citizens in rural areas to connect them with volunteerism in their communities as well as other areas in Tuscaloosa and Hale Counties.

Other

Not applicable

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

Not Applicable