

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Solid Ground is pleased to submit the following application for RSVP of King County.

Solid Ground works to end poverty and undo racism and other oppressions that are root causes of poverty. Solid Ground believes our community can move beyond poverty and oppression to a place where all people have access to quality housing, nutritious food, equal justice and opportunities to thrive. Solid Ground is committed to working with compassion, integrity, accountability, creativity and an anti-oppression approach to end homelessness, hunger, inequality and other barriers to social justice. We value collaboration and leadership from the communities we serve. Solid Ground believes that volunteer programs have a positive impact on the agency's ability to meet its mission and support the community in meeting critical needs.

An estimated 1,000 RSVP volunteers will serve at 65 planned stations. Some of their activities will include delivering food to older adults, providing companionship, supporting food pantries, providing nutrition education, tutoring/mentoring K-12 students, and providing ESL/ ABE education to economically disadvantaged adults.

The primary focus area is healthy futures. Volunteer activities in this area are expected to result in 255 older adults and/ or individuals with disabilities reporting increased social ties/ perceived support, 25 caregivers reporting increased social ties/ perceived support, and 40 individuals reporting increased food security for themselves and their children. Additionally, volunteers will serve in the areas of education, economic opportunity, veterans and military families, environmental stewardship, capacity building and other community priorities. Other focus area activities will result in 25 Habitat for Humanity families successfully transitioning into safe, healthy affordable housing. The CNCS federal investment of \$ 143,826 will be supplemented by \$84,444 anticipated non-federal resources.

## Strengthening Communities

Community description summary:

King County RSVP meets critical community needs by placing volunteers, age 55 and older, with local public and non-profit organizations. RSVP serves Seattle as well as 39 smaller cities. Unincorporated areas cover 82 percent of King County's land area, but now contain less than 20 percent of King County's population and development activity. With more than 2 million people and growing, King

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County ranks as the 14th most populous county in the nation. Between April 1, 2010 and July 1, 2012 the population grew by 3.9 percent. Per census projections, more than 259,843 people (ages 5+) live with a disability, there are nearly 131,000 Veterans (6.6 %), and adults over 65 make up more than 11% of the population and this is expected to double over the next decade. Thirty-six percent (36%) of those 65 and older are people with disabilities. Non-Hispanic whites make up 64% of the population. Twenty percent (20%) of the population are foreign-born and 10.5% of the total population lives below the federal poverty level.

Summary of needs in primary focus area:

A significant network of resources and services, identified in local area plans, are necessary to help keep 232,863 older adults (age 65+) and 259,843 individuals with disabilities independent in their homes. In order to do so, volunteers are needed to provide food delivery, transportation, companionship, fraud education and respite services (H8 and H13). Food insecurity is a serious and growing problem in our community. To address food insecurity volunteers are needed to support food pantries and provide education and resources to alleviate long-term hunger (H10 and H11). Volunteers are also needed to help increase access to care by providing information and resources to access health insurance, benefits and services (H2). In order to address the needs summarized above, the primary focus area will be healthy futures. Below is a description of each of the needs and how they will be addressed:

Community Need (H8):

The Seattle/ King County area is on course for a major demographic shift as trends indicate a rapid increase in its age 65 and over population. According to the Office of Financial Management and the Census, senior residents (over 65 years) in King County increased by about 29,000 (16 %), from 2000 to 2010. Currently, an estimated 11 % of the population is now 65 years or older. According to the American Community Survey, 36% of King County's older population (65+) are people with disabilities (AARP Report). Moreover, it is predicted that by 2020, 18 to 20% of the population will be 65 or older. This dramatic shift will increase the need for senior support and resources to meet the increased demand. Support services needed include food delivery, transportation, companionship and fraud education. These critical programs all allow seniors to preserve their independence, reduce their

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isolation and maintain social contact with friends and neighbors. Social contact with a volunteer allows for a consistent monitor for seniors who can provide counsel and referrals to other resources as needed.

Compounding the need for increased services for seniors are that seniors have an increased life expectancy and are facing more barriers to stability including poverty, food scarcity, as well as language and cultural barriers. Consider the following:

- 1) The population of older adults in King County is increasingly diverse in terms of race, ethnicity and immigration status, with a significant number of individuals who have limited or no English language skills;
- 2) In King County, 8.6 percent of residents age 65 and older live in poverty. On average, Native Americans, African Americans, Asian/ Pacific Islanders, and Hispanic/ Latinos fare considerably worse than the average for King County, and far worse than White Non-Hispanic residents;
- 3) According to a new study by the AARP, entitled "Food Insecurity among Older Adults," 6.2% of older Washingtonians face the risk of hunger. Specifically, in the Seattle/ Tacoma/ Bellevue metropolitan area, 23.92% of low-income residents (below 300% of the Poverty Line) ages 50 and over have marginal food insecurity, 12.42% have some food insecurity and 4.33 % have very low food security; and
- 4) Access to resources and services becomes increasingly challenging for seniors in King County due to several factors including: limited public transit options, concerns about safety, challenging bus schedules and connections to destinations. As the senior population increases, so will the challenge of increased, safe and age-appropriate transportation options.

In addition to meeting basic needs elder abuse is becoming an increasing concern as our community ages. Please consider the following statistics:

Elder abuse costs victims billions of dollars each year nation-wide. The annual financial loss by victims of elder financial exploitation was estimated to be \$2.9 billion in 2009, a 12% increase from

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2008. [Source: National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, Virginia Tech, Metlife Mature Market Institute (2011)]

Nearly 1 in 2 people with dementia experience some form of abuse by others. [Cooper, C, Selwood, A, Blanchard, M., Walker, Z., Blizard, R., & Livingston, G. (2009)] and 1 in 10 Americans age 60+ experienced abuse over one year--many experienced it in multiple forms (Source: National Center Elder Abuse)

The statistics are staggering. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) outlines several reasons why seniors are disproportionately targeted for fraud schemes: 1) Older individuals are thought to have significant assets set aside--their "nest egg"---including their home and retirement fund; 2) Older generations were raised to be polite and trusting. Those trying to scam seniors know that they are less likely to get a "no" or get hung up on; 3) Seniors are less likely to report a fraud because they do not know who to report it to, because they are ashamed at having been scammed or simply because they are not aware that they have been scammed; and 4) Elderly victims tend not to be strong witnesses. Con artists use the effects of age on memory to their advantage as well as their defense. [Source: FBI]

Potential scams may include: health care/ Medicare and health insurance fraud, funeral and cemetery scams, identity fraud, counterfeit prescription drugs and internet fraud.

RSVP Responds: service activities will allow 25,493 homebound OR older adults and individuals with disabilities to live independently (H8): RSVP plans to work with a variety of social service providers throughout King County to meet current and increasing needs by providing the following services: 90 RSVP volunteers will deliver meals and groceries (through Meals on Wheels and Food Banks) to 450 older adults/ individuals with disabilities. 10 RSVP members will provide transportation for a minimum of 10 older adults/ individuals with disabilities; and 33 RSVP members will provide companionship for 33 older adults/ individuals with disabilities. As a result of the activities, 255 older adults and/ or individuals with disabilities will report increased social ties/ perceived support on an annual survey implemented by Senior Services, Catholic Community Services and Eastside Friends of Seniors. Additionally, 38 volunteers will provide elder abuse prevention and financial literacy education over the phone and in person to 25,000 older adults through AARP's Fraud Fighter Center.

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Community Need (H13): The Seattle/ King County area is on course for a major demographic shift as trends indicate a rapid increase in its age 65 and over population. According to the Office of Financial Management and the Census, senior residents (over 65 years) in King County increased by about 29,000 (16 percent), from 2000 to 2010. Currently, an estimated 11 % of the population is now 65 years or older. According to the American Community Survey, 36% of King County's older population (65+) are people with disabilities (AARP Report).

With the rise in the number of adults with disabilities in King County coupled with the prohibitive cost of nursing homes and assisted care facilities, more seniors are opting for in-home care. According to the National Alliance for Caregivers 51% of care recipients live in their own home, 29% live with their family caregiver, and 4% live in nursing homes and assisted living. Moreover, during the 2009 economic downturn, 1 in 5 family caregivers were forced move into the same home with their loved ones to cut expenses. (Evercare Survey of the Economic Downturn and Its Impact on Family Caregiving; National Alliance for Caregiving and Evercare. March 2009).

The hardships on the caregiver take a real toll on the caregiver both emotionally, financially and physiologically. The average family caregiver for someone 50 years or older spent \$5,531 per year on out of pocket caregiving expenses in 2007 which was more than 10% of the median income for a family caregiver that year. (Valuing the Invaluable: The Economic Value of Family Caregiving, 2008 Update. AARP). Moreover, family caregivers experiencing extreme stress have been shown to age prematurely. This level of stress can take as much as 10 years off a family caregiver's life (Elissa S. Epel, Dept of Psychiatry, Univ of Calif, SF, et al, from the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Dec 7, 2004, Vol 101, No. 49).

RSVP Responds: respite services will be provided for 189 individuals throughout King County (H13): 40 RSVP members will provide companionship and respite in group, adult day and in-home settings. Twenty-five (25) individuals will report increased social ties/ perceived support on a mail-in survey implemented by Nikkei Concerns, Adult Day Program. Stations include Full Life Care, Nikkei Concerns and Senior Centers with Adult Day programs.

Community Need (H10): Food insecurity is a serious and growing problem in our community. Last

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year, Seattle food banks served 158,572 unduplicated individuals and 702,238 duplicated households. March, 2011 marked the busiest month in the history of Seattle food banks. Households with infants using the emergency food systems have increased by 7%, and repeated visits by these households have increased by 41%. The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services reported that the average monthly Basic Food Program caseload increased 8.3%, from 536,602 cases in 2011 to 580,977 cases in 2012. One explanation for this increase is that more individuals and families may have qualified for and enrolled in this program due to the ongoing effect of increasing the program's income limit from 130% to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level in October 2008. Other contributing factors include the continuing economic downturn and exhaustion of other financial sources such as personal savings or unemployment benefits (Washington State DSHS). Concurrently, there has been a 24% decrease in funding for food purchases.

Food insecurity in adults can be linked to a host of physical and mental health problems, from anemia to depression. For children, the effects of food insecurity are particularly devastating, creating life-long, deleterious impacts on almost every aspect of life. Children living with food insecurity are more likely to require hospitalization, and are at a higher risk for chronic health conditions like asthma and anemia. These children have also shown delayed development, academic underachievement, and increased behavioral issues. Lack of access to sufficient, consistent, and nutritious food impacts children in ways that are hard, if not impossible, to counteract or remedy later. Yet, the child food insecurity rate in Washington State is currently an astounding 24.7%, amounting to 382,860 children.

South Seattle and South County neighborhoods, among others we serve in King County, have been identified as being food deserts--lacking quality supermarkets, while having an abundance of fast-food chains and convenience stores. Lack of access to healthy food results in poor dietary choices that lead to long-term health consequences, including obesity, malnutrition and poor health.

Food bank usage has increased in south Seattle communities by up to 50% over the past two years (and higher in some South County neighborhoods) while, at the same time, donations of money and food to food banks have decreased by 30%. In Seattle's Rainier Valley, 50% more families live below the federal poverty line than in the city as a whole. Moreover, in most south Seattle schools, up to 70% students are eligible for free/ reduced fee meals.

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Seattle's Rainier Valley is an area rich in diversity and poor in resources. In fact, the Rainier Valley Food Bank is located in the 98118 zip code which has been identified as the most culturally diverse zip code district in the United States. Every day those living in poverty, face difficult questions such as: "How can I feed my family? Who can I turn to for help?" For immigrants and refugees, the challenges are magnified due to language and cultural barriers as well as a tenuous support system.

RSVP Responds: food pantry support will serve 65,000 individuals throughout King County (H10): 80 RSVP members will support food pantries by collecting and transporting food, helping to unload trucks, deliver food, clean and restock the pantry and distribute food to clients for an average of 4 hours per day, 1-4 days per week. Food pantries throughout the county will serve as stations.

Community Need (H11): The extended recession has had devastating impacts on food security for Washington families, especially those with low-incomes, those struggling with a disability and the elderly. Due to continued high unemployment, budget cuts to state safety net programs, and the rising cost of food staples, the number of hungry families in Washington has risen 85% since 2008--reaching the highest rate of hunger recorded to date in our state. Rates of food insecurity are higher in households with children than those without; indeed, 25% of our state's children experience food insecurity. Unfortunately, the cheapest foods are also the most sugary and refined products available, and it can be difficult to prepare nutritious, healthy food on an extremely tight budget.

Hunger and malnutrition in adults has been shown to lead to chronic diseases such as hypertension, high cholesterol, and obesity, among other health issues. The Washington State Department of Health reports that: 1) One in five adults is obese; 2) Almost a fourth of adults have high blood pressure and 3) Over a third of adults have high cholesterol. Moreover, immigrant families face additional barriers to health and well-being when they come to the U.S. as they may not be familiar with local produce and products. Language and cultural barriers often make it difficult to connect with needed services and resources.

Children, however, need consistent nutrient-dense food to thrive. Malnutrition in children is linked to a myriad of issues from stunted mental and physical growth, to increased hospitalization and a higher risk of chronic conditions, to more behavior problems at school. United Way reports that: 1) 1 in 5

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children in King County is at risk for hunger; 2) The percentage of King County residents needing help to buy food has nearly doubled in the past four years; 3) 53% of babies born in the US rely on the WIC program.

Beyond the emotional toll from the social stigma of being overweight, obese children and youth face increased health risks that will follow them into adulthood. These risks include premature strokes, chronic diseases including coronary heart disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, certain types of cancer, and premature death. Data from Seattle and King County show that in King County, one in five children are considered overweight or obese; Obesity rates are disproportionately high among youth of color, and those living in South King County; and King County youth of color have higher rates of obesity and overweight compared to white youth, similar to the pattern seen nationally. Moreover, diabetes more than doubled in a ten-year period, with nearly 6% of King County residents diagnosed as diabetic in 2006. Type II diabetes is the form associated with obesity and until recently, has rarely occurred among children. Fortunately, all of these health risks can be prevented and reduced through knowledge of and access to proper nutrition and physical activity, and by increasing health equity across communities.

It follows that childhood obesity cannot be addressed without addressing the eating habits and physical activity levels of adults as well. To address the emerging obesity epidemic in King County, community organizations that serve different populations and the Public Health Department have developed partnerships to increase access to healthy foods, increase physical activity, decrease access to junk food, and make healthy living an easier choice to make in King County. These interventions are critical in working in neighborhoods with the highest rates of children and families at risk for obesity and poor nutrition.

RSVP Responds: nutrition education will be provided to alleviate long-term hunger for 300 individuals and their children (H11): 40 RSVP members will provide nutrition education services to economically disadvantaged individuals. Education will include instructing and assisting in teaching 6 week courses through Cooking Matters, Share our Strength; educating kids at community gardens 10 times each Spring through Lettuce Link; distributing seeds and providing in-person information about growing food to food pantry recipients and providing nutrition education, resources and services at Baby Boost resource fairs for expecting families and those with infants and toddlers. As a result of the Cooking



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Matters classes, 40 individuals will report increased food security for themselves and their children. Responses to a pre/ post survey will be analyzed and reported through the national Share our Strength data base.

Community Need (H2): Health insurance and government assistance programs including Medicare, Medicaid and Basic Food Program are complex and often hard to access. For those with disabilities, comparing private and public health insurance, long-term care insurance and employment-related health benefits, then deciphering and deciding upon the best course of action are especially daunting.

It is estimated that one in six King County residents between the ages 18 and 64--or 217,300 people--are uninsured. There were almost 50,000 more uninsured adults in 2011 than there were in 2008, an increase from 13.4% to 16.4%. Under the Affordable Care Act, 85% of King County's uninsured adults--or 183,800 people--would become eligible for public or subsidized health insurance (Source: Seattle and King County Public Health, 2013).

The Affordable Care Act, which takes effect on January 1, 2014, has the potential to greatly increase peoples' access to health care in King County--especially for those living on low-incomes. The Affordable Care Act has the potential of eliminating the racial disparity that exists around health care made evident by the following statistics: Hispanic/ Latinos are nearly four times as likely to be uninsured as Whites; and 2) Black/ African Americans are more than twice as likely to be uninsured as Whites (Source: Seattle and King County Public Health, 2013).

This is an important, potentially life changing opportunity for many in King County. There are, however, significant barriers to enrollment. Many of those individuals and families that are now eligible may not know about the new provisions or have the knowledge or means to access the application process which is exclusively on line. For those who are computer illiterate or without access to a computer, the application process is onerous.

Another example of the need for outreach around benefits includes the Basic Food program. In November, 2012, the Basic Food program supported 1,097,281 low-income individuals and families in Washington state, but two-thirds of eligible seniors do not take advantage of the program (Source: AgeWise King County). Outreach, information and access assistance are key ways in which RSVP can

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improve the quality of life for many in our community.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in people ages 65 and older (AARP Report). For those individuals, researching and accessing resources can be overwhelming. Different treatment options coupled with working through all of the paperwork around benefits and insurance leads to confusion and fear for many during an already difficult time. RSVP volunteers are critical in supporting this vulnerable population and helping them overcome the many hurdles to achieve health.

RSVP Responds: distribution of information which will support 500 individuals in accessing care (H2): 8 RSVP members will provide information and resources on health insurance, healthcare access and health benefits programs. Information will be provided in-person at cancer resource centers and over the phone for an average of 4 hours, once a week. Stations include Senior Services, SHI BA program and American Cancer Society.

Plan and infrastructure to support data collection and ensure National Performance Measure outcomes and outputs are measured, collected and managed:

National Performance Measures were shared with stations and proposed stations in developing this grant. All the outputs and outcomes in this plan were discussed and analyzed with each of the stations to ensure that appropriate data collection tools and tracking are in place. The RSVP project director will work with the volunteer stations to develop individualized plans, outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding, to collect outputs and outcomes from the volunteer stations annually or more often depending on what makes the most sense for each station. Outputs and outcomes will be reviewed for completeness, consistency and compliance. Back-up documentation will be saved for 7 years.

Describe any activity in service to veterans and/ or military families as a part of service in the Primary Focus Area, Other Focus Areas or Capacity Building:

Virtually every service area touches the lives of veterans in our community from providing job training and financial skills to providing companionship and meals to homebound veterans. RSVP is currently taking steps to capture the number of veterans served as well as recruit veterans to serve as volunteers and expand veteran representation in our advisory/ community participation group. We are

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planning to have RSVP of King County representation on the Veteran's Administration Voluntary Service (VAVS) Committee. The RSVP director, coordinator and two RSVP advisory members (one who is a former Veteran) attended the most recent (VAVS) meeting. Our goals are as follows: we plan to recruit 10 new RSVP members to serve veterans needing assistance through the VA medical center. Secondly, an RSVP volunteer will provide financial literacy education and outreach to 50 veterans through Solid Ground's financial fitness program. Finally, RSVP will support access to job opportunities through supporting Hire America's Heroes, which connects thousands of veterans and their families to corporate job opportunities each year.

### Recruitment and Development

Volunteer Assignments and Training: RSVP of King County is committed to creating high quality volunteer assignments with opportunities for volunteers to share their experience, abilities and skills to improve their communities and themselves through service. This occurs through the site development process and the volunteer placement process. Site development is a continual process in which RSVP seeks to align community and national priorities with sites that provide high impact volunteer jobs with high quality training in culturally and geographically diverse settings. We are proud that our plan includes opportunities and stations that meet these criteria including stations that welcome volunteers who do not speak English. Our plan also includes a range of assignments to meet a wide variety of volunteer schedules including on-going weekly commitments, projects that may span a few weeks to several months and one-time service opportunities. Throughout the grant period, RSVP will seek additional high-quality volunteer opportunities which align with grant goals and fall within the priority areas.

First and foremost, volunteers are ensured a meaningful volunteer experience through the partner site at which they are placed. Therefore, a strong site selection process, described in the "Program Management" section, is important in meeting the goals stated above. Our thorough site selection process helps ensure that sites have staff in place ready to train, supervise and support volunteers as they build new skills and develop leadership within the organization. A high quality site understands the impact volunteers have on the community, how service impacts the lives of volunteers and is committed to developing the volunteer by providing high-quality training.

In addition to having high-quality sites, the volunteer placement process is equally important. RSVP staff at Solid Ground are highly experienced and skilled in the area of volunteer placement. They

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know and understand the needs of the stations in depth. Great care is taken in finding the right fit between the volunteer and the volunteer placement. When a potential volunteer contacts RSVP, an RSVP staff member listens carefully to the potential volunteer, learns about the skills, abilities and experience they offer and suggests appropriate placements. RSVP members have a wide variety of placements throughout the county to choose from and the RSVP coordinator assists throughout the placement process to make sure that the volunteer is placed in a volunteer position that is right for them. RSVP staff encourage volunteers to use their current skills as well as develop new skills and interests in order to improve their own life as well as the lives of others.

Finally, staff follow-up with volunteers helps ensure a good fit and a good experience for volunteers. Phone calls are made to all members within their first quarter of service. If needed, RSVP staff will assist volunteers and sites in identifying additional training resources or re-assign a volunteer if necessary.

Demographics, Recruitment, Retention and Recognition: King County, including older adults, is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of race, ethnicity and immigration status, with a significant number of individuals who have limited or no English skills. Non-Hispanic whites make up 64% of the population; Twenty percent (20%) of the population are foreign-born; and 10.5% live below the federal poverty level. It is also important to note that of those 65 and older, 36% live with a disability and 8.6 % live in poverty. On average, Native Americans, African Americans, Asian/ Pacific Islanders, and Hispanic/ Latinos fare considerably worse than the average for King County, and far worse than White Non-Hispanic residents. Finally, there are nearly 131,000 Veterans making up an important segment of the population.

King County RSVP focuses on three important areas to build and maintain a diverse corps of volunteers. The first is an Ambassador Program (RSVP Ambassadors play the dual role of advisory members and ambassadors, forming our very active and rich community participation group), which includes training and support of a group of 30 plus senior volunteers who represent RSVP in the community and at partner sites. This inclusive and welcoming group is representative of the many backgrounds of RSVP members and the communities they serve including but not limited to diversity in age, income, ethnicity/ race, ability/ disability, sexual orientation and veterans. Staff and ambassadors provide a 3 hour orientation and training, 1-2 times per year for 8-15 potential

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ambassadors. Efforts are made to reach out to seniors from all backgrounds in order to continue to expand our diversity and capacity. Group members speak on behalf of RSVP at events, table at recruitment fairs, build relationships with key community members, and represent RSVP throughout King County with particular emphasis on low-income, communities of color and veterans. For example, RSVP ambassadors attend the Veteran's Administration Voluntary Service (VAVS) Committee meetings focused on building capacity for the VA Puget Sound Health Care System. Ambassadors have been effective at promoting particular volunteer opportunities as well as increasing the quality, quantity and diversity of people interested in registering with RSVP. Also, during quarterly meetings, ambassadors help staff brainstorm ways to reach new groups. The ambassadors are trained directly by and work closely with RSVP staff. Additionally, RSVP staff are trained to work with diverse groups and regularly participate in conferences and workshops to increase their understanding and skills in working with diverse volunteers.

Secondly, going forward, staff will work closely with the RSVP ambassadors and stations to develop tools and messaging specific to engaging volunteers in the primary focus area as well as activities in the other focus areas. We will continue to expand and evaluate targeted outreach in order to achieve the performance measures and increase the effectiveness of the volunteer programs.

The third part of the recruitment and retention plan includes building and maintaining relationships with current volunteers. Research and staff experience have proven word-of-mouth to be the most effective recruitment tool, and it follows that the largest asset for recruitment are current and past RSVP volunteers. When volunteers feel connected to the program and see the great value in RSVP membership they are much more likely to tell their friends and neighbors, effectively reaching many more people than can staff alone. Current volunteers are, without a doubt, some of our greatest advocates. Peter Langmaid, Retired REI manager and RSVP ambassador/ advisory member says: "RSVP helped me find a volunteer opportunity that fits my skills and schedule. For me community service is a fun, exhilarating experience and it makes me feel incredibly good about myself."

Volunteer recognition goes hand-in-hand with building relationships with current volunteers, as appreciating volunteers strengthens their connection to the program and the likelihood that they will tell their friends about RSVP. Each year King County RSVP recognizes volunteers in several ways. The ambassador/ advisory group helps decide on the primary means of recognizing all RSVP members.

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Past annual recognitions have included presidential certificates, a mailed gift or a recognition event. The last three events were well attended with turnouts of 500 volunteers. In 2013 we are planning an event in which all RSVP members will be invited to the Seattle Symphony to attend a recognition program, enjoy refreshments and attend the Symphony. In addition, volunteer accomplishments are showcased and recognized in the quarterly newsletter and other publications. The quarterly newsletter is a beautiful, 8-page, full-color publication featuring in-depth interviews with volunteers and stations. It provides important news on how RSVP volunteers are addressing community needs as well as additional opportunities for involvement. Every member receives the newsletter each quarter to read, enjoy and share. Articles are tracked in order to make sure that volunteers recognized represent the diversity of our community. The newsletter is also an important recruiting tool as it lists volunteer opportunities, is shared by the volunteers who receive it, is stocked in King County libraries and passed out at recruitment events and fairs. About 3,700 paper newsletters are circulated each quarter and it is also available on the Solid Ground website.

Furthermore, staff and ambassadors/ advisory members attend site recognition events throughout the county to personally thank volunteers for their service and pass out certificates and pins. Site recognition events are a wonderful opportunity to visit volunteers in their own communities which are easily accessible to the volunteer and often where they are most comfortable and at ease. Site recognition events take place in geographically and ethnically diverse communities in King County and include a translator if necessary. Finally, RSVP staff members nominate volunteers for community service awards on a regular basis. Retaining volunteers is another objective of our volunteer recognition efforts. By showcasing the accomplishments of volunteers and thanking them for their service in a meaningful way, RSVP program staff hope to acknowledge and enrich their volunteer experience.

In addition to the three main avenues for volunteer recruitment and retention, King County RSVP utilizes other recruitment strategies. Volunteer opportunities are listed on the Solid Ground website as well as on other local websites. RSVP partners with United Way of King County to highlight RSVP partner site volunteer opportunities on their website with a special RSVP medallion, bringing greater visibility to RSVP partner sites and to the RSVP Project overall. Posters and brochures are distributed to site partners, community centers, senior centers and libraries. Additionally, RSVP of King County provides press releases and volunteer stories to community media outlets.

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## Program Management

Solid Ground has a proven track record and a well-established infrastructure in place for ensuring project compliance with federal regulations since 1994. This includes a well-established and dynamic community participation group (advisory council), regular review of OMB circulars; updating program materials for compliance, station and volunteer management procedures; responding to changing community needs; and consistently tracking, reporting and meeting outcome requirements. Solid Ground consistently performs well in compliance monitoring visits with no major findings.

The RSVP advisory council/ community participation group consists of 30 plus active and diverse RSVP volunteers who meet quarterly, receive program updates, provide feedback to staff, assist in assessing work plans and goals as well as planning and implementing recognition, recruitment and other service activities. Many serve as liaisons' with the various stations.

RSVP of King County ensures management of volunteer stations in compliance with RSVP regulations from the time a station applies to become a partner and throughout the partnership. Sites apply to partner by filling out an application and submitting volunteer job descriptions. The materials are reviewed by the RSVP director. If the site and volunteer job descriptions qualify for the program under the grant, RSVP staff will meet with station staff to ask follow-up questions and tour the site to gain a full understanding of the station's volunteer program. During the site visit RSVP staff orient the perspective station to the RSVP program and review all of the requirements. If the station meets standards, they sign an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for one year. After a one-year period, the partnership is reviewed and if all is satisfactory, a 3-year MOU is signed. Every year, stations verify the safety standards through e-mail or written agreement. If sites are not following regulations, RSVP staff will discuss and verify needed changes and provide written documentation if necessary. Conversations about grant compliance provide an opportunity for stations to ask questions, request support and improve the quality of their volunteer program. Efforts are made to support the stations and bring them into compliance. If compliance is not possible, the MOU is terminated. Stations have the opportunity to re-apply once non-compliance issues are resolved.

RSVP volunteers fill out an application which includes program eligibility criteria which is verified by RSVP staff. RSVP volunteers receive a volunteer handbook via mail or e-mail upon joining the RSVP program. The handbook which, has been reviewed by CNCS, is thorough in its description of the

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RSVP program, as it outlines prohibited activities, volunteer rights and responsibilities. RSVP members have the option of volunteering at any partner sites which have a signed Memorandum of Understanding. All RSVP members will receive their RSVP job description(s) and appropriate training through the stations. RSVP hours are verified by RSVP staff and either the RSVP member or their site supervisor. All RSVP members receive a phone call from RSVP within the first quarter of becoming an RSVP member to check-in about their volunteer assignment and answer any questions about the RSVP program or the volunteer's experience.

RSVP of King County and its sponsor, Solid Ground, plan to minimize the disruption to volunteers and stations participating in service activities that no longer align with the RSVP program by providing volunteers and stations several options: 1) Stations which no longer align may develop capacity building volunteer positions in which RSVP members may participate and continue to support the organization; 2) Volunteers will be offered positions which align with the grant; and/or 3) they may continue to volunteer outside the RSVP program. Additionally, if Solid Ground receives the grant, it is committed to creating and funding a community senior volunteer program outside the RSVP grant. The purpose and focus of this program would be to minimize disruption to current volunteers who are not able to change volunteer positions or sites and to create increased access to volunteer positions for volunteers from all backgrounds and abilities.

Solid Ground has a proven track record for measuring performance in the primary focus area and is partnered with organizations that have a proven track record for measuring performance in the primary focus area. Senior Services, Full Life Care, Catholic Community Services and Eastside Friends of Seniors are examples of stations which focus on keeping seniors independent in their homes. Solid Ground has a track record for measuring performance in the area of Obesity and Food. Through a partnership with Share our Strengths, Solid Ground's Cooking Matters, nutrition education outcomes are collected through a pre and post survey and tracked through a national database.

### **Organizational Capability**

Experience: Established in 1974 as a community action agency, Solid Ground serves approximately 54,500 people each year through a variety of food, housing, nutrition, advocacy, transportation and volunteer service programs. Our mission: Solid Ground works to end poverty and undo racism and other oppressions that are root causes of poverty.



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Capacity: Solid Ground complies with outcomes based reporting for funders such as the United Way, the City of Seattle and King County. The RSVP budget is designed to meet our programming needs and sufficient to cover all costs. RSVP operates on three-year renewable grants, which generally cover about 65% of the program expenses. The remaining balance is committed by Washington State Department of Commerce and Solid Ground Private Fundraising. In-kind resources are also a significant part of the RSVP Budget, including \$18,000 in donated printing and \$22,000 in volunteer meals donated annually. The Human Resources Department requires job descriptions for all positions and has a compensation plan based on job functions. The roles of each staff member are clearly defined to ensure all project functions are accomplished through a coordinated effort. Internal policies are in place to outline appropriate use of staff time, purchasing procedures and travel, among other things.

Key RSVP Staff: The full time RSVP Director has worked with RSVP for the last 8 years, has a Masters in Community Planning and a non-profit management certificate through the University of Washington, Cascade Leadership Forum for National Service Executives. She provides program leadership and management, serves as president of the Washington Association of RSVP Directors, develops and manages the station portfolio, needs assessment and evaluation and ensures compliance with OMB circulars. The full time program coordinator has over 20 years of volunteer experience and 5 years work experience in the field of senior volunteerism. She manages recruitment, recognition and volunteer placement. Both the director and coordinator work with advisory/ ambassador volunteers for program guidance. Solid Ground's Finance Director has more than 20 years of experience and provides overall financial oversight. The Community Development Director will have at least 7 years of experience working in a social service setting including at least 5 years of experience in the following areas: supervising staff in the provision of services, financial management, contracting, budgeting and program development, evaluation and measurement. Each year, every Solid Ground staff member is involved in setting and implementing individual, program, and department goals to increase understanding and skills of anti-racism principles and better serve a diverse community.

Financial Management: Solid Ground manages approximately 200 public contracts at any one time and 300 contracts annually. Our Finance Department provides accounting, information technology and facility functions for the agency, including: accounts receivable, accounts payable, payroll, general ledger maintenance, contract maintenance, risk management, cash management, taxes and

## **Narratives**

licensing. Public contracts for 2012 totaled nearly \$22 million. The largest single contract was Seattle Personal Transit at \$10.4 million. Solid Ground also serves as the lead agency for a number of public funding streams, including HSP, EFSP and EFAP, performing the management and accounting functions on these grants, which totaled more than \$1,000,000 in 2012. Solid Ground maintains strong financial footing, has fiscally sound checks and balances in place, and regularly receives unqualified audits with no negative findings. The agency maintains positive working capital and building reserves to assure we can meet any cash flow needs. Our 2012 audit was unqualified. We had one minor finding related to two audit adjustments that were needed and made in the financials.

Track Record: Solid Ground has over 20 years of experience coordinating national service projects, including multiple VI STA and AmeriCorps Member Teams. The legacy of Solid Grounds' experience is knowledge of how to work with partner agencies to structure placements that will effectively address critical community needs. Since 1994, Solid Ground's King County Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) has connected people 55 or older to meaningful volunteer opportunities. RSVP volunteers currently have the opportunity to work at over 86 sites including workforce development sites, schools, food banks and other public and nonprofit organizations.

Capital Asset Management: Solid Ground maintains 4 facilities employees including a facilities manager for the HQ building, leased office, and 46 owned and leased shelter units. In addition, we manage a contract for property management of 150 shelter units. Maintenance of approximately 90 buses is conducted by 6 onsite mechanics and 1 maintenance manager.

Procedures for Self-Assessment: Solid Ground uses data collection tools, as appropriate, to monitor our outcomes and accomplishments, including: a) CNCS Periodic Reports submitted by project sites, b) surveys completed by RSVP volunteers, c) program evaluations completed by project site supervisors, and d) end-of-year impact assessments. We use a database to track recruitment, site development activities and outcomes, and we determine success by comparing the outcomes to our projected performance measures.

### **Other**

N/A

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

## Narratives

N/A