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Executive Summary

Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1940 as a private, non-profit corporation with the mission of putting Stuttgart on the map. In its more than 70 years as an advocate of area business, the Chamber has established Stuttgart as an economic leader in southeast Arkansas. You could say the Chamber works on those issues that affect the "quality of life" in our community with volunteers being a critical piece in our community.

Southeast Arkansas RSVP sponsor serves Stuttgart, Pine Bluff, Arkansas County, and Jefferson County in all service categories with the majority of the 671 volunteers serving in healthy futures, education, disaster training, veterans, military families, and environmental stewardship. SEARSVP understands the unique needs of low-income older adults and continues to identify, and implement programs to meet those needs while successfully placing volunteers into essential components that impact the lives of residents in a way that compliments the vision of Senior Corp. The US Department of Agriculture annual report released on September 5, 2013, ranked Arkansas first in low food security and with the federal nutrition program not reaching all food-insecure people, this shows the important role of charitable hunger relief programs in Arkansas.

An estimated 120 RSVP unduplicated volunteers will serve in Monroe and Phillips county in southeast region of Arkansas, a rural area typically known as the "Arkansas Delta". The CNCS federal investment of \$75,000 will be supplemented by \$23,229 total budget of \$93,229.

Southeast Arkansas RSVP proposes to implement an RSVP Program in Monroe and Phillips County, in Arkansas beginning July 1, 2017. SEARSVP will recruit, train and place 120 unduplicated volunteers, 55 and older, by the third year of the program. SEARSVP has intentionally chosen these counties due to their location, within 100 miles of the Southeast Arkansas RSVP Director and program main office and their existing partnerships already established within the primary focus area of Healthy Futures and Disaster Preparedness. SEARSVP building on their expertise in engaging older adult volunteers while building on an evidence based work plan model through existing partnerships with United Way of Southeast Arkansas, American Red Cross, Office of Emergency Services, Tri Delta Food Ministries and the Economic Opportunity Commission will address the primary focus area of Healthy Futures activities.

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Healthy Futures will be the primary focus area, providing support services, and education to alleviate long-term food insecurity. Volunteer opportunities include: food insecurity measures, financial counseling, meal packing, distributing food, provide in-home and support services to veterans, disabled and the elderly increasing food security via a survey instrument.

The mission of Southeast Arkansas RSVP is to engage volunteers over 55 years of age to lend their time and expertise in service non-profits and organizations to strengthen the well-being of both self and community. We know now more than ever, volunteers, especially baby boomers feel their time is precious by offering unique experiences with additional flexibility we can make a difference by touching lives and lifting spirits.

Strengthening Communities

Arkansas is still in its natural state, 600,000 acres of lakes, 9,700 miles of rivers and streams, and 204 million acres of forest and is in the southern region of the United States. With a population of 2.98 million with a third of the population (1.15 million) living in rural Arkansas. The Arkansas Delta byways is a rural high poverty area with undereducated workforce and miles and miles of farmland. The median family income is \$38,806, ranking 49th in the nation and ranks 5th in the nation for percentage of its population living below the poverty level. With Arkansas being the natural state, Arkansans enjoy the mild climate, however; Arkansas is known for the E-3 thru E-5 tornadoes averaging over 33 a year.

The current SEARSVP service area of Arkansas and Jefferson counties close geographical proximity to Phillips and Monroe counties, in the Arkansas Delta Region, allows SEARSVP to easily create and maintain successful relationship to expand the scope of services provided. SEARSVP will recruit, train and place 120 unduplicated volunteers, 55 and older, by the third year of the program operations. The primary focus will be to build healthier communities by lending their time and expertise for change and growth of both self and communities. Southeast Arkansas RSVP has intentionally chosen this area due to well-established partnerships that focus and address activities within the primary Focus Area of Healthy Futures.

Monroe County

As of the 2015 census, Monroe County's population is 7,399. Created as Arkansas's 20th county on

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November 2, 1829, Monroe County is home to two incorporated towns and three incorporated cities, including Clarendon, the county seat, and Brinkley, the most populous city. The county is also the site of numerous unincorporated communities and ghost towns. The service area, Arkansas Delta Byways, is rural, with miles and miles of farmland separating neighboring homes as well as communities.

The county is located in eastern Arkansas in a rural area typically known as the "Arkansas Delta", a region of high poverty, an undereducated work force, and a generational history of single parent families. In this county, there is no public transportation system such as cab services for our seniors, veterans or young mothers. The challenges of accessing the health care system for veterans and seniors living in rural Arkansas go beyond having to wait months to land an appointment, several miles often lie between doctor's offices requiring endless hours of commute time. It is worse for those who can't drive themselves. RSVP volunteers will provide such assistance so the veterans and the elderly can remain in their homes providing them with a better quality of life.

The community consists of people from diverse backgrounds with 56.7% of the residents categorized as white, 40.1% as African American, and 1.3 % Hispanic. The remaining 1.9% is distributed among races. More than 455,743 seniors over the age of 65 live in Arkansas with 1,539 (20.9%) living in Monroe County according to the US Census Bureau. The community's lack of resources to help frail seniors find affordable transportation, food and information leads to loneliness and early institutionalization. RSVP volunteers will provide such assistance to help the elderly and disabled remain in their homes to improve quality of life.

In 2015 the estimated income was \$27,647 for Monroe County with 2,286 (30.9%) persons living below the poverty level. Households that fall into the "low food security" category had more severe problems, experiencing "deeper hunger and cutting back or skipping meals on a more frequent basis with both adults and children." Majority of households experience food insecurity at times during the year, meaning that their access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources. According to a USDA September 2013 report, households with children headed by single parents with income near below the federal poverty line are in the more severe range for food insecurity. According to 2015 census, 19.2% of adults have not completed high school. Children living in rural counties often enter kindergarten without basic numeric and language skills as well as social and emotional skills putting them behind their peers.

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Phillips County

Phillips County is a county located in the eastern part of the U.S. state of Arkansas, in what is known as the Arkansas Delta along the Mississippi River. As of the 2015 census, the population was 19,513. The county seat is Helena-West Helena. Phillips County is Arkansas's seventh county, formed on May 1, 1820, and named for Sylvanus Phillips, the area's first-known white settler and representative to the first Territorial Legislature of the Arkansas Territory. This lowland area, 884.8 square miles, was developed for cotton plantations in the antebellum area and is still largely rural. The county is located in eastern Arkansas in a rural area typically known as the "Arkansas Delta," a region of high poverty, an undereducated workforce, and a generational history of single parent families. In 2015, the estimated income was \$26,844, below the State of Arkansas at \$40,531, with 7,278 (37.3%) persons living below poverty level in Phillips County. Households that fall into the "low food security" category had more severe problems, experiencing "deeper hunger and cutting back or skipping meals on a more frequent basis with both adults and children." A majority of households experience food insecurity at times during the year, meaning that their access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources.

The community consists of people from diverse backgrounds with 36.5% of the residents categorized as white, 61.3% as African American and 1.4% as Hispanic. The remaining .8% is distributed among other races. More than 455,743 seniors over the age of 65 live in Arkansas with 3,317(17%) living in Phillips County according to the US Census Bureau. There are many identifying aspects of diversity not always related to race or ethnicity. Diversity, within age groups can enhance civic engagement if we utilize the respective talents of each individual and groups. The community's lack of enough resources to help frail seniors, at risk families and disabled veterans find affordable transportation, food, health services and etc. which in turn leads to loneliness and isolation. RSVP volunteers will provide such assistance to help the elderly, at risk families, veterans and the disabled remain in their homes to improve quality of life.

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Communities are about people who are the greatest asset in every city, neighborhood, or rural town. It takes a collective effort, energy, resources and commitment to improve the quality of life for everyone. The volunteer program will establish a partnership within the community to provide strategic volunteer engagement and collaborate with other non-profits to discuss common challenges, exchange ideas and share solutions.

Senior volunteers are the preferred providers of services to area non-profit organizations and government agencies. We know that now, more than ever, volunteers, especially baby-boomers feel their time is precious. Volunteers are encouraged to participate in community outreach programs such as recruitment, speaking at local organizations, and educating each other in regards to the special needs of the military and the community. Southeast Arkansas RSVP sponsor will seek to find ways to more effectively prepare this vital "resource" to serve the needs of the people of the communities through its partner agencies. There are many identifying aspects of diversity not always related to race or ethnicity. Diversity within age groups can enhance civic engagement if we utilize the respective talents of each individual and groups. Leaders will develop a strategic approach to managing volunteers, and appropriate training that expands our vision by creating a volunteer experience that is a challenging, transformative experience that gives an in-depth understanding of challenges facing our community members and their families. Community partners such as Area Agency of Aging of Southeast Arkansas, Economic Opportunity Commission, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Department of Emergency Management, American Red Cross, Ministerial Alliance, local college and school boards as well as other groups will help fund, assist and provide moral and physical support to our community and provide volunteer opportunities in food banks, transportation for veterans, tutoring, volunteer reception centers, and a lot more.

The Economic Research service of the US Department of Agriculture annual report released on September 5, 2015, ranked Arkansas Senior's first in low food security. According to local telephone survey provided by Baptist Health, the top three health concerns for local residents is smoking, diabetes, and obesity. RSVP volunteers in our primary Healthy Futures focus area will engage in numerous ongoing activities related to nutritional education for food insecure individual and families. In an effort to meet the community health concerns, 120 unduplicated RSVP volunteers with the help of local community action groups and agencies will join to explore ways to combine resources to feed

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and educate the low-income and senior families in need of emergency food assistances. With the downturn in the economy, unemployment, and low income families there is a real need for food. There are children going to bed hungry and elderly who must choose between medicine and groceries. With the help of new partnering agencies, Economic Opportunity Commission, Department of Health, and local food pantries, who will complete client's assessment forms assisting the clients with answering the food insecurity survey on the bottom of the form. The client brings completed forms with survey questions answered to local food banks where volunteers complete intake forms with name, address, number in household, income and sign-off on completed forms. Clients receive emergency food and personal hygiene products. Volunteers complete activity log and sign-off on forms. RSVP volunteers enter information from completed forms to food bank clients and volunteers activity spreadsheet. . The data provides information about the person being served and the benefit they receive. This Community action group will meets on a quarterly bases to address the outcomes and if services need improvement to best meet the clients needs.

Southeast Arkansas RSVP will provide leadership in local coalitions working on implementing solutions that improve the health of the community while taking on ownership of health problems. Working with local coalitions, volunteers will provide educational program and community outreach programs focusing on food security, health promotion and disease prevention events such as but not limited to Health Expos, local food drives, employee health fairs, Back-2-School Extravaganzas, commodities distribution, etc. This raises awareness of the importance of good nutrition and general overall health quality.

All volunteer data will be maintained using the volunteer reporter software. New RSVP volunteers complete applications which provide name, address, date of birth, military service, and their skills and hobbies with staff verifying their identification. A primary placement will be chosen for each member so that unduplicated numbers of volunteers may be indicated. Volunteer stations are monitored annually to insure MOU compliance, and unique and high quality opportunities for the volunteers. RSVP staff will provide each volunteer station with customized time sheets in order to facilitate their collection and reporting of volunteer hours for RSVP members. Volunteer hours will be collected by the partner volunteer stations and reported for each volunteer on a monthly basis. Data will be entered by the RSVP staff using the volunteer reporter software. Questionnaires will be mailed on an annual bases to RSVP volunteers and work station managers to evaluate job assignments and

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performances. Outcomes from the survey will be reported to the Advisory Council and Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce Board at the yearly program of works review.

The Southeast Arkansas RSVP program is well documented by the community through the local newspaper, radio stations, Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, local college newsletter and the RSVP newsletter. RSVP volunteers will serve in an advisory capacity for organizations or committees that promote services that meet community needs and build public awareness. The ten member Advisory Council will be chosen among political, educational, senior citizens, and active community members representing all the service area. The Advisory Council members provide input into our program from various views and diversity, while monitoring progress to ensure local input into programs designed to provide yearly evaluation to the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce Board. RSVP will continue to provide volunteer resources and advertising campaigns to reach new organizations and new volunteer opportunities in Monroe and Phillips County. RSVP will enhance the capacity of organizations and the institutions in those communities providing help and support that allows organizations to keep their doors open while bridging the gap both economically and with overall diversity.

Recruitment and Development

Southeast Arkansas RSVP's sponsor is well established in Arkansas County and is a long-term partner with over 22 organizations within the community and hopes to expand services to neighboring Monroe and Phillips County.

RSVP sponsor will ensure that management of volunteer stations are in compliance with RSVP program regulations and applicable laws by requiring monthly visits to the station by either the RSVP Director or the Volunteer Coordinator. The staff has a checklist of items which are discussed at each station during these meetings. All volunteer station are required to be handicap accessible, so handicapped individuals can volunteer or participate in activities at volunteers stations. RSVP Advisory Council will perform annual assessments of the stations where they assess the stations level of satisfaction with both the program and the volunteers. If the Advisory Council feels the need to graduate the work stations, first the action will be verbal notification followed with a written letter, and the volunteers will be are notified work station graduation by the director. Each volunteer will be visited by the director and reassigned to new work stations. In effort to recruit new volunteers and work stations, we will form a new coalition with local non-profit agencies, meeting quarterly to

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network, communicate and assess community needs. We hope to host volunteer job fairs and other community events. This would open the door to a variety of information about the community and enable us to form new partnerships. We hope to expand our work stations and create new opportunities for the volunteers.

The SEARSVP Staff works with each volunteer who has a desire to learn new skills while making a positive contribution to the community to provide them with opportunities to enhance leadership skills and broaden the senior volunteer experience. The volunteers will be Monroe and Phillips County's most valuable assets, making volunteer recruitment, retention and recognition a top priority.

One area that appeals to baby boomer volunteers is enabling them to reinvest in their communities and in themselves with instant gratifications. Many volunteers are veterans and members of the American Legion, we hope to focus on recruiting these individuals to help with completing insurance benefit forms and transportation issue affecting the health needs of disabled veterans. While working the program, we hope to recruit these volunteers by providing them with the opportunity to give back to the community and have the flexibility and knowledge to work with short term assignments.

Research indicates that baby boomers and veterans are seeking new opportunities that offer unique experiences, challenging positions and flexibility. Recruitment strategies to be used include: keeping a high profile in the media, existing partnerships, and other groups while networking with local community groups.

Orientation will be conducted for all new volunteers. The Project Director will meet with each new volunteer to discuss work stations that might be interesting to them. New volunteers will receive a handbook which contains volunteer stations, job descriptions, volunteer guidelines, rules for staff, information on volunteers insurance, time sheets and volunteer calendars. After selecting the capacity in which they want to serve, the director and work station manager will meet with the volunteer to discuss their job skills and requirements.

Strategies for retention include: orientation for all new members, conducting follow-up with volunteers after recruitment, reviewing hours reported monthly to identify volunteers that are not reporting and make personal contact, local newspaper articles on Senior Corp, RSVP Program and the volunteers. RSVP Facebook page, Twitter and newsletters stimulate interest in upcoming events and volunteer opportunities.

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Most of the volunteer assignments will be on the job training positions provided by partnering agencies, Arkansas Department of Human Services, Office of Emergency Management, Arkansas Department of Health Services, Salvation Army, Arkansas Division of Volunteerism, and etc. are just some of the agencies. RSVP will make use of local coalitions to meet the training needs of most volunteer assignments with one on one orientation by station supervisors with group training provided by partnerships and the RSVP staff. RSVP staff attends all training as required by CNCS and participates in other professional development opportunities.

Volunteers will be recognized for their time and service during four events throughout the year. Volunteers receive recognition during National Volunteer Week, Senior Corp Week, and Veterans Day Celebration and treated to a holiday potluck complete with food, fun, and fellowship in December.

Program Management

With over 40 years of work in CNCS Focus Areas, SEARSVP has gained considerable experience successfully managing Senior Corp grants engaging volunteers, managing budgets and program outcomes while partnering with non-profits, as outlined in the code of Federal Regulations, title 45. With Monroe and Phillips Counties rural settings, we understand the unique needs of low-income older adults and will continue to identify and implement synergistic relationship with partnering agencies to meet those community needs. We will bring this vast experience to ensure the success of our RSVP Program of work.

RSVP will manage volunteer stations in compliance with RSVP Regulation.

SEARSVP will operate and manage its program in compliance with all CNCS regulations and will ensure that volunteers do not engage in prohibited service activities as outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations. All staff will be trained in CNCS regulations and volunteers will receive training on prohibited service activities in pre-service training. The Project Director and staff will work with the station supervisor to develop and manage volunteer stations that address specified unmet community needs. The Memorandum of Understanding requires that stations are a not for profit organization and meet locally identified needs. All volunteers will receive orientation and site-training that goes over the handbooks which sets guidelines to follow for volunteer and volunteer stations. Volunteer stations will be in compliance with RSVP program regulations with signed Memorandum of

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Understanding with volunteer assignments attached and reviewed at annual site visit from staff. During site visits, volunteer assignment needs are identified and methods used for tracking volunteer hours and data are reviewed. Questionnaires will be mailed on an annual basis to RSVP volunteers and work stations managers to evaluate job assignments and performances for impact statements. Staff will follow-up with telephone check-in with volunteers and stations to discuss any challenges or problems they are having. The Advisory Council members will assess the stations on level of satisfaction with the program and volunteers. We will also engage community leaders and service agencies to track and meet changing community needs.

In an effort to recruit stations, we will work with local community action groups and city officials to network, communicate and assess community needs. We hope this will open doors and enable us to form new partnerships and expand our workstations, as well as create new opportunities for our volunteers. We hope this strategy will help guide us in not only providing meaningful volunteer experience but also assist us in meeting the community needs. RSVP provides a policy and procedure handbook that outlines the rules and regulation for RSVP to each workstation. The volunteer manager will meet monthly with the volunteer coordinators to determine compliance with RSVP regulation, going over monthly site visits and workstation reports of volunteer actives providing an opportunity to make changes, if necessary. The Project director will generate monthly reports to determine the projects and workstations progress toward the outputs and outcomes to ensure meeting goals set in the grants workplans. RSVP stations not reporting service hours will be listed as inactive and volunteers will be moved to other stations of interest.

SEARSVP Advisory Council has been established to assist RSVP in defining community needs, addressing policy concerns, and developing plans for continued success and funding. The current Advisory Council consist of 8 active members who reflect the demographics and the diversity of the population with the expansion we would recruit 4 new council members for guidance and direction in the new service area. The Advisory Council meets quarterly and assists with program management, operations and assessment, volunteer recruitment and retention. They will complete an annual survey of local needs as well as an evaluation of how well we are meeting current needs, our accomplishments, and impact on the community.

The Project Director will report to the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors on a

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monthly basis, providing them a programmatic and financial report. Information and data for RSVP is managed by the RSVP Director through Volunteer Reporter, a volunteer management software program, which tracks the activities and progress of the volunteer stations to ensure compliance. The local college will provide RSVP with work-study students each year who works directly with the Project Director and the Data Entry Manager in managing the data entry on tracking volunteers and volunteer stations making sure volunteers are placed in stations that have signed MOU's and ensuring all volunteers are eligible to serve in RSVP. A system of records will be maintained on each volunteer and station, including eligibility, dates of service, and hours volunteered. If disruption of volunteer's services at work stations or if graduating a station is necessary, first is verbal communication followed up with written notification of ending of services. On a monthly basis, the Data Entry Manager generates reports for review by the Project Director and the Volunteer Manager to determine project progress towards the outputs and outcomes outline in the grant cycle. All files of supporting documentation will be maintained at the RSVP office with procedures reviewed annually while ensuring all programs are in compliance of federal regulations. Software will be updated as revisions become available. The Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors will conduct an annual evaluation of the RSVP program and staff, assuring that goals and objectives are being met and that a significant impact is being made on the community. The Project Director will be responsible for managing information and data for the programs. This task is made easier by utilizing Volunteer Reporter are computer software. A file of supporting documentation will be maintained as well.

Organizational Capability

Our plan is to operate RSVP following the guidelines of CNCS grant. We will prepare guidelines for day to day operation of the volunteers and the volunteer station.

Southeast Arkansas RSVP Sponsor has a Project Director to oversee the project. Southeast Arkansas RSVP sponsor receives funding from state and local governments. Phillips County Community College of the University of Arkansas provides a large in-kind donation of 825 square feet of office space plus use of the college facilities.

The Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce has been the sponsoring agency for Southeast Arkansas RSVP since 1973. The role of the board of directors and the Executive Vice-President of the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce are clearly defined and corresponds with that of the key RSVP staff positions, as they both work to ensure the continuous improvement of the project for the benefit of volunteers as

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well as the community as a whole. Sponsorship support includes financial support to meet the sponsor match, providing a Finance Manager, an annual evaluation of the RSVP Program Director, issuing checks for expenses, and technology assistance. Program performance will be assessed through surveys and combined into a program evaluation by Advisory Council and results are shared with the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce Board.

Memoranda will be signed, filed with each station, and updated in Volunteer Reporter every 3 years and station visited by director via telephone or in person quarterly. SEARSVP Staff will have easy access to volunteer information and job descriptions with database for assignment and record keeping. Impact Statements will be filed under each volunteer station and enable the staff to develop and manage volunteer assignments that address specific community needs.

Resources, both financial and in-kind, are kept on record by the director. The bookkeeper will use Quicken an accounting software to track and pay invoices with the Executive Vice-President of the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce signing-off on the original vouchers (in-kind or bills) to manage the monetary portion. The RSVP Director reports monthly to the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors with RSVP Highlights of Events and provides a monthly, as well as year-to-date financial report with bank reconciliation from previous monthly banking transaction.

The Project Director is a full-time position and the person primarily responsible for overseeing the program with over 14 years of experience managing grants and received certification as a Certified Grant Specialist from the National Grant Writers Association which has provided a detailed overview of grant administration as well as grant research and development. The Director is a Leadership Stuttgart graduate from Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas.

Southeast Arkansas RSVP has three part-time staff, Volunteer Manager, Volunteer Coordinator and Bookkeeper. We hope to add two additional staff member, Volunteer Coordinator, who will be located in Helena Office in Arkansas and a Data Entry Manager this should increased results for greater impact to benefit those we serve while collecting and reporting accurate data as report by the volunteers and volunteer stations. Under the new grant we will recruit volunteers what will help us address the community need in the Primary Focus Area- Healthy Futures, and the other focus areas. By partnering with local agencies we will meet the needs of the elderly, veterans, disabled, and

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children. The local college provides RSVP with work study students each year that work directly with the Project Director in tracking volunteers and volunteer stations making sure stations have signed MOU's and ensuring all volunteers are eligible to serve in RSVP.

The SEARSVP has an excellent track record of successfully managing volunteers and volunteer stations. The Southeast Arkansas RSVP sponsor has worked with seniors for more than forty years and has clearly demonstrated an ability to carry out impact-based programming and manage federal and state grants. In addition, this organization has adequate facilities, equipment, supplies, purchasing procedures, as well as personnel management support and policies. With the addition of Monroe and Phillips County's we hope to expanded volunteer services, educational training and host short term volunteer projects in are new office in Helena, Arkansas located in Phillips County. Systems for self-assessment, evaluation, and continuous improvement are in place with annual review from the sponsor and volunteer surveys. Results of the evaluation and surveys will be reviewed by the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and recommendations or changes will be reflected in the yearly program of work.

We hope to become an active participant in community development, and virtually become the only volunteer organization with a large number of volunteers readily available to assists, RSVP will be sought out by organizations needing volunteers. The project director will work with volunteers to determine which projects will be of interest and provide meaningful volunteer opportunities. Questionnaires will be mailed on an annual basis to RSVP volunteers and work station managers to evaluate job assignments and performances for impact state

Other

We currently have an active DUN number for Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce and renew annually. Please contact Norma Strabala at 870-673-8584 or cell 870-659-3809 for any clarifications.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

n/a