

PART I - FACE SHEET

APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to conform to the Corporation's eGrants System)

1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION:

Application Non-Construction

2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS): 03/07/24	3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE:	STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:
2b. APPLICATION ID: 24SC263356	4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY: 03/07/24	FEDERAL IDENTIFIER: 24SCGTX001

5. APPLICATION INFORMATION

LEGAL NAME: HIDALGO, COUNTY OF UEI NUMBER: VJCDQFM7W7B4 ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county): 2524 N Closner Blvd Edinburg TX 78541 - 6502 County: Hidalgo	NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes): NAME: Sylvia Sepulveda TELEPHONE NUMBER: (956) 383-6240 3932 FAX NUMBER: (956) 380-4324 INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: sylvia.sepulveda@co.hidalgo.tx.us
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6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN): 742234352	7. TYPE OF APPLICANT: 7a. Local Government - County 7b. Local Government, Municipal
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8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box). <input type="checkbox"/> NEW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE <input type="checkbox"/> CONTINUATION <input type="checkbox"/> AMENDMENT If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es): <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> A. AUGMENTATION B. BUDGET REVISION C. NO COST EXTENSION D. OTHER (specify below):	9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY: <p style="text-align: center;">Corporation for National and Community Service</p>
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10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER: 94.016 10b. TITLE: Senior Companion Program	11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT: SCP Rio Grande Valley 11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):
12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc): Hidalgo County (Alton, Mission, McAllen, Edinburg, Pharr, San Juan, Alamo, Elsa, Edcouch, La Blanca, Mercedes, Monte Alto, and Weslaco) and	

13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 07/01/24 END DATE: 06/30/25	14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant <input type="text" value="TX 15"/> b.Program <input type="text" value="TX 15"/>
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15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #: <input type="text" value="1"/> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 5px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">a. FEDERAL</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 560,034.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b. APPLICANT</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 62,791.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>c. STATE</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 6,791.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>d. LOCAL</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>e. OTHER</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 56,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>f. PROGRAM INCOME</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>g. TOTAL</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 622,825.00</td> </tr> </table>	a. FEDERAL	\$ 560,034.00	b. APPLICANT	\$ 62,791.00	c. STATE	\$ 6,791.00	d. LOCAL	\$ 0.00	e. OTHER	\$ 56,000.00	f. PROGRAM INCOME	\$ 0.00	g. TOTAL	\$ 622,825.00	16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS? <input type="checkbox"/> YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON: DATE: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372
a. FEDERAL	\$ 560,034.00														
b. APPLICANT	\$ 62,791.00														
c. STATE	\$ 6,791.00														
d. LOCAL	\$ 0.00														
e. OTHER	\$ 56,000.00														
f. PROGRAM INCOME	\$ 0.00														
g. TOTAL	\$ 622,825.00														
	17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT? <input type="checkbox"/> YES if "Yes," attach an explanation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO														

18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.

a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: Jaime R. Longoria	b. TITLE:	c. TELEPHONE NUMBER: (956) 383-6240
d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:		e. DATE SIGNED: 05/02/24

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The County of Hidalgo Community Service Agency proposes to have 65 AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers providing companionship in Hidalgo County (Alton, Mission, McAllen, Edinburg, Pharr, San Juan, Alamo, Elsa, Edcouch, La Blanca, Mercedes, Monte Alto, and Weslaco) and Cameron County (Brownsville, Harlingen, and San Benito) and Willacy County (Raymondville). AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers will serve 63 volunteer service years (VSYs) each year. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. AmeriCorps Senior volunteers will be responsible for 110 clients increasing social support, and improving capacity for independent living. The AmeriCorps investment of \$557,534 will be supplemented by \$62,791.

Strengthening Communities

Strengthening Communities

The AmeriCorps Seniors Senior Companion Program in the the Rio Grande Valley (RGV-SCP) is sponsored by the County of Hidalgo Community Service Agency located in Edinburg, Texas. The Rio Grande Valley is an area located in the southernmost tip of South Texas. It lies along the northern bank of the Rio Grande River, which separates Mexico from the United States. The region consists of Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy counties. It is one of the fastest growing regions in the United States. The County of Hidalgo Community Service Agency has successfully managed the Senior Companion Program in Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy counties for the last four years. The SCP project will engage a diverse group individuals 55 and older in volunteerism. These efforts will make a significant impact in decreasing social isolation and increasing independent living amongst the elderly, the disabled individuals, and the veterans within the geographic service area.

The mission of the Hidalgo County Community Service Agency (HCCSA) is, "to improve the quality of life and promote self-sufficiency of the low income and vulnerable households by providing effective, efficient, and comprehensive services through partnerships." It is the intent of the agency to pave the way to support communities by engaging AmeriCorps Seniors to meet community challenges. In addition to the SCP project, it is the goal of the HCCSA to provide a seamless continuum of services to the vulnerable senior population in the geographic service area by effectively operating, managing, and adhering to the AmeriCorps Seniors Program Federal Regulations (45 Chapter XXV, Part 2551). The Rio Grande Valley Senior Companion Program (RGV-SCP) will pair individuals 55 and older with

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elderly seniors in the community within the geographic service area who have difficulty with the simple tasks of daily living and who are alone. The project will recruit qualified individuals to serve as SCP volunteers and place them in service activities that yield measurable outcomes in the project's Primary Focus Area Healthy Futures: Aging in Place. The Senior Companion volunteers will support the ability of homebound seniors, older adults, and individuals with disabilities to live independently by providing companionship in their home environment for a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 40 hours weekly. The project will engage a diverse group of people 55 and older in volunteerism to remain physically and mentally active and improving their self-esteem by applying their life experiences while meeting community needs for the elderly. Senior Companions will receive a stipend of \$4.00 per service hour and will be reimbursed up to \$0.55 per mile during service time if funds permit. Volunteers will be placed in volunteer stations in close proximity to their homes as much as possible. The stipend is not regarded as income and does not affect other benefits or assistance the volunteer may be receiving. All Senior Companions will undergo and pass a criminal history background check and complete a rigorous interview process with the program staff. Every new volunteer will attend a minimum of 20 hours in-service orientation before a volunteer assignment is provided. In addition, all eligible volunteer will be required to attend a minimum of 24 hours in-service training annually on various topics that will enhance their volunteerism. Volunteers will be offered the opportunity to provide person-to-person companionship to homebound seniors who are lonely and need help; thus, giving them a sense of purpose enabling them to participate and help the frail elderly so they may remain in their homes living independently.

The Community Action data reports the total population in Hidalgo County at 855,176 with a 50.17% growth from 2010 of which 70,520 are over the age of 55. The Latino and Hispanic community is the largest group in the valley with 91.75% males compared to 8.25% non Hispanic males. The Hispanic female population is 92.59% compared to 7.41% of non Hispanic females. Projections indicate a significant continued growth in the senior population within the next ten years.

In 2007, the Lower Rio Grande Valley Community Partnership (LRGVCP) was established in response to a national initiative organized by the United States Department of Health and Human Services to address health disparities affecting older Hispanics. A study based on a community assessment conducted at local clinics, senior centers, and colonias was aimed to determine: (1) the level of health care access for older Hispanics with type 2 diabetes living in a US/Mexico border area; and (2) personal and health correlates to health care utilization (ie, physician visits, eye care, emergency room use).

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In the border region known as the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas, where this study was conducted, diabetes prevalence among aging Hispanics (28%) is higher than the national level (18%), as well as other US areas with large Hispanic populations including San Antonio (24%) and Houston. Studies also show that older Hispanics in the RGV receive less diabetes education and clinical testing, and fewer eye examinations than their non-Hispanic white counterparts (E. Moy, Hispanic Elders Community Chartbook, 2007). Although preventive practices and regular care are effective at reducing or delaying the onset of diabetes complications, Hispanics have less access to preventive services than their non-Hispanic white counterparts. The LRGVCP health assessment included Hispanics with type 2 diabetes, who were 60 years of age and older, and living in the tri counties, at the Texas/Mexico border. The RGV is one of the 10 poorest regions in the United States; approximately one third of its aging population lives below the federal poverty level. The majority of the Hidalgo population is of Mexican descent and speaks Spanish at home (E. Moy, Hispanic Elders Community Chartbook, 2007). In this region, Hispanics living in areas known as Colonias belong to one of the most disadvantaged, hard-to-reach minority groups in the United States. Colonias are impoverished neighborhoods with substandard living conditions along the US/Mexico border. Hispanics living in Colonias are one of the most disadvantaged minority groups in the United States. According to the 2015 American Community Survey on the prevalence of disability among non-institutionalized people ages 65-74 and older in Texas was 52.8%. In other words in 2015, 556,300 of the 1,908,800 individuals ages 65-74 reported one or more disabilities. In 2019, among the six types of disabilities identified in the ACS report, the highest prevalence rate was for Ambulatory disability, 18.3%. The lowest prevalence rate was the Self-Care Disability, 5.1 %. 70% of Americans aged 65 or older will need long-term nursing care at some point in their life. 69% of people age 90 or older have a serious disability. 14% of caregivers for older adults are themselves aged 65 or more. 65.7% million people in the US provided unpaid caregiving services to an adult in 2019. Approximately 66% of American unpaid caregivers are female and the typical caregiver in the US spends 20 hours per week administering care to their loved ones. The elderly living alone struggle with Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs) such as: housework, managing money, taking their medications, preparing meals, cleaning up after meals, shopping for groceries, shopping for clothes, using the phone, caring for pets or responding to emergency alerts. SCP volunteers will be instrumental in assisting the elderly in their home environment by providing person to person companionship.

Description of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility.

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In the County of Hidalgo, the Hispanic and Latino group are the majority in the Rio Grande Valley. The 2019 data from the Community Action report indicates the total population in Hidalgo County is 855,176 of which 90% are Hispanic and Latino, 8.19% Caucasian, 0.5% African American and 1.0% are Asian.

The Hidalgo County's Advisory Council members comprises of individuals who represent the communities we serve, and the Advisory Council is consulted regarding the project's activities. The council members participate in supporting the low-income population. Their daily involvement consist of supporting migrant families, support with legal aid, education, housing, training and education. One of the members is an officer with the Knights of Columbus and they support the members of the communities by providing medical equipment to the disabled and veterans. Every effort has been made to include and recruit all ethnic groups in events conducted by the agency regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender and socioeconomic status.

The agency's mission, "to improve the quality of life and promote self-sufficiency.....by providing effective, efficient, and comprehensive services through partnerships." This mission statement is inclusive of all groups. Available resources are equitably distributed to all eligible clients through an application process which is available to every member of the community. The agency addresses all ethnicity groups who attend informational events hosted by the agency in senior day cares, residential communities, and community precincts. Local news channels broadcast regularly inviting the public to seek assistance for utilities, rent, taxes, mortgages, and veteran resources. Through these efforts, the agency is able to reach diverse groups of individuals in all communities. The AmeriCorps Seniors staff engages in numerous recruitment events that are geared to all members of the community. The Filipino Missionary Families of Christ and the Filipino Chamber of Commerce have held informational sessions with AmeriCorps staff on volunteerism. They provide tutoring sessions in designated areas of the communities where children reside to help the students who are struggling with language barriers that hinder their academic success. Mount Olive Ministries is a non-profit organization where people of color gather. Mt. Olive is a recruitment site for AmeriCorps Seniors. They also support diverse groups of individuals in need of shelter, food and clothing where AmeriCorps Senior volunteers help support their initiatives. Senior Summit Cultural Events are held throughout the year for individuals over the age of 55 where hundreds of organizations gather to engage with diverse groups of seniors to offer available benefits. In addition, the agency has remote sites and deploys mobile units throughout varying communities in an effort to reach all community members.

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The agency is committed to continue to recruit diverse members of the community through an equity lens by continuing to make a presence and promote AmeriCorps Seniors in cultural events across the region.

Recruitment and Development

Recruitment and Development of Volunteers

The AmeriCorps Seniors Companion Program (SCP) project staff will recruit, train, and retain a diverse group of volunteers who meet federal income eligibility guidelines, pass criminal history checks, and who are also eager to positively impact the lives of seniors living alone who need companionship. There is a great need for low-income residents 55 and older to augment their annual earnings and the SCP project is a great opportunity for volunteers. The SCP Project staff will recruit a volunteer pool who is reflective of the community demographics average: 90% Hispanic, 8.19% white, 0.5 African American and 1.0% Asian, individuals of low-income and veterans. The SCP project staff will strive to ensure all volunteers receive a high quality experience in volunteerism by using their experiences, abilities and talents. The SCP project staff and the AmeriCorps Seniors Advisory Council Members will recruit potential volunteers who meet income eligibility guidelines, who will serve a minimum of 5 hours and a maximum of 40 hours a week in low-income housing communities with seniors in the geographic service area. The sponsoring agency will implement an SCP Project Recruitment Plan with a systemic infrastructure that include recruitment sites where diverse groups of people over the age of 55 gather or receive services. Recruitment will take place in low-income housing communities that are in close proximity to SCP volunteer sites and through community sponsored events for seniors age 55 and over. During recruitment events, the SCP staff will provide an awareness of the AmeriCorps Seniors SCP by passing out printed informational flyers, posters, post cards, and bags. The University of Texas at RGV Engagement Zone and the Volunteer Match websites will be used for recruitment purposes. Recruitment will be a continual process throughout the duration of the three year grant period. New and novice SCP volunteers will receive a 20 hours pre-service orientation prior to beginning direct service to clients. The SCP staff will provide every volunteer with a RGV-SCP Volunteer Handbook addressing rules, regulations, policies, and procedures from the SCP project staff which includes information from the AmeriCorps Seniors website. Volunteers will receive at minimum 24 hours of in-service training annually focusing on the project's Primary Focus Area: Healthy Futures, Aging in Place Objectives; allowable service activities; the Assignment Plan, the Output/Outcome Instrument; the Independent Living Assessment; the SCP policies and procedures Volunteer Handbook, and the volunteer survey. They will receive extensive

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training on the service activities listed in the work plans and the documents used to record and report data. After adjudication of the criminal history background checks and the required training, the volunteers will receive a certificate of completion, the AmeriCorps Seniors uniform, and gear. The SCP volunteers will wear AmeriCorps Seniors branded gear during direct service hours with clients. The uniform will consist of a branded polo, t-shirt, jacket, rain ponchos, name tags, and a bag for materials. With extensive training, volunteers will be empowered and be active participants in activities of engagement in training sessions throughout the year. This training will help retain a group of experienced volunteers. The volunteers will receive meals, snacks, and materials during training. The snack may consist of a taco, sweet bread, candies, coffee, or water. The snack bag will include candy, cookies or chips, etc.

The SCP volunteers will engage in formal and informal recognition and appreciation events, banquets, attend health fairs, receive plaques and certificates of appreciation, participate in socials/teas at volunteer stations, and be provided the opportunity to lead and be highly involved with AmeriCorps Seniors special projects. The SCP staff and volunteer leaders will keep open lines of communication to contact volunteers by using emails, flyers, telephone calls, local media, and the sponsor project website. In addition, the SCP staff will visit volunteer stations regularly to advocate, to build a positive rapport, and create long lasting friendships with all their staff and volunteers. The volunteers will be provided an anonymous 5 question survey to complete annually so the volunteers have an opportunity to voice their opinion and provide ideas for the SCP project. The survey will be reviewed by the agency staff, the SCP staff, the SCP volunteer leaders, the AmeriCorps Seniors Advisory Council Members, and the volunteer stations managers to improve the projects performance in an effort to retain high quality volunteers.

Program Management

Program Management

The County of Hidalgo, the Community Service Agency and the AmeriCorps Senior Companion Program project staff will update the Senior Companion Program Handbook with established effective practices and procedures for developing successful volunteer stations that meet community needs. The handbook will address project goals, targets, objectives, community priorities, service activities, implementation structures and timelines for volunteers and station managers to provide awareness of outputs/outcomes to all project stakeholders. The handbook will also include procedures on how volunteer station managers train, assign, and evaluate volunteer service activities. The SCP staff will pursue a positive working relationship with volunteer stations managers by keeping clear lines of

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communication open, and by providing training on the roles and responsibilities of a volunteer station, developing volunteer assignments plans, and addressing service activities to be performed by the volunteer and verified by the volunteer station manager. An SCP Memorandum of Understanding will be a formal written arrangement between the sponsor and the SCP volunteer station managers and will be signed and agreed upon by both parties before placing volunteers in service. The MOU will describe program requirements, working relationships and mutual responsibilities between the sponsor and the volunteer station. It will include general conditions applicable to the SCP project and the volunteer stations and will be the primary source of documentation establishing the relationship between the sponsor and volunteer station. The SCP staff will ensure the MOU be reviewed, renegotiated if needed, signed and dated at least every three years and it may be amended at any time by mutual agreement. The SCP staff will work with volunteer stations managers and volunteers periodically to consistently up-date the data recording/reporting documents (work plan/ instrument) which will list service activities with measurable outcomes. The SCP staff will incur mileage which will be paid at .670 cents a mile while traveling to all geographic service areas to communicate with volunteer station managers, clients, volunteers, and city officials. All pertinent documents will be kept in a central location in individual volunteer station files in the SCP Supervisor's Office. The five member AmeriCorps Senior Advisory Council members will meet quarterly with the sponsoring agency and the SCP staff to provide guidance and support for the project to ensure all volunteer stations comply with policies and procedures. The project staff will place a strong emphasis, create, and implement work plans for the SCP volunteers that align identified community needs for the elderly with service activities in the primary focus area objective: Aging in Place. The SCP staff will track the number of individuals who have received services using the in home assignment plan. The output and outcome instruments will be listed and described in detail in each individual work plan. The Client Data Collection Form will be completed by all clients to measure the increase and/or decrease in social support and improved capacity for independent living. The SCP project will strive to meet the program targets and outputs-outcomes at 100% by the end of the grant year.

Organizational Capability

Organizational Capacity

The County of Hidalgo administrative team, and the Community Service Agency's Executive Director has managed federal and state grants for 37 years. HCCSA is governed by the Hidalgo County Commissioner's Court and the HCCSA's Board of Directors. The agency has policies and procedures for all its' programs and departments including the Fiscal Department. The agency has established

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policies for fiscal procedures, day-to-day project operations, program status, regulations, OMB circulars requirements, accountability, and efficient and effective use of available resources for the project. The HCCSA Board and the RGV AmeriCorps Seniors Advisory Council will also provide the RGV-SCP staff with governance, sound programmatic operational support to ensure full project implementation with fidelity. The AmeriCorps Seniors Advisory Council will meet quarterly or as needed to assess and address community needs, strategic planning and monitor the progress of the project.

The CSA's Fiscal Department will provide fiscal oversight and use the Federal Division of the Payment Management System and eGrants portal to submit accurate Federal Financial Expenditure Reports quarterly/semi-annually and comply with due dates. All local funds and donations will be tracked using the RGV-SCP project in-kind document. The RGV-SCP project will undergo an annual audit by an Accounting Consultants group. The SCP programs pays an annual flat fee of \$1,250 for their service. The Fiscal's Department Divisions Manager will provide fiscal support to the AmeriCorps Seniors Program staff. The program Account will work directly under the Divisions Manager, the SCP Supervisor, and the Director. The CSA Executive Director holds a Master's Degree in Organizational Leadership and has many years of experience managing grants and is currently administering over \$7,200,000 grant funds in support of low-income residents with energy assistance, education, job placement and a \$300,000 grant in support of veterans. The Executive Director has the necessary skills sets to manage and oversee the RGV-SCP project and also have the necessary experience to develop and implement internal policies, operating procedures, personnel management and fiscal operations for the project with full transparency. The RSVP Program Director holds a Master's Degree in Educational Administration and Mid-Management. The director brings 40 years of experience in the field of education and educational administration and has managed federal and state grants of over \$21,000,000. A waiver to request approval for a part-time director has been submitted and approved by AmeriCorps Seniors for the last five years. The director was elected by her peers across the state of Texas and is the acting RSVP Vice President for the Texas Senior Corps Association. The director will provide direct support to all the SCP staff and volunteers 15% of the time and the salary will be allocated in the SCP budget narrative in the amount of \$10,639 for 12 months. The SCP Supervisor's position is full-time and will be assigned duties and responsibilities 100% of the time. The Supervisor's salary is \$44,512 for 12 months, and \$1,350 annually for longevity. The SCP Supervisor will adhere to the Hidalgo County Community Service Agency's policies and procedures for program, fiscal, human resources operations and AmeriCorps rules and regulations of the RGV-SCP project.

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Two SCP Recruiters will be full-time positions with an annual salary of \$34,857 for 12 months each. The recruiters will work directly under the SCP Supervisor and the Director. The Accountant will be a shared position with the Foster Grandparents Program 36%, 3% of the time with the RSVP project, and 61% of the time with the Senior Companions Program. The Accountant's salary is \$42,120 for 12 months of which \$25,693 will be allocated in the SCP budget narrative. The Accountant's salary calculation is based on the number of employees and volunteers for each program. The Accountant will be assigned responsibilities and duties for the project's fiscal, and programmatic operations 100% of the time, and will work jointly with the agency's Fiscal Division Manager, the SCP Supervisor, and the Director to implement the grant funds with fidelity. The Accountant will assist and prepare the SCP staff with monthly and quarterly projections for volunteer stipend and mileage. Expenditure and revenues reports will be reconciled accurately with minimal errors and provided to the SCP Supervisor, and the Director as needed. All expenditures of the project funds will be effectively, and efficiently monitored using the program regulations. The Accountant will complete, submit, and file all Federal, State, and County Financial Reports in a timely manner without errors. The Accountant will receive guidance and support from the Fiscal's Division Manger to ensure all required reports are completed and submitted on time. The on-line course, "Key Concepts of Financial Management" on Litmos will be completed by the HCCSA's Division Manager and the Accountants to ensure full compliance with all fiscal project regulations. The Executive Director, the Director, and the SCP Supervisor will work with all the fiscal staff to regularly compare and reconcile the budget to actual costs. The SCP supervisor and recruiters will attend approved AmeriCorps Senior convenings, zoom meetings, and trainings annually to learn first-hand about appropriate operating procedures and accurate implementation of the AmeriCorps Senior SCP project to ensure the accomplishment of the program objectives and performance measures are met. The AmeriCorps-SCP Office will have a personnel file for all its' staff members that will include timesheets, mileage logs, job application, signed job description, criminal history background checks (45 CFR 2540.200-207), certificates of training, performance evaluation, and other pertinent information on record.

In an effort to implement the SCP project successfully, the staff and volunteer expenses are necessary. Project personnel expenses and fringe benefits in the amount of \$217,652 are itemize in the budget narrative. The Director, SCP Supervisor, Recruiters, and Accountant are all part of the SCP staff. Local staff travel encompasses all the southern region border covering three counties. All staff who provides service at 100% of the time to the project will incur local travel at .670 a mile. They will travel to train, monitor volunteer sites, meet volunteers, visit client homes, and recruit at different community sites

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throughout the region. Clients are visited by staff members regularly and volunteers are monitored at the client's home. The total local travel cost for 12 months is \$13,176 and is itemized in Part I of the budget narrative.

Long distance travel will be incurred to attend state and national AmeriCorps Seniors conferences for staff training to learn and enrich the program's overall operations. The cost incurred will be \$6,824. The cost of long distance travel's per diem is based on the County of Hidalgo travel policy. Essential office supplies and ink cartridges are necessary for program implementation and to be used on a daily basis by the SCP designated staff. The desktop office computers will have its own CPU, mouse, and keyboard. Janitorial supplies will be purchased monthly as needed and to keep the project offices clean. Ink cartridges are required for staff office printers for program use. All staff is 100% compliant with Criminal History Checks. The accounting software is necessary to process the program's fiscal budget requirements, and the annual fee is \$1,300 annually. Hot spot equipment and internet is is needed by staff when traveling to remote locations where training, recruitment, evaluating volunteers and clients is being conducted. The staff using hotspots are training and meeting with volunteers at remote sites where internet is not available. National and State Membership fees are paid only for the program staff to engage with other program supervisors and trainings. The postage meter is used by the program to stamp envelopes in bulk. The program cost for daily janitorial services is \$49 a month. Bank checks are required to pay volunteer stipends and to pay vendors who require checks for services or products. Volunteers are provided a small meal, snacks, water, coffee, tea/soft drinks during the required project trainings, and while attending special events hosted by the project staff and community partners. The cost of food has increased, and each volunteer will be allotted \$62 annually which is approximately \$4,030. Sometimes, multiple meetings and events are held within a month in an effort to bolster the quality of service that beneficiaries receive and to increase the level of engagement among volunteers after troubled program year(s) due to COVID-19. In addition, a small snack and/or water is provided to the volunteers while participating in these events. Uniforms are a favorite for volunteers and all branded uniform gear is used by volunteers to promote and provide an awareness of AmeriCorps Seniors programs during service hours. Supplemental accident and auto liability insurance is a requirement of the grant and is provided to all volunteers while providing service. Recognition items are purchased on a monthly basis to recognize and motivate volunteers to stay in service. Volunteers are provided snack bags with candies, cookies, and chips of minimal cost for recognition and during trainings. Volunteers are awarded gift cards, awards, and a certificate for their participation in AmeriCorps Seniors. in addition, volunteers are provided gift cards, and meals as

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a recognition award during Recognition Banquets and Senior's week. All this is done in an effort to motivate, recognize, and retain volunteers in service. AmeriCorps Seniors branded recruitment items are necessary to promote and provide an awareness of the AmeriCorps Seniors programs to individuals across the geographic service area. AmeriCorps Seniors branded promotional items are purchased in bulk with the project's location and telephone number on them and are handed out during recruitment events to members of the community to continue to provide an awareness of AmeriCorps seniors and volunteerism. These recruitment items are purchased in bulk to maximize funding. The cost for recruitment items has increased because the program staff and volunteers will be promoting and attending more community events now that COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted. Recruitment items are also provided to the volunteers so that they can hand out and promote AmeriCorps branded items in their communities in an effort to recruit volunteers.

Volunteers will travel between volunteer stations, trainings, and special events at approximately 9,084 miles per month at an increased rate of *\$0.55/miles *12 months equaling \$4,996 per month. Google maps are printed for each volunteer who incurs mileage to all approved travel locations. This mileage information is used to record the mileage on the volunteer's mileage log and is paid monthly. Every effort is made to place volunteers in close proximity to their client's homes as much as possible. The SCP volunteer leader will incur an additional \$80.00 monetary incentive per month. The SCP volunteer leader will provide mentorship services to all the SCP volunteers.

Other

Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

Sixty-five unduplicated volunteers will be engaged in the Primary Focus Area Healthy Futures service activities of the Rio Grande Valley-SCP project at a minimum of 5 hours and a maximum of 40 hours weekly with a stipend of \$4.00 an hour and \$0.55 a mile for mileage. All SCP funded VSYs will be utilized effectively so that the maximum number of elderly in the geographic service area receive companionship, improved capacity for independent living, and decrease social isolation. With the \$622,825 federal funding provided from CNCS, the state, and the sponsor match, the geographic service area's SCP volunteers will improve the lives of approximately 110 elderly seniors by providing companionship while they age in place. Dedicated SCP staff members will implement the SCP project with fidelity and full transparency to meet the projects goals. The County of Hidalgo will provide the required 10% match for the current baseline permanent SCP funding of \$56,000 secured funds, and the state will provide \$6,791 for a total of \$62,791 of non-federal proposed funds. The Advisory Council members will schedule meetings with intermediaries and geographic service area stakeholders

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to present the impact of the SCP project in an effort to secure additional funding.

The SCP supervisor will post job descriptions and follow the Hidalgo County Human Resources Office hiring practices. The SCP staff will be committed and dedicated to the overall management of the SCP project. All SCP staff members will undergo the required criminal history checks, complete the online Litmos CHCs training, and provide a copy of the CHC certificate for the personnel record. All staff criminal history checks will be conducted through Truescreen and Fieldprint. All measures will be taken to ensure cost-effective practices and budget adequacy is in compliance with all cost requirements established by AmeriCorps Seniors, and the County of Hidalgo's Fiscal Department policies and procedures. In the SCP budget application all allowable and reasonable costs will be separated by source and differentiated by purpose whether the costs are to cover costs of volunteer expenses or volunteer support expenses to benefit the project's operational effectiveness and to meet the program's output and outcome targets.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)

1. The Hidalgo County Community Service Agency (HCCSA) is being charged with addressing poverty. HCCSA sponsors the AmeriCorps Senior Programs in the region. Information was gathered throughout the community via forums, surveys, interviews and focus groups to identify underserved groups. The identified groups who were shown to be underserved were the homeless, LGBTQ, military veterans, migrants and those leaving the penal system. This provided an avenue for the AmeriCorps Seniors program staff to search community members within these identified groups. Through community sponsored events, AmeriCorps Seniors staff work to engage these individuals in service to their communities. The HCCSA will also increase its presence at events where these identified groups gather to inform them about available resources in the community, and to encourage them to engage in community service. The Rio Grande Valley is committed to engage underserved groups through community events that provide awareness. The South Texas Equality Project (STEP) held its first annual Pride in the Park event for all to attend. Other organizations Aqui Estamos, Equal-Open and Free, PFLAG, RGV Trans Support, and the Student Equality Alliance are a coalition of different non-profits and community groups that work with the LGBTQ community. The African American community has a Memorandum of Understanding with the RSVP program. This is a non-profit organization within the community of color and is now an active RSVP volunteer station since the inception of DEIA. This community site will continue to collaborate with the AmeriCorps Seniors staff to recruit, retain, and to train volunteers to provide service. Their volunteers provide cooked food and

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clothing to the community at large. The Filipino and the Pakistan communities are in the process of becoming RSVP stations. The AmeriCorps Senior staff is working diligently to recruit new volunteers for their community organizations. The County of Hidalgo and the County of Hidalgo Community Service Agency will continue to recruit all diverse and underserved individuals in the community to ensure everyone has equal access and inclusion in receiving and providing available service. All individuals will be provided the opportunity to be included in volunteerism across the geographic service area. Our goals are geared towards ensuring all underserved individuals are included and receive equal access to participate in volunteerism in non-profit sites to offer community support by becoming part of AmeriCorps Seniors Volunteer Cohort in our region.

2. The AmeriCorps Seniors Programs in our region could benefit from continued training and technical assistance on DEIA from AmeriCorps Seniors staff. Provide more training in conversation on DEIA and how to sensitively collect information for data reporting. Provide direction on how to access statistical sites of data basis that exist across the country on data report for DEIA. If we could access this available data sources, we could get ideas from other parts of the county as to how they are addressing DEIA. The technical assistance that has been provided to us on DEIA from portfolio managers and AmeriCorps Seniors administrators has been helpful. More examples on how other projects are addressing and targeting DEIA goals would also be helpful.

3. Thankfully, the AmeriCorps Seniors SCP volunteers have continued to provide service after the pandemic. The Senior Companions Program volunteer cohort continued to communicate with their clients during COVID-19 through text messaging and telephone calls. The Senior Companion clients and volunteers received resources from the community during COVID-19 which included food, vaccines, and CDC guidelines information on COVID. The volunteers placed food on the porches of the elderly's homes who could not be seen in person due to COVID-19. Everyone continued to communicate with each other so that no one would suffer during the pandemic. The Hidalgo County Health Department staff, and the AmeriCorps Seniors staff members worked endless hours making sure all family members, volunteers, and clients received a wrist band to access COVID-19 vaccines. Unfortunately, we lost staff, family, friends, volunteers, and clients as they succumbed to the COVID-19 virus. Now, we are back in full force with most of our active volunteers providing service to the elderly, the disabled and the veterans who need our service.

We are currently requesting to keep our existing VSYs so that we may continue to provide the same service in the communities across our geographic service area, and to also be able to provide the

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increase in stipend and mileage to the SCP volunteers. We did not want to reduce the number of VSYs in our region because there is a lot of need in our communities. In the short time post COVID-19, the SCP program started full force without delay, and service by the volunteers has resumed at the same level since before COVID-19.

E.1d

The County of Hidalgo Community Service Agency has policies and procedures in place to ensure waste, fraud, criminal activities, and abuse are not happening. The AmeriCorps Seniors administrators and staff conduct periodic audits of project records to ensure compliance. The staff is trained with the AmeriCorps Federal Regulations to ensure the project is compliant and to detect fraud and the potential risks involved. Staff meetings are conducted regularly. The Fiscal Department undergoes annual audits by the County of Hidalgo to ensure waste, fraud and abuse are no committed. The CHCSA Personnel Office keeps a job description for every employee that delineates job duties and responsibilities. Segregation of duties are carefully reviewed by supervisors to ensure maximization of efficiency and too avoid duplication of efforts. The biometric clock is used by all employees to clock in and out daily which creates a bi-weekly timesheet to submit to the Fiscal Department for payment. All timesheets include the program name and the percentage of time each staff member is paid by each program. All timesheets are submitted with signatures and dates by each employee and by their immediate supervisor.

The Fiscal Department Administrator and the Operations Manager implements policies and procedures which includes checks and balances and preventative controls to ensure no one person has control over all parts of a financial transaction. Purchases, payroll, and disbursement of payments are conducted by different staff members. The agency's Financial Officer reviews and submits all financial transactions to the Operations Manager and the Executive Director for approval. Finally, all approved financial disbursements are sent to the Hidalgo County Judge for authorization of disbursements. The Fiscal Department has policies and procedures in place for procurement of goods. Detailed requisitions, quotes, and invoices are kept on file for every item purchased for all programs and reviewed during audits by the auditors. The AmeriCorps Seniors program staff provides stakeholders with the contact information to report fraud, waste and abuse. The AmeriCorps.gov website, and the information for the AmeriCorps Office of Inspector General are provided to stakeholders via trainings. The program flyers provide the contact information for all program staff including the program's portfolio manager's information. The agency's Biometric Clock is used by all

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employees to clock in and out daily. The timesheet is generated by the Operations Manager using the Biometric Clock software for employee's review, signature, and date. The timesheet is submitted to the payroll specialist for processing payroll, and then they are archived in the Fiscal Department for future reference. The AmeriCorps Senior staff provides a copy of the approved project budget when submitting requisitions to the Fiscal Department to assure the program accountant verifies the purchase to be made is listed in the approved grant budget narrative. All expenditures for program activities are listed in the budget narrative and are reviewed by the program director, the project accountant, and the Agency's Financial Manager. The program's expenditure reports are provided to the program director for review on a monthly basis. The AmeriCorps Seniors Administrative staff meets regularly with the fiscal Department staff to assure the budgets are accurately reconciled. The County of Hidalgo conducts a Community Service Agency annual audit and provides the single audit during the AmeriCorps Seniors grant submission. The Executive Director provides detailed expenditure reports to the Advisory Board Members during their monthly scheduled meetings for full transparency and reporting.

The AmeriCorps Seniors Federal Regulations are reviewed and adhered to by staff members. Each employee has a copy of the rules and regulations and are reviewed periodically during staff meetings to monitor program compliance. The prohibited activities document found in the AmeriCorps Seniors webpage are printed and provided to all staff, volunteers, and volunteer station managers. The prohibited activities are reviewed with the volunteers and the volunteer station managers during site visits. The prohibited activities are included in the site visit training for each volunteer station which is reviewed and agreed upon by the authorized representative. The Volunteer Station Feedback Form (VSFF) is used as a monitoring tool which addresses the prohibited activities document. The SCP VSFF data collection forms are used to monitor program implementation at each individual site, and all the documents are archived in the volunteer station folders for future reference. Every volunteer station manager receives a copy of the volunteer prohibited activities document. The document is reviewed, signed, and dated. In addition, a signed copy is placed in the volunteer's folder and the volunteer station's folder. The criminal history checks procedures are also included in the staff trainings. Every staff member who generates a salary from the grant undergoes a federal, state, and NSOPW fingerprinting prior to begin employment. The employee's FieldPrint and Truescreen/NSOPW record is placed in the employees personnel file in the grantee's office. Every employee who receives a salary from the grant has completed the annual Criminal History Check

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course in Litmos. The employee's CHCs certificates are archived in the employee's personnel file. All AmeriCorps Seniors employees conducts the CHC course in Litmos annually.

The Senior Companion Program data collection document (Client Data Collection Form) measures individual clients reporting increased social support and improved capacity for independent living. The SCP Client survey identifies the client responses used to collect high quality performance measurement data.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

NA

Performance Measures

% of Unduplicated Volunteers in Work Plans that result in Outcomes: 100%

% of Unduplicated in the Primary Focus Area: 100%

Performance Measure: 1.1 Companionship	
Community Need to be Addressed:	
<p>The Community Action data reports older population for the region is significant with an increase of 50.17% growth from from 2010, which is higher than the general population of Texas at 35.53% of which 70,520 are over the age of 55. The Latino and Hispanic community is the largest group in the valley with 97.75% males compared to 8.25% non Hispanic males. The Hispanic female population is 92.59% compared to 7.41% non Hispanic females. The low- income senior population is at 23.3%; thus, the need for older seniors to augment their financial status with a volunteer stipend. Approximately 66% of American unpaid caregivers are female and the typical caregiver spends 20 hours per week administering care to their loved ones. The elderly living alone struggle with Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs) such as: companionship, communicating client needs to program staff, exercising, light housekeeping, meal preparation, and receiving information on good health practices and preventions. In 2007, the Lower Rio Grande Valley Community Partnership (LRGVCP) was established in response to a national initiative organized by the United States Department of Health and Human Services to address health disparities affecting older Hispanics. The study based on a community assessment was conducted at a clinic/senior centers and aimed to determine: (1) the level of health care access for older Hispanics with type 2 diabetes living in a US– Mexico border area; and (2) personal and health correlates to health care utilization (ie, physician visits, eye care, emergency room use). In the border region known as the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas, where this study was conducted, diabetes prevalence among aging Hispanics (28%) is higher than the national level (18%). Studies also show that older Hispanics in the RGV receive less diabetes education and clinical testing, and fewer eye examinations.</p>	
Focus Area: Healthy Futures	Objective: Aging in Place
Anticipated Unduplicated	63
Anticipated Volunteer	65
Service Activity:	Companionship
Service Activity Description:	Senior Companion Volunteers communicate client needs, provide information on available resources for the elderly, provide exercise, and recreation as needed, prepare simple meals, foster client contact with family and friends, read and write letters/stories, organize and label foods.
Anticipated	H4A: Number of individuals served
Target: 110	How Measured: Tracking System
Instrument Description:	SCP Volunteer Timesheet
Anticipated	H9A: Number of individuals who report having increased social support or improved capacity for inde
Target: 110	How Measured: Tracking System
Instrument Description:	The SCP Client Data Collection Form indicates individual clients reporting increased social support or improved capacity for independent living.

Number of
Volunteer
Stations: 2

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Applicant Operational and Financial Management Survey (OFMS)

Already on File at CNCS

