

PART I - FACE SHEET

APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to confirm 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: 24SF264138	4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY: 03/07/24	FEDERAL IDENTIFIER: 24SFGTX001

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: 94.011 10b. TITLE: Foster Grandparent Program	11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT: FGP Rio Grande Valley 11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):
12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc): Hidalgo County (Mission, McAllen, Edinburg, Pharr, San Juan, Mercedes, Weslaco) and Cameron County (Brownsville) and Willacy County (Raymondville)	

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;">\$ 320,306.00</td></tr> <tr><td>b. APPLICANT</td><td style="text-align: right;">\$ 43,476.00</td></tr> <tr><td>c. STATE</td><td style="text-align: right;">\$ 5,476.00</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;">\$ 38,000.00</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;">\$ 363,782.00</td></tr> </table>	a. FEDERAL	\$ 320,306.00	b. APPLICANT	\$ 43,476.00	c. STATE	\$ 5,476.00	d. LOCAL	\$ 0.00	e. OTHER	\$ 38,000.00	f. PROGRAM INCOME	\$ 0.00	g. TOTAL	\$ 363,782.00	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	\$ 320,306.00														
b. APPLICANT	\$ 43,476.00														
c. STATE	\$ 5,476.00														
d. LOCAL	\$ 0.00														
e. OTHER	\$ 38,000.00														
f. PROGRAM INCOME	\$ 0.00														
g. TOTAL	\$ 363,782.00														
	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 45 AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers tutor school age children at the Boys and Girls Clubs in Hidalgo County (Mission, McAllen, Edinburg, Pharr, San Juan, Mercedes, Weslaco) and Cameron County (Brownsville) and Willacy County (Raymondville). AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers will serve 36 Volunteer Service Years (VSY) each year. The primary focus area of this project is Education. AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers will be responsible for 270 elementary students reading on grade level. The AmeriCorps investment of \$317,806 will be supplemented by \$43,476.

Strengthening Communities

Strengthening Communities

The AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparents Program in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV-FGP) 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 managed a long running success of five years because of the Foster Grandparents Project in Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy counties. The project has actively engaged 45 individuals over the age of 55 providing service to school age children. These efforts have made a significant impact on the academic performance of children. Through a center based network, the volunteers support and strengthen our communities by "tutoring" children in the Boys and Girls Club's in after school programs across the geographic service area. Most importantly, children continue to learn by engaging the Foster Grandparents directly and indirectly.

The mission of the County of Hidalgo 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 sponsoring agency to pave the way to support communities by engaging our Foster Grandparents to meet community challenges. In addition to the FGP project, it is the goal of the HCCSA to provide a seamless continuum of services to the vulnerable population in the geographic service area by operating, managing, and adhering to the Foster Grandparents Program Federal Regulations (45

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Chapter XXV, Part 2552). The RGV-FGP project will recruit a diverse group of individuals ages 55 and older to serve as FGP volunteers and to place them in service activities that yield impactful measurable outcomes in Education. In addition, the Foster Grandparents will provide support to school age children with exceptional need five days a week for a minimum of 5 to 40 hours weekly. They will provide individualized tutorials to promoting academic success, good character, and citizenship.

Geographically, the Rio Grande Valley is a region in Deep South Texas which includes Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy counties that are in close proximity to the Mexican border. For this reason, many traditions from Mexico have been mixed with American customs. You will find that most children are bilingual. They can switch from English to Spanish often doing so in the same sentence. Since this is a border geographic service area, there is a blending of American and Mexican cultures in the region. Out of 430,000 children, more than half live with at least one parent who is an immigrant and an estimated 13% live with one or more undocumented parents (Capps R., 2016). Foster Grandparent will help reduce the learning gap of dual language learners by provided such needed services. Children growing up in the Colonias face unique challenges and are of low socio economic status. Colonias are residential communities along the United States-Mexican border that often lack the most basic necessities for living: portable water, sewer systems, electricity, paved roads, and safe housing. Colonias were set up by developers who created unincorporated subdivisions on land that couldn't be used for farming. The developers then sold the land to low-income people searching for affordable housing. Little to no infrastructure was provided, and those who buy property in the Colonias often construct their homes in phases as they can afford materials (Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas 2017) and (Office of the Secretary of State 2017). According to the 2016 American Community Survey (ACS), the population in Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy counties is home to 1,422,228 of which 34% live below the poverty line, a number that is higher than the national average of 14% and the state average of 17%. The largest demographic living in poverty is female age 34, followed by female age 18-24. The average unemployment rate for the three counties is 11% compared to that of the state of Texas of 6.4% and the U.S. with a rate of 4.1% (ACS 2016). The Rio Grande Valley's metropolitan areas McAllen-Edinburg-Mission and Brownsville-Harlingen have finished #1 and #2 on a list of "America's Poorest Cities." In the McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, Texas (Hidalgo County) area the median household income is \$31,077 with a population of 797,810 which is the 68th highest in the state. The unemployment rate is at 12%, the below poverty line is at 37.7% and more than 37% of the population did not have health insurance which is the highest percentage of all metro areas in the U.S

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(Wall Street 2016). The Brownsville-Harlingen, Texas (Cameron County) area median household income is \$32,070 with a population of 414,123 it being 124th highest populated area in Texas. The Unemployment rate is at 11.8%, the households below poverty line is at 34.1% which is the 2nd highest in Texas. About 34% of households lived in poverty, the second-highest percentage of all metro areas, and 10.6% of all households earned less than \$10,000 a year while more than a third of residents did not have health insurance in 2011, the third-highest rate in the country (Wall Street 2016). 31.5% of the population in Hidalgo County, TX live below the government poverty line of which the largest group are females between the ages of 18 thru 34. They are unemployed or work for a minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour. Students in the Rio Grande Valley are more likely to be economically disadvantaged than other students from across the state of Texas. For example, economically disadvantaged students in Cameron County are at 84.7% and in Hidalgo County 83.3% as compared to 58.7% of Texas (2017 Center for Public Policy Priorities). The RGV-FGP will engage volunteers 55 and older seniors to remain physically and mentally active, to boost their self-esteem through continued involvement in volunteerism. The FGP project staff will recruit, retain, and train volunteers from different ethnicity groups who meet federal program guidelines, who have income limitations, and are eager to positively impact the lives of economically disadvantaged and exceptional children. The volunteers will be afforded the opportunity to provide in-class academic support in small classroom group settings.

There is a great need for residents 55 years of age and older to augment their annual earnings and the FGP project is a great opportunity. Through active engagement, volunteers will help improve their own personal self-esteem through continued involvement with children. Thus, giving them a sense of purpose enabling them to participate and help make a significant difference in community based programs across the geographic service area while in service with AmeriCorps Seniors FGP.

Furthermore, the Region I Education Service Center for the geographical area 2022 data reports that children in kindergarten enter school with limited vocabulary and are dual language learners. By the third grade, children from low-income families who are not reading at grade level are six times less likely to graduate from high school than students who are proficient in English. It further explained that children from low-income families are less likely to have access to high quality early education, and less likely to enter school prepared for on grade level success. The FGP volunteers will provide service to numerous children daily in the Focus Area: Education, K-12 Success. By providing tutorials to students after school, the FGP project will be able to measure the number of youth served (ED1A), and the number of students with improved academic performance (ED5A) by implementing systems

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that are reliable and valid.

Description of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility.

In the County of Hidalgo, the Hispanic and Latino group are the majority in the Rio Grand Valley, Texas. 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 comprises 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 consists of supporting migrant families, support with legal aid, housing, training and education. One of the member is an officer with the "Knights of Columbus" and they support the members of the communities by providing free 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 reaches diverse groups 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 also provide tutoring sessions in designated areas of the communities where children reside to help the students who are struggling with language barriers. Mount Olive Ministries is a non-profit organization where people of color gather. Mt. Olive has been a recruitment site for AmeriCorps Seniors. Mt. Olive supports all diverse groups 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,

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the agency has remote sites and deploys mobile units throughout varying communities in an effort to reach all community members. 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 Rio Grande Valley-Foster Grandparents Program will recruit a volunteer pool who is reflective of the community demographics. The Foster Grandparents Program will engage seniors 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. Income eligible Foster Grandparents will receive a stipend of \$4 for every direct service hour provided to children. The stipend is not regarded as income and does not affect other benefits or assistance the volunteer may receive. In addition, Foster Grandparents will undergo and must pass a criminal history background check and an interview before providing direct service hours to children. The volunteers will be placed in volunteer stations in close proximity to their homes as much as possible; thus giving them a sense of purpose by enabling them to participate and help the children in their communities. All volunteers will receive PPE (masks, gloves, wipes, face shields, sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, etc.) to ensure the safety of all volunteers and children. They will receive AmeriCorps Seniors branded gear to be used during direct service hours. The FGP project staff will strive to ensure all volunteers receive a high quality experience in volunteerism by using their experiences, abilities, and talents. The FGP project staff and AmeriCorps Seniors Advisory Council will recruit potential volunteers who meet the income eligibility guidelines to begin serving. The volunteers may serve a minimum of 5 hours and a maximum of 40 hours a week. The sponsoring agency will implement a FGP Project Recruitment Plan that has a systemic infrastructure which includes recruitment sites where people age 55 and older gather or receive services within the geographic area. The University of Texas at RGV Engagement Zone and the Volunteer Match websites will be used to recruit volunteers. Recruitment will take place in low-income housing communities that are in close proximity to FGP volunteer sites and through community sponsored events for seniors. Recruitment will be a continual process throughout the duration of the grant year. New FGP volunteers will receive a 20 hour in-service orientation and a minimum of 24 hours of in-service training annually on various topics that will enhance their volunteerism. The FGP staff will be using the RGV-FGP Volunteer Handbook addressing rules, regulations, policies, and procedures from the RGV-FGP project and the AmeriCorps.gov website.

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Volunteers will receive a scheduled 4 hour monthly in-service training focusing on the project's focus area (Education) K-12 Success objectives, allowable service activities, and review of the work plan/instrument to ensure all children meet performance measures. They will receive extensive training throughout the year. The trainings span from a variety of activities whereby volunteers grow into experienced volunteers; thus, giving rise to empowerment for volunteers to excel in their service to their community. The FGP volunteers will engage in formal and informal recognition activities, appreciation events, attend health fairs, receive certificates and incentives of appreciation, participate in socials at volunteer stations, and be provided the opportunity to lead and be highly involved with FGP special projects. The FGP staff and volunteers will keep open lines of communication to contact volunteers by using emails, flyers, telephone calls, the local media and the sponsor and county websites. In addition, the FGP staff will visit volunteer stations regularly to advocate, build a positive rapport, and create long lasting relationships with all volunteers, volunteer station managers, children and parents. The volunteers will be provided with an anonymous 5 question survey to complete annually so the volunteers have an opportunity to voice their opinion and provide ideas on the FGP project. The survey will be reviewed by the FGP staff and the volunteer stations managers to improve the projects performance and progress.

Program Management

Program Management

The County of Hidalgo Community Service Agency and the Rio Grand Valley- FGP project staff will use the revised RGV-FGP Handbook with established effective practices and procedures for developing successful volunteer stations that meet community needs. The FGP 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. Also, the handbook includes procedures on the proper manner volunteer station managers train, assign, and evaluate volunteer service activities. The FGP staff will pursue a positive working relationship with all volunteer station managers by keeping clear lines of open communication. Moreover, the FGP staff will ensure that training is provided for the roles and responsibilities of a volunteer station, i.e., developing volunteer assignment plans, addressing service activities to be performed by the volunteer that will be verified by the volunteer station manager. An RGV-FGP Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be a formal written agreement between the sponsor and the FGP volunteer stations and will be signed by both parties (sponsor and volunteer

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station) before placing volunteers. 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 FGP project and the volunteer stations and will be the primary source of documentation establishing the relationship between the sponsor and volunteer station. The FGP staff will ensure the MOU be reviewed, renegotiated, signed, and dated at least every three years. Also, the MOU may be amended at any time by mutual agreement. The FGP staff will periodically work with volunteer stations managers and volunteers to consistently up-date the data recording/reporting documents (volunteer assignment plan and work plans) which will list service activities with measurable outcomes. All pertinent documents will be kept in a central location at individual volunteer station files in the FGP Supervisor's Office. The five member FGP AmeriCorps Seniors Advisory Council will meet quarterly with the sponsoring agency and the FGP staff to provide guidance and support for the project to ensure all volunteer stations comply with policies and procedures of the project. The project staff will place a strong emphasis on creating and implementing work plans for FGP volunteers that align with identified community needs and service activities in the primary focus of school readiness. All Foster Grandparent volunteers work plans will list the service activities the children will be working on. The output and outcome instruments will be listed and described in detail in each individual volunteer assignment plan. The RGV-FGP project will strive to meet the program targets and outputs/outcomes at 100% by the end of the grant year period.

Organizational Capability

Organizational Capacity

The County of Hidalgo administrative staff and the Community Service Agency's Executive Director has managed numerous federal and state grants. CHCSA is governed by the Hidalgo County Commissioner's Court and the CHCSA Board of Directors. The agency has policies and procedures for all its programs and departments including the Fiscal Department. The agency has established policies and procedures for fiscal procedures, day-to-day project operations, program statues, regulations, OMB circulars requirements, accountability, efficient and effective use of available resources for the project. The CHCSA's Advisory Board and the Rio Grande Valley AmeriCorps Seniors Advisory Council will also provide the FGP staff with governance, sound programmatic operational support to ensure full project implementation with fidelity. The AmeriCorps Seniors Advisory Council members will meet quarterly or as needed to assess and address community needs, strategic planning and the progress of the project.

The CHCSA's Fiscal Department will provide fiscal oversight and use the Federal Division of the

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Payment Management System and the eGrants portal to submit Federal Financial Expenditure Reports quarterly/semi-annually and comply with due dates. All local funds and donations will be tracked using the FGP project in-kind document. The FGP project will undergo an annual audit by an accounting consultant group. The FGP program pays an annual flat fee of \$1,000 for their service. The Fiscal's Department Division Manager will provide fiscal support to the AmeriCorps Senior Program staff. 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, rent-mortgage assistance, and a \$300,000 grant in support of veterans. The Executive Director also has the necessary skills sets to manage and oversee the FGP project, and also has the experience to develop and implement internal policies, operating procedures, personnel management, and fiscal operations for the FGP project with full transparency. The RSVP Program Director holds a Master's Degree in Educational Administration and Mid-Management. The RSVP director brings 40 years of experience in the field of education and educational administration, and has managed federal and state grants of up \$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 acting RSVP Vice President for the Texas Senior Corps Association and has been instrumental to other AmeriCorps Seniors Directors. The director will provide direct support to all the FGP staff and volunteers 15% of the time and the salary will be allocated in the budget narrative in the amount of \$10,639 for 12 months. The Foster Grandparent's Supervisor's holds a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work. This position is full-time with a salary of \$44,512 for 12 month, and is assigned duties and responsibilities for the project's daily operations 100% of the time. The FGP Supervisor will adhere to the County of Hidalgo Community Service Agency's policies and procedures for program's, fiscal, human resources operations, and AmeriCorps Seniors rules and regulations of the FGP project. The FGP Recruiter's position is full-time and will be assigned to the project 100% of the time with a salary of \$32,240 for 12 months. The recruiter will be assigned duties and responsibilities for the project's daily management. The FGP Accountant will be a shared position with the Senior Companions Program 61%, RSVP 3%, and the Foster Grandparents Program 34%, of the time. The Accountant's salary is \$42,120 for 12 months of which \$15,163 will be allocated in the FGP budget narrative. The accountant's salary is based on the number of employees and volunteers for each program. The accountant will be assigned duties and responsibilities for the project's fiscal, and programmatic operations 100% of the time, and will work jointly with the agency's Fiscal Divisions

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Manager, the FGP Supervisor, and the Director to implement the grant funds with fidelity and full transparency. The accountant will assist and prepare the FGP staff with monthly and quarterly projections for volunteer stipends and mileage. Expenditure and revenues reports will be reconciled accurately with minimal errors and provided to the FGP Supervisor, and the Director as needed. 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's Manager to ensure all required reports are completed on time. All expenditures of the project funds will be effectively, and efficiently monitored using the program regulations. The Division's Manager will review all reports prior to submission with complete accuracy. The on-line course, "Key Concepts of Financial Management" on Litmos will be completed by the CSA's General Accountant to ensure full compliance with the FGP regulations (45 CFR 2552). The CSA Executive Director, FGP Supervisor, and the Director will work with all the fiscal staff to regularly compare the budget to actual costs. The FGP Supervisor and the recruiter will attend approved AmeriCorps Seniors Convenings and trainings annually to learn first-hand about appropriate operating procedures and accurate implementation of the AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparents Program to ensure the accomplishment of the program objectives. The agency will archive a personnel file for all its staff members that will include timesheets, mileage logs, job application, signed job descriptions, criminal history background checks (45 CFR 2540.200-207), certificates of training, performance evaluation and other pertinent information. The NSCHS annual training in LITMOS is completed by all staff, and the certificates are kept in the personnel files and are available upon request.

In an effort to fully implement the RGV-FGP project successfully, the staff and volunteer expenses are necessary.

The Director, the FGP Supervisor, the FGP Recruiter, and the Accountant are all FGP staff members. The project's personnel expenses and fringe benefits in the amount of \$146,745 are itemized in Part I of the budget narrative. The personnel salaries and percentages of fringe benefits are comparable to the County of Hidalgo's personnel policies.

Local staff travel encompasses all the southern region border covering three counties. The Supervisor and the recruiter provide services at 100% of the time and will be incurring local travel at \$0.670 a mile as per state policy. They will travel to train, recruit, and place volunteers in locations across the geographic service areas. The FGP supervisor and the recruiter will attend one State and one National Conference to gain program knowledge and enrich the programs' overall operations. The FGP supervisor and the recruiter will travel long distance to attend one state and one national convening

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using the county and state rate policies. Essential office supplies are necessary for program implementation and are to be used on a daily basis by program staff. Janitorial supplies will be purchased monthly to keep the program office clean. Personal and Protective Equipment are required to ensure the safety and well being of all staff and volunteers during working and service hours. Ink cartridges are needed for staff office printers for program use. The NSCHS checks for all staff including the FGP supervisor, director, recruiter, and the accountant are requirements of the program's grant. The office copier is on a lease and all departments pay a portion of the monthly rental fee based on the number of personnel in each department. The accounting software is necessary to process the program's fiscal budget requirements, and the annual fee is \$1,300. Hot spot equipment and internet is required during staff local travel to locate destinations while traveling. The FGP staff will use hotspots and internet during training and when meeting with volunteers at remote sites where internet is not available. The National and State Membership fees are paid so staff can engage directly with other program supervisors and trainings. The postage meter is used by the program staff to stamp envelopes in bulk for a monthly fee of \$10. Bank checks are needed to pay volunteer stipends and to pay vendors who require checks for services and products. Volunteers are provided a small meal, snacks, water, coffee, and tea/soft drinks during the required project training, and while attending special events. The cost for food has increased, and each volunteer will be allotted \$63 for the 12 months which is approximately \$5 a month for each volunteer. 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 a troubled program year due to COVID-19. Uniforms are a favorite for volunteers and all branded polos, tees and jackets are worn by volunteers to promote and provide an awareness of AmeriCorps Seniors during service hours. Supplemental accident and auto liability insurance is provided to all volunteers while providing service. Recognition items are purchased on a monthly basis to recognize volunteers. They are provided snack bags with candies, cookies, and chips of minimal cost. Volunteers receive an award and a certificate of appreciation for their participation in AmeriCorps Seniors. Volunteers are recognized during Senior week and are provided a gift card. All this is done in an effort to motivate and and retain volunteers in service. AmeriCorps branded recruitment items are used by recruiters to promote and provide awareness of the AmeriCorps Seniors program to all diverse groups in different venues across the region. AmeriCorps Seniors branded promotional items are purchased in bulk with the project's location and telephone information printed on them and will be handed out during recruitment events to all members of the community to promote AmeriCorps Seniors. The

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recruitment items have increased in cost and more items are being purchased because the recruiters and the supervisors attend more community events to recruit volunteers.

This is why the cost of recruitment items increased from last year. Volunteers will travel between volunteer stations, trainings, and special events and will be reimbursed .55/miles on a monthly basis. This figure is significantly higher than that of last year due to volunteers not traveling due to the pandemic and not being able to return to service. Google maps are printed for each volunteer who incurs mileage. This mileage information is used to record the mileage on the volunteer's mileage log. Every effort is made to place volunteers in close proximity to their volunteer station when possible. NSCHS funding is necessary for new volunteers. Truescreen fees are \$28 for each volunteer and \$30 for Field Print. The expenditures are for a 12 month grant period.

Other

Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

Forty-five volunteers will engage in the Primary Focus Area (Education) service activities of the Rio Grande Valley Foster Grandparents Program with a stipend of \$4/hour and .55/mile. All FGP stipend hours will be utilized effectively so that the maximum number of children in the geographic service area receive academic support. With funding provided from AmeriCorps Seniors, Hidalgo County, and the State of Texas, the geographic service area's FGP volunteers will provide tutorials and mentoring to approximately 270 children in the Boys and Girls Clubs. The FGP staff members will implement the FGP project with fidelity and transparency to meet the projects goals. Hidalgo County, the sponsor, will provide the required 10% match for the 12 month base funding of \$317,806. Hidalgo County (the sponsor) will collaborate with the AmeriCorps Seniors FGP Advisory Council Members to schedule meetings with intermediaries and geographic service area stakeholders to present the impact of the FGP project in an effort to secure additional funding. All project personnel will be committed, dedicated full-time to the overall management of the RGV-FGP project, undergo criminal history background checks using 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 RGV-FGP 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 contribute to the achievement of the project goals and objectives.

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Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility

1. The County of Hidalgo and the Community Service Agency is being charged with addressing poverty. CHCSA 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 CHCSA 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 to 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 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 clothing to the community at large. 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 diverse and underserved individuals in the community to ensure everyone has equal access and inclusion in receiving and providing available services. Individuals will be provided the opportunity to be included in volunteerism across the geographic service area. Our goals are geared towards ensuring 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 and conversation on DEIA and how to sensitively collect information for data reporting. Provide direction on how to access statistical apps of data that are currently being utilized across the country on DEIA would be

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helpful. If we could access this available data sources, we could get ideas from other parts of the county as to how they are collecting and approaching 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, our organization has continued to provide service after the pandemic. Prior to COVID-19, the FGP volunteer stations were in the Head Start Centers within our communities. The Head Start Centers closed during COVID-19 and did not allow the volunteers to return to the centers due to the restriction placed by school administrators due to COVID-19 and the Texas Education Agency. We hope to initiate new Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with the Head Start Programs in the future. Our director was instrumental in collaborating with the Boys and Girls Clubs immediately after Head Start closed its doors. She introduced the AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparents Program to the Boys and Girls Clubs staff members in cities across our region and was successful. In collaboration with the Boys and Girls Clubs administrators, a Memorandum of Understanding was created to begin service. Now, we are back in full force with most of our returning volunteers providing service in the Boys and Girls Clubs in after school programs working with underserved children. At the moment, new FGP sites are being added and new volunteers are being trained as we continue to expand the FGP program to more communities in need. The Hidalgo Health Department staff, and the AmeriCorps Seniors staff members worked endless hours making sure all family members and volunteers received a wrist band to access COVID-19 vaccines. Unfortunately, we lost staff, family, friends, volunteers, and teachers as they succumbed to the COVID-19 virus. 99% of the FGP volunteer cohort is up to date with their vaccines. In the short time post COVID-19, the FGP program started back without delay, and service by the volunteers has resumed.

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

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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 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

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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 Volunteer Station Feedback Form (VSFF) is used as a monitoring tool which addresses the prohibited activities document. All the program VSFF 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 prohibited activities are included in the site visit training for each volunteer station which is reviewed and agreed upon by the authorized representative. 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 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 FGP staff and station managers will be using the individualized volunteer assignment plan to collect high quality performance measurement data.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

PNS Amendment

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 Tutoring	
<p>Community Need to be Addressed:</p> <p>The Region I Education Service Center for the geographic service area 2021 data reports children in kindergarten enter school with limited vocabulary and are dual language learners. By the end of the third grade, children from low- income families who are not reading at grade level are six times less likely to graduate from high school than students who are proficient. For over 100 years, Boys and Girls Clubs have been at the forefront of youth development. The Boys and Girls Clubs can be the catalyst to providing access to mentors who help promote academic success, and social- emotional development. Today, more than 345,000 boys and girls call their Club home. It is at the Club, where young people learn and grow. The Club's goal is that all youths graduate from high school and are prepared for higher education, trade school, military service or employment. The Boys and Girls Clubs provide a safe place for young people to play, grow and learn while empowering youth to excel in school. In the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, Boys and Girls Clubs plan an active role in their community. The mission of the Boys and Girls Clubs is to inspire and enable all young people to reach their full academic potential, be productive, responsible and caring citizens.</p>	
Focus Area: Education	Objective: K- 12 Success
Anticipated Unduplicated	36
Anticipated Volunteer	45
Service Activity: Tutoring	
Service Activity Description:	Elementary age students will be tutored in small groups during after school attendance at the Boys and Girls Clubs.
Anticipated	ED1A: Number of individuals served
Target: 270	How Measured: Tracking System
Instrument Description: The individual student Assignment Plan and the volunteer timesheet will be used to the number of individuals served.	
Anticipated	ED5A: Number of students with improved academic performance
Target: 270	How Measured: Tracking System
Instrument Description: The individual student- volunteer Assignment Plan will be used to measure student outcomes.	

Number of
Volunteer 12
Stations:

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Applicant Operational and Financial Management Survey (OFMS)

Already on File at CNCS

