

Narrative Checklist in Detail

Section A: Strengthening Communities

1. Describe the community you serve including key economic, demographic and geographic features.

Economic features

- Who are the main employers in your area?
- Describe the poverty and wealth that exists in your service area.
- What are the major cities within your service area?

Demographic information

- Is the area rural or urban? What is the population?
- Include the latest census information.
- Describe the diversity that exists in your community. This may include diversity of race, age, income, education level, or disability.
- How old are residents of your service area?
- What is the education level among residents?

Geographic features

- What counties do you serve?
- What geographic features exist in your area (farm land, rivers, lakes, etc.) and how do these features affect residents?

2. Describe how you ensure local input into program design and evaluation.

- What role does your advisory council play in your program?
- How do you use feedback given by your volunteer stations?
- What other ways does the community support or give feedback to your program?

WEAK	Advisory Council provides input and reviews the annual assessments.
STRONG	A twelve member Advisory Council representing area agencies provides input, guidance and direction, leads fundraising, and reviews annual volunteer and station assessments.
STRONGEST	A twelve member Advisory Council, made up of representatives from local human service agencies, law enforcement, health care, meet quarterly. Their role is to provide guidance and direction to Project Director, lead PR and fundraising efforts, work w/local media to showcase project events and accomplishments, identify opportunities in the community for partnerships, review annual assessments to evaluate program accomplishments, and assist in developing annual programs goals.

3. Describe the relationship between your program and the community including how you select community partners and the role of each partner.

- Name your main community partners and explain how you originally selected the partners. These partners may include organizations that have representatives on your advisory council, support from your local government, or other key players. The partnerships discussed in this section should not include volunteer stations. Volunteer stations are discussed under the Program Management section.
- What specific role does each community partner play in your program and how did you collaboratively arrive at this role?
- What other support does the community give to your program?

4. Provide information about how you will build public awareness of and support for the program within the community.

- What current methods do you use to notify the public about your program? Methods may include press releases to local media, newspaper articles, newsletters, websites, public service announcements, billboards and signs.
- What plans are in place to expand public awareness of your program?
- If there are any barriers to public support, describe these and explain what you will do to overcome them.

5. Describe how you will bring together people of diverse backgrounds.

- Diversity should have been explained in the first section of the Strengthening Communities section. In what ways does your program bring together the diversity in your community? This may include diversity among volunteers, diversity among volunteers and the people that they serve, or even diversity among volunteers and those who work at volunteer stations.
- If there are any barriers to reaching people from certain backgrounds, these should be described and efforts to overcome these barriers should be explained.
- Diversity can include:
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Culture (lifetime residents and those who have relocated)
 - Incomes Levels
 - Physical Abilities
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Ethnic and Racial backgrounds
 - Skill/Education Levels
 - Where they live within the countie(s) being served

6. Describe how you mobilize community resources.

- Describe the resources that you mobilize outside of your required match. What resources do you use from your community partners, such as training materials, media, or leveraging volunteers outside of your program? Describe any innovative uses of the resources in your community.

7. Describe how, if at all, volunteers will participate in community activities.

- Describe the existing community activities in which your volunteers participate. These activities may be ones that are incorporated into your work plans or activities separate from your program that demonstrate the involvement of your volunteers within the community. You may consider boards or advisory groups in which your volunteers participate and special events (theatre ushering, county or state fairs) that receive assistance from your volunteers.

Volunteers participate in community activities	<p><i>One community activity our volunteers participate in is the Whoville Memorial Day Festival, a 3 day event held to increase support and resources to help the local senior and childcare centers. The event is sponsored by the Whoville County Board of Supervisors, Seuss Veterans and Senior Center and the Horton Society. This year the Festival is celebrating its 50th anniversary with support provided by our volunteers for the past 15 years. On average 20 volunteers participate each day. Their contributions begin in the initial stages with 1 of our volunteers serving on the Planning Committee and 2 others on Parade Committee. During the event volunteers serve as parking attendants; vendor registration tent; food service; kiddie play park and other activities. Proceeds from last year's Festival resulted in a donation of approximately \$10,000 to the local senior and childcare centers.</i></p>
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8. Describe how you enhance the capacity of organizations and institutions within the community.

- What are your volunteers doing through their service to expand or improve local organizations?

Volunteers enhance capacity of community orgs & institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Efforts by Senior Corps Volunteer enhance the capacity of organizations within the community. Senior Corps Volunteers spend a significant amount of time providing one-on-one assistance to 24 children at 4 local elementary schools. The 12 volunteers provided a total of 1500 hours and, according to school representatives, grades significantly improved for 18 of the 24 children with some improvement for the other 6 children. More importantly, all the students showed dramatic improvement in social skills and caused less disruption; thus provided a healthy learning environment for all the classrooms.</i>
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9. Describe how you will work to integrate senior service into the activities of other service programs within the community.

- What other service programs (existing volunteer programs) are your volunteers participating in that did not originally include senior volunteers? For example, if there is an elementary tutoring program in your community that did not originally have very many older adult volunteers, explain how your program is enhancing the tutoring program through the use of senior volunteers.

Section B: Recruitment and Development of Volunteers

1. Describe how you will assure a high quality experience for volunteers that offers opportunities such as building new skills, developing leadership potential, reflecting on the meaning of service to the community, and enhancing the quality of their own lives.

- Each section of this narrative question should be addressed in some way using specific examples.

2. Describe how you will build a corps of volunteers, including recruiting, retaining, and recognizing senior volunteers.

- Describe your current recruitment methods as well as any new methods you will be implementing.
- Describe what you are currently doing to ensure that volunteers continue to be involved with your program. This should include your current retention rate as well as the current number of volunteers in your program.
- Describe the recognition activities that you currently do for your volunteers.

WEAK	Developed volunteer recruitment plan 3 years ago.
STRONG	Developed volunteer recruitment plan 3 years ago; it's actively implemented and outcomes reviewed annually.
STRONGEST	In the past, we've experienced some difficulty in recruitment, averaging only 2 to 3% increase in volunteers each year. Three years ago we worked with the United Way to develop a volunteer recruitment plan and have implemented it annually since that time. Some components of this plan include enhancing relationships with local media outlets (increasing PSAs), increased participation in regional health and faith-based fairs, presenting and providing materials to committee of local HR Directors, and giving incentives to current volunteers who recruit friends or family. These efforts have resulted in very positive outcomes, resulting in a 10% increase in recruitment, growing from 100 volunteers to 135 over the past two years. We will continue to implement this plan during the upcoming year and continue to evaluate its effectiveness.

3. Explain how you will provide training and technical assistance to project staff, volunteers, volunteer station supervisors, and community participation groups.

- Be sure to address training and technical assistance provided to each of the 4 groups mentioned and give specific examples of the types and frequency of trainings offered.

Section C: Program Management

1. Describe how you will develop and manage volunteer stations and volunteer assignments that address specified community needs and provide meaningful placements for the volunteers.

- Specific examples should be given about your process for developing new volunteer stations. This should include the process for ensuring that all stations have a signed MOU and other necessary paperwork, ensuring that the station fits into your work plans, how volunteer requests and community needs are factored into station development, and your process for continued communication with station directors.

2. Describe your processes for assessment of project performance to assure all goals and objectives are met and that these result in a high quality project. This should include an annual assessment of project accomplishments and impact on the community and/or client population.

- Who is surveyed as part of your annual assessment?
- What do you do with the assessment results?
- Who is responsible for conducting the assessment and compiling the results?
- What tools do you use for project assessment?

3. Describe how you manage information and data to demonstrate the concrete impacts of the project and its volunteers.

- What tracking system do you use for volunteer hours and impact-based work plans?
- When and how is this information collected?

4. Describe how you manage project resources, both financial and in-kind, to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources.

- What specific accountability policies exist at your sponsoring organization? For example, is the person who writes checks separate from the person who reconciles bank statements?
- Who manages the budget for the project?
- How are resources tracked to be sure that the grantee match is met?
- For examples of required accountability practices, see sections C.7.-C.12. of the Senior Corps Compliance Monitoring Tool.

5. Describe how you secure resources, such as cash and in-kind contributions, to sustain and expand the project.

- What methods currently exist to secure the grantee match and what do you plan to do in the future to ensure that you continue to meet your grantee match?
- How do you plan to increase your grantee match so your project can grow?
- Is there diversity in your grantee match so that the project can continue if one resource should be lost?

Section D: Organizational Capacity

1. Describe your organization's experience in the proposed program area.

- How long has your sponsor been involved with your Senior Corps program?
- What makes your sponsor a good fit for running this Senior Corps program?
- How has the program grown while sponsored by your organization?

2. Describe key staff positions responsible for program management, background, and experience of these staff members and/or plans to select and support additional staff.

- Each staff position in the personnel section of the budget should be described in this section, including the person who supervises the project director and the person who is in charge of the fiscal responsibilities.
- What are the responsibilities of each of these staff positions?
- Which staff person works on the renewal application? Be sure this is reflected accurately in the budget to demonstrate money in the excess column if the director works on the renewal.
- What makes the people in these positions qualified for their jobs?

3. Describe your agency's financial management systems and past experience managing federal grant funds.

- What does your sponsoring organization do to assist in financial management of your Senior Corps grant?
- What other federal grants does your sponsor operate or have they operated in the past?

4. Describe your agency's track record in successfully managing volunteer programs, involvement with seniors, and impact-based programming.

- What other volunteer programs, senior programs, and impact-based programs does your sponsor run? How have these programs demonstrated success?

5. Describe your organization's capacity to assure the project has adequate facilities, equipment, supplies, purchasing procedures, and personnel management support, including clearly defined roles for staff and administrators; internal policies, including a travel policy.

- All 8 sections of this question need to be addressed in detail. It is not enough to state that these pieces exist at your sponsor, you should describe them in detail. For example, do not simply state that there is a travel policy. Instead, explain what the travel policy is including how travel is approved, tracked, and reimbursed.

6. Describe your organization's procedures or systems for self-assessment, evaluation, and continuous improvement.

- This question specifically addresses your sponsor's process for assessing the organization as a whole. Information shared in this section should be completely separate from the project-specific assessment described in the Program Management section.

Section E: Other

1. Summarize your efforts in each of the strategic priority areas, as applicable.

- It is not required that you address each strategic priority area in this section. Instead, describe your *extra* efforts towards one or two specific strategic priorities. If strategic priorities are described in this section, it is expected that these strategic priorities are easily found in the work plans.

Common Mistakes

- "Parroting Back" the question, and not really providing an answer
- Not explaining **HOW** the program is addressing the question
- Only answering part of the question
- Only providing data to answer a question
- Providing too much information
- Assuming the reviewer knows all about you, your program, the sponsor, where you're located, the community you serve, what you do, what you've done, etc.
- Not providing information because it was included in another area.
- Waiting until the last minute and/or not allowing sufficient time to develop a strong, thorough application.
- Submitting the same info year after year.
- Writing the grant from the Project Director's perspective rather than the sponsor's perspective.