



# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Pittsburgh Cares seeks funds in the amount of \$148,805.00 from the Corporation for National and Community Service in support of the development of a robust RSVP project in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, which includes the city of Pittsburgh.

The mission of Pittsburgh Cares is to maximize the impact of our regional nonprofit partners by mobilizing volunteers and engaging the community. The vision is to position the greater Pittsburgh region as a national leader in growing a sustainable culture of volunteerism and community involvement.

Pittsburgh Cares is the largest volunteer agency in Pittsburgh. As a leader in volunteer engagement, Pittsburgh Cares connects all sectors in the Pittsburgh region -- individuals, businesses, non-profit organizations and governments -- to meet community need through volunteerism capacity building.

Pittsburgh Cares has the capacity to operate direct community service programs; experience and interest in the needs of older adults; and the ability to develop strong community financial and programmatic support.

Allegheny County RSVP will place 500 seniors in 54 nonprofit organizations for community service. Allegheny County RSVP volunteers will contribute more than 35,000 hours of service to county residents, a computed savings to the county in excess of \$718,000 per year. RSVP volunteers will serve in six focus areas that are also six of the eleven defined focus areas of Pittsburgh Cares: Education, Health and Wellness, Veterans and Military Families, Environmental Stewardship, Economic Opportunity and Disaster Service.

## Strengthening Communities

The Pittsburgh region has been undergoing a comprehensive economic makeover as major healthcare centers, tech startups and higher education facilities increasingly replace rusted smokestacks and steel mills. Top tier universities such as Carnegie Mellon and the University of Pittsburgh have lured major international corporations, including Google and Disney, to establish offices here. Pittsburgh has also weathered the most recent recession relatively well, experiencing a stable housing market and unemployment rate below the national average.

Despite the overall economic outlook appearing rather robust, Pittsburgh is remains home to startling numbers of at-risk and underserved individuals. The region has suffered the highest rate of poverty among working-age African-Americans of any of the 40 largest metropolitan regions in the country, with 28% of African-Americans ages 18 to 64 living in poverty in 2008. The Pittsburgh region is also first in the country in the rate of poverty among African-American children under age 5, with nearly two-thirds living in poverty in 2008.

The city of Pittsburgh is also home to more than 50,000 residents over the age of 65. Nearly 20,000 seniors live entirely on their own, leading to an ever-increasing demand for senior services and independent living assistance just as state budgets for social services are dramatically reduced.

The picture would be far bleaker if it were not for the region's vibrant nonprofit sector, which contributes to Pittsburgh's recent successes and accolades. The nonprofit sector comprises nearly 25% of all employment in the city of Pittsburgh, and it continues to grow each year.

However, nonprofit operating budgets fail to grow at a pace that matches the growing demand for services. Faced with such limited financial resources, nonprofits turn increasingly to one-time and ongoing volunteers to expand service output. Pittsburgh enjoys an abundance of individuals willing to

offer their time and talents, with residents logging more than 73 million volunteer hours each year. Yet the need for more volunteers, particularly volunteers with strong skills and professional experience, persists.

With more than 600 nonprofit partners, Pittsburgh Cares, the premiere volunteer agency in the Pittsburgh region, is uniquely positioned within the community to identify where the most pressing need for volunteers exists and to connect individuals and businesses with nonprofits. Again, our primary mission is to increase capacity and enhance the impact of regional nonprofit partners by strategically maximizing volunteer time. By continuously improving our volunteer recruitment and management practices, we also aim to provide volunteers with a high-quality service experience that fuels further action.

During our most recent fiscal year, our efforts resulted in more than 18,000 volunteer slots filled, 2,400 projects completed, and 70,000 service hours logged. Our volunteer needs assessments, partner surveys, and community volunteer calendar enable us to incorporate nonprofit input in all program design, including RSVP. We also place emphasis on providing nonprofits with skill-based volunteers whose valuable talents and knowledge immediately enhance organizational capacity and increase service output.

Pittsburgh Cares accomplishments and strong reputation with the community at-large have allowed us to establish a diverse base of nearly 8,000 active volunteers, including more than 1,200 individuals above the age of 55. We thus have the ability to alert thousands of community residents and nonprofit professionals in the region of major volunteer opportunities and initiatives. RSVP would be no exception. There is simply no organization in the region better prepared to mobilize and manage participants in the Allegheny County RSVP program.

## **Recruitment and Development**

Pittsburgh Cares offers a range of service opportunities, convenient scheduling, and flexible commitment levels, making it easy for anyone to become involved in volunteering in the Pittsburgh region. By partnering with more than 600 nonprofit organizations, Pittsburgh Cares allows volunteers to get involved in a diverse array of impact areas, including: adult education and literacy, animal support, arts & culture, children and youth, community events, disaster relief, environmental protection and preservation, health and wellness, homelessness and hunger, renovation-revitalization-repair, senior care, and veterans care. We offer ways for residents to effectively engage with their surrounding community practically every day of the year.

All nonprofit partners are screened and approved by the Director of Community Programs. Nonprofits must be established 501(c)3 organizations and prohibit discrimination in their volunteer, service and hiring practices. Site visits and volunteer needs assessments are conducted before a nonprofit can request Pittsburgh Cares volunteers, ensuring that agencies have the capacity and facilities for providing volunteers a safe, high quality service experience.

Volunteer opportunities are also screened and approved by the Director of Community Programs, ensuring that volunteers are utilizing their skills in order to positively impact the community. Approved volunteer requests must demonstrate how a project will be a worthwhile volunteer experience, how the volunteer efforts are meeting a pressing community need, and the population(s) being served. Requests to use volunteers for partisan political efforts or to proselytize are not approved. We also request that volunteers submit feedback in their online volunteer account after each project, which is viewable by both Pittsburgh Cares and the managing nonprofit partner. Our top priority is to provide each volunteer with a meaningful service experience.

With an active base of nearly 8,000 unique volunteers, Pittsburgh Cares is a leading regional expert in volunteer recruitment, retention, and recognition. We would begin building our Allegheny County RSVP volunteer corps by directly reaching out to retirees and seniors within our existing base and inviting them to RSVP kickoffs and open houses throughout the city. We have always recognized the value of senior volunteers, and we would continue to recruit additional RSVP volunteers at rotary clubs, senior volunteer fairs, and community events. We also recognize the recent studies around veteran's interests in volunteering and the associated benefits, therefore, Allegheny County RSVP will develop a plan to recruit veteran volunteers. Pittsburgh Cares partnered with the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in 2011 on the event's volunteer efforts, recruiting over 3000 volunteers and establishing relationships with numerous veterans and military families through the process. Allegheny County RSVP will use this network along with established relationship with the VFW and other area nonprofits that serve veterans to assist with recruitment. We also have the opportunity to promote RSVP to hundreds of volunteers at our service projects each month. Further, our strong relationships with local radio stations and media outlets enable us to promote and build excitement around RSVP throughout the region.

Having managed volunteers and refined our processes for 20 years, Pittsburgh Cares understands that the key to volunteer retention is always providing volunteers with high quality service experiences, which is why we take seriously the aforesaid nonprofit screening and approval processes. Individuals want to be sure their time is being utilized in the most worthwhile manner and truly making a positive impact on their community.

Recognition is also directly linked to retention; volunteer service cannot be taken for granted. Pittsburgh Cares and its nonprofit partners would host biannual volunteer recognition events, highlighting RSVP volunteers that have logged the most service hours and demonstrating the impact of the program at large. We will also incorporate RSVP into our existing volunteer recognition efforts. For example, we

currently partner with the Pittsburgh Pirates and offer volunteers that log service hours a complimentary baseball ticket; the volunteer that completes the most service hours during the regular baseball season is recognized on the field during a home game. We plan to acknowledge the "all-star" RSVP volunteers at these ceremonies in the future.

Another way to improve volunteer retention is to ensure that RSVP work stations and volunteers are properly introduced to the program. Pittsburgh Cares will provide pre-service orientations that introduce new RSVP volunteers to the program's policies and procedures, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the nonprofit sector and services in the Pittsburgh region. Pittsburgh Cares will also host a required orientation to staff of any nonprofit serving as an RSVP work station, educating them on the RSVP program and training them in volunteer management best practices. We would also work with the stations to put together onsite pre-service orientations and handbooks for RSVP volunteers. Pittsburgh Cares views RSVP as a unique and exciting way to further engage seniors in the Pittsburgh community, and we are willing to use every resource at our disposal to establish a quality and high impact program.

#### **Program Management**

Pittsburgh Cares will hire a qualified Allegheny County RSVP project director to work 40 hours per week. This staff member will be responsible for day to day oversight of the placement of RSVP volunteers. The project director will recruit, train, place, support and recognize senior volunteers. The director will also recruit, train and support excellent volunteer opportunities for diverse seniors.

The RSVP project director will spend adequate time researching and assessing the volunteer needs of the community -- and assessing the impact of volunteers in addressing community needs prior to placing volunteers at a particular station. A plan for program management quality will be developed annually with the help of the director of community programs outlining program goals and objectives

that indicate the efforts of RSVP volunteers and how they impact critical community needs. Regularly assessing project performance, project accomplishments and impact on the community will assure all Allegheny County RSVP goals and objectives are met. Individual weekly performance work plans directly tied to program management will also be submitted for review, using the same template and program management best practices as all Pittsburgh Cares/sponsoring organization staff.

The Allegheny County RSVP project director will work closely with the assigned staff members at the volunteer stations who are responsible for the placement of RSVP volunteers within their station. Training, frequent communication and data sharing will help build the relationship between the RSVP project director and volunteer station and also ensure accountability when it comes to managing information and data that will demonstrate the actual impacts of the project and its volunteers. In the event an RSVP volunteer requests an in-home assignment, a Letter of Agreement will need to be signed and it will be the responsibility of the RSVP project director to ensure that the placement complies with all regulations and requirements just as the other volunteer stations. The RSVP project director will initially serve as the station supervisor for any in-home assignments. As with all Pittsburgh Cares programming, reasonable accommodations for RSVP volunteers with disabilities are made in adherence to all federal, state and local law.

The RSVP project director will provide support and information to RSVP volunteers on a regular/weekly basis. It will be imperative for the director to maintain a relationship with all RSVP volunteers through social visits, phone calls, emails, and bi-monthly newsletters that highlight stories and accomplishments from the field. These efforts will assist the site director will develop and RSVP identity among RSVP volunteers. Pittsburgh Cares and the Allegheny RSVP recognize that volunteer appreciation and recognition is very much tied to volunteer satisfaction and retention. Volunteer appreciation will be encouraged at the work station level and at the Allegheny County RSVP project level. Work station

supervisors will be given tools and ideas for simple and low-cost ways to recognize their RSVP volunteers to promote the practice throughout the year. For example, work stations may be notified when an RSVP volunteer's birthday month is approaching and be encouraged to have staff members at the station sign a card for the volunteer.

It is important to note that once a volunteer has been assigned to a particular station, the RSVP project director will provide a walk through orientation to the station and if necessary, arrange for appropriate in-service training to ensure success and confidence when performing duties. RSVP volunteers will meet their work station supervisor and be trained on any work station policies/procedures, including safety policies and procedures prior to starting their actual assignments.

The RSVP project director will adhere to the same thorough financial management processes and procedures as Pittsburgh Cares, the sponsor organization. The RSVP project director will maintain the appropriate fiscal and program records and review the financial statements and program budget on a weekly basis, prior to providing records to the sponsor organization for review. The RSVP project director will managing all project resources, both financial and in-kind, to ensure accountability and efficient use of these resources and will keep detailed records and acknowledgment reports. Working closely with the Pittsburgh Cares executive director and director of community programs, the RSVP project director will assist in the identification of funding prospects for the Allegheny RSVP project and with grant making. All RSVP project budgets, financial and development reports, and data will be tracked using Pittsburgh Cares data management systems, such as Quick Books and advanced Salesforce Technology.

### **Organizational Capability**

Pittsburgh Cares has the capacity to operate direct community service programs; experience and interest in the needs of older adults; and the ability to develop strong community financial and

programmatic support.

Pittsburgh Cares employs 8 full-time staff and 3 AmeriCorps VISTA members. A board of directors consisting of 18 members governs Pittsburgh Cares and makes up five advisory committees: communications, development, executive, governance, and human resources.

Pittsburgh Cares continues to be in a strong financial position. Last year, PC delivered 14.8% productivity to planned budget, 21.2% improvement over previous year. The organization completed FY10-11 adding \$136K of earned-income into reserves, 289% above budget and \$147K over FY09-10. PC plans to end the current FY (June 30, 2012) with both a positive balance and a significant increase in planned budget. An annual audit confirms for constituents, board members, and other stakeholders that financial management systems are sound. All program budgets are reviewed by the executive director on a monthly basis and by the board treasurer on a bi-monthly basis. Pittsburgh Cares is experienced in managing federal grant funds through the CNCS and is familiar with most recent reporting processes.

As Pittsburgh Cares' senior executive, Amanda Hope is responsible for leading the nonprofit organization's efforts to meet Pittsburgh's critical needs through volunteer service. Hope has a strong background in nonprofit management and administration of volunteer programs as well as holding leadership positions managing the people, strategy and operations of complex volunteer-based organizations in the not-for-profit sector. Hope was appointed to the Governor of Pennsylvania's Community Service Advisory Council and the PennSERVE Advisory Board in 2010. Locally, she serves on Mayor Luke Ravenstahl's Community Service Advisory Council.

Robert Moore has been with Pittsburgh Cares since 2009 and currently serves as its Director of

Community Programs. Prior to starting at Pittsburgh Cares, Moore acquired his Master of Science in Public Policy and Management at Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College. At Pittsburgh Cares, he oversees initiatives and staff that have engaged nearly 10,000 volunteers with more than 500 regional nonprofit partners in the last year. His position requires him to seek creative ways to engage the community and enhance the collective impact of Pittsburgh Cares' nonprofit partners. Since taking over the program in 2010, community volunteer registration has increased by 53% and active nonprofit partners by 26%.

Allegheny County RSVP will seek a project director with a bachelor's degree and experience in operating social service program, working with senior citizens, volunteers, community partners, and committees. The RSVP project director will be hired, trained, and evaluated by the Director of Community Programs.

A human resources committee provides specific tools and guidance to the executive director and senior staff for communicating expectations, setting goals, evaluating employee performance, recognizing accomplishments, and communicating developmental needs. Pittsburgh Cares employees are required to have an annual written performance assessment, which includes a self-assessment and an individual performance plan that aligns with each staff member's work plan.

Pittsburgh Cares has a strong track record of successfully managing volunteer programs and impact-based community programming. Examples include partnerships with the local United Way of Allegheny County - managing their Days of Caring initiative for the past four years, which includes coordinating over 200 service events a year, engaging close to 3,500 volunteers at over 100 nonprofit partner agencies. We also provide EVP support to approximately 100 local corporations, including Highmark, Deloitte, and Alcoa; served as the city's lead organizer for MLK Day, GYSD, and Make a Difference Day, and partner with the US Marine Corps on the local Toys for Tots campaign, an initiative that directly

impacts over 100 nonprofit organizations and close to 2,000 families each year. Pittsburgh Cares also provides direct service programs to the Pittsburgh Public School System and numerous other private and charter schools throughout Allegheny County.

Pittsburgh Cares is experienced in working with seniors through our Community Connections volunteer programming. The interest in and knowledge of the capability of older adults positions Pittsburgh Cares to be a successful sponsor organization of the Allegheny County RSVP. Nearly all of our 600+ nonprofit partners utilize senior volunteers. More than 1,200 individuals within our active volunteer base are over the age of 55.

Pittsburgh Cares has proven its ability to develop strong community financial and programmatic support. It is evident through our accomplishments and strong reputation that we are a trusted community partner. Our diverse funding sources, specifically the local foundation community, corporate community, and education community along with our fee-for-service program partnerships with numerous organizations are indicative of the value placed on our work by the community. As the sponsor organization of Allegheny County RSVP, Pittsburgh Cares will assume full responsibility for securing maximum and continuing community financial and in-kind support to operate the project successfully.

**Other**

N/A

**PNS Amendment (if applicable)**

N/A