

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Gericulture Corporation is a non-profit organization established under the laws of the "Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico" in March 1989. Our mission is to support our clients' independent living at home and in their communities by guaranteeing an excellent service practice. Our vision is to be known for our sense of responsibility, capacity and excellence in services provided to the community, especially to the older aged or senior citizen population. Our program relies on the services of 250 volunteers 55 years of age or over to serve in 26 groups or volunteer stations in four municipalities of the eastern and southeastern part of Puerto Rico. These Municipalities are: Fajardo, Naguabo, Humacao, and Yabucoa. Our volunteers offer different types of services based on the clients' needs, mostly to improve the quality of life and ensure the independent living of older aged or handicapped persons in their own homes. They also support people in hospitals and adult homes and assist with the collection, cooking and distribution of meals in soup kitchens. Our goal is to continue to make these much needed services available to a community that in not only ageing, but is also suffering the consequences of an economic crisis. Our objective is to achieve a better life for everyone by educating on subjects such as Natural Disaster Preparedness and continuing our Environment Protection Plan.

## Strengthening Communities

The Gericulture Corporation serves four municipalities located on the eastern to southeastern area of Puerto Rico. The nearest one from San Juan, where most of the important government and medical services are offered is Humacao at 17.2 km. This may be considered a great distance for most of our clients being that they are elderly persons without a means of transportation. According to the "Oficina del Procurador de Personas Pensionadas y de la Tercera Edad", the 60 years of age and older population in Puerto Rico has reached 800,000. The Federal Census Bureau estimated in 2010 that the following number of people per municipality are 55 years of age or older: Fajardo 10,316, Naguabo 6,548, Humacao, 16,136 and Yabucoa 9,683.

In 2007 a study to measure the social needs of Puerto Rico revealed that the most oppressing problems in Puerto Rico are family related problems which include caring for elderly family members. We live in a society where we don't appreciate, respect or know how to protect and care for the ageing population. Our volunteers provide the ageing population with the company and support that gives them the energy to improve their self-esteem. This helps them gain confidence in themselves and visualize a positive future in which they remain independent. The independence is also supported by helping them acquire the medical equipment they need, applying for a housekeeper in their

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municipalities, or finding a means of transportation to their medical appointments if the volunteers themselves don't accompany them.

The ageing community doesn't know where to go when they have social, economic or health issues because the institutions assigned to serve this population are facing an economic crisis as well, which is affecting the services they provide. The elderly community is confused and short of alternatives when they are to require services and acquiring them seems more difficult every day. This is causing them to suffer from depression and anxiety; affecting their health and overall lifestyle.

The ageing adult is usually left out of family and community activities. This affects them greatly because they feel they are no longer functional resulting in low self-esteem. It's important that we achieve that the older population remain independent and don't pull themselves away from the community life. "Impact your home" is an activity where our volunteers clean up and restore the homes of elderly or handicapped citizens in the communities. This project is intended to make the homes of these people safe and to guide them in the process of achieving a better quality of life.

### **Recruitment and Development**

The Gericulture Corporation's Board of Directors, the Advisory Council and the program's administration conduct events in shopping centers throughout the municipalities of the east region to promote the RSVP program and services volunteers provide. These three groups also work in collaboration to conduct promotional activities in other gathering places such as public plazas and prepare radio announcements. To assure a high quality experience for volunteers, each person interested in applying to the RSVP program is interviewed so that we can have a better understanding of his/her skills and service preferences. Once the volunteers are assigned to a specific station, they receive training that is especially tailored to the needs of their respective service areas. The Corporation ensures high volunteer retention rated by coordinating for volunteers to attend conferences relevant to their needs. Volunteers are recognized several times throughout the year. These activities keep them motivated and in contact with each other. For some special holidays the Corporation sends out greetings to volunteers in which they are recognized as important and special. We also organize an annual major volunteer recognition activity. In addition to that, we have a special appreciation bulletin that highlights with pictures and stories the services our volunteers provide. The vast majority of the Corporations' volunteers that remain in service help us recruit more persons in whom they have observed an interest in volunteer activities. These volunteers refer the aspiring volunteers to the main office or the volunteer station where they receive information about the program, the different activities we organize, and a volunteer application is filled out. All aspiring

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volunteers must have a criminal background check and hand in copies of ID documents that we will verify. Project staff receives a general training on their specific roles with the Corporation's program, the Corporation for National and Community Services guidelines, the guidelines for each station and the volunteers' expectations. Each station coordinator is also informed about the specific goals they are required to meet and the workplan that each station is supposed to carry out. We've developed courses to train coordinators and volunteers about their responsibilities and duties with the Corporation.

Now that Baby Boomers are senior citizens it's clear that this population will increase considerably in the next ten years. Gericulture Corporation will address Baby Boomers in different social activities and radio programs. We'll make them aware of the needs of our communities and have them know that they have the time and experience that we need to make things better. Considering the interests, special trainings and knowledge of the Boomers, Gericulture Corporation can find a place for them to help less fortunate people in their same age group. This way the volunteers and clients will recognize and identify with each other as being from the same period which can help them bond and develop a better relationship.

### **Program Management**

The Gericulture Corporation's Board of Directors and Advisory Council have made the following plans for managing the RSVP program. The Council and Board are both in charge of the planning and conducting of fundraising efforts, meeting with the Mayors of the Municipalities where service is provided, submitting proposals for government funding, and requests for donations from local businesses. The sponsor's staff assesses the program's performance via monthly meetings between the Board of Directors, the Advisory Council, and local representatives of the municipalities where the stations serve. In those meetings, the performance of each station is discussed as well as their future or new workplan and service. To further assess project performance each volunteer is also required completing a monthly attendance log. This ensures that the assignments of tasks are on track for completion. Station Directors or Coordinators are surveyed to evaluate their satisfaction with the volunteers' work and service. This data is collected annually and continually evaluated by the program staff so that what has been accomplished or what areas need improvement can be identified. The program secures in-kind resources by establishing memorandums of understanding with partner stations and local municipal governments. All program purchases and payments are made through requisition that must be approved by a representative of the Board of Directors and the Program Director. The program staff is also responsible for securing deposits of cash donations from

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government agencies or private donors. Any check or official disbursement of funds must be signed by two Board of Directors representatives. The Program Director is responsible for assuring that all tax forms are completed including the Puerto Rico 480.7 which is completed by a Certified Public Accountant.

### **Organizational Capability**

The Gericulture Corporation began to offer social services to the community in 1989. Our mission is to provide a range of social services in order to improve the wellbeing of the communities in the eastern region of Puerto Rico through the commitment of volunteers 55 years of age and older. The Corporation has 22 volunteer stations in 4 municipalities. Our goal is to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of the clients on each volunteer station. The objective of those volunteers that serve in the person's homes is to increase their independent living status. The President of the Board of Directors and the Project Director are responsible for planning and conducting monthly program assessment meetings. The Director is also responsible for assessing the programs needs for each station, as well as selecting and counseling station Directors and Coordinators and having them know their roles and responsibilities. The Director is also in charge of the volunteer's placement process, attending to volunteer grievances, preparation of financial reports and quarterly progress reports, oversee that any pertinent organizational requirements are updated and in compliance with the law, and serve as the main liaison between the different stations and the Corporation's office. The Corporation also has a Secretary; her responsibilities are: preparing training for volunteers, being the main liaison between volunteers and the Program Director, assisting with the preparation of financial and progress reports, preparing and evaluating assessment tools and instruments such as attendance sheets, training new staff, ensuring the successful operation of the program office, and keeping volunteers informed of any new information or requirements. The program assures adequate facilities and equipment through the establishment of partnerships with the station. The Program Director continually visits volunteer stations to ensure that volunteers have adequate supplies and support. The sponsor has been successfully managing an annual budget of over \$90,000.00 obtained through federal funding, state, local, and private sources. It has proven its capability as a sound fiscal and programmatic administration. The program operates on a cash accounting system and its finances are audited annually by an accountant in compliance with federal guidelines.

### **Other**

N/A

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**PNS Amendment (if applicable)**

N/A