

2018-2019 Participant Handbook

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About PULSE

This handbook gives you an overview of the PULSE program: the core purpose/values, structure, and guidelines that govern your participation in the program.

PULSE (Pittsburgh Urban Leadership Service Experience) *“cultivates a community of young servant leaders to transform Pittsburgh”*. PULSE invites talented university graduates to partner with Pittsburgh nonprofits for a year of service and leadership. PULSE participants serve with a Pittsburgh nonprofit, live with other participants in intentional community, and grow professionally and personally.

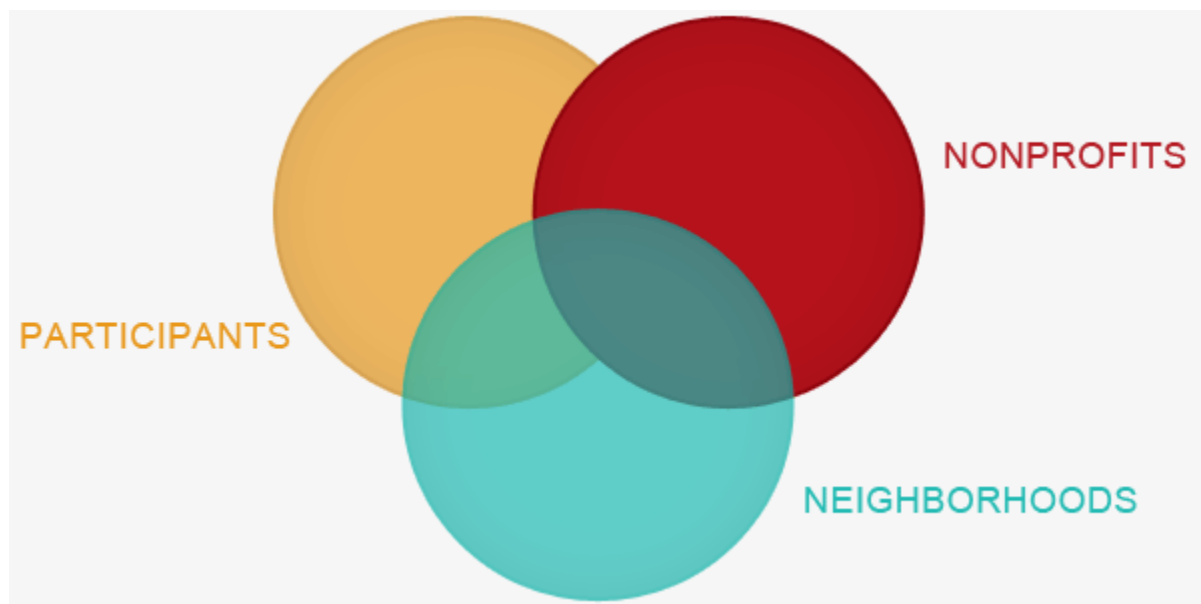
Core Purpose:

PULSE cultivates a community of young servant leaders to transform Pittsburgh.

Core Values:

- Engaging in the Possibility of the City
- The Transformative Power of Serving
- Celebrating the Creative Energy of Young Adults
- Building Strong and Enduring Relationships
- The Exploration and Development of Faith

Over the last 23 years, over 250 PULSE participants have partnered with more than 125 Pittsburgh nonprofits, contributing some 400,000 of hours of service to the city and its residents. PULSE’s unique model which focuses on participants, nonprofit partners, and city neighborhood has created lasting change in the lives of thousands of individuals and organizations.



Brief History:

In the early 1990s, PULSE founder John Stahl-Wert recognized that Pittsburgh was losing its young adults at a rapid rate. This loss of young adults contributed to a need for educated, skilled workers in the city's nonprofit sector. At the same time, Stahl-Wert observed that recent college graduates across the nation were struggling to find creative, meaningful service opportunities, particularly in the arts.

In response to these needs, PULSE was formed in 1994 by John Stahl-Wert who was, at that time, pastor of the Pittsburgh Mennonite Church. He envisioned a program that would place talented, recent college graduates into meaningful organizations where they could apply their skills and passions. The participants would live in an intentional community where they could process their experience in an urban environment.

Program Philosophy and Structure:

There are three primary, interdependent components to the PULSE program – intentional community, nonprofit partnerships, and professional and personal development. All three components are fundamental to the PULSE program and serve to reinforce one another in achieving our mission.

Intentional Community

Intentional community is a counter-cultural protest against the individualism and materialism that negatively impacts both individuals and communities. The community aspect of the program is designed to challenge the participants to reach beyond themselves within a supportive environment. It provides a sustainable approach to meeting basic human needs and creates an atmosphere where participants can work creatively together in the pursuit of common ends. Intentional community forces individual participants to think of the community's needs before their own. While recognizing the need for individual perspectives and the temptation to sacrifice deeply held beliefs for community "peace", special attention must be made in decision-making to ensure that all perspectives are heard and considered. Thus, consensus decision-making, as opposed to a simple majority vote, should be considered as the preferred means of community decisions. While it may take longer, peacemaking is often not the most efficient short-term option, but it's far more just in the long run.

To assist in the process of community decision making, each PULSE house will be asked to create a "House Agreement". During orientation, you and your housemates will have time to meet together and discuss such matters as:

- General expectations for the program, house, and themselves;
- Policies for food, house cleanliness, dishes, yard work, etc.;
- If necessary, potentially contentious lifestyle issues;
- Shared meal expectations (Monday – Thursday, community potlucks)
- Use of technology (smartphones, television, computers, etc.);
- Frequency/scope of house meetings.
- Community engagement

Staff will provide a general framework to structure the house agreement. The house will submit a draft to staff, which will be returned and finalized by the house. PULSE will provide times of regular check-in concerning how the House Agreement is being lived out over the course of the year. Staff reserves the right to intervene to ensure the wellness of the community.

In the PULSE program structure, intentionality is achieved through a multi-faceted approach. With the bulk of the monthly financial allotment held in a common account, participants must practice effective community stewardship to meet the nutrition and transportation needs of all household members. The orientation, retreat and seminar requirements are also designed to foster community through recreational, intellectual and cultural activities. While these requirements set a minimum standard for community engagement, the true mark of success within community is the personal investment of each participant into the other members of the community. Sharing personal resources, especially one's time, creates strong human relationships that can be transformative. Being aware of the many distractions that take the individual away from community is a key to intentional community.

Community should be a source of comfort and challenge. Living with other young adults who are experiencing similar challenges provides a network of support that can be an effective antidote for alienation. Because of the varied interests and passions of each community member, shared experiences provide exposure and engagement to activities beyond the normal purview of an individual member. Community also can be a source of challenge because it forces individuals to think beyond their own needs, a very counter-cultural idea. For example, accommodating vegetarian diets when one is a committed carnivore forces everyone to think through their assumptions and think of new ways to prepare food. It also challenges individualistic approaches to faith exploration and encourages dialogue on the important social issues confronting emerging leaders.

Intentional community is the wellspring from which the rest of the PULSE program flows. Without it, we lose the source of our strength and an important aspect of our program identity. While it is often the most challenging aspect of the PULSE program, investing in it will pay large future dividends as we strive to cultivate the next generation of servant leaders.

Nonprofit partnerships:

Nonprofit Partnership

Participants have answered the call to serve the community and nonprofit partnerships are the primary means through which they respond to this call. Through the nonprofit partnership process, we match participants with nonprofit organizations that are in need of their unique skills and passions. By collaborating with PULSE, nonprofit partners build much-needed capacity within their organizations and give the PULSE participant a meaningful experience through which they can develop personally and professionally.

Nonprofit partnerships become the laboratory in which participants learn from their colleagues, try new ideas and serve the community through their organization's mission-based activities. PULSE encourages its participants to communicate regularly with their site supervisors on what they are learning and how they can make a greater impact in their nonprofit partnership.

It is critical to maintain the proper perspective when it comes to nonprofit partnerships. Some of our nonprofit partners are small organizations where every staff member pitches in on larger tasks that may not fall directly in their area of responsibility. Whether it's direct or indirect service, your primary role at your nonprofit partner is to help them achieve their mission and this will invariably require flexibility on your end. However, your nonprofit partnership is for 35 hours per week and this gives you adequate time to explore other opportunities during your PULSE experience.

PULSEstart Event

PULSE participants will come to Pittsburgh July 14th – 17th, 2018 for an introduction to PULSE staff and co-participants, the PULSE community, and Pittsburgh. PULSE will also facilitate an interview opportunity for interested prospective nonprofit partners and accepted PULSE participants on July 16, 2018 to determine where participants will serve in the 2018-2019 year.

Evaluation

PULSE participants complete mid-term and year-end evaluations concerning nonprofit partnerships, seminars, community living, and staffing. Staff members also conduct mid-year nonprofit partnership evaluations with participants' supervisors.

Staff Role with Nonprofit Partnerships

Staff will assist participants in order to ensure the highest quality nonprofit partnership experience. Occasionally, such assistance results in staff communication with site supervisors. Participants are responsible to seek out staff involvement with nonprofit partnerships. Participants should consult the PULSE staff before undertaking any significant changes in their nonprofit partnership arrangements.

Professional and Personal Development:

PULSE's participant development program aims to fulfill our mission of "cultivating a community of young servant leaders to transform Pittsburgh" through a holistic approach that targets key learning outcomes to develop PULSE participants both professionally and personally.

Several modes of delivery are used to execute this program:

- **Orientation (August 25th – September 2nd, 2018):** During this week, participants become better acquainted with themselves, one another, PULSE, their neighborhood, their placements, and the city through a variety of activities and reflections.
- **Weekly Seminars (Wednesday afternoons, 1:00-5:00 pm):** PULSE weekly seminars explore a variety of topics that support the greater learning outcomes of the program. Participants learn through a variety of vehicles including discussion, experiential learning, guest presenters, exploration, and service.
- **Bi-annual retreats:** PULSE has two mandatory retreats that occur approximately 6 weeks into the program (October 5-7, 2018) and 6 weeks from the end of the program (April 5-7, 2019). The retreats are times of community building, individual reflection and recreation. Participant input is always appreciated.
- **Regular coaching meetings with a PULSE Program Coordinator:** This time is used for participants to personally connect with their program coordinator and focus on individual personal development.
- **Mentoring:** Each participant will be provided with the opportunity to have a mentor to journey with them through their PULSE year. Participants are matched with a mentor who meets their specific personal development goals and objectives. Mentors meet with participants once a month to discuss how the PULSE year is going and to provide further support.

Benefits:

Financials

Participants are provided the following monthly financial benefits:

- \$90 personal stipend
- \$217.50 allotted to house per person for food and transportation

Community House Funds

Each house operates with a community house account, where each participant's food and transportation stipends are pooled and considered community funds. These community funds should not be thought of as an individual allotment and are to be used according to the community's priorities. House members are expected to take turns preparing meals and the community shares meals together. This not only saves a lot of money when compared to individual meals but builds the bonds of community.

Transportation

PULSE has consistently affirmed the value of public transportation and encouraged its participants to thoughtfully consider their transportation choices. In addition to the economic and environmental benefits of public transportation, there are also significant social considerations. The house community is strengthened through shared trips, conversations, and conservation planning. Social capital is built through conversations at bus stops. On the bus, participants also get to learn the perspectives of others in their neighborhood and community (compared to driving their own vehicle). Taking public transportation helps the organization better fulfill its mission values of sustainability, justice, peacemaking and stewardship.

As Pittsburgh becomes more bike friendly, PULSE also realizes the values of bikes for a form of transportation. If participants choose to ride a bike for recreation or transportation during PULSE, they must wear a helmet. Additionally, all rules of the road must be followed, including the requirement for front and rear lights if you are riding at night.

While participants are encouraged to use the other forms of transportation outlined above, they are free to bring their personal cars to Pittsburgh. Personal cars can benefit the community as they are often helpful for food shopping. Free on-street parking is available in PULSE neighborhoods. All costs of vehicle ownership, including regular maintenance and insurance, are the participant's responsibility.

Rent

PULSE covers monthly rent/mortgage bills for each property.

Utilities

PULSE covers all utilities, including electricity, gas, water, and wireless internet/phone. All houses also have printers available for use. There is a phone in each house and one phone line, covering all local and domestic long distance calls.

Personal Development Funds

Each participant has access to \$150 in personal development funds per PULSE service year that can support classes, lectures and conferences to assist in their personal and professional development. Participants are also encouraged to design and undertake personal projects, which in past years have ranged from a sound studio, Alley Bicycle Cooperative, Kincaid St. Community Gardens, short story writing, to visual art and design work. Support for these projects can come from the education fund or can be negotiated with staff on a case-by-case basis. Many participants find that they have more time on their hands than during their years at school; participants are encouraged to take advantage of the extra time that the PULSE structure provides.

Health Coverage

In light of the Affordable Care Act, PULSE encourages the following:

- Participants to stay on their parent's plan (if available and whenever this is a feasible and economical option). In assessing this, please consider all relevant factors, including in-network vs. out-of-network costs if the young adult lives in a different geographic area than the parent's current plan covers.
- Participants to obtain their own insurance through the www.healthcare.gov marketplace.

PULSE will pay up to \$500.00 in premium costs or medical expenses per PULSE year, not calendar year, August 25, 2018 to August 3, 2019. PULSE will reimburse payee upon receipt of invoice/expenses. Participants must keep and submit out-of-pocket receipts for reimbursement.

PULSE does not want the lack of health insurance to be a concern for participants or prohibit one's decision to join PULSE. If your personal health needs and associated costs (cost of coverage, prescriptions, doctor visits, etc.) are of concern to participating in the program, please contact Amanda Duncan, Recruiting and Partnership Coordinator, at aduncan@pulsepittsburgh.org prior to accepting an offer to join PULSE. We handle all inquiries on a case by case basis.

Gym Membership

PULSE is willing to cover a gym membership of \$45 in total per person for the PULSE year. PULSE encourages participants to obtain "family memberships" if possible.

Vacation/Holidays

Nonprofit partners agree to provide full-time (35 hours/week) participants with two weeks (10 business days) of vacation during the year. There are also 12 scheduled PULSE holidays and 6 personal/sick days. The 12 PULSE holidays are the following:

January 1 st	May 27 th	July 4 th	September 3 rd
November 22 nd	November 23 rd	December 24 th	December 25 th
December 26 th	December 27 th	December 28 th	December 31 st

Any vacation/time off should certainly be cleared by the nonprofit partner's site supervisor well ahead of time.

Additional Information

Terms of Service

The PULSE year runs from August 25, 2018 to August 3, 2019. Move-in will occur between 1:00 and 5:00 pm on August 25, 2018.

Other Key Dates:

- July 14-17, 2018– PULSE Start Event in Pittsburgh
- August 25 – September 2, 2018 – Orientation
- September 4, 2018 – First day at Nonprofit Partner
- October 5 – 7, 2018 – Fall Retreat
- April 5 – 7, 2019 – Spring Retreat
- August 2, 2019 - Last day at nonprofit partner
- August 3, 2019 – PULSE House Clean-up and End of Year Celebration
- August 4, 2019 – Move Out Day

Participant Communication and Fundraising

PULSE requires participants to invite others to journey with them over the course of the year. This is not just about financial support; rather it is about deepening relationship with friends, family, places of worship, etc. through ongoing communication about the work of PULSE and your role in it. We take our mission value of stewardship very seriously and always seek ways to economize in order to maximize the impact of each dollar.

Participants will be asked to send letters inviting their friends and family to support the work of PULSE. There is a minimum goal of \$2,500/participant. In addition, participants can set up an online crowdfunding site to raise support. This is a group goal. Some will raise more, some less, but we hope to raise at least \$2,500/participant (about 10% of the costs and benefits associated with having a participant in the program). Most other programs require \$4,500-\$6,500/participant. Your commitment to invite your friends and family to support the work of PULSE is taken seriously.

Housing Deposit

Upon acceptance of your PULSE invitation, participants will submit a \$250 non-refundable deposit to secure their spot in PULSE.

During move-out weekend, each participant must clean their room and make necessary repairs, clean and repair public spaces, return their key and provide a forwarding address. Upon staff inspection, if the space is deemed satisfactory and the participant has fulfilled all requirements, an appropriate reimbursement of the room deposit will be issued. A checklist will be provided in July for cleanout requirements.

Outside Community Commitment

PULSE discourages participants to pursue substantial commitments outside the PULSE community beyond their nonprofit partnerships. “Substantial commitments” can be defined as evening/weekend jobs, classes, coursework, volunteering, etc. that last for a lengthy period of time (e.g., working at a coffee shop or retail store) and take you away from your PULSE community for a substantial part of your week.

This policy aims to protect adequate time and energy for engagement in community life, commitment to nonprofit partnerships, exploration of the city, personal growth, and an encouragement to live simply and within the means of the program. Nonprofit partnerships must always take first priority if a scheduling conflict arises.

PULSE understands that each PULSE participant has different needs and resources that may require them to pursue employment, classes, volunteer commitments, etc. In this regard, PULSE requires the following:

- No Outside Commitments during the first six weeks of service (Move-in to Fall Retreat)
- After Fall Retreat, participants may engage in no more than 5 hours/week of substantial commitments outside the PULSE community.

This policy is deliberately flexible. Obvious exceptions include temporary, more informal jobs such as: occasional housecleaning; babysitting; lawn mowing; maintenance work; theater productions; and other sporadic, short-term work (such as working at the Three Rivers Arts Festival). Ideally, these jobs would not take up more than one weeknight or a Saturday morning. If an employment opportunity falls within the gray area of this policy, it is always best to discuss with PULSE staff before making a commitment.

Prior to making an outside community commitment, PULSE participants must:

- Discuss the commitment with their housemates at a house meeting
- Receive approval from their PULSE Program Coordinator at least two weeks in advance.

Early Termination

PULSE fully expects that each participant will complete his or her full year. Participants have made a contractual commitment to PULSE, their service at their nonprofit partnership, and their house community. In the rare and regrettable event that a participant decides to leave the PULSE program, he or she will relinquish all fiscal and other benefits derived from PULSE, and will be asked to leave the PULSE house within a reasonable time period.

Substance Use

Alcohol

While regulating the consumption of alcohol is determined by each house, the PULSE community house account funds cannot be used for the purchase of alcohol (or corking fees).

Drugs

PULSE prohibits the use, sale, purchase, transfer, or possession of any and all illegal drugs on the premises of the PULSE residence or any PULSE property. The PULSE house is smoke free.

Any participant found under the influence of, or in possession of, illegal drugs will be expelled from the program.



PULSE Participant Commitment Contract

Please initial the following, agreeing to your commitment to:

_____ Serve with PULSE from August 25, 2018 – August 4, 2019

_____ Full engagement and participation in:

- Nonprofit Partnership service – 35 hrs/week, September 4, 2018 to August 2, 2019.
- Weekly seminars on Wednesday afternoons from 1 – 5 pm
- Retreats: Fall (October 5-7, 2018) and Spring (April 5-7, 2019)
- Up to monthly meetings with PULSE Program Coordinator
- Mentor relationship

_____ Participate in PULSE’s PULSEstart Event from July 14-17, 2018 in Pittsburgh

_____ Specifics:

- Stipend - \$90/month
- Food and Transportation - \$217.50 allotted to house account/person
- Rent - Single bedroom
- Rent - Full furnished and supplied house, including laundry
- Utilities - Full cost of all Gas, Electric, Water, Internet use
- Health Coverage - Up to \$500 in reimbursable premium costs/medical expenses per PULSE year
- Gym - Up to \$45 in reimbursable gym membership per PULSE year
- Personal Development Funds - Up to \$150 in reimbursable class, lectures and conference expenses per PULSE year

_____ Share my commitment to PULSE with family and friends, seeking to raise at least \$2,500. This is part of a larger group goal.

_____ Submit a \$250 non-refundable housing deposit upon acceptance of invitation to serve. If there is a concern regarding this commitment, please contact Amanda (412.361.0124 or aduncan@pulsepittsburgh.org).

I, _____, have read and understood this document and its contents. I will adhere to all policies set forth in this document.

(Signature)

(Date)