



2019-2020 Fellow 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 fellows serve with a Pittsburgh nonprofit, live with other fellows in intentional community, and grow professionally and personally.

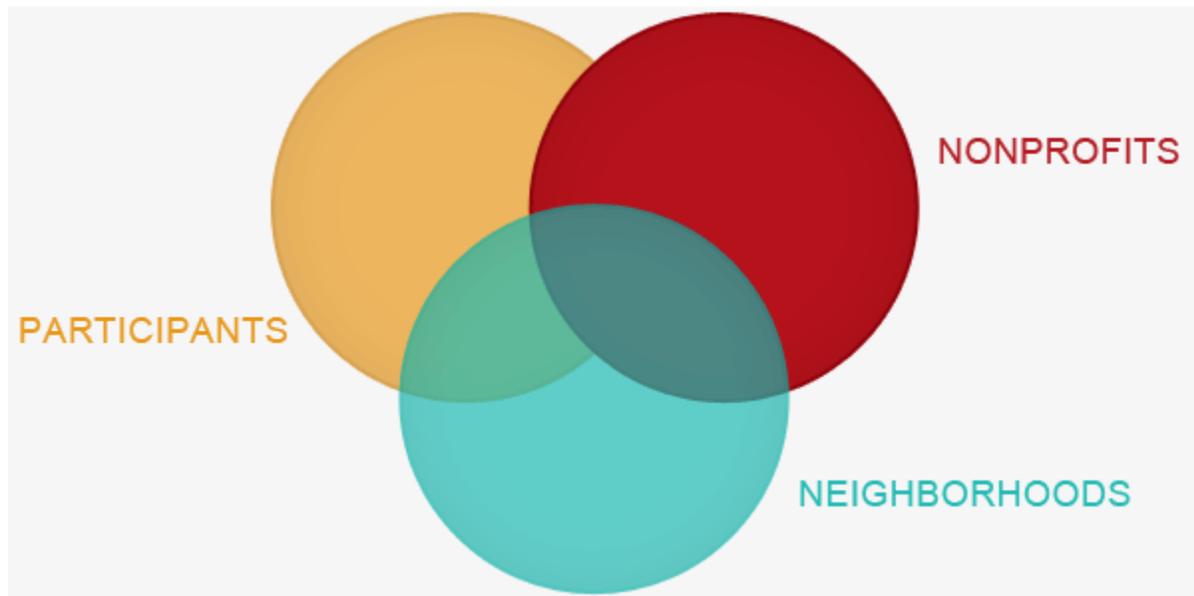
Core Purpose:

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 25 years, over 300 PULSE fellows have partnered with more than 125 Pittsburgh nonprofits, contributing some 500,000 of hours of service to the city and its residents. PULSE’s unique model which focuses on fellows, 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 fellows 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 fellows to reach beyond themselves within a supportive environment. It provides a sustainable approach to meeting basic human needs and creates an atmosphere where fellows can work creatively together in the pursuit of common ends. Intentional community forces individual fellows 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, fellows 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 fellow 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

Fellows 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 fellows 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 fellow a meaningful experience through which they can develop personally and professionally.

Nonprofit partnerships become the laboratory in which fellows learn from their colleagues, try new ideas and serve the community through their organization's mission-based activities. PULSE encourages its fellows 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 fellows will come to Pittsburgh July 13th – 16th, 2019 for an introduction to PULSE staff and co-fellows, the PULSE community, and Pittsburgh. PULSE will also facilitate an interview opportunity for interested prospective nonprofit partners and accepted PULSE fellows on July 15, 2019 to determine where fellows will serve in the 2019-2020 year.

Evaluation

PULSE fellows 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 fellows' supervisors.

Staff Role with Nonprofit Partnerships

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

Professional and Personal Development:

PULSE's fellow 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 fellows both professionally and personally.

Several modes of delivery are used to execute this program:

- **Orientation (August 24th – September 1st, 2019):** During this week, fellows 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. Fellows 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 4-6, 2019) and 6 weeks from the end of the program (April 17-19, 2020). The retreats are times of community building, individual reflection and recreation. Fellow input is always appreciated.
- **Regular coaching meetings with a PULSE Program Coordinator:** This time is used for fellows to personally connect with their program coordinator and focus on individual personal development.
- **Mentoring:** Each fellow will be provided with the opportunity to have a mentor to journey with them through their PULSE year. Fellows are matched with a mentor who meets their specific personal development goals and objectives. Mentors meet with fellows once a month to discuss how the PULSE year is going and to provide further support.
- **Community Outreach:** PULSE provides ample opportunities for fellows to connect intentionally with their Pittsburgh neighborhood. This includes participating in community meetings, holding house community events for neighbors, and volunteering with causes that fellows care about.

Benefits:

Financials

Fellows are provided the following monthly financial benefits:

- \$90 personal stipend (Not considered taxable income and a W-2 will not be issued)
- \$217.50 allotted to house per person for food and transportation

Community House Funds

Each house operates with a community house account, where each fellow'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.

Homey House Fund

Each house receives a small Homey House Fund (~\$40) during the first 6 weeks of the PULSE program that can be spent in on an item that makes the PULSE house feel more "homey", such as candles, posters, doormat, or cardboard cutout of your favorite Disney character. All housemates have to agree on the purchase, and the item must stay in the PULSE house for future generations to come.

Transportation

PULSE has consistently affirmed the value of public transportation and encouraged its fellows 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, fellows 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 fellows 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 fellows 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 fellow's responsibility.

Loan Forbearance/Deferment

PULSE Fellows may be able to forebear or defer their student loans during their service with PULSE. PULSE Fellows will be provided with a letter from PULSE confirming your enrollment in the program from 8/24/19-8/2/20 as a full-

time unpaid volunteer. You can use this letter to provide proof of service to your loan holder(s). We strongly recommend contacting your loan holder(s) prior to joining the program to discuss your plans to participate in a year of service and how this affects your loan repayment plan. Loan holders each have their own policies and procedures regarding service years.

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.

Fellow Development Funds

Each fellow has access to up to \$150 in fellow development funds per PULSE service year that can support classes, lectures and conferences to assist in their personal and professional development. These cannot be used for Graduate/Admissions testing. Fellows also have the opportunity to use these funds to design and undertake personal projects, which in past years have ranged from a sound studio, short story writing, to visual art and design work. (Support for these projects can come from the personal development funds or can be negotiated with staff on a case-by-case basis.) Many fellows find that they have more time on their hands than during their years at school; fellows 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:

- Fellows 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.
- Fellows 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 24, 2019 to August 2, 2020. PULSE can pay this directly to the provider or will reimburse payee upon receipt of invoice/expenses. Fellows must keep and submit out-of-pocket receipts for reimbursement.

PULSE does not want the lack of health insurance to be a concern for fellows or prohibit one's decision to join PULSE. Please direct any questions or concerns to PULSE's Executive Director at ccooke@pulsepittsburgh.org or call 412-361-0124.

Physical Activity Funds

Fellows have access to up to \$45 in total per person for the PULSE year to use for activities that help them to stay physically active. Many fellows have found that this helps particularly in the winter to subsidize a low-cost gym membership (although it will likely not cover all); PULSE encourages fellows to obtain "family memberships" if possible. Fellows can also use these funds to cover things like a yoga class, a boxing class, or a local running race.

Vacation/Holidays

Nonprofit partners agree to provide full-time (35 hours/week) fellows 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:

New Year's Day (January 1 st)	Memorial Day (May 25 th)	Fourth of July (July 4 th)	Labor Day (Sept 2 nd)
Veteran's Day (Nov 11 th)	Thanksgiving (Nov 28 th)	November 29th	December 24 th
December 25 th	December 31st	MLK Day (January 20 th)	President's Day (Feb 17 th)

12/26, 12/27, 12/30

Any vacation/time off must be cleared by the nonprofit partner's site supervisor, PULSE Program Coordinator, and PULSE Director of Operations and Partnership at least two weeks in advance.

PULSE Fellows may not plan to take vacation or personal time during the last two weeks of the PULSE program and may not save their vacation and/or personal time in order to exit the program early. This has serious ramifications on the PULSE nonprofit partnership agreement and program exit.

Additional Information

Terms of Service

The PULSE year runs from August 24, 2019 to August 2, 2020. Move-in will occur between 1:00 and 5:00 pm on August 24, 2019.

Other Key Dates:

- July 13-16, 2019– PULSE Start Event in Pittsburgh
- August 24 – September 1, 2019 – Orientation
- September 2, 2019 – First day at Nonprofit Partner
- October 4 – 6, 2019 – Fall Retreat
- April 17 – 19, 2020 – Spring Retreat
- July 31, 2020 - Last day at nonprofit partner
- August 1, 2020 – PULSE House Clean-up and End of Year Celebration
- August 2, 2020 – Move Out Day

Fellow Communication and Fundraising

PULSE requires fellows 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, communities, 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.

Fellows 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/fellow, which adds up to a large group goal. In addition, fellows 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/fellow (about 10% of the costs and benefits associated with having a fellow in the program). Most other programs require \$4,500-\$6,500/fellow. 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, fellows will submit a \$250 non-refundable deposit to secure their spot in PULSE.

During move-out weekend, each fellow 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 fellow 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 fellows 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 fellow has different needs and resources that may require them to pursue employment, classes, volunteer commitments, etc. In this regard, PULSE strongly suggests the following:

- No Outside Commitments during the first six weeks of service (Move-in to Fall Retreat)
- After Fall Retreat, PULSE strongly recommends that fellows engage in no more than 5 hours/week of substantial commitments outside the PULSE community. If you choose to engage in more than 5 hours/week, please discuss with your Program Coordinator.

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 fellows strongly encouraged:

- 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 fellow will complete their full year. Fellows 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 fellow decides to leave the PULSE program, they 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 fellow found under the influence of, or in possession of, **illegal drugs will be can be expelled** from the program.



PULSE Participant Commitment Contract

Please initial the following, agreeing to your commitment to:

____ Serve with PULSE from August 24, 2019 – August 2, 2020

____ Full engagement and participation in:

- Nonprofit Partnership service – 35 hrs/week, September 2, 2019 to July 31, 2020.
- Weekly seminars on Wednesday afternoons from 1 – 5 pm
- Retreats: Fall (October 4-6, 2019) and Spring (April 17-19, 2020)
- Regular coaching meetings with PULSE Program Coordinator

____ Participate in PULSE’s PULSEstart Event from July 13-16, 2019 in Pittsburgh

____ PULSE’s monthly stipends: \$90 personal stipend, \$217.50 allotted to house per person for food and transportation

____ Share my commitment to PULSE with family and friends, seeking to raise at least \$2,500.

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