



GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO
**Department of Labor and Human
Resources**

SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

STAND ALONE STATE PLAN

PY 2020-2023

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SECRETARY**



Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources (PRDOL)

**SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SCSEP)
STAND-ALONE STATE PLAN
PY 2020-2023**

I. Economic Projections and Impact

A. Discuss long-term projections for jobs in industries and occupations in the state that may provide employment opportunities for older workers. (20 CFR 641.302(d)). Alternatively, states may discuss this in the economic analysis section of strategic plan, if submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan.

B. Describe how the long-term job projections discussed in the economic analysis section of the strategic plan relate to the types of unsubsidized jobs for which SCSEP participants will train and the types of skills training provided. (20 CFR 641.302(d)).

C. Discuss current and projected employment opportunities in the state (such as by providing information available under §15 of the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 USC 491-2) by occupation), and the types of skills possessed by eligible individuals. (20 CFR 641.325(c))

These requirements stated in Sections A to C will be discussed jointly hereinbelow, since they are intimately related.

In order to discuss properly long-term projections for jobs in industries and occupations in Puerto Rico that may provide employment opportunities for older workers, one must consider how the current economic landscape, following the impact of Hurricanes Irma and María and the recent earthquake on January 6th 2020 and the aftershocks have limited the government's ability to develop counter measures. In addition, the COVID 19 Pandemic will also substantially alter the economic landscape for this current FY year 2020 and potentially for FY 2021 and after.

There have been, undoubtedly, profound social and economic changes that have led to population decline with migration and a rapidly increasing aging population. Nevertheless, low-cost interventions such as having industrial and service sectors adapt to older age requirements and adapting better to generational preferences are proven mechanisms that have been well documented in other jurisdictions worldwide. In almost any scenario to be contemplated, Puerto Rico continues to have a shrinking economic base and a higher percentage of older adults in a very challenging labor market. In fact, at the beginning of the 21st century, the population in Puerto

Rico remained relatively young, with a high percentage in the 25 to 34 year cohort, and a noticeable decline in older cohorts per U.S. Census Bureau data (remember that other than yearly adjustment the U.S. Census data is from 2010). By 2010 the population younger than 34 years old had declined by approximately 243,000 individuals while the population 45 years and older increased by almost the same amount, or 233,000 individuals. In fact, the population 65 years or older almost equals the population younger than 16 years old in number manifesting a significant shrinkage of the working-age population. In fact, by 2010 individuals under 19 and individuals 20-44 years old, both major cohorts of the younger population were in negative territory¹. This is why one of the main drivers of the economic contraction in population is the steadily increasing outmigration. This high emigration catalyzed the aging trends in Puerto Rico.

We must first establish how Puerto Rico, which had one of the most dynamic economies in the Caribbean region until 2006, became mired in a government debt-crisis that the island's debt to US financial lenders hit US \$73 billion and extreme measures had to be contemplated. Since then, economic growth has been negative. This downturn initially coincided with the phase-out of tax preferences that had for decades led US firms to invest heavily in the Commonwealth along with steep rises in the price of oil, which generates most of the island's electricity.

As is widely known, on July 1st 2016 the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico defaulted on its General Obligations (GO's), which payment is guaranteed under the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The direct result was the Commonwealth's inability to gain access to credit markets or meet its financial obligations.

The Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA) was passed by the U.S. Congress (2015-2016) on June 9th 2016 as Public Law 114-187. President Barack Obama signed it into law on June 30, 2016. The intention of the law was to establish an Oversight Board that would assist the Government of Puerto Rico, including instrumentalities, in managing its public finances, and for other purposes. The establishment of the Financial Oversight and Management Board of Puerto Rico (the Board) was necessary since it acts as an automatic stay of creditor actions to enforce claims against the government of Puerto Rico. The oversight board is to facilitate negotiations, or, should negotiations fail, bring about a court-supervised process akin to a bankruptcy. More importantly, the Board must oversee and monitor sustainable budgets. The President appoints all seven members of the board, six of whom are chosen from a list of individuals recommended by Congressional leadership, some of these had previous ties to profitable industries in Puerto Rico. The Governor of Puerto Rico, or a designee, serves ex-officio as an eighth member but has no voting rights. The oversight board designated the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and certain other territorial instrumentalities as covered entities under PROMESA, which means that Puerto Rico, as a covered entity, is required to submit a fiscal plan that provides various methods to achieve fiscal responsibility and access to capital markets.

Since then, Puerto Rico has faced unusual extreme hardships. In September 2017 two hurricanes hit Puerto Rico back to back, Irma and María. The latter collapsed all local infrastructure and essential services. Besides forever altering the life of all our residents, it marked a turning point in what Puerto Rico was before September 2017, and what it is now. The turmoil did not stop there, during the summer of 2019, once again Puerto Rico faced unexpected life changing

¹ Official source – data from the US 2010 Census Bureau.

circumstances. In the span of a week, the then Governor stepped down, his successor lasted one week before it was legally determined that his tenure could not be sustained. After his resignation, a third Governor (following the Puerto Rico line of succession within the Puerto Rico Cabinet) the then Puerto Rico Secretary of the Department of Justice took oath and become the third Governor in one week. She continues to be in office, now dealing with another disaster, the COVID 19 Pandemic. Per the Executive Order issued on March 15, 2020 she mandated all non-essential public and private sectors to immediately close for business, in order to mandate social distancing to reduce contagion and limit the curve of sick patients. As of March 25, 2020 the official records of the Puerto Rico Health Department show that there are now 39 confirmed COVID 19 positive patients, of which sadly two have died, and hundreds of tests are being conducted, which likely will increase the number of infected patients. This unexpected turn of events causes a great disruption of the local labor market, especially in our senior community.

The expected challenges in the labor market and changing occupational structures in labor and labor demand underlie the importance of promoting lifelong learning and increasing individual skills which is a key component of what SCSEP does for the participants.

There have been profound shifts away from the conditions that existed at the time Puerto Rico's initial economic strategy was conceived in the 1950's. Until 1955, agriculture constituted Puerto Rico's main economic sector. Sugar cane, mostly for export to the U.S. mainland, was the main crop, followed by coffee and tobacco. Sugar cane production declined as prices remained low, agricultural labor migrated to the United States, and urban expansion took over much of the Relevant background information shows that there was a significant shift in the industrial composition of Puerto Rico's economy initiated by the sharp decrease in the manufacturing sector and an increase in services. In the 1950's and 1960's, the Puerto Rican government encouraged a massive migration of poor agricultural workers to the east coast of U.S. and opened the way locally to a predominantly industrial economy.

Puerto Rico's manufacturing sector has shifted from the original labor-intensive industries, such as the manufacturing of tobacco, leather, and apparel products, to more capital-intensive industries, such as pharmaceuticals, chemicals, machinery, and electronics. Major manufacturing activities in the order in which they contribute to the manufacturing domestic income are chemical and allied products, machinery and metal products, food and kindred products, stone, clay, and glass products, tobacco, paper and allied products, and textile mill products with the metropolitan area of San Juan and the region of Mayaguez as the leading center for clothing manufacturing including U.S. military uniforms.

In Puerto Rico, the Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) has fallen from 48.0 % in 1970 to 46.1% in 2000 and from 38% to 40% in the years between 2010 and 2018. The Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) was expected to be 40.50 percent by the end of December of 2019. These figures may drop significantly in the first quarter of 2020 giving the effect of the tremors of January 7, 2020, and the continuing significant aftershocks affecting infrastructure of businesses and housing severely in the Southwestern part of the island. During calendar year 2019 the LFPR varied between 39.9 and 41.9. The local research firm "Estudios Técnicos" (private entity) in a study commissioned by the Economic Development and Commerce Department (DDEC by its Spanish acronym) projected that in the long-term the LFPR rate would stand at around 41.00 for

about a year, or during 2020 and then it would oscillate between 41.30 in 2021 and 41.50 in 2022 not going past 42.00 as an average by 2024.

The participation rates in Puerto Rico are substantially lower than on the U.S. mainland across all age groups. Local economists believe that these lower participation rates should not be attributed to any particular demographic segment but seems to be the result of a combination of factors, such as; an aging population, outmigration of relatively young cohorts and a falling birth rate (which has fallen by more than one third in the past 20 years). In the case of those of working age 65+ the LFPR went down much faster, from 15.9% in 1970, 11.8% in 1980, to 8.4% in the 1990's, 7.6% between 2000 and 2010 and hovering around 4.2% to 4.5% between 2016 and 2019.

Hence, with a struggling economy because of a multi-billion dollar public debt and the impact of the above referenced two hurricanes in 2017 (the economic impact long-term of the tremor of January 7, 2020 and the aftershocks is being studied), the COVID 19 Pandemic and the ensuing mandated directives issued by the Governor of Puerto Rico, Wanda Vázquez, increases the common perception among the residents of Puerto Rico is that the unemployment rates are higher and may increase further.

Nevertheless, a recent report by PRDOL reveals that the private sector has experienced growth in every main industry. During fiscal year 2019, which covers the period between July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019, the employment level was the island's highest in the past 14 years. In fact, employment in the private sector showed an increase of 3.6 percent in fiscal year 2019, after the fall that had occurred in fiscal year 2018 of -3.3 percent attributed chiefly to the aftereffects of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Also, it's noteworthy that the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) stated that this increase had been the largest in the last 19 years. Moreover, non-agricultural wage employment grew by 1.7 percent in 2019 compared to a drop of -3.8 percent in 2018. The industries that reported the greatest growth in PY 2019 were construction (17.3 percent); professional & commercial services (4.1 percent); recreation and lodging (3.9 percent); trade, transportation and utilities (3.6 percent); and information (2.8 percent). Of these, the construction industry experienced its greatest increase in 15 years. The trade, transportation and utilities, as well as the professional and commercial services sectors saw the most significant upsurge in 19 years while the information and recreation industries also had its most significant growth in six years. More importantly, the self-employment sector grew by 3.3 percent in fiscal year 2019 after it had been reduced by -3.7 percent the previous fiscal year. Meanwhile, the public sector labor force rate was reduced by -4.3 percent, which marks a consecutive, decade-long decline. The unemployment rate in fiscal year 2019 was reduced by 1.2 percentage points, whereas in fiscal year 2018 the reduction was 0.3 percentage points. More specifically, the number of unemployed persons decreased by -12.6 percent during fiscal year 2019 after having experienced a -3.8 drop in fiscal year 2018. The unemployment rate during 2019 was at the lowest point in September at 7.6 percent and the highest was December at 8.4 percent. In the long-term, the Puerto Rico Employment Rate is projected to trend around 37.80 percent in 2021 and 38.10 percent in 2020 according to the latest econometric models

In terms of long-term job projections, the period between 1999 and 2019 showed reductions in middle wage occupations yet there have been increases in the Healthcare Industry and Technical

Occupations. Within the last two Program Years, PY 2017 and PY 2018 SCSEP was able to train and certify in Home-Health Care a total **82** participants.

The emphasis on lifelong learning and up-skilling acquires greater importance when unemployment levels are high and the reality of rapid technological change impacting various occupations require updating acquired skills for older adults. Revitalizing urban centers and adapting more industries to older age requirements are steps in the right direction. An aging population requires specialized services such as those related to home care and the PRDOL intends to provide, at a minimum and based on the participant's IEP's formal training leading to certification once a year between July 1st of 2020 and June 30th 2024. Although Puerto Rico is perhaps best known as a Caribbean tourism hub there are many career opportunities available outside the hospitality industry (how affected by the COVID 19 pandemic).

According to U.S. DDOL reports the following occupations are amongst those expected to have the most job openings from 2020 to 2024. Most of these careers have no educational requirements for employment although some may require a high school diploma or its equivalent (like the Tourism Industry). As a general rule, the State Grantee being the PRDOL tends to have at least **65** percent of its participants with a High School education and a smaller percentage of participants with a vocational degree or an equivalency. The suggested occupations with most job openings best suited for our SCSEP participants would be: combined food preparation and serving workers, including those at fast food restaurants; waiters and waitresses; counter attendants, cafeteria, food concession, and coffee shop; restaurant cooks; retail salespersons; cashiers; stock clerks and order fillers; general office clerks; customer service representatives; janitors or custodians; school or special client bus drivers; and home health aides.

Of all of these occupations the fastest growing, based on expected increases in employment between 2020 and 2024 of 22 percent or more would be restaurant cooks, home health aides, school or special client bus drivers and general office clerks. Since those with some university level education or Bachelor's degrees or higher educational backgrounds are never more than 10 percent to perhaps 15 percent of all active participants the IEP's should reflect efforts to get those participants either licensed or certified if they no longer are or to take any and all necessary professional or board exams as required.

Hence, training in office and administrative skills to upgrade skills will be developed to be offered once a year, starting in November of 2020 to 2024 for SCSEP's applicants. The subject was extensively discussed with Path-Stone NCOA and the AARP Foundation, the only two National grantees with authorized positions for SCSEP besides PRDOL as State grantee.

Puerto Rico's economic challenges and social changes have spurred an increase in creative job opportunities, which are listed in PRDOL's digital magazine "Tendencias", drafted and published by the agency's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Creative occupations are present in almost all industries and the most prominent have recognized that the creative element in their employees is one of the keys to success. In terms of creative careers most in demand with the percentage of projected growth to 2024 in Puerto Rico those would include the traditional ones: poets and creative writers; art directors; scenographers and exhibition designers; and fine artists, painters sculptors and illustrators and others less traditional such as: video game designers; web page

developers, etc. Like with all global crisis, unexpected industries and new labor tendencies are likely to result after the COVID 19 pandemic. Puerto Rico undoubtedly has a very skilled and experienced workforce, including our seniors, which in many states are being called back from retirement to join the think tanks and share their wealth of experience gained through years of war, famine, recessions and other disasters.



**SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SCSEP)
Stand-Alone State Plan PY 2020-2023**

II. Service Delivery and Coordination

A. Provide a detailed description of what actions will be taken to coordinate SCSEP with other programs, including:

- 1. Actions to coordinate activities of SCSEP grantees with WIOA Title I programs, including plans for using the WIOA one-stop delivery system and its partners to serve individuals aged 55 and older. (20 CFR 641.302(g),641.325(e))*
- 2. Actions to coordinate activities of SCSEP grantees with the activities the State will carry out under the other titles of the OAA. (20 CFR 641.302(h))*
- 3. Actions to coordinate SCSEP with other private and public entities and programs that provide services to older Americans, such as community and faith-based organizations, transportation programs, and programs for those with special needs or disabilities. (20 CFR 641.302(i))*
- 4. Actions to coordinate SCSEP with other labor market and job training initiatives. (20 CFR 641.302(j))*
- 5. Actions the State will take to ensure that SCSEP is an active partner in the one-stop delivery system and the steps the State will take to encourage and improve coordination with the one-stop delivery system. (20 CFR 641.335)*

B. Describe the long-term strategy for engaging employers to develop and promote opportunities for the placement of SCSEP participants in unsubsidized employment. (20 CFR 641.302(e)) (Alternately, the State may discuss this in the State strategies section of strategic plan if submitting a Combined Plan.)

C. Describe the long-term strategy for serving minorities under SCSEP. (20 CFR 641.302 (c))

D. Provide a list of community services needed and the places that need these services most. Specifically, the plan must address the needs and location(s) of those individuals most in need of community services and the groups working to meet their needs. (20 CFR 641.330)

E. Describe the long-term strategy to improve SCSEP services, including planned long-term changes to the design of the program within the State, and planned changes in the use of SCSEP grantees and program operators to better achieve the goals of the program. This may include recommendations to the Department as appropriate. (20 CFR 641.302(k))

F. Describe a strategy for continuous improvement in the level of performance for SCSEP participants' entry into unsubsidized employment, and to achieve, at a minimum, the levels specified in OAA Section 513(a)(2)(E)(ii). (20 CFR 641.302(f))

These requirements stated above will be discussed jointly hereinbelow, since they are intimately related.

SCSEP has taken and continues to take the necessary steps to coordinate with other programs that serve the needs of older adults. The main purpose of SCSEP is to provide eligible participants the opportunity to engage in occupations considered to be of service to their community, and to upgrade their skills, as necessary. They must actively pursue unsubsidized employment during their enrollment and participation in SCSEP. Therefore, any Program or Agency that can assist in supporting each participant's goals, as outlined in their respective Individualized Employment Programs (IEP's) or permits them to enhance or learn new skills is actively sought and contacted by SCSEP staff. Undoubtedly, when SCSEP establishes collaborative agreements with public and private entities (like for example Path–Stone NCOA and the AARP Foundation) providing services to older adults it allows for the pooling of resources and, more importantly, to avoid duplication of efforts. Hence, the opportunities and alternatives that can be offered to this population are maximized allowing wider choice of services they can benefit from in their homes, the community or an institutional setting.

SCSEP has the advantage of having seamless cooperation from the WIOA one-stop delivery system. Employment Specialists who are under the Unemployment Insurance Program (UI) at PRDOL and are trained to assist and refer individuals aged 55 and older to SCSEP. That is essential, since participants are required to conduct ongoing searches for unsubsidized employment and at the American Job Centers (AJCs) they are registered and assisted, along with the guidance and assistance provided by SCSEP staff. They also are key when offering and enrolling participants in job search training, job clubs and other job search activities. SCSEP's Director and staff are familiar with the local job market and job skills that are in high demand within the community and develops relationships with potential employers to understand the qualifications required as well as the work environments and job opportunities available for older adults. In addition, the National grantees in Puerto Rico, which as stated above are the AARP Foundation and Path Stone, as a sub-grantee of National Council on Aging (NCOA), meet regularly and engage in the joint project known as **VIDA** part of the public policy efforts for this population in the current Administration (to be expanded upon later). Please refer to the organizational chart for the breakdown of the LIB's wherein the PRDOL SCSEP has participants.

The primary Agency that carries out activities under Title III of the Older Americans Act (OAA) is known as "Oficina de la Procuradora de Personas de la Tercera Edad" (OPPEA), or the Office

example: after the January 7, 2020 earthquake and the COVID 19 pandemic) SCSEP staff consults through their website www.saludprimaria.org.

There are several multiple activity centers, some are for profit establishments and most are nonprofit that provide social and recreational services to help people maintain and maximize their independence for a portion of the day. SCSEP has some of the nonprofit multiple activity centers as Host Agencies, like the CASMPEA Center in the municipality of Ponce and in Utuado the Senior Center used to be run by HOPE but they turned private and the municipality has been running it since 2016. The transportation services for the elderly is mostly the one provided by services paid through Medicare although some small companies are currently under development and some are already providing transportation for errands that are not health related. Only some municipalities offer transportation regardless of whether it is to be used for health related issues or to run errands through a transportation program called SENDA in some municipalities while in the San Juan Metropolitan Area there is a transportation service known as the “Llame y Viaje” Program available for people with physical or mental disabilities offered by the Metropolitan Bus Authority.

Coordination with other public entities includes linkages to the Office for the Protection and Defense of the Rights of the Elderly (“Defensoría de las Personas con Impedimentos”) which is an office dedicated to serving those with special needs or disabilities. The University of Puerto Rico has an office that offers technical assistance as needed to older adults with computer systems including programs for the blind and the deaf communities. It is located in the “Jardín Botánico” or Botanical Gardens in Río Piedras. The director is Professor María Miranda Castro who is also a member of the Executive Board of the Vida Plus Initiative and will be assisting, along with her staff, in the design of the website we are developing¹. The Puerto Rico Alzheimer’s and Related Disorders offers counseling and support for people with Alzheimer’s. They educate others and have provided SCSEP participants with orientations on therapeutic alternatives for the patient and his or her family and caregivers (the last one was in December Of 2018). Since some of our participants are home health care aides whose patients have Alzheimer’s and others have relatives or neighbors with the condition the trainings they provide our participants will be offered, on average every 18 months or every other Program Year between PY 2020 and PY 2023.

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transvestite, Transsexual (LGBT) community in Puerto Rico was able to establish a local chapter of national recognized SAFE through Waves Ahead Corporation. They have been integrated since August 29th 2018 to the efforts being undertaken by the National grantees and SCSEP as well as OPPEA (Title III under OAA) and the current Administration in the efforts to develop a website summarizing and directing all Programs and Services that target the needs of older adults and their caregiver on the island. They have been keeping updated data of the primary needs for older adults, regardless of their sexual orientation, in the areas that were affected the most by the Hurricanes Irma in María in September of 2017 and had continued their efforts assisting, most recently with the earthquake that affected mostly the South Western part of the island. They have also brought in donations that allow our participants to have basic survival items while they offer them trainings on how to utilize these survival items (such as desalination tablets or tablets to purify rainwater, etc.).

¹ <http://www.thevidainitiative.com/>

The strategies for engaging employers include interacting with the Employer Committees (“Comités de Patronos”) when they meet monthly by geographical region either, at the respective American Job Centers or the UI regional offices, and meeting with the associations and organizations such as the Lions Club, Rotary Club and the Chamber of Commerce, etc. at least once yearly, alongside with the National Grantees locally (AARP Foundation and the NCOA sub-grantee Path Stone) so that all 78 municipalities on the island may benefit from our efforts to educate and promote how they may benefit from placements of SCSEP participants. There is no need for a long-term strategy for serving minorities per se since 99% of our current participants are of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin and there is less than 1% of the population in Puerto Rico who are Asian and absolutely none of American Indian or Alaskan Native descent.. We do have some who might still be distantly related to the Taíno or Carib Indians that inhabited the islands back in the late 1400’s and 1500’s. The percentage of those Black or of two or more races is usually rounding 45 percent (for PY 2019 it was 54 percent). This information was obtained from the United States 2010 Census Data.

There will be a change from SPAQ to the new data collection Program which was scheduled to start in January 2020 after several fundamental changes had to be done. We anticipate requiring technical assistance, as needed, should the SCSEP fail to meet programmatic nationwide goals. Specific training on the handling of chemicals and toxic substances will be provided to those being trained as custodians or working in recycling plants and will be provided and coordinated through the PRDOL Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Program which will also offer their Health and Safety in the workplace presentation to all of the SCSEP active participants annually to ensure they are aware of whether the environment in the Host Agency they are assigned to or the facilities they need to work at are per code and not pose risks to their health and safety.



**SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SCSEP)
Stand-Alone State Plan PY 2020-2023**

III. Location and Population Served Equitable Distribution

A. Describe the localities and populations most in need of the type of projects authorized by title V. (20 CFR 641.325 (d))

B. List the cities and counties where the SCSEP project will take place. Include the number of SCSEP authorized positions and indicate if and where the positions changed from the prior year.

C. Describe any current slot imbalances and proposed steps to correct inequities to achieve equitable distribution.

D. Explain the state's long-term strategy for achieving an equitable distribution of SCSEP positions within the state that moves positions from over-served to underserved locations within the State in compliance with 20 CFR 641.365 and;

1. Equitably serves both rural and urban areas (20 CFR 641.302(a)(2) and

2. Serves individuals afforded priority for service under 20 CFR 641.520. (20 CFR 641.302(a), 641.365)

E. Provide the ratio of eligible individuals in each service area to the total eligible population in the state. (20 CFR 641.325(a))

F. Provide the relative distribution of eligible individuals who:

1. Reside in urban and rural areas within the state

2. Have the greatest economic need

3. Are minorities

4. Are limited English proficient

5. Have the greatest social need. (20 CFR 641.325(b))

G. Describe the steps taken to avoid disruptions to service for participants to the greatest extent possible, when positions are redistributed, as provided in 20 CFR 641.365; when new Census or other reliable data becomes available; or when there is over-enrollment for any other reason. (20 CFR 641.325(i), 641.302(b))

These requirements stated in Sections A to C will be discussed jointly hereinbelow, since they are intimately related.

Alongside the many economic challenges currently facing Puerto Rico is the demographic challenge of the island's population having shrunk by more than 5 percent over the course of a decade. In addition, Puerto Rico is losing a disproportionate share of its younger citizens and working age adults and professionals - widely referred to as brain drain, a trend that has accelerated the aging of its population. The population of Puerto Rico had grown at a steady clip following World War II, rising from 2.2 million in the early 1950's to a peak of about 3.8 million in 2004. Through the 1970's the island's annual population growth rate averaged about 1.7 percent and then it began to slow in the early 1980's. Between 1982 and 1992, that rate dropped by half, from 1.2 percent to 0.6 percent. Population growth picked up briefly between 1992 and 1996, only to give way to a sharper and more sustained downward trend. As per the United States Official Census 2010 Data, Puerto Rico Population, as of April 1, 2010, had diminished to 3,725,789 residents.

In fact, the population growth rate turned negative in 2005, and by 2013, the annual pace of decline totaled a full percentage point – which is considered a very significant loss in demographic terms. So, undoubtedly, Puerto Rico was experiencing a population decline largely driven by migration and low birth rates before it was hit by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017. Since then, other factors have resulted in loss of productive residents to the Mainland in search of more job offers and potential increased remuneration.

In 2018, the population of Puerto Rico stood at 3.2 million, its lowest point since 1979 and down sharply from 2017, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data. The 3.9 percent decline in 2018 represents the largest year-to-year drop since 1950, the first year for which annual data is available. From 2017 to 2018 it is estimated 123,000 more people left than moved to Puerto Rico, compared with 78,000 the previous year. Between 2000 and 2009, the net migration loss was no more than 6,000 each year. These losses significantly increased since 2011 and have grown since.

Every municipality in Puerto Rico lost population in 2018, with each seeing at least a 2 percent decrease. The municipalities with the largest populations also experienced some of the fastest rates of decline. Of these, Bayamón (population 170,000) decreased by 4 percent or more, and Ponce (population 133,000) also decreased 4 percent or more. These are the two largest municipalities served by SCSEP. Puerto Rico's out-migrants tend to be from younger, and, in recent years, less-educated segments of the population. While the share of young people, both living and leaving Puerto Rico had declined over time until the aforementioned natural disasters and natural population aging, the sixteen-to-thirty-year-old age group makes up a greater percentage of the out-migrants than of the Puerto Rico population as a whole. Indeed, one-third of those born in Puerto Rico now live on the U.S. mainland. Hence, out-migration has accelerated the aging of the remaining population. Overall, 81 percent of the island's population was ages 18

and older in 2018, up from 75 percent in 2008. The share who were 65 and older increased from 14 percent in 2008 to 21 percent in 2018.

To further aggravate the recovery efforts on the island, hundreds of small earthquakes have hit the island since December 28, 2019. The largest and most damaging earthquake to hit Puerto Rico since 2014 occurred in the early morning hours (4:24 a.m.) of January 7, 2020 when a 6.4 magnitude quake struck Puerto Rico's southern coast, about 6 miles south of "Indios", a town of about 1,500 people according to the US Geological Survey (USGS). More than 400,000 of Puerto Rico's 3.1 million people would have felt strong shaking, the USGS estimates, though the entire island would have felt lesser effects. The Honorable Governor of Puerto Rico declared a state of emergency and activated the Puerto Rico National Guard. It likely will be the island's most damaging earthquake in a century, and hopefully will remain as such. In 1918, a strong earthquake shook Puerto Rico, causing a tsunami and resulting in 116 deaths and economic losses estimated at around \$4 million, which represented two times the island's annual budget at the time, according to the Puerto Rico Seismic Network. That's about \$73 million today. Since the aftershocks continue, the full extent of damages is still unclear but experts say the island could need hundreds of millions of dollars in aid. Mr. Chuck Watson, an analyst from Enki Research, a Georgia-based disaster research group estimates the quakes could cost the island up to \$3.1 billion in losses, he said. The estimate includes not only damage to public and private property but also lost tourism, wages and business due to power outages. Furthermore, Watson's estimate includes how multiple aftershocks can potentially damage weak structures, as well as the lingering damage left by Hurricanes Irma and Maria since some of the infrastructure damage from the 2017 storms is not repaired. Aftershocks continue to be experienced on a daily basis since January 2020.

SCSEP equitably serves both rural and urban areas, without distinction all those who must be afforded priority of service. Since near half of the general population, enumerated by the 2010 Census of Population and Housing, in Puerto Rico was living below the poverty level the 18 counties served by SCSEP have very similar needs. Nevertheless, very few sociodemographic studies have taken into account the poverty level among Puerto Rico's 55 and over population. Currently, Hunter College is conducting a study, but it comprises elders 65 and over. The data source they are using is the 5 percent Public Use Micro data Sample (PUMS), created by the U.S. Census Bureau. Among the expected results, which can be found as of now amongst current and past participants of SCSEP, is the fact there is a greater poverty level amongst the feminine population and amongst the ones with lower educational levels. There is no long-term plan to move positions from over-served to under-served since they are all considered to be or have similar needs overall.

The localities served by SCSEP are: Aguadilla; Aguas Buenas, Aibonito, Arroyo, Bayamón, Canóvanas, Cayey, Coamo, Dorado, Florida, Ponce, Quebradillas, San Sebastián, Santa Isabel, Toa Alta, Utuado, Vieques and Villalba for a total of 112 authorized positions. There has been no change in the number of authorized positions from the previous year. The only two municipalities also served by a National Grantee or a sub-grantee are Bayamón, which is also served by the AARP Foundation, and Ponce, with some participants of Path-Stone, which is the sub-grantee of the National Council on Aging (NCOA) on the island since February of 2017. In terms of the geographic aspects, the municipalities that constitute the geographic areas denominated as PUMAs (Public Use Microdata Area) in the Census of Population and Housing are primarily those located

in the central and mountainous area (for PRDOLHR’s SCSEP Program: Aguas Buenas, Aibonito, Cayey, Florida, Quebradillas and San Sebastián) have the greater percent of elders living below the poverty level.

The current slot imbalances are due to several factors and we will strive to explain municipality by municipality either over-enrolled or under enrolled.

There is no actual discrepancy with ratio of eligible individuals in each service area to the total eligible population in the territory. That is because it is estimated that regardless of service area most individuals would be eligible island-wide for the services provided under Title V of the Older Americans Act.

Also, as previously explained, since the majority of the active participants are of limited-English speaking ability, of Latino origin; educational level-wise close to 36% have less than an 11th grade education; 98% with incomes below the poverty level; over 85% receiving some sort of public assistance and; ranging from 50% to 60%, at any one time, residing in rural areas this actually mirrors the limited data the “Instituto de Estadísticas” or the Central Government’s “Junta de Planificación” (Planning Board under the Department of Commerce and Economic Development) has since data on individuals 60 and over are not kept nor disseminated.

The complete equitable distribution or listing of municipalities and authorized positions for PY 2019:

Aguadilla	10	14	4
Aguas Buenas	5	11	6
Aibonito	5	3	-2
Arroyo	3	10	7
Bayamón	15	5	-10
Canóvanas	6	6	0
Cayey	7	5	-2
Coamo	6	7	1
Dorado	5	2	-3
Florida	2	5	-3
Ponce	10	10	0
Quebradillas	5	5	0
San Sebastián	9	6	-3
Santa Isabel	4	4	0
Toa Alta	8	7	-1
Utua	6	6	0
Vieques	2	2	0
Villalba	4	4	0
Totals	112	112	

As previously detailed, SCSEP serves both rural and urban areas equitably and attends expeditiously those afforded priority for service. At present there is only one veteran being served

in Aguadilla, three who are over age 75, 59 reside in rural areas out of 112, 92% are considered to have limited proficiency in the English language and most are considered minorities.

The areas that are over-enrolled cannot be said to be the only ones with participants with the greatest economic need but are arguably ones with the greatest social need. The municipalities overenrolled are: Aguadilla (4), Aguas Buenas (6), Arroyo (7) Coamo (2), Florida (4), and Santa Isabel (1). In Aguadilla we have had 4 placed in employment within the last 9 months, in Aguas Buenas two are participant staff, and two have been placed by the municipality, in Arroyo they have placed 4 in the past year and it is one of the poorest municipalities on the island, in Coamo the non-for-profit absorbed two participants in the last 6 months, in Florida they have placed two within the last calendar year and in Santa Isabel the over-enrolled individual just moved to the state of Florida within the last week of February so there are only 4 participants (which is the exact number of authorized positions in that municipality). The only seriously under-enrolled county is Bayamón, closest to the main metropolitan area and largest city – San Juan – there are two candidates that were expected to be interviewed by 3/31/2020. This is under review, as a result as the COVID 19 preventive measures mandating social distancing. The other under-enrolled municipalities are Aibonito (-2), Canóvanas (-2), Cayey (-2), Dorado (-3), Ponce (-2), San Sebastián (-3) and Toa Alta (-3). The disparities between authorized positions have been resolved since eligible candidates were already interviewed in Toa Alta and were expected to start their assignments as of 3/16/2020 and there two others expected to start in Canóvanas as of 3/16/2020 also. There are potentially eligible candidates with intake interviews pending in Aibonito and San Sebastián. A recent visit for re-certifications and search for eligible candidates in Dorado was unsuccessful. We have requested the re-doubled efforts of the Dorado-Manatí AJC.

Undoubtedly, the current COVID 19 pandemic likely will change all scenarios and bring changes to the labor market and the SCSEP's participants. PRDOL will update information and remit it to the FPO as it becomes available.