

## **PRDOLHR SCSEP Stand-Alone State Plan PY 2020-2023**

### **III. Location and Population Served Equitable Distribution**

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, 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. 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.

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 the PRDOLHR SCSEP Program. 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. In 1918, a strong quake 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.

The PRDOLHR SCSEP Program equitably serves both rural and urban areas and serves 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 PRDOLHR's SCSEP Program 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 the PRDOLHR SCSEP Program, 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 the PRDOLHR SCSEP Program 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 11<sup>th</sup> 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) 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

Utuado	6	6	0
Vieques	2	2	0
Villalba	4	4	0
Totals	112	112	

As previously detailed, the PRDOLHR SCSEP Program 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 will be interviewed by 3/31/2020. 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 will start their assignments as of 3/16/2020 and there two others starting 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.