

# CITY OF RICHMOND CITIES OF SERVICE LEADERSHIP GRANT

Final Narrative and Financial Report Submitted to the  
S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation  
by

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# **Narrative Report**

## **SUMMARY**

In February 2012, the City of Richmond received a \$200,000 Cities of Service Leadership Grant from the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation to support the planning and implementation phases of an impact volunteering program using the national Cities of Service model. The \$200,000 was provided in equal installments over two years. As part of this national coalition of mayors and cities, the program engaged the Richmond community, at all levels, to address the community's pressing needs by harnessing the power of volunteers and stakeholders.

Richmond's impact volunteering program model was branded through a community ballot process as "Excellence Serving our Community (ESC)."

To date, Richmond ESC has engaged over 1,700 volunteers (including 670 youth between the ages of 5 and 25), who have served within the Richmond community in priority areas ranging from education to community beautification. Additionally, our program has partnered with or supported 62 community organizations/groups and internal departments/programs during this grant period.

## **KEY ACHIEVEMENTS**

Planning and implementing a service strategy in the City of Richmond was a large effort. We strongly feel that both phases were successful, which resulted in a sustainable impact volunteering program that is increasingly scaling. In reference to our program objectives for the leadership grant, following are the achievements for this full grant period.

### **Planning Phase – February 2012 to February 2013**

March 2012 - October 2012 – Supported by a contracted strategy consultant, conducted community research of Richmond's overall volunteer infrastructure. The extensive process entailed the following:

<b>Expert Interviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Six</b> interviews with chief service officers</li><li>- <b>13</b> interviews with local community leaders (government, philanthropy, business, and non-profit)</li></ul>
<b>Focus Groups</b> ( <i>parent engagement, community beautification, health and wellness (2), and volunteer infrastructure</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Five</b> focus groups with <b>42</b> participants</li></ul>
<b>Online surveys</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Two online surveys to <b>10</b> local government agencies and community-based organizations</li></ul>

October 2012 - Reported results from the community research process to the public and identified Richmond's immediate high-level priorities:

- support youths' educational, health, and wellness development;
- expand and support community beautification programs/projects;
- build the infrastructure and capacity of volunteers and agencies; and
- raise awareness regarding impact volunteering.

November 2012 - January 2013 – Drafted citywide high-impact service plan.

**Implementation Phase – February 2013 to Current**

February 2013 – Released the program's [service plan](#) and launched the official Richmond-based volunteer website, [Richmond Volunteers](#).

**GRANT PERIOD HIGHLIGHTS**

During the planning and implementation phases of the grant period, Richmond ESC noted other [significant program highlights](#).

April 2012- Richmond ESC, in partnership with the Richmond Community Foundation and the Volunteer Center of the East Bay, hosts the First Annual Citywide Volunteer Recognition and Awards Ceremony to recognize outstanding volunteers. Twenty-one honorees, nominated by local organizations, were recognized for their extraordinary service to the Richmond community.

August 2012- Richmond ESC is selected by Youth Service America to be a lead agency to engage youth in service and receives a grant (\$2,000).

October 2012- Richmond ESC receives a \$25,000 Impact Volunteering Fund Grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies/Cities of Service to help expand the capacity of Community Alliance for Learning, a non-profit organization. Our program partnered with the organization's Writer Coach Connection Program to recruit volunteers to offer one-on-one writing support and coaching to 150 Richmond High School students.

April 2013- In partnership with the Richmond Community Foundation and the Volunteer Center of the East Bay, Richmond ESC hosts the Second Annual Citywide Volunteer Recognition and Awards Ceremony held to recognize nearly 40 outstanding volunteers and organizations.

April 2013 - Youth led projects kick off for Global Youth Service Days - April 26-28.

May 2013- Richmond ESC hosts the Youth Recognition Ceremony to recognize the nearly 350 youth leaders and volunteers (ages 5 – 25) who participated in 15 Global Youth Service Day projects.

October 2013- In partnership with KaBoom!, Livie and Luca, the Belding Woods Neighborhood Council, Richmond ESC brought together over 300 volunteers to rebuild the Belding Garcia Playground.

December 2013- Richmond ESC receives \$100,000 Impact Volunteering Fund Grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies/Cities of Service to sustain the WriterCoach Connection Program at Richmond High School and expand it to Kennedy High School to coach a total of 175 students. Additionally, in partnership with Read Aloud Program and Bring Me a Book, volunteers help improve literacy skills for 150 elementary school children among three elementary schools (Steger, Coronado, and Washington) and provide family literacy workshops at these schools.

January 2014 – Over 600 (including nearly 260 youth) volunteered to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and served on various projects along the Richmond Greenway. Richmond ESC supported the Friends of the Richmond Greenway by recruiting and organizing volunteers for this annual community event.

February 2014 – 145 youth volunteers gathered at the Craneway Pavilion for Unite 4 Good, a movement to engage youth in acts of kindness.

March 2014 – 75 Richmond ESC youth volunteers joined over 450 West Contra Costa Unified School district students in the first ever We Day California, a day-long event to inspire youth to get involved in local and global volunteer actions to change the world.

April 2014 – Collaborating with the Richmond Community Foundation, the Third Annual Citywide Volunteer Recognition and Awards Ceremony was held to recognize nearly 30 volunteers and organizations.

April 2014 – Nearly 240 members from Mormon Helping Hands, and employees from Overaa Construction Company volunteered to support Parchester Village residents for a community beautification day. Community garden projects included building garden beds, repairing the garden's fence, and painting the garden's fence. Additionally, unique touches were added to Parchester Village's iconic sign, and residents were assisted with trash removal. Residents and volunteers filled fifteen, 40 yard dumpsters with 58.3 tons of trash.

May 2014 – Student organization, Richmond ESC at Berkeley, receives the University of California at Berkeley Chancellor's Awards for Public Service. Chancellor Nicholas B. Dirks presented Richmond ESC at Berkeley, the Student Group Award for Civic

Engagement recognizing the program's partnership with the university that embodies UC Berkeley's proud tradition of public service and commitment to improving our local and global community. Richmond ESC at Berkeley was also selected to receive a \$900 mini-grant from the Public Service Center to further its work.

May 2014 – Richmond ESC recognized youth volunteers who led or participated in community service. Richmond ESC expanded its partnership base and connected with Free the Children, an organization that educates, engages, and inspires youth to make a difference in their community and the world. With this added partner, Richmond ESC was able to engage 670 youth, who led and participated in 20 different projects.

July 2014 – Memorandum of Understanding developed with Volunteer Center of the East Bay to continue to provide free trainings for selected non-profit organizations. Additionally, public roundtable discussions and professional development sessions will be jointly offered.

July 2014 – Richmond ESC has been a key contributor in series of planning discussions with Cities of Service and Bay Area Community Resources to establish a Cities of Service California Civic Corps. Other Bay Area cities invited to these planning discussions are Oakland and Hayward. California Civic Corps, a federally funded program, will be a pilot program using New York City Civic Corps as its model. A program proposal with a request for funding will be submitted to California Volunteers. Like the national AmeriCorps program, cities will provide a funding match.

## **CHALLENGES**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Meeting the high need for long-term volunteer placements with community organizations.	This is an ongoing challenge. Besides launching a Richmond volunteer-based website for organizations and volunteers to connect, we have also used the City of Richmond’s public portals (i.e., electronic marquee, government TV station, City Manager’s Weekly Report) to promote volunteer opportunities with Richmond organizations. In partnership with the Volunteer Center of the East Bay, a volunteer fair is tentatively scheduled for April 2015. The fair will give organizations an opportunity to highlight their service opportunities and recruit volunteers who are seeking meaningful service opportunities— long or short-term.
Securing funding for initiatives and partnering stakeholders who manage some of the initiatives.	In addition to the Leadership Grant, nearly \$190,000 in grant funds, in-kind donations and services have been secured to support parent engagement/education initiatives, the youth volunteer program, and community beautification initiatives. We are actively seeking and pursuing funding opportunities.
Low attendance and interest in pilot capacity building opportunities and/or trainings offered by Richmond ESC and/or in partnership with Volunteer Center of the East Bay.	Partnership with Volunteer Center of the East Bay has been restructured to offer panel and roundtable discussions in addition to no-cost trainings.

## **NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPACTS**

During this grant period, new opportunities were plentiful. Using the platform of impact volunteering, we engaged groups, organizations, and residents on unprecedented levels that resulted in helping scale initiatives and community projects that could have had minimal results.

For example, with our program’s leverage, Richmond’s inaugural participation in the largest national day of service, Make a Difference Day, resulted in over 300 volunteers rebuilding a community park playground in one day.

Additionally, supporting the Richmond community’s tradition of having a “day on” instead of a “day off” to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., our involvement helped increase volunteer participation to over 600 volunteers converging on the Richmond Greenway to serve on various projects.

Without funding from the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation--which allowed us to become a Cities of Service leadership city—we would not have been able to apply for grants offered by the Cities of Service Impact Volunteering Fund. These grant awards enabled us to provide capacity building support to local nonprofit organizations using the impact volunteering model.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

As a Cities of Service leadership city, we have developed new partnerships and enhanced existing partnerships. Our key partnerships have yielded the following outcomes for this grant reporting period:

### ***Community Alliance for Learning***

Writer Coach Connection Program at Richmond and Kennedy High Schools.

### ***Read Aloud Volunteer Program and Bring Me a Book Foundation***

Grade Level Reading – It’s a Family Affair initiative at Washington, Coronado and Stege Elementary Schools.

### ***Volunteer Center of the East Bay***

Capacity building resources for nonprofit organizations and volunteers.

### ***City Departments***

Improved effectiveness of existing city programs and projects.

### ***Free the Children***

Increased leadership development opportunities and youth service participation in Richmond.

## **CONCLUSION**

The leadership grant from the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation enabled Richmond to successfully demonstrate that service as a strategy to address our pressing needs is a viable solution. With the implementation of the Cities of Service impact volunteering model, we have had significant results in the area of service. Volunteers are supporting our youth, groups are volunteering to beautify our neighborhoods, volunteers are consistently serving within City Hall offices, and nonprofit agencies are gaining skills to build and sustain their volunteer programs. Moving forward, Richmond ESC will continue to seek innovative approaches within our service capacity to sustain and enhance programs and partnerships.