STRATEGIC PLAN FOR

PIERCE COUNTY

AMATEUR RADIO EMERGENCY SERVICE (ARES)

AND

AMATEUR RADIO COMMUNICATION SERVICES (ARCS)

Pierce County ARES
Amateur Radio Emergency Service

Pierce County Volunteer Group of the Year for 2017 and 2006

Pierce County ARCS

Amateur Radio Communication Services

Adopted by the ARCS board on March 12, 2025

Mission:

To provide an organization of trained radio operators to assist communities during a disaster.

Vision:

We are a highly trained, dependable organization of amateur radio operators which fosters a culture of service and technical expertise and is prepared to support community preparedness, and response and recovery during emergencies.

Core Values

- Readiness: Always be prepared to serve when needed.
- Service: Our work supports community resilience.
- Integrity: We operate with honesty and respect for the community and each other.
- Innovation: Encourage continuous learning and the use of emerging technologies.

Purpose:

The purpose of this Strategic Plan for Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and Amateur Radio Communication Services (ARCS) is to help guide and develop operational readiness, volunteer engagement, and partnerships with local emergency services and community organizations.

This Strategic Plan outlines in broad terms the goals to be achieved and actions to be taken. **Specific tasks to achieve these goals should be explicitly presented in an annual prioritized work plan for each organization.**

Background:

ARES is an all-volunteer association of amateur radio operators who come together to support communication needs in times of crisis. It is organized under the guiding principles of the Amateur Radio Relay League (ARRL), a national association that promotes amateur radio.

Volunteers come to ARES with a very broad range of backgrounds and experience. Many have just recently attained their Technician license from the Federal Communications Commission and still suffer from “mic fright.” Others have long professional backgrounds in technical fields like electrical engineering and software development.

Most volunteers have their own personal equipment which they intend to use in support of the ARES community-benefit mission. That provides an important infrastructure backbone for emergency communications. Still, there is benefit to having a cache of equipment available to deploy in the field that is not owned by individuals, but is held in common for mutual benefit. ARES is not a corporate entity and has no status as a legal organization. As such it cannot own property or enter into binding agreements such as contracts, nor can it raise money from entities such as foundations for the support of its operations.

ARCS was formed as a non-profit corporation to support the material needs of ARES by procuring, maintaining, and accounting for equipment held in common for use by volunteer radio operators. In addition to its equipment-management duties, the organization is also the fiscal agent for ARES operations and maintains contracts with other entities for items such as leasing space at tower sites for repeater systems. ARCS is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

PRIORITY GOALS

There are many actions ARES and ARCS could implement to meet the vision and mission of the combined organizations. But, as all-volunteer organizations, the ability to accomplish multiple goals is limited. The Priority Goals presented here are the most vital in pursuit of the organizations' objectives.

Goal 1: Served Agency Relations (ARES Emphasis)

ARES, and by extension ARCS as it supports ARES, is intended to provide communication services to emergency management and disaster response agencies. Those agencies may be at the Federal, State, or local level. In addition, ARES is prepared to provide communication assistance to non-governmental organizations such as those that might operate shelters or provide other assistance during and after a disaster.

ARES Role

- Develop talking points and an "elevator pitch" regarding what ARES is and can provide.
- Develop and maintain a contact list of agencies and officials that ARES might serve.
- Document, through surveys or conversations, agency needs and expectations for involvement of ARES volunteers.
- Craft volunteer training to incorporate agency needs and expectations.

ARCS Role

- Maintain records.
- Assure contract compliance.

Goal 2: Equipment Stewardship (ARCS Emphasis)

ARES Role

- Organize training on ARCS-owned equipment.
- Promote “best practices” for equipment use and care.
- Assist with equipment inventory.
- Stay abreast of technological advances and develop ways to incorporate them into standard operating procedures as appropriate.
- Identify needs and develop proposals for equipment acquisition and maintenance.

ARCS Role

- Evaluate and prioritize equipment procurement.
- Assure maintenance of equipment.
- Raise funds for equipment acquisition and maintenance.
- Account for corporate funds and for equipment in inventory.

Goal 3: Volunteer Engagement (ARES Emphasis)

ARES Role

- Communicate with volunteers what they can expect, what is expected from them, and opportunities for involvement.
- Provide a convenient way for volunteers to track their accomplishments.
- Provide training opportunities on equipment, radio operator “best practices,” served agency expectations, software platforms, and EOC operations.
    - Document which tasks are appropriate for home-based stations, which are not, and develop policies and procedures for deploying volunteers.
    - Provide training at the team level, in addition to the district level.
- Where possible, incorporate available training from organizations such as WaveTalkers.
- Provide opportunities for team-building and comradery, such as antenna-building workshops, picnics or other gatherings, “fox hunts,” etc.
- Leverage existing relationships with radio clubs to build awareness of ARES and opportunities for involvement.

ARCS Role

- Assure sufficient equipment is available and operational for training and events.

Goal 4: Organizational Development (Equal Emphasis)

- Inventory and map volunteer operational and equipment capabilities and interests.
- Engage in ongoing leadership development and succession planning.
- Develop and implement an organizational structure that minimizes responsibilities and span of control for volunteers in leadership roles.

SECONDARY GOALS

If sufficient resources, especially volunteer participation, are available, and if the Priority Goals are largely being met, these secondary goals should be pursued.

Goal 5: Other Radio Services (ARES Emphasis)

- Recognize that radio operators from alternative radio services (e.g. FRS, GMRS, MURS, CB, etc.) will be active during response to a disaster.
- Develop policies and procedures which anticipate those actions and plan ways to incorporate or mitigate them.

Goal 6: Public Relations (ARES Emphasis)

- Develop a program to attract new volunteers and inform the public about the purposes and capabilities of ARES.
- Cultivate relationships with other related organizations such as CERT, the Radio Club of Tacoma, etc., to work toward shared goals, practice where appropriate, and find opportunities to recruit new ARES members.

Goal 7: External Relations (ARES Emphasis)

- Cultivate relationships with organizations with similar objectives as ARES, outside of Pierce County, to share information and create a more unified statewide approach to disaster communications, volunteer engagement, and opportunities to advance shared goals.