

# NONPROFIT CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM

Rural Aging Initiative 2017 - 2019



A diverse group of 18 nonprofit aging services organizations received fundamental capacity-building support during Phase I (2014 - 2016) of the Rural Aging Initiative. This critical work continued in Phase II. The 18 participants received additional technical assistance, training, and funding totaling \$369,766 to implement strategic planning, board and staff development, financial and operational improvements, outreach and marketing, technology upgrades, and program expansion. As a result they boosted management and operational efficiency, enhanced program effectiveness, leveraged new funding, strengthened inter-organizational relationships and collaboration, and – ultimately – served more older adults and their family caregivers.



## SELECTED AGING SERVICES PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES



### **46% MORE OLDER ADULTS**

were served by the end of the initiative

- 6,640 older adults served in 2017
- 12,362 older adults served in 2019



**\$2.7 MILLION** in new state funding was leveraged by **12 NONPROFITS** between 2017 and 2019 to further expand their programming



### **89% OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS**

at participating organizations were retained, a 28% improvement over the prior phase



### **100% OF PARTICIPANTS**

reported that a cohesive aging services network has now been established regionwide

## CAPACITY BUILDING BY THE NUMBERS

**12,362 older adults** impacted

**\$369,766** invested in **18 nonprofits**

**43 hours** of training and peer learning:

- **10** sessions
- **18** organizations
- **60** unduplicated staff/board

**16 nonprofits** strengthened/expanded programs and services:

- **14** enhanced marketing/outreach
- **12** updated IT
- **10** developed strategic plans
- **9** improved operations e.g. financial, policy and procedure, data management

# CAPACITY BUILDING LESSONS LEARNED: TWO PERSPECTIVES

## PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVE

### STAFF AND BOARD DEVELOPMENT ARE ESSENTIAL

Time and budget constraints often limit small nonprofits' ability to pursue staff and board training. Supporting staff to attend workshops, conferences, and certificate programs adds tools to their toolbox and energizes their work. Training for board members boosts their understanding of mission, needs, opportunities, and finances, thereby improving their decision-making and stewardship. Investing in the capacity of staff and board is foundational to organizational growth.

### TECHNOLOGY UPGRADES PROMOTE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Most funding for aging services organizations is earmarked for direct services, which makes it difficult to make needed technology upgrades. Funds that can be spent on acquiring computers, mobile devices, software, and IT support are game-changers for improving efficiency and effectiveness.

### STRATEGIC PLANNING SUPPORTS MISSION FOCUS AND ADVANCEMENT

Formal strategic planning fosters big-picture thinking and creative problem-solving. Having the resources to bring staff and board together, and perhaps employ an outside facilitator, allows nonprofits a pause from daily work to assess progress, explore new directions, and set a course for the future.

### ELEVATING MARKETING AND OUTREACH HELPS ORGANIZATIONS SERVE MORE OLDER ADULTS

Services for older adults and caregivers do little good if the community doesn't know about them. Tapping marketing experts to refine messages and materials and help with website updates, branding, and social media helps nonprofits reach new clients, as well as attract volunteers and funding.

*"I'm much more likely in the future to call on the other directors for help or support, more invested in their progress, and more actively open to how we might collaborate on larger programs or grants."*

– Kay Grindland, Care Partners of Cook County

## NORTHLAND FOUNDATION PERSPECTIVE

### FLEXIBLE FUNDING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROMOTE ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Helping organizations identify, prioritize, and address capacity-building needs is a critical piece of the sustainability puzzle. Investments in staff and board, strategic planning, technology, finance, and operations strengthens nonprofits at their core and poises them to successfully pursue government and foundation grants, fee-for-service models, and corporate and individual giving programs.

### HARNESS THE POWER OF PEER LEARNING

Group training enhances the skills and knowledge of nonprofit leaders. It also promotes peer-to-peer learning. The chance to connect regularly with other aging services providers makes space for building good relationships and sharing ideas that, in turn, spark fresh thinking and collaboration.

### REACH MORE OLDER ADULTS AND THEIR CAREGIVERS BY ENHANCING SERVICES

Strategic capacity-building support not only stabilizes participating organizations but also sets the table for innovation and expansion. A potent combination of training, funding, consulting services, and peer networking results in more older adults being served through new and expanded programs.

### MULTI-YEAR CAPACITY BUILDING YIELDS LASTING RESULTS

Building capacity among small, geographically dispersed organizations is not a quick fix. Slow and steady wins the race. Flexible funding and technical assistance provided in manageable increments, over time, positions both the individual organizations and the entire network of service providers for lasting success and continued growth.