

Northland Foundation's **RURAL AGING INITIATIVE**

2017 - 2019

Supporting Older Adults in Northeastern Minnesota to
Age in Place in Their Home and Community of Choice



OVERVIEW

In early 2017 the Northland Foundation began an ambitious second phase of its existing aging program, the Rural Aging Initiative. Phase II was designed, broadly, to help northeastern Minnesota's older adults and their family caregivers age in place in their homes and communities of choice with purpose, dignity, and autonomy.



PARTICIPANTS AND PARTNERS

The Northland Foundation partnered with the **Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging** to work with **18 aging services organizations, 4 Tribal Nations, 18 AGE to age communities, and 10 other grantee organizations** within a large seven-county region of northeastern Minnesota. Training and networking, tailored technical assistance, and strategic and competitive grantmaking were ongoing. This combination of supports, provided over three years, led to a more connected network of aging services providers; idea-sharing, replication, and collaboration across organizations and communities; and time for participants to plan, test, and implement programming.

PROGRAM DESIGN

Phase I (2014-2016) of the Northland Foundation's Rural Aging Initiative focused heavily on fortifying the region's fragile aging services organizations, along with increasing social engagement among older adults, and piloting community-based planning in

two rural sites to increase awareness and availability of aging services and supports. In the next three-year phase (2017-2019), the Foundation undertook three distinct strategies to build on the groundwork that was laid in the previous three years:

- **Capacity Building Program**
Enhancing organizational, community, and regional capacity to provide a continuum of services for older adults by offering training, technical assistance, peer learning, and funding to aging services organizations.
- **AGE to age Program**
Expanding opportunities for older adults to improve their health and well-being through engagement in community-based intergenerational activities.
- **Aging Innovations Program**
Encouraging fresh approaches to serving older adults and their family caregivers living in low-income rural areas.

A LOOK AHEAD

Through the Rural Aging Initiative, the communities and Tribal Nations of northeastern Minnesota have created a stronger aging services infrastructure, leveraged additional funding, and sparked innovation and expansion.

With a new name – the Integrated Rural Community Aging Program – the Northland Foundation and its partners will build on the solid framework that has been established, taking their work in aging to the next level so that more rural older adults may live well, with dignity and autonomy.



HIGHLIGHTED OVERARCHING OUTCOMES



24,050
RURAL OLDER
ADULTS SERVED



\$1.635 MILLION
AWARDED THROUGH
134 GRANTS
TO HELP OLDER ADULTS
AGE IN PLACE



**50 PARTNER
ORGANIZATIONS**
ENGAGED

MULTI-FACETED STRATEGY OUTCOMES



CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM

12,362 older adults served by the 18 participating aging services organizations

60 staff/board members engaged in **43 hours** of training and peer learning over 3 years

100% of participants reported improved organizational capacity to better serve older adults and their family caregivers



AGING INNOVATIONS PROGRAM

4,115 older adults benefited from the **39 projects**

\$1.7 million leveraged by grantees to implement and expand their projects

90% of funded projects have continued to serve older adults in the region



AGE TO AGE PROGRAM

7,572 older adults participated in **550 activities** across 18 rural communities including 3 Tribal Nations

15,531 youth benefited from older adults' talent, wisdom, and connection

94% of older adults report decreased social isolation and improved well-being

LESSONS LEARNED

CAPACITY BUILDING YIELDS LONG-TERM RESULTS

Capacity building has been a critical step to help small aging services nonprofits make fundamental organizational and programmatic improvements. Technical assistance, training, sub-awards, and peer learning have not only strengthened each individual nonprofit but also their connection to each other, creating a robust, cohesive network of services and supports.

INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS EXPAND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

The intergenerational activities offered in AGE to age sites give older adults opportunities to build social connections and feel valued for their wisdom and life experience. Rooted in community, AGE to age provides a ready avenue to integrate social engagement programming with community planning and care coordination for older adults.

COLLABORATION MAXIMIZES RESOURCES

The Northland Foundation's close partnership with the Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging over the past six years has made for more efficient, effective work. Combining our respective experience and strengths provided a richer context for decision-making.

DEDICATED FUNDING SPURS INNOVATION

The Aging Innovations Program grants – both modest and larger dollar amounts – have proven to be successful catalysts for grantees to explore creative ideas and pilot new or expanded programs. Most recipients have since leveraged significant other funding to further support growth and sustainability of their projects.

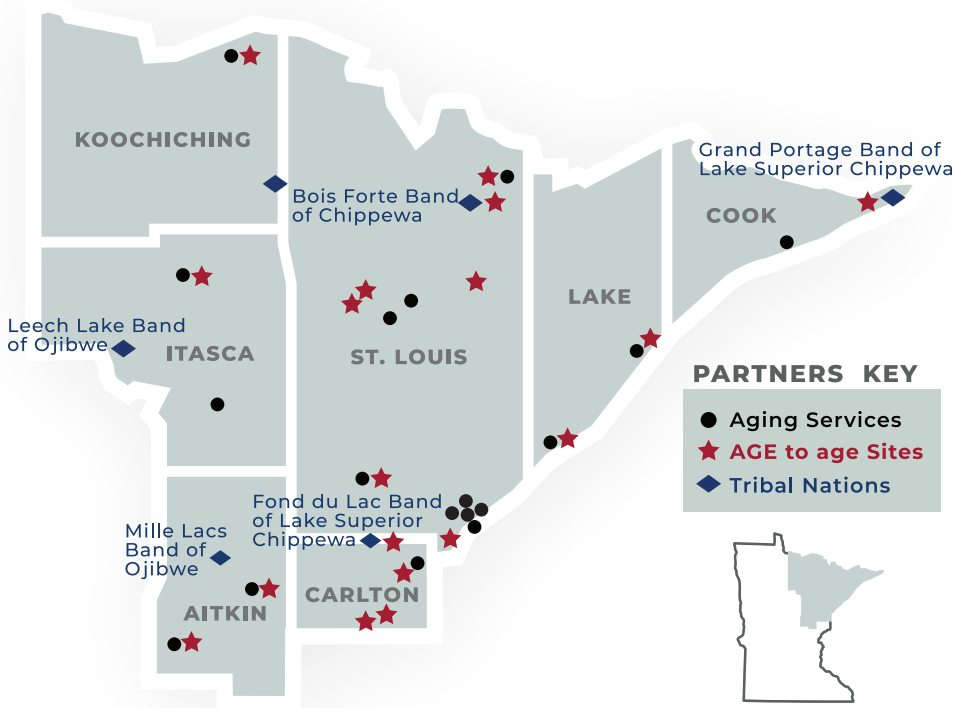
INTENTIONAL, RESPECTFUL OUTREACH FOSTERS TRIBAL RELATIONSHIPS

Intentional outreach that respects Tribal sovereignty and a funding pool earmarked specifically for Native communities have fostered culturally grounded programming for Elders now, as well as strengthened relationships that will help ensure future initiatives are inclusive and equitable.

MULTI-YEAR INVESTMENT COMPOUNDS IMPACT

Working in communities over a period of years has given participating nonprofits time to design, test, modify, and implement new and expanded services. It has also helped to develop new and more knowledgeable leaders with the tools to move their organizations forward.

SNAPSHOT OF NORTHEASTERN MINNESOTA



- 7 counties covering 18,185 square miles
- 324,914 residents, or just 18 people per square mile
- 1 urban area with 86,236 people and 67 other towns up to 16,000 people
- 5 Tribal Nations: Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, and Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
- 36% of people are age 55 or older and 20% are 18 or younger
- 32% of adults age 65+ live alone
- 14.3% of residents live at or below Federal Poverty Guidelines, with poverty rates up to 40% in pockets of the region

THANKS TO KEY PARTNERS

The Northland Foundation thanks its Rural Aging Initiative partners including the Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging, Capacity Building Program participants, Aging Innovations Program grantees, Tribal Nation partners, and AGE to age communities. Additional resources for the AGE to age program expansion were provided by the Bush Foundation, Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation, Mardag Foundation, Minnesota Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation, and Otto Bremer Trust.

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