

PowerUP! A New Volunteer Engagement Strategy for the Aging and Disability Networks

POSITIONING STATEMENT

The Aging Network's
Volunteer Collaborative

April 2013



PowerUP! A New Volunteer Engagement Strategy for the Aging and Disability Networks

You've likely heard plenty about America's changing demographics and the growing numbers and needs of older adults. You likely have heard less about older adults themselves being an increasing, cost-saving, and indispensable resource in meeting growing needs for essential services and constructing livable communities for all ages.

The Administration on Aging (AoA) sees vast potential in older adult volunteers to power up local organizations that serve older adults. Through the Aging Network's Volunteer Collaborative, funded by AoA, a goal has been set to double the number of volunteers in aging and disability services—to one million volunteers—by 2015. Through a series of efforts, the Volunteer Collaborative is leading a PowerUP! movement to help aging and disability services organizations build their capacity for older adult volunteers through templates, tools, and training for use by local organizations and programs.

AoA sees vast potential in older adult volunteers to power up local organizations that serve older adults.

Below are the concepts that support this innovative, capacity-building idea to PowerUP! aging and disability service organizations to help all existing and future generations of Americans age with dignity, independence, and the highest quality of life possible.

Challenges Facing Older Adults and Service Providers

Older Adults: By 2030, more than 70 million Americans will be 65 and older—twice their number in 2000 and one in every five Americans. As they age, needs will rise. Many will need services that allow them to stay in their homes,¹ including senior center or adult day care, home-delivered meals, homemaker services, assistance with personal care, and transportation. Others will need assistance understanding their Medicare options and learning of other healthcare programs. Seniors in nursing homes and assisted living facilities need personal care support and advocacy to maintain a reasonable standard of quality of life.

For example, roughly half of adults age 65 and over have at least two chronic conditions, and the average 75-year old has three. Among older adults, chronic conditions make up nearly 95 percent of health care costs and limit the activities of 12 million people.²

The economy has taken its toll as well. Currently, more than 23 million Americans aged 60 and older are economically insecure, living at or below 250 percent of the federal poverty level (\$27,925 per year for a single person)—struggling to pay for food, medicine, and heat or living one unexpected event away from being in that situation.³ At the same time, 80 percent of care to older adults is provided by families⁴, mostly women caring for both parents and in-laws and raising children. The near economic collapse combined with potential cuts in supportive services for these caregivers also places these families at risk.



In addition, because of cultural and language barriers, older adults who are minorities may be more vulnerable than their peers. They may face special challenges with respect to access to services, employment opportunities, health, housing, and finances.

- **Aging and Disability Services Providers:** As demand for services for older adults and their caregivers has risen, federal, state, and local budgets either have been cut or have not kept pace with the rising demand, leaving increasing numbers of older adults without the assistance they need and at risk.

Even seemingly small budget cuts have a large impact on the number of people served. For example, the 8% cuts made as part of the federal government's sequester are expected to have a chilling effect⁵:

- 17 million group and home-delivered meals for older adults would not be served.
- 1.9 million rides to medical appointments, grocery stores, and other errands would not take place.
- 1.2 million older adults would lose the homemaker services that help them with cooking or laundry, and another 1.5 million people would lose in-home assistance with bathing, toileting, and dressing.
- Three-quarters of a million individuals in adult day care programs would lose access to the health care, nutrition, and opportunities to avoid isolation that they—and family caregivers—rely upon.

With roughly 10,000 people reaching age 65 every day, a wealth of skills and energy is flooding the potential volunteer pool.

Additional cuts being considered in Medicare and Medicaid will result in more out-of-pocket expenses for services. To support older adults who need help most, aging and disability services organizations are searching for ways to expand their capacity, affordably.

The Solution: Tap Older Adult Volunteers

With roughly 10,000 people reaching age 65 every day⁶, a wealth of skills and energy is flooding the potential volunteer pool. Of those who are retiring, many are coming into leisure time wanting to devote their newfound time to activities that will allow them to create real impact in the world.⁷ Joining hundreds of thousands of older adult volunteers, the rapidly increasing numbers of people living healthier lives will change perceptions of how we spend our later years and challenge society to define a new life stage, namely the additional 20 to 30 years of productive living as a time for building legacy and giving back.

The solution is to marry the needs of older adults, aging and disability services organizations, and older adult volunteers. Creating more capacity-building roles for volunteers at aging and disability services organizations could expand the capacity of these organizations and meet growing needs. It also could help to extend limited government funding.

The aging and disability services network is a respected and trusted resource for planning, coordinating, innovating, and advocating for basic services needed by older adults to maintain dignity and quality of life. The 618 local Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), 246 local Title VI Native American aging programs nationwide, and the 56 State Unites on Aging and Disability, along with AoA, have provided the safety net and delivered aging and disability services in every community for nearly 40 years.⁸

Network members are adept at stretching local, state, and federal dollars.

- The AAAs pull together state, local, and private funding to build comprehensive systems of long-term services and supports in their communities. For every \$1 in federal funding for Older Americans Act programs, which support older adults living in the community, they leverage nearly \$3 more in funding.
- They spur local economies; AAAs fund and partner with a host of private companies and healthcare organizations to deliver quality care and create jobs in their communities.
- They leverage community support through extensive partnerships that strengthen the local home and community-based services systems.⁹

There have always been exceptional volunteers who exceeded all expectations and who had far greater impact on organizations and those served than ever thought possible. The ongoing demographic and longevity revolutions are spawning a new generation of volunteers with higher-level training, skills, and organizational experience. This new volunteer generation has the potential to greatly expand the cadre of “extraordinary” volunteers. Recent research and demonstrations about developing and structuring opportunities for extraordinary volunteers have yielded startling results—an unexpected high return on investment of 8:1¹⁰.

Organizations with foresight and willingness to reframe what volunteers can contribute will be able to expand their reach through existing and new services that meet rising needs. The aging and disability services network is positioned to lead the charge to engage both this new generation of volunteers and extraordinary volunteers serving in traditional roles to address the growing needs, and the diminishing resources, for aging services.

Impact:

Because of the vast potential it sees in older adult volunteers, AoA, through the Aging Network’s Volunteer Collaborative, has set a goal to double the number of volunteers in aging services—to one million volunteers—by 2015.

These numbers are achievable. In 2011, more than 29% of Baby Boomers volunteered, giving more than 2 billion hours of service. Among older adults overall, nearly 24% volunteered, providing more than 1.5 billion volunteer hours.¹¹

Proven Results:

For this concept to work, aging and disability services organizations must open new pathways to service, utilize volunteers’ diverse talents, ensure that volunteer management is done professionally, and view volunteers as staff. Many are doing just that. Already, real-life examples show success:

- **Aroostook Area Agency on Aging, Presque Isle, ME:** Volunteers completely run the senior center and two financially sustainable programs. Volunteers secured 45 acres of land that farmers agreed to till; harvest produced 15 tons of fruit and vegetables for congregate meals and Meals on Wheels and 17 tons for the food pantry. Once a month, the quilting class sells a quilt for \$300 that pays the senior center’s heating bill.

- **Multnomah Aging & Disability Services, Portland, OR:** Its volunteer-led Gatekeeper Program provides outreach and training to businesses and community groups to identify at-risk seniors and adults with disabilities, linking them to critical social and health services.
- **Region IV Area Agency on Aging, St. Joseph, Mich.:** A volunteer-led team ran a capital campaign that raised \$1 million in 18 months to expand the agency's physical service area.
- **State Governments:** In 2011, more than 9,000 certified volunteer long-term care ombudsmen working in states nationwide donated 735,000 hours to advocate for individual residents of nursing homes and similar facilities, to ensure that residents are safe from abuse and treated with respect.¹² Thousands of State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) volunteers and Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) volunteers serving across the country contributed tens of thousands of additional hours assisting seniors in choosing appropriate health insurance and preventing Medicare fraud.
- **Texas Department of State Health Services:** The department operates a training and certification program for persons who act as “promotores” or community health workers, who assist low-income patients who come to emergency departments with non-emergency conditions by providing information on Texas Health Steps benefits and linking patients with providers and preventive care.



Potential Impact / Opportunities:

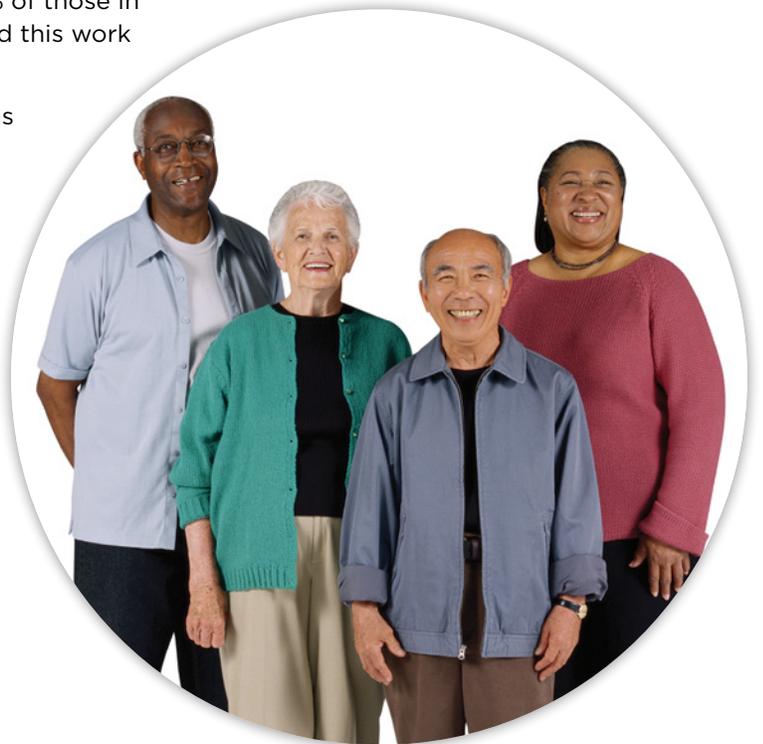
The opportunities for volunteers to carry out similar projects are vast.

- **Health:** Community health programs currently provided under AoA's lead, such as chronic disease self-management and falls prevention programs, deliver proven results and reduce Medicare and Medicaid costs. Volunteer leaders help run these programs and can replicate this model in even more communities nationwide.¹³
- **Affordable Care Act (ACA) Community Care:** AAAs are taking a lead role in new ACA programs by partnering with health care systems and state quality improvement organizations to transition people smoothly from acute care settings back to their homes, which produces better health and lessens hospital re-admissions. AAAs are leading many Community Based Care Transitions Program projects. AAAs also can help advance the ACA's goals by partnering with the medical community to better integrate health care and home and community-based services, providing strong long-term services and supports for older adults, people with disabilities, and people who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid.¹⁴ Volunteers can play a key role in everything from strategic planning to delivering meals to expand the work of the AAAs in these roles.

The Aging Network's Volunteer Collaborative has set a goal to double the number of volunteers in aging and disability services—to one million volunteers—by 2015.

- **Home and Community-Based Services:** Roughly 42 percent of adults over age 65 need assistance with activities of daily living, such as eating, bathing or dressing.¹⁵ Historically, AAAs and Title VI Native American aging programs engage volunteers to support home health care, homemaker services, transportation, respite care, meal deliveries, and other services. These volunteers help people age where they want to—at home and in the community—while avoiding institutional care and its costs and/or spending down to Medicaid. This approach also saves money for federal and state governments.¹⁶ Volunteers are perfectly poised to help provide more of these services and supports within their communities.
- **Caregiver Support:** The National Family Caregiver Support Program, funded by the Administration on Aging, connects caregivers to services, counseling, training, and respite care. Demand is high in every community, yet federal resources are limited.¹⁷ Volunteers can plan and deliver this support, from planning and conducting trainings through providing respite care.
- **Transportation:** More than half of non-drivers aged 65+ stay home in any given day because they don't have transportation. Twenty-one percent of people aged 65+ do not drive; that number jumps to 40% among Hispanic, African-American, and Asian seniors.¹⁸ Volunteer-run transportation services are the mainstay in providing transportation and could play an even greater role in meeting needs for transportation to doctors, adult day care centers, grocery shopping, and the like.
- **Senior Community Service Employment Program:** SCSEP is the nation's only program providing part-time community service employment and job training for workers age 55 plus who have low incomes. In 2010, 89% of the participants had incomes at or below poverty, and 36% were homeless or at risk of being homeless. In 2011, funding was cut by 45%, limiting the program to less than 1% of those in need.¹⁹ Volunteers could help extend this work in their communities.
- **Elder Justice Act (EJA):** As many as 5 million older adults suffer from elder abuse and neglect each year—costing the nation \$2.6 billion annually. This legislation aims to create a coordinated national response to elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation but is not yet funded.²⁰ Volunteers could assist in the implementation.

The solution is to marry the needs of older adults, aging and disability services organizations, and older adult volunteers.



Get Involved—and PowerUP!

Through a series of efforts, The Aging Network's Volunteer Collaborative is leading a PowerUP! movement to help aging and disability services organizations build their capacity for older adult volunteers and to tap volunteers' vast potential. Here's how you can get involved:

- **Aging and Disability Services Organizations:** The Aging Network's Volunteer Collaborative has released a new toolkit to help you recruit and engage volunteers. It includes PowerUP! marketing templates that you can customize for your own program. More opportunities—including specialized trainings—will be coming in future months. Visit our website at *PowerUpVolunteers.org* to find these and other resources you can use to secure buy-in, break down barriers, and initiate and sustain a program.
- **Volunteers:** Share your skills to assist an aging and disability services organization in your community and better serve older adults in need! Visit *PowerUpVolunteers.org* for more information.

For this concept to work, aging and disability services organizations must open new pathways to service.

Notes

- ¹ n4a Policy Priorities 2012: Promote the Health, Security and Well-Being of Older Adults (www.n4a.org/files/advocacy/policy-positions/n4a_2012PolicyPriorities_Web_Final.pdf)
- ² n4a Policy Priorities 2012
- ³ Caring.com, National Council on Aging: Interview With Paul DelPonte—How NCOA Is Helping Seniors Keep Their Independence, Brad Prescott, March 1, 2013 (www.caring.com/articles/national-council-on-aging-interview)
- ⁴ Family Caregiving Alliance
- ⁵ Leadership Council of Aging Organizations Issue Brief, NDD Sequestration Hurts Vulnerable Seniors, Oct. 2012 (www.lcao.org/files/2013/02/LCAO-Sequestration-Issue-Brief-Oct2012.pdf)
- ⁶ Pew Research Center, Dec. 29, 2010 (www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/baby-boomers-retire)
- ⁷ The New Face of Retirement: An Ongoing Survey of American Attitudes on Aging, Civic Ventures/Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 2002, (www.encore.org/files/2002_survey_analysis.pdf)
- ⁸ n4a Policy Priorities 2012
- ⁹ n4a Policy Priorities 2012
- ¹⁰ The Boomer Solution: Skilled Talent to Meet Non-Profit Needs—Final Report, National Council on Aging, 2010 (<http://agingnetworkvolunteercollaborative.org/resources/1482/>)
- ¹¹ Volunteering and Civic Life in America. Corporation for National and Community Service (<http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/special/Baby-Boomers>)
- ¹² Administration on Aging, AGing Integrated Database (AGID) (www.agidnet.org)
- ¹³ n4a Policy Priorities 2012
- ¹⁴ n4a Policy Priorities 2012
- ¹⁵ n4a Policy Priorities 2012, citing 2010 report from the Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics
- ¹⁶ n4a Policy Priorities 2012
- ¹⁷ n4a Policy Priorities 2012
- ¹⁸ National Council on Aging Transportation Advocacy Toolkit (<http://www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/advocacy-toolkit/advocacy-toolkit-transportation.html>)
- ¹⁹ National Council on Aging Issue Brief, Investing in the Health and Economic Security of Older Adults (<http://www.ncoa.org/assets/files/pdf/public-policy--action/AD12-Aging-Services-Funding.pdf>)
- ²⁰ National Council on Aging Issue Brief, Investing in the Health and Economic Security of Older Adults (<http://www.ncoa.org/assets/files/pdf/public-policy--action/AD12-Aging-Services-Funding.pdf>)

A PROJECT OF THE AGING NETWORK'S VOLUNTEER COLLABORATIVE



PowerUPVolunteers.org