



Experience in Action: Community Programming for Healthy Aging

Core Values in Seniors' Programs

Focus on Values Rather Than the Bottom Line

All projects directed to seniors must acknowledge a set of fundamental human values. It is these values which must ultimately guide project development.

Saskatchewan Story-Dialogue Project

Core Values

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The fact sheets were produced by the Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto with the participation and support of the New Horizons: Partners in Aging program, Health Canada. Permission is granted to photocopy if the source is acknowledged.

- ▶ Certain values are fundamental to seniors' community programming: dignity, purpose, self-esteem, respect, fairness, equity and compassion. Projects with seniors need to honour these values.
- ▶ Dignity, purpose and self-esteem are fundamental ingredients for any person's quality of life. Opportunities to reinforce these values occur when seniors:

pass on skills and knowledge.

"Knowing that younger generations benefit from our experiences can provide a tremendous sense of satisfaction."

reminisce.

"The opportunity to talk about good times can give more meaning and purpose to our accomplishments and experiences."

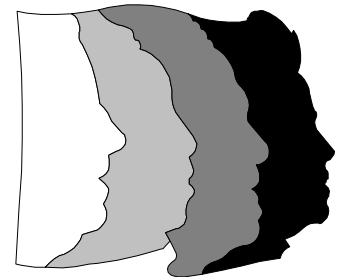
continue a purposeful routine.

"Routines provide structure and order in our lives, and give us a sense of purpose."

The Importance of Shared Experience

- ▶ Seniors have a vast collection of knowledge and experience. Given the opportunity and the right climate of acceptance and trust, seniors are often willing to share their personal experiences with others. In doing so, they find that they are not alone in their struggle with life events.

- ▶ When seniors are brought



together with others who have common concerns, the sharing of experiences can be even more empowering and hopeful, as new ways of coping emerge. Through helping others, seniors are sometimes surprised to learn that they are, in fact, needed by others. This enhances their own level of self-worth.

- ▶ All people have something to give, but some may need

encouragement to reach out and belong. Sharing needs to be encouraged in small groups and expanded over time. Build trust by involving consistent leaders and support people.

Our society, through the perpetuation of negative images of seniors, increases prejudice toward seniors, reduces their self-esteem and involvement and thereby increases their risk for poor health.

Toward Healthy-Aging Communities: A Population Health Approach

Recognize and Value Differences

- ▶ Seniors are as diverse as any other sector of the population. Programs and services directed to seniors need to recognize and value their differing needs and contributions.
- ▶ A project cannot be everything to everyone; however, sensitivity to varied concerns and multi-faceted approaches to support are needed, e.g., a Wellness Centre could offer educational, fitness and social activities along with very practical supports such as informal referral, home repair, maintenance and transportation.

▶ Pay attention to:

- ✓ **programs that cross all age groups.** Community programs that involve different age groups are less stigmatizing for older people. Intergenerational programs give seniors and younger people chances to better understand and value each other.
- ✓ **differences between senior men and women.** Senior women may have different life concerns than senior men. Often, older women are also caregivers and need additional supports if they are to take part in activities outside the home.
- ✓ **senior immigrants.** Senior immigrants experience language and cultural barriers that make isolation more acute for them than for non-immigrant seniors.
- ✓ **aboriginal seniors.** Working styles must be appropriate to aboriginal seniors. Programming must be culturally appropriate and priorities should be set in partnership with groups such as Aboriginal Elders. The proper way to enter a community varies among First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. It is important to develop trust and show proper respect for the local community.
- ✓ **literacy and low income levels.** Programs need to deal sensitively and appropriately with illiterate and low literate seniors as well as with seniors who have low incomes.

- ✓ **developmentally delayed seniors.** Care and support of developmentally delayed seniors and their caregivers is a relatively new challenge because persons who are developmentally delayed are now living longer and are not as likely to be in institutions.

The prevalence of low self-esteem and stress among seniors reduces their coping skills and places many seniors at risk for physical and mental illness.

Toward Healthy-Aging Communities: A Population Health Approach

Key Messages

- ▶ Establishing and maintaining core community values are fundamental to the success of seniors' programming and services. These values focus on human dignity and not on deficit reduction.
- ▶ Multi-faceted approaches are needed to deal sensitively and appropriately with the diverse needs of different seniors.
- ▶ Trusting relationships reach isolated seniors and overcome cultural barriers. Building these relationships takes time.



Related Fact Sheets and sources of information are listed in Fact Sheet #9, Sources and Resources.



Experience in Action: Community Programming for Healthy Aging

Effective Community Development

Every Community is Unique

Community development is the process by which a community decides collectively on its needs and develops strategies to utilize its collective power to meet those needs.

Ontario Community Development Association

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Why Community Development?

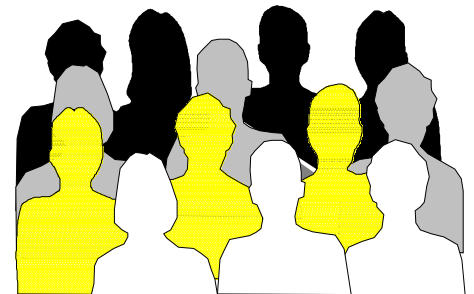
- ▶ This approach ensures that seniors define their own needs and come up with their own solutions.
- ▶ It allows community programming for seniors to work with the unique combination of needs and assets of the whole community.
- ▶ A solution worked out by one community may offer valuable lessons for others tackling the same problem. However, every community is different. One size does *not* fit all!
- ▶ Community development lends itself to prevention, not just cures.
- ▶ Programs are more likely to last when a community development approach is used.

Using a Community Development Approach

Make seniors the catalyst for action.

- ✓ Make sure that programs are led and owned by seniors, not staff.

- ✓ Help seniors identify their own local problems, and design and carry out their own projects.
- ✓ Involve seniors in leadership roles: heading up a volunteer committee, contributing to decision making, setting priorities for funding, etc.
- ✓ Create opportunities for seniors to further develop leadership and advocacy skills.



Stay in touch.

- ✓ Learn about other organizations, agencies and groups. Know what they do, who they work with, what their goals are.
- ✓ Create networks to share resources, information, services, tools, knowledge and talent.
- ✓ Form and connect local councils on aging.

Take time to develop partnerships.

- ✓ Identify partners with similar concerns and issues. Seek out partners with strong commitment and ability to share turf.

Make the best use of community assets and strengths.

- ✓ Focus on assets and strengths rather than on weaknesses.
- ✓ Capture the wisdom of seniors. Encourage them to be full contributors to society.
- ✓ Train peer facilitators to make personal contact with other seniors, to coordinate support groups or to do peer counselling.
- ✓ Use participatory action research as a tool for involving people, learning more about the community, finding new ways to do things, and demonstrating the benefits of programs in ways that decision-makers can understand.

Start slowly.

- ✓ Focus on activities with the best chance for success.
- ✓ Celebrate successes—build on them and use them as examples of what can be accomplished.
- ✓ Be multi-faceted but avoid trying to be everything to everyone.
- ✓ Support activities that can bring people together. Choose activities that suit the unique situation of the community.

Do what works: a knitting circle, a garden club, dancing, restoration of an historic site or aircraft.

Coordinate with partners to offer options in services.

- ✓ Work with other community partners to make sure that seniors have access to a variety of activities and services that meet varying needs.
- ✓ Keep programs flexible enough to respond to new opportunities for working together, emerging needs and emergency situations.
- ✓ Work with partners to reduce barriers for rural or isolated seniors by offering decentralized, mini programs.

Once people had come together, they began to talk about their lives and the lives of their friends and neighbours ... As they talked, they realized that there were issues facing seniors that needed a whole community to solve.

Atlantic Seniors' Networking Forum

Promote programs by going where seniors are.

- ✓ Use various informal means of communication that are part of seniors' everyday lives. Word-of-mouth and personal contact are most effective. Other effective channels include

church bulletins, telephone calls, radio announcements and posters in ferries, club houses and laundry rooms.

- ✓ Integrate programs into existing traditional practices or activities.
- ✓ Have peer facilitators maintain direct contact with seniors who are at risk for poor health. The senior who drives the grocery bus or a friendly visitor can pass on information.

Make sure that transportation needs are met.

- ✓ Ensure that people can get to programs or that programs can get to people.

Key Messages

- ▶ Use community development to connect people and get them involved. Community development:
 - ✓ enhances personal control
 - ✓ improves collaboration and coordination across programs (which makes access to services easier for seniors and their caregivers, reduces duplication and cuts costs)
 - ✓ promotes activities and available supports for seniors and their families
 - ✓ increases the sustainability of programs.



Related Fact Sheets and sources of information are listed in Fact Sheet #9, Sources and Resources.



Experience in Action: Community Programming for Healthy Aging Partnerships

Renewed Interest in an Old Tradition

Before “partnering” became a catch phrase, seniors’ organizations often found partners out of necessity or out of principle. Seniors groups found ways to collaborate, exchanging their gifts and talents.

Atlantic Seniors’ Networking Forum

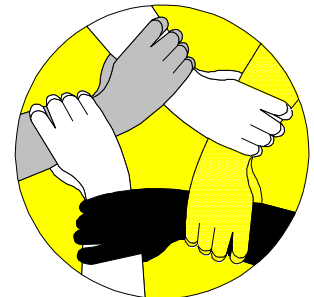
Why Have Partners?

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- ▶ Generally, there are three reasons for partnering. Organizations or groups may *want to* partner because it is a strategic element of effective community development; they may *need to* partner because less resources are available; or they may *have to* partner because a funder insists on it.
- ▶ When groups *want to* partner, the capacity of a partnership is often more than the sum of its parts.
- ▶ Partnership means different things to different people. Partners may
 - ✓ share resources (space, staff, volunteers, funding and in-kind services)
 - ✓ exchange information and share networks
 - ✓ reduce duplication and cut costs
 - ✓ learn from each other
 - ✓ enhance each other’s power, credibility and recognition for fund raising, lobbying or advocacy
 - ✓ complement each other’s activities, deliver more comprehensive services and refer clients to each other

- ✓ increase access to programs for seniors
- ✓ collaborate to create a new organization (e.g., seniors council or council on aging, multi-faceted service centre)
- ✓ carry out a joint project, foster the continuation of a project and ensure its sustainability.



Partner With Whom?

- ▶ **Identify partners with similar concerns and issues.** Learn who does what in your community and create links with similar groups. Build on existing networks and links. Be ready when the opportunity for a partnership arises. Remember, it is difficult to form partnerships when in crisis.

- Establish relationships with key individuals in different sectors** of the community, e.g., housing, transportation, media, business, service clubs, churches and potential funders. Develop relationships among seniors' groups and with trusted persons whom seniors respect. Inter-generational partnerships offer many benefits for seniors and the whole community.
- Network and form coalitions of seniors groups** locally, regionally, across a province or territory and nationally to support each other's causes.
- Encourage funders to form partnerships** and to clarify and coordinate their financial roles and responsibilities.

Effective partnerships were often the key to sustaining a project after the funding ended.

British Columbia/Yukon Regional Forum

What Makes Partnerships Successful?

- Approach potential partners openly.** Understand their role and position in the community. Suggest an important issue of common interest. Be prepared to illustrate the value of partnering and how each partner can benefit. Check with others whether additional partners should be included.

- Involve partners early** so they gain a sense of ownership and commitment.
- Take the time to build trust and agree on the basics.** Be sensitive to each other's needs. Ensure open, honest and clear communications. Share each other's vision and develop a common vision, goals, objectives and work plans for the partnership. Partnerships formed gradually on the basis of a shared desire are more likely to succeed than those formed quickly as a requirement for funding.
- Recognize and work with differences.** Acknowledge that partners have their own individual priorities. Acknowledge unequal power and resources and take the time to negotiate needs and expectations. Respect limitations and be flexible. Identify available resources for joint action. Be willing to take risks and share resources. Resolve any hidden motives or control issues.
- Have a clear picture of how the partners will work together.** Ongoing communication is critical to effective partnerships. Establish a structure devoted to managing the partnership, e.g., a committee where all partners have an equal voice and opportunity to participate in decision-making. Define clear roles and responsibilities and ensure each partner has a particular function. Agree on how power will be shared and how decisions will be made.

Pay attention to both people and paper—written plans are useful for staying on track, for evaluating progress and in writing proposals. Develop mechanisms for dispute resolution. Use an outside facilitator to help at the formative stage, if appropriate.

Partnerships cannot be forced. Successful partnerships need time, patience, flexibility and listening to partners' concerns.

Quebec Regional Forum

Key Messages

- Partnerships are an essential element of community development.** They may involve information exchange, collaboration on a specific project and strategic activities around common goals.
- Partnerships bring benefits to the partners and the community.**
- Effective partnerships are based on honesty and take time to develop.** Approach potential partners openly. Take the time to build trust and agree on the basics. Recognize and work with differences, and have a clear picture of how the partners will work together.



Related Fact Sheets and sources of information are listed in Fact Sheet #9, Sources and Resources.



Participation and Leadership by Seniors

Reach Out and Involve Seniors

Communities are more likely to have successful, sustainable initiatives if they define their own problems, search out solutions, control their own programs, and strategize to make change.

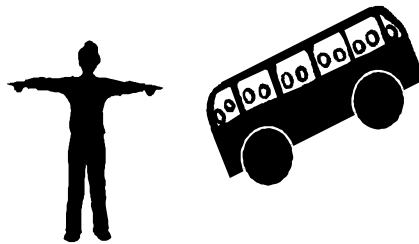
*A Preliminary Look at
Community-based Research
for Active Living*

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Finding the Leaders

- ▶ Effective community programming for seniors requires that seniors take the lead in defining needs, finding solutions and controlling programs.
- ▶ Seniors have diverse interests and skills. A variety of events and activities are required to attract seniors and respond to specific community needs. Possibilities include dances, exercise programs, community gardens, cooking classes, community kitchens, short trips and personal care services such as blood pressure checks and foot care.



- ▶ Take time to create an environment of mutual respect so that seniors feel comfortable participating in programs either as recipients, volunteers, planners or decision-makers. Given time and patience, a few seniors can become a core group that shares information and contacts, identifies common

issues and reaches out to other seniors.

- ▶ The seniors that come out first are most likely to be leaders who are out-going and interested in being with others. Encourage them to become more involved as volunteers, e.g., committee members, peer counsellors, event organizers and friendly visitors. Celebrate their contributions.

Getting Seniors Involved

- ▶ **Follow these tips when you organize activities.**
 - ✓ Ask seniors what *they* want.
 - ✓ Find convenient times for seniors to get together.
 - ✓ Be flexible.
 - ✓ Try one-time practical learning sessions.
 - ✓ Ensure transportation (or have programs in senior residences).
 - ✓ Integrate an event into traditional activities.
 - ✓ Maintain regular contact with phone calls, not just with meetings.
 - ✓ Ensure that seniors continue to have influence over the program.
 - ✓ Make sure that events are enjoyable—include humour, food and song!
- ▶ **Personal contact is the most important way to reach out to**

seniors. Build relationships with key individuals in different sectors of the community. Visit and speak to groups that involve seniors and stay in touch with key individuals whom seniors already trust. Have seniors contact other seniors. Combine word-of-mouth contacts with high visibility activities in the community.

- ▶ **Use a variety of additional means of communication** to create visibility. Focus on radio, TV or newspapers that seniors pay attention to. Prepare a feature article to profile successes. Use free publications that are delivered to households. Make use of public service announcements. Write articles for the newsletters of other organizations. Post flyers in churches, community centres, community meeting halls, corner stores, ferries, laundry rooms and physicians' offices. Use plain language and clear print.

Isolated Seniors

- ▶ **Isolation can be geographical or social.** Social isolation implies a lack of social networks, absence of visitors and no support systems. Seniors become isolated to varying degrees because of:
 - ✓ a physical or mental disability
 - ✓ pride in staying independent
 - ✓ negative attitudes about aging held by seniors and others
 - ✓ reduced social roles, e.g., recently retired or widowed

- ✓ language or cultural barriers
- ✓ educational barriers
- ✓ inappropriate, expensive or nonexistent transportation
- ✓ fear of going out, safety concerns
- ✓ being new to the community
- ✓ poverty
- ✓ bad weather.

▶ **Respect the desire to be independent.** A senior may prefer to be alone. Sometimes older adults have difficulty switching from independence to interdependence with others. They may feel guilty relying on others and, therefore, are reluctant to seek help.

▶ **Seniors from other cultures** may benefit from services originating in the mainstream but it is often more difficult to involve them in programs. Use culturally appropriate approaches and materials to reach out to seniors from multicultural groups and to Elders in First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

▶ **Outsiders must take extra care.**

- ✓ Develop an understanding of the culture.
- ✓ Recognize that the attitudes of older men or women participating in activities may be different from mainstream attitudes.
- ✓ Take along a trusted individual from the community when doing outreach and make use of an interpreter whenever necessary.

▶ **Reaching out to Elders in First Nations' communities.**

- ✓ Gain support and involvement of chiefs and band council members on reserves. Involve

Native Friendship Centres and other First Nations programs and groups off reserve.

- ✓ Approach health holistically rather than one area at a time.
- ✓ Be prepared to listen and learn. Projects need to facilitate sharing of information about health between First Nations and the wider community.
- ✓ Recognize the importance of traditional activities for well-being such as gatherings and retreats focusing on spiritual and emotional health.

People from the dominant culture may not know what they don't know.

*British Columbia/Yukon
Regional Forum*

Key Messages

- ▶ Involving seniors in planning and organizing community programs is essential.
- ▶ An environment of mutual respect makes seniors feel comfortable and draws out leaders.
- ▶ The most effective outreach, whether seniors are socially isolated or not, is through personal contact based on trusting relationships. Personal contact is reinforced by other communication channels.



Related Fact Sheets and sources of information are listed in Fact Sheet #9, Sources and Resources.



Volunteer Recruitment, Retention and Recognition

Volunteering Works

Well coordinated volunteer programs help projects to achieve powerful results for a small investment.

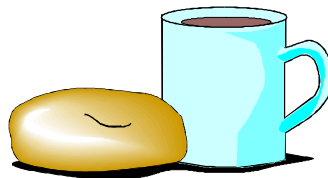
National Forum for Healthy Aging

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Voluntarism Has Changed

- ▶ Finding volunteers is more difficult than in the past. The volunteer pool is smaller and more diverse. It is more difficult to keep volunteers long-term. More women are in the workforce and so have less time for volunteering. Younger people often volunteer short-term as a stepping stone to paid work. Seniors may be too busy with caregiving or may like to travel.
- ▶ Projects need a comprehensive volunteer program that includes recruiting, screening, training, support, recognition and flexibility.



Coffee and doughnuts open many doors.

National Forum for Healthy Aging

Finding Volunteers

- ▶ Where and how volunteers are recruited contributes to how effective they are and how long they will stay.
- ✓ **Target the recruitment of volunteers** by making personal contact with groups that are already involved with seniors, e.g., church groups, seniors' groups and clubs, associations that deal with seniors' issues. Also, use the media and the nearest volunteer centre.
- ✓ **Be passionate in recruiting** volunteers. Let people know volunteering can be fun.
- ✓ **Be clear about the job**—the kind of work, skills, responsibility and time commitment.
- ✓ **Screen potential volunteers carefully** to determine their suitability for working with seniors, their skills and available time. Make sure that the match between the volunteer and the senior is appropriate. Seniors who volunteer may not enjoy visiting with frail seniors. They may prefer to work in a group setting.

- ✓ **Seek out senior volunteers** to reach out to other seniors, act as peer counsellors, participate in planning programs, and serve as decision-makers, advocates and fundraisers.

Provide volunteers with new tasks and challenges—give them a volunteer career path.

*British Columbia/Yukon
Regional Forum*

Maintaining Volunteers

- ▶ **Training and orientation are important** tools for keeping volunteers.
- ✓ Provide general training in communication and listening skills, safety, confidentiality issues and health information.
- ✓ Provide specialized training for volunteers working with clients with special needs.
- ✓ Pair up a new volunteer with an experienced one to provide orientation and build confidence.
- ✓ Provide continuous training to discuss problems and clarify the volunteer's role.
- ✓ Support each volunteer on an ongoing basis.
- ✓ Clearly describe the role of the volunteer to avoid unrealistic expectations and possible misuse of the volunteer's role.

- ▶ **Society does not place enough value on volunteers.** Agencies must recognize and acknowledge the value of their work.
- ✓ Provide ongoing recognition, e.g., appreciation awards, dinners, small gifts, certificates, their own business cards, honoraria, opportunities to socialize with other volunteers and staff.
- ✓ Treat volunteers as professionals, personalize the job and emphasize its value.
- ✓ Recognize that volunteers cannot do everything.

Seniors are rich in experience and creativity and they are available. Many people blossom late in life because of their participation in seniors' organizations.

*New Brunswick Seniors'
Networking Forum*

- ▶ **Voluntarism is not free.** Mobilizing volunteers is hard work and costs money. Volunteer programs need paid coordinators. In addition, resources are needed to reimburse volunteers for expenses.
- ✓ Create written policies and procedures for volunteers.
- ✓ Ensure volunteer back-ups to cover natural interruptions in volunteering which are characteristic of seniors' lives.
- ✓ Establish credibility within the community.

- ✓ Address liability issues related to safety, especially when transporting seniors in vehicles.
- ✓ Share with other volunteer programs. Pool resources and try joint efforts.
- ✓ Pay attention to paid agency staff who need assurance that volunteers are not going to take away their jobs.

Hearing about benefits that any of their actions have provided to seniors in need helps senior volunteers recognize that they can make a difference.

*Toward Healthy-Aging
Communities: A Population
Health Approach*

Key Messages

- ▶ Finding volunteers and keeping them long-term is more difficult than in the past.
- ▶ Where and how volunteers are recruited contributes to how effective they are and how long they will stay.
- ▶ Maintaining volunteers requires orientation, training and ongoing recognition and support.
- ▶ A paid volunteer coordinator is often necessary.



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Experience in Action: Community Programming for Healthy Aging

Effective Project Management

The Process Is As Important As the Product

Effective project design and management require a clear focus, ongoing evaluation, flexibility and the involvement of key sectors.

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Leadership

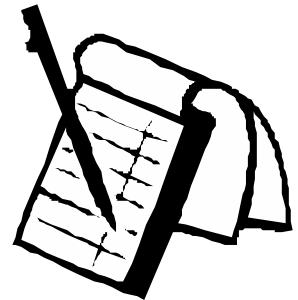
- ▶ Seniors should be the catalyst for programs. An active advisory committee of seniors contributes to planning and provides ongoing input into programs.
- ▶ Involve people with different skills. Balance professional expertise with community knowledge.
- ▶ Planning is difficult in a state of crisis. A healthy project needs a healthy organization with adequate resources and good management.

Where Are We Going?

- ▶ **Understand what is already happening in the community.**
 - ✓ Draw upon partners.
 - ✓ Test assumptions about seniors' needs by actively canvassing to find out what seniors want.
 - ✓ Look for skills and assets; build on existing resources.
 - ✓ Make sure that existing programs are genuinely addressing the needs of seniors and not just those of professionals or government.

▶ Take the time to plan carefully.

- ✓ Develop a clear vision and achievable objectives.
- ✓ Be realistic. Avoid settling for a "quick fix"—plan for the long-term.
- ✓ Clarify roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ Determine the resources required and how they will be used to achieve the expected outcomes.
- ✓ Be innovative—try new programs and service delivery methods.



- ✓ Trade services with other programs. Share talents with other organizations.
- ✓ Plan to hire staff to coordinate activities, support volunteers and manage programs.

- ✓ Plan adequate time for evaluation within the project timeframe. Clarify what success means and agree on ways to measure it.
- ✓ Develop a communications plan. Identify the benefits of your project. Promote these benefits in the community and use them to sell the project to funders or new partners.

If we start planning from the premise of having very little money, we can say “We can do this much with nothing. Give us more and we can move the world”.

*Atlantic Seniors’
Networking Forum*

- ✓ Search out corporate and non-traditional funders.
- ✓ Be flexible—develop plans and allocate resources for contingencies.
- ✓ Keep sustainability in mind. Plan for integration of the program into the community after the development period is complete.
- ✓ Maintain excitement during the time lag between the planning stage and implementation (e.g., when funding is secured).

We’re on Our Way!

- ▶ **Activity leaders need to ensure** that learning and participation are fun.
 - ✓ Know the client group and their needs.
 - ✓ Offer topical workshops with wide appeal.
 - ✓ Be flexible and ready for change.
- ▶ **Here are a few more hints** for keeping on track:
 - ✓ Review your plan often. Focus on the vision and core values.
 - ✓ Continue reaching out to seniors in the community.
 - ✓ Deal with issues as they arise.
 - ✓ Use clear, non-academic language. Avoid jargon, e.g., phrases such as “at-risk seniors”.
 - ✓ Protect the confidentiality of seniors in all aspects of programs, i.e., evaluation, partnering and volunteer training.
 - ✓ Be sensitive to the needs and concerns of the client group, partners and the sponsoring organization.
 - ✓ Use funds wisely—it is amazing how creativity improves as dollars disappear.

Are We There Yet?

- ▶ Participants should have repeated opportunities for input. Respond by revising programs and adjusting priorities whenever necessary.

- ▶ Celebrate successes and use them to promote the program. Some immediate indicators of success include positive evaluations, spontaneous feedback, increased participation, a sense of pride among participants, personal testimonies, transformation of a participant from receiver to giver, interest from other organizations and recognition by key decision-makers.

Improve planning skills. Set goals and strategies. Implement. Evaluate. Revise and adjust priorities. Study trends and plan ahead five and ten years.

*New Brunswick Seniors’
Networking Forum*

Key Messages

- ▶ Effective project management requires strong leadership and careful planning with seniors acting as a catalyst for action.
- ▶ Refer to your project plan often. Focus on the vision. Be flexible.
- ▶ Carry out ongoing evaluation. Respond to input and celebrate successes.



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Experience in Action: Community Programming for Healthy Aging

Sustainability

Build In Sustainability from the Beginning

Key words that define programs that flourish are nourishment, sustenance, encouragement and ongoing creativity.

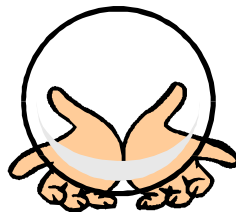
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- ▶ Sustainability means a program will continue as long as it is needed. It requires planning for this from the outset of a project.
- ▶ Sustainability is not just about asking for more funding. In general, success in fundraising and, hence sustainability, depends on how well a project is able to:
 - honour core values
 - ensure ownership by seniors
 - use a community development approach
 - foster partnerships
 - recruit and nurture volunteers
 - manage effectively day-to-day.
- ▶ Volunteers, paid staff and in-kind supporters need a pool of skills including:
 - leadership
 - advocacy and lobbying



- communications and marketing
- community development
- interpersonal skills
- fundraising
- research and evaluation.

Sustaining volunteer organizations is difficult when they are all competing for the same dollars. It is even harder now that government-sponsored organizations like hospitals and the new health boards are joining in the competition for community contributions.

*Atlantic Seniors'
Networking Forum*

What Characterizes a Successful Program?

- ✓ **A clear need for the program:** Seniors themselves identify the program need and demonstrate a readiness to be involved.
- ✓ **Focused efforts:** The program focuses its efforts on specific populations and on wellness instead of illness. It is community-based, volunteer-driven and led by seniors.
- ✓ **A positive, values-based approach:** A successful program captures the wisdom of seniors and promotes the

theme of seniors as contributors to society. It relies on dedicated leaders and motivated volunteers who receive training and ongoing recognition. It maintains a fun learning process at all times.

- ✓ **Timely planning and evaluation:** The program is developed with partners through joint, long-term planning based on a common vision and mutual goals. Ongoing evaluation allows the project to assess progress, make needed adjustments and market itself.
- ✓ **Strong community partnerships:** Partnerships that foster sustainability are ones that share space, resources, services, tools and talents. They may support various aspects of the project, provide it with an infrastructure, and integrate or combine activities.
- ✓ **Growth in the lead organization:** The lead organization should have effective administrative practices and use its resources wisely. It resolves internal difficulties promptly and effectively. A competent paid coordinator could manage the program.

- ✓ **Effective community awareness and lobbying:** Successful programs have leaders with the necessary skills to sell the project. They know the program's value and how to package it and promote it. They use focal points (e.g., TV, community newspaper) to share and publicize success stories and build the case of value for money. The visibility of the project is increased with products such as brochures, caregiver's guides and volunteer training programs. Coalitions of partners can advocate the importance of the service to the community, governments and other potential supporters.

The keys to program success are seniors—in leadership, as volunteers and providing community support—but they cannot do it alone.

New Brunswick Seniors' Networking Forum

- ✓ **Creative fundraising:** Support comes from a variety of sources in the form of funding or in-kind contributions. The program does local fundraising with service clubs, health councils or health boards, municipal government, businesses and professional associations. Community fundraising may be in collaboration with

partners. It may include telemarketing, donations, campaigns, planned giving, etc. Proposals for funding are prepared in cooperation with funders such as provincial governments and foundations. Core funding, not just project funding, is requested to hire a coordinator to support and manage volunteers. The organizations involved advocate policies at all levels of government that recognize and support community-based approaches.

Projects need to identify interested individuals with connections that can assist them in seeking ongoing support for their projects.

British Columbia/Yukon Regional Forum

Key Messages

- ▶ Sustainability is less about funding and more about ownership by the community.
- ▶ Begin planning for sustainability at the outset of a project.
- ▶ Sustainable programs require effective project management, strong community partnerships, and staff and volunteers with a variety of skills.
- ▶ Be creative about fundraising.



Related Fact Sheets and sources of information are listed in Fact Sheet #9, Sources and Resources.



Experience in Action: Community Programming for Healthy Aging
Social and Community Change

Small Investments Yield Powerful Results

We were working on determinants of health long before the government knew what to call it.

National Forum for Healthy Aging

The information in this fact sheet comes from a cross-Canada process designed to gather valuable learnings from seniors' community projects funded by Health Canada. Nine fact sheets share what was learned about practical ways to deal with issues that affect seniors' health and well-being.

The fact sheets were produced by the Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto with the participation and support of the New Horizons: Partners in Aging program, Health Canada. Permission is granted to photocopy if the source is acknowledged.

A Valuable Investment

- ▶ For many years, seniors' community projects have turned small investments into powerful results. By achieving changes in the social and physical environments of communities, thousands of projects have contributed to seniors' well-being.
- ▶ Seniors' community programs



- give an excellent rate of return:
 - ✓ The prevention and health promotion activities of community programs address key determinants of health, diminishing the need for future medical and social services.
 - ✓ Volunteers do much of the work, contributing their experience, talents and time.
 - ✓ Programs cross the full array of seniors' health and social concerns. Funding supports fellowship, education, organizational infrastructure, volunteer development and home care.

Seniors find it incredible that program funding is about to be dramatically reduced at a time when all demographic indicators show clearly that the number of seniors over the age of 65 is rapidly increasing.

National Forum for Healthy Aging

- ▶ When funding is cut, valuable community infrastructures disappear. Rational project planning for these infrastructures requires "clarity from the top", i.e., clear supportive policies from funders, leaders and politicians at all levels.

Building Supportive Policies

- ▶ Funders should ensure small amounts of ongoing funding for community-based projects.
- ✓ Form partnerships to clarify and coordinate financial roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ Allocate government funds to groups assuming responsibility for services previously managed

by government agencies, e.g., home care.

- ✓ Provide longer-term support to respect the community development process.
- ✓ Keep application forms and other requirements clear and simple.

▶ **Governments should support knowledge development and information sharing activities.**

- ✓ Identify and share the knowledge gained from seniors' community projects. (The federal government has a key role to play in synthesizing and disseminating results and transferable programs across the country.)
- ✓ Enhance community capacity in community development and community-based research.
- ✓ Support catalyst organizations in each community that perform the role of connecting community members and providing them with information, resources, training and other support.
- ✓ Establish and maintain local, regional and national networking among seniors' projects to learn what has been successful elsewhere and to support each other's efforts.

▶ **Governments should support public awareness and education efforts** that promote healthy aging and reduce health care costs.

- ✓ Inform the public about seniors' issues and portray seniors as contributors to society.

Just a Sampling ...

▶ Here are a few of the seniors' concerns and issues addressed by seniors' community projects funded by Health Canada:

- ✓ **Poverty** can lead to isolation, lack of information, erosion of self-esteem and a lack of community involvement.
- ✓ **Social support networks** are limited by geographic and social isolation.
- ✓ **Education** affects literacy, understanding of personal health and susceptibility to financial abuse.
- ✓ **Social environments** affect well-being, e.g., societal attitudes toward aging, living alone, fewer nursing home beds, extended families spread across the country.
- ✓ **Physical environments** affect well-being, e.g., adapted housing that takes into account needs for privacy, space and social support.
- ✓ **Gender** affects the types of supports needed, e.g., women are more isolated than men, most informal caregivers are women.

- ✓ **Cultural and language differences** can lead to acute isolation for minority seniors. Intergenerational cultural differences can also be a factor, e.g., discomfort with new information technologies, fear of vandalism.

- ✓ **Other health and social issues** include nutrition, exercise, proper use of medications, stress, hearing loss, mental health, coping skills, autonomy, access to information, gaps in health care services, home care, end-of-life issues, palliative care, elder abuse, literacy, Alzheimer's disease, care for the caregiver, prevention and control of chronic conditions (e.g., arthritis, osteoporosis, incontinence, hypertension, atherosclerosis, diabetes, sensory loss).

Key Messages

- ▶ Community projects involving seniors have a wealth of experience to share.
- ▶ A small investment in community projects can have a powerful impact on the quality of life of seniors.
- ▶ Essential community infrastructures need appropriate funding and support for knowledge development, information sharing and public education.



Related Fact Sheets and sources of information are listed in Fact Sheet #9, Sources and Resources.



Experience in Action: Community Programming for Healthy Aging
Sources and Resources

Over 25 Years of Project Experience

► This is the last in a series of nine Fact Sheets based on the learnings of projects funded by the *New Horizons: Partners in Aging* program of Health Canada. Participants in the National Forum for Healthy Aging summarized the learnings in eight categories that form the basis of Fact Sheets 1 to 8. The reports listed below provided information for the Fact Sheets.

The information in this fact sheet comes from a cross-Canada process designed to gather valuable learnings from seniors' community projects funded by Health Canada. Nine fact sheets share what was learned about practical ways to deal with issues that affect seniors' health and well-being.

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Proceedings Reports

National Proceedings - Experience in Action: A National Forum for Healthy Aging, February 9-11, 1997, available from the Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto. Telephone (416)978-1809 Fax (416)971-1365

Preliminary Report, Health Canada - Partners in Aging: Regional Forum, January 29-31, 1997, Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia, available from Health Promotion and Programs Branch, British Columbia and Yukon Regional Office. Telephone (604)666-2729 Fax (604)666-8986

The Saskatchewan Story-Dialogue Project, report of the forum held January 27-28, 1997, available from Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism. Telephone (306)359-9956 Fax (306)359-6922

Sharing Manitoba Project Results: Strengths - Learnings, January 29-30, 1997, available from Creative Retirement Manitoba. Telephone (204)949-2565 Fax (204)957-7839

Adults with Vulnerability: Addressing Abuse and Neglect, report of the Ontario Seniors Forum held January 15-16, 1997, Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, Ontario Elder Abuse Network, Ontario Advocacy Coalition, available from Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. Telephone (416)925-7674 Fax (416)925-7674

Summary Report on the Regional Forum "Towards More Effective Partnerships", November 18-20, 1996, Health Promotion and Programs Branch, Quebec Region, Health Canada. Telephone (514)283-7342 Fax (514)283-3309

A Look to the Past to Build a Better Future, report of the New Brunswick Seniors Networking Forum, December 2-3, 1996, New Brunswick Senior Citizens Federation and Community Health Promotion Network Atlantic (CHPNA), available from Mary Simpson, Atlantic Coordinator, CHPNA. Telephone (506)758-0987 Fax (506)758-2002

Seniors and New Horizons: Today's Successes and Tomorrow's Strategies, report of the Newfoundland/Labrador Seniors' Networking Forum, November 27-29, 1996, available from Rosemary Lester, Seniors Resource Centre.
Telephone (709)737-2333
Fax (709)737-3717

Setting Our Course, report of the Nova Scotia Seniors Networking Forum, January 8-9, 1997, Canadian Pensioners Concerned, Nova Scotia Division, available from Susan Lilley, Nova Scotia Coordinator, CHPNA.
Telephone (902)463-1837
Fax (902)469-4166

Prince Edward Island Seniors: Their Legacy, report of the Prince Edward Island Seniors' Networking Forum, November 25-27, 1996, Prince Edward Island Federation of Seniors, available from Laurie Ann Kightly, Prince Edward Island Coordinator, CHPNA.
Telephone (902)887-3751
Fax (902)628-2185

An Awakening: Report of the Atlantic Seniors Networking Forum, Halifax, Nova Scotia, January 27-29, 1997, available from Mary Simpson, Atlantic Coordinator, CHPNA.
Telephone (506)758-0987
Fax (506)758-2002

Review of *New Horizons: Partners in Aging* Projects

Toward Healthy-Aging Communities: A Population Health Approach, prepared by Linda MacLeod and Associates, March, 1997. Available from the Division of Aging and Seniors, Health Canada.
Telephone (613)952-7606
Fax (613)957-7627

Other Resources

A Preliminary Look at Community-Based Research for Active Living, Draft Report, prepared by Susan Swanson, for the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, February, 1997. Available from the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute. Telephone (613)233-5528
Fax (613)233-5536

Aging Vignettes, a statistical portrait of seniors in Canada, National Advisory Council on Aging, 1993. Available from the Division of Aging and Seniors, Health Canada.
Telephone (613)952-7606
Fax (613)957-7627

Handbook on Using Stories in Health Promotion Practice, prepared by Ron Labonte and Joan Feather, 1996. Available from Policy Development and Coordination Division, Health Promotion and Programs Branch, Health Canada.
Telephone (613)946-8624
Fax (613)954-5542

Successful Strategies and Programs for the Empowerment of Canadian Seniors in Situation of Risk, prepared by Pam Thompson, InPro Consulting, March, 1997. Available from the Division of Aging and Seniors, Health Canada.
Telephone (613)952-7606
Fax (613)957-7627



- ▶ This series of nine Fact Sheets is one component of a kit. Other materials are:
- ✓ the **Proceedings** of Experience in Action: A National Forum for Healthy Aging, February 9-11, 1997.
- ✓ a short **Video** filmed during the national forum. It provides a synopsis of the presentations, small group sessions and informal discussions which shaped the nature and outcome of the discussions.
- ✓ a **Community Guide** for using the materials from the National Forum for Healthy Aging.

