AARP Foundation

Identifying Evidence-Based Solutions for Vulnerable Older Adults Grant Competition

AARP Foundation

Vision: A country free of poverty where no older person feels vulnerable.

Mission: We serve the vulnerable 50+ by creating and advancing effective solutions to help them secure the essentials.

Pre-Application Deadline: October 18, 2016, 11:59pm ET

Application Deadline: November 10, 2016, 11:59pm ET

AARP Foundation Overview

AARP Foundation works to ensure that low-income vulnerable older adults have nutritious food, safe, secure and affordable housing, a steady income, and strong and sustaining social bonds. To address those needs, the grant competition is seeking evidence-based solutions that are guided by a deep level of engagement with AARP Foundation and that can be nurtured, evaluated and brought to scale.

Through this grant competition we hope to achieve multiple goals:

- Develop a landscape analysis of evidence-based interventions that serve vulnerable older adults and align with our four impact areas;
- Create a portfolio of grant-funded programs that includes projects with different levels of evidence with the goal of scaling, at the appropriate time, to serve more low-income older adults; and
- Identify solutions that seek to achieve a double bottom line (sustainable programs that achieve a positive financial and social return).

Ultimately, we expect a percentage of the grantees will move along the evidence continuum in preparation for their programs being scaled nationally under the AARP Foundation umbrella. Toward that end, AARP Foundation will be actively involved during the grant period to understand how each grant-funded program work and how we can provide the necessary technical assistance to achieve the different levels of evidence and create a model to achieve sustainability and expansion.

Advancing Effective Solutions

As stated in our mission, AARP Foundation is focused on creating and advancing effective solutions around our four impact areas. Below are the objectives for each of the four impact areas for which we are seeking solutions. We understand that some interventions may indirectly affect other areas (e.g., increased income security will often result in increased food security) and we encourage proposals that have cross-objective impact. However, we want to make sure the solution does have a primary focus related to at least one of the impact areas that follow. Often by focusing on a single objective, secondary and tertiary results come naturally.

- Income Security Objectives
    - Increasing low-income older adult savings through innovative products, services and tools to help increase financial stability and savings and decrease debt of low-income workers.
    - Connecting employers with a pipeline of trained, prescreened and qualified workers.
    - Developing more opportunities tailored for women, who are less likely to be income secure.
    - Preventing fraud by empowering low-income older adults to protect their income by learning how to recognize, refuse and report financial fraud, scams and abuse.

  Ultimate outcome: More working-age older adults employed and able to protect their financial assets.

- Food Security Objectives
    - Reducing negative health outcomes of vulnerable 50+ due to hunger/poor nutrition.
    - Improving food security of low-income 50+ by increasing food access, availability, affordability and/or diet appropriateness.

  Ultimate outcome: A food-secure nation where all older adults have access to healthy, safe and affordable foods.

- Housing Security Objectives
    - Reducing costs of vital home repairs by creating new models of home repair assistance to ensure that home improvements such as grab bars and ramps are available to those who need them.
    - Linking housing and health care by collaborating with housing and health care providers to integrate health services in older adults' homes and ensure the best quality of care for aging in place.
    - Preventing foreclosures and scams by providing counseling to older homeowners to help them remain in their homes and protect them from con artists touting housing scams.
    - Increasing the supply of affordable, functional housing by incentivizing the market to invest in universally designed homes.

  Ultimate outcome: More adults able to keep and maintain the place called home.

- Social Connectedness Objectives
    - Reducing negative health outcomes associated with isolation through prevention and treatment by focusing on three life events that are the root causes of social isolation among older people:[1]
        - Retirement and losing connection with colleagues

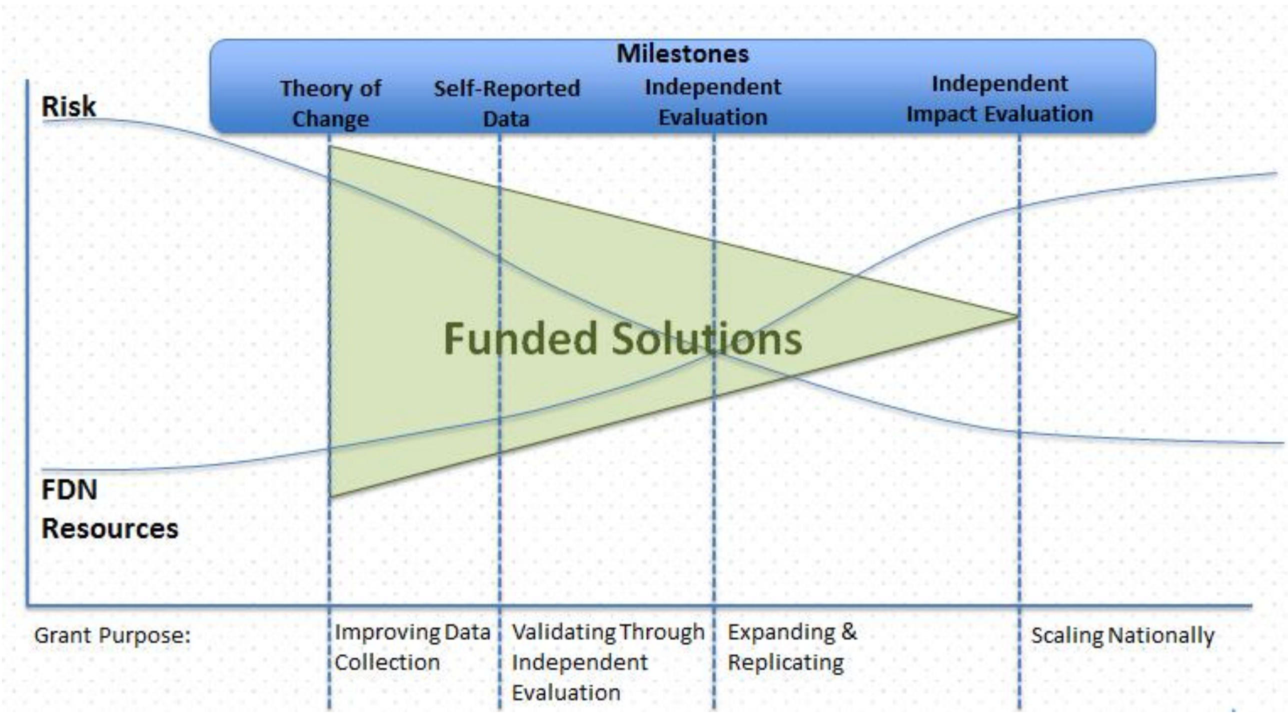
[1] Public Health England, Local action on health inequalities: Reducing social isolation across the lifecourse; September 2015.

- Falling ill and becoming less mobile
- A spouse dying or going into care

Ultimate outcome: Older adults are fully connected to community – and healthier for it.

Innovation Pipeline

To manage our ability to create and advance effective solutions, AARP Foundation has developed an innovation pipeline. Concepts and programs enter the pipeline based upon level of project maturity and evidence. Through this pipeline, programs are piloted, tested and reiterated based on results of the different testing stages. We do not expect every project will go through each phase of the pipeline (though our goal, in this RFA, is to help each grantee to do so). As a result, we invest smaller amounts of resources in many projects with less evidence and increase the level of investment as the amount of evidence of impact increases. Below is a graphic that represents this approach. The greater the risk (i.e., the less evidence of impact a project has), the less resources allocated to each individual project. As the risk decreases, the resources increase.



Our goal is to assist you through the process as you seek to achieve each milestone with your grant-funded project. While the timeline to achieve each milestone will vary, we will set specific timelines for progress toward each milestone. These timelines may shift as the project progresses, but in order to receive additional funding beyond the initial grant, progress toward the milestone must be achieved. Unfortunately, despite our best combined efforts, there will be a percentage of grantees whose progress will not reach the necessary milestones to achieve future funding. For those grantees we will ensure the program is properly transitioned and positioned for its next steps.

Our approach toward testing and iterating programs focuses on the Lean Startup methodology. We will not invest grant funding into building up significant infrastructure of a program until it meets specific milestones. We seek to invest an appropriate amount to test, iterate and test again to continue to refine the program model until it meets the necessary criteria to achieve each individual milestone. As each milestone is achieved, the level of investment coincides with the ability of the program to reach the next milestone.

For example, a program receives a small grant during the testing and iteration phase. When the model is appropriately refined and there appears to be a clear market for the program, a larger grant will help with establishing the infrastructure. When the level of evidence demonstrates a clear impact on the intended beneficiary (i.e., in a quasi-experimental design study or randomized control trial), an appropriate grant amount will be allocated to test replicability of the model in existing or new geographic areas. While the grant will not increase exponentially, we will work with the grantee to ensure each stage is funded at the appropriate level and, ideally, not solely with AARP Foundation funding.

Double Bottom Line: Social and Financial Return

AARP Foundation views our grantmaking as investments that seek a social return, particularly as it relates to health outcomes. The social return can be financial savings to the beneficiary, for-profit entity and/or the government as a result of the health outcome. Depending on your level of evidence, you may not have calculated your social return. Because this grant program is funding programs with different levels of evidence, we seek to support the programmatic and evaluative costs to assist in determining the program social return.

In addition, we are seeking interventions that have a compelling financial model. There are two types of financial models that we deem compelling:

- Self-sustaining financial model not reliant on donations or grants (social entrepreneurship)
- Break-even financial model reliant on existing and identified funders (social service)

We understand that many social service programs by the nature of who they are serving are unable to generate a self-sustaining source of revenue. However, if a compelling social return is identified, we do believe there will be private and public funders that are willing to pay for the service because it will provide direct savings to these funders.

For self-sustaining solutions, we believe AARP Foundation can play multiple roles to assist the solution in serving more people. Those ways may include investing in the solution to increase its organizational capacity; utilizing the trusted AARP Foundation brand to enter new markets; and playing an intermediary role in which AARP Foundation can connect the solution with customers and funders.

Scaling and Program Life Cycle

Broadly defined, scaling simply means helping more people in need (specifically in the case of AARP Foundation, low-income older adults). To provide greater context to our definition as it relates to AARP Foundation and, in particular, this grant competition, there are two conditions for consideration:

1. Identifying and replicating the best evidence-based, sustainable models more deeply and widely
2. Increasing the number of people served while decreasing the unit price of marginal cost

The first condition can be broken into three parts:

- Demonstrable outcomes: Scaling is undertaken once a program demonstrates an acceptable level of outcome (i.e. evidence-based results).

- Replicable: Before adding new locations, ensure that the program can be reproduced with fidelity to ensure the same level of effectiveness.

- Fundability: Identify and maintain sustainable funding.

The second condition acknowledges that as the program gets larger, the cost to serve each individual generally decreases. The degree to which that occurs may vary widely depending on the nature of the program in achieving its intended outcome.

The two conditions are intrinsically linked. Both need to occur in order for us to consider scaling a program. Therefore, the time necessary for each program to meet both conditions is considered on an individual basis with specific milestones tailored to each program.

For more information about scaling frameworks that we find compelling and useful, please read Transformative Scale: The Future of Growing What Works by Jeffrey Bradach & Abe Grindle.

Evidence Continuum

We acknowledge that existing and new programs have varying degrees of evidence. Our goal with this RFA is to assist the grantee in moving through the evidence continuum in order to demonstrate impact and achieve strong levels of evidence, which is an extremely high bar. The following definitions are helpful in determining your project's current level of evidence:

- Theory of Change/Pre-Evidence: Program model supported by theoretical framework (e.g., theory of change) and/or previous research.
- Self-reported Evidence: Systematically collected data tracks who is served, and the outputs and outcomes that are achieved.
- Independent Evaluation: Evaluations that support causal conclusions but cannot be generalized beyond the study group; or evaluations that support causal conclusions with a large range of participants or multiple evaluations supporting the same conclusion.

AARP Foundation will consider funding projects at each level of evidence along the evidence continuum with a primary focus on existing programs that have self-reported evidence or independent evaluations. However, at minimum a program must have a strong theory of change supported by previous research findings to be considered for funding.

AARP Foundation Engagement

AARP Foundation will be engaged in a manner that may be unlike other funder-grantee relationships. AARP Foundation is a public charity; we are both a grantmaker and a service provider. As such, we focus our grantmaking to identify new programs that we can implement directly or through close collaboration with other organizations.

Through this deep level of engagement, we seek to:

- Define your outcomes and methodology to measure the outcome.
- Understand and refine your business and program model.
- Determine your readiness for the appropriate evaluation.
- Expand the program under the AARP Foundation umbrella.

Expansion under the AARP Foundation umbrella is intended to be a broad statement that could range simply from leveraging AARP Foundation's trusted brand to increase awareness and participation to integrating the program within AARP Foundation's organizational structure. The degree of program adoption by AARP Foundation will vary program by program. Simply stated, if a program has demonstrated evidence of impact, we want to make sure it reaches the most number of intended beneficiaries across the nation. We will then determine the most effective and efficient structure for expansion to achieve that goal.

Grant Award Information

The total amount and length of the grant award will coincide with the level of evidence and maturity of the program. The cost to move from one milestone to the next is often higher – particularly as more people are being served and the necessary evaluation becomes more complicated. In general, the following should be considered guidelines, but not strict funding bands:

Theory of Change/ Pre-Evidence: $50,000-$75,000; 9-18 months

Self-reported Evidence: $100,000-$200,000/year; 18-24 months

Independent Evaluation: $200,000-$300,000/year; 24-36 months

Grant Application Process

Eligible organizations include those with 501(c)(3) designation. AARP Foundation does not make grants to individuals.

All applications must be completed online. The application itself will consist of two parts:

- **Mandatory pre-application: deadline Oct. 18**
- **Invited full application: deadline Nov. 10**

All are invited to submit the pre-application, which, besides general organizational information, contains a list of basic information about your current program or theory of change.

The pre-application submissions undergo a thorough review process, from which a smaller number of organizations will be invited by October 24 to complete a full application.

During the last two weeks of November and first week of December during our review, you may receive clarification questions and follow up (which may include video conference or on-site visit). Our goal is to make a final decision by December 16.

Pre-application (See Appendix A)

The pre-application provides an overview of the current program you have in place or a new program based upon a theory of change. Our goal is to receive a basic understanding of the level of evidence and/or affiliated research of your program. The pre-application provides general organizational information and asks a series of questions. The questions seek concise and specific answers. We anticipate the pre-application will take you 20-30 minutes to complete, assuming you have basic information about the program for which you are seeking funding. This information includes organizational details such as vision and mission; logic model or theory of change; outcomes (if any) achieved; and social benefit calculation (if possible). The social benefit calculation should be based on actual data or research and, ideally, is quantified. For example, a program to increase food security for an individual may also increase the individual's health outcomes, which in turn would reduce health care costs; we would seek that actual dollar amount of the reduction in health care costs. At this stage we are not requesting your grant request or a budget. We are simply seeking to understand your proposed program.

Full application (See Appendix B)

Those invited for the full application will have an opportunity to provide additional details about their program and, in particular, their financial model and current reality. In this section you will also have the opportunity to make your formal request for the grant amount and length of grant award. The clarification period, which shortly follows the full application deadline on November 11, will focus primarily on your responses to this section.

Review criteria

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions associated with the pre-application and full application. The questions are specifically designed for us to understand where your program resides in its life cycle and the degree of evidence associated with it. The questions are seeking concise and specific information that you have available. We understand that not every program will have the same level of information about its impact, beneficiaries and social return. In most cases the level of data associated with the program will be directly correlated with the maturity of the program, and our preference is to fund existing programs with existing data (though we are open to new research-based program models). A new program should be informed by research and have a strong theory of change and logic model, but it might not have outcome-related data, which may be appropriate. However, a mature program should have outcome-related data and should be able to answer the application questions with specific detail and outcomes backed by data.

We view these grants as an investment into programs – and the questions are designed to see if you understand your program at a micro level and have the research and evidence to back up your results. The stronger the evidence-based results, the more significant the grant investment.

Timeline

October 11: Technical assistance call/webinar, 3:00 p.m. ET. Click here to register.

October 18: Pre-application deadline by 11:59 p.m. ET

October 24: Notification to all applicants regarding invited status

November 10: Invited full application deadline by 11:59 p.m. ET

November 21 - December 9: Clarification period (as needed)

December 16: Organization informed about funding

January 1: Program start date

Contact

The primary contact for this grant competition is Matt D'Amico, Grant Program Officer (evidence@aarp.org). For any questions related to this grant competition, Matt will assist you and provide a timely response.

Appendix A: Pre-application Questions

The Pre-application allows for you to provide details on the proposed project for which you are seeking funding from AARP Foundation. Please be specific and concise.

Contact

- Salutation
- First Name
- Last Name
- Job Title
- Phone
- Email

Organization Details

- Company
- Address
- Website
- EIN

Project Details

- Primary Impact Area (Select from list)
  - Food security
  - Social connectedness
  - Income security
  - Housing security

- Secondary Impact Area (Select from list)
  - Food security
  - Social connectedness
  - Income security
  - Housing security
  - n/a
- Project Name
- Project Summary (255 character limit).
- Current Project Costs
- Number of People Served
- % of People Served that are low-income older adults

Data Collection and Evaluation

- Does the proposed project currently track participants and other programmatic outputs and outcomes (those listed in the corresponding fields above)?

  If yes, please explain how the outputs and outcomes are tracked. Please include metrics and tools used, who captures your metrics, how often your metrics are captured, and how your metrics are shared. (1000 character limit)

- Does your program have a research-based theory of change?
  - If yes, please attach theory of change, including relevant research referenced, on the Attachments Tab.
- Has your program ever been evaluated?
  - If yes, what is the type of evaluation?
    - Developmental
    - Formative (Implementation or Process)
    - Summative (Impact or Outcome Evaluation)
    - Don't know
  - Was the evaluation internal or external?
    - Internal
    - External
  - Attach evaluation on the Attachments tab.

Community Need

- What is the pressing social problem affecting older adults you seek to solve? (1000 character limit)
- Is the program:
  - Preventing social problem
  - Addressing effect of social problem
- Tell us what the customer's "pain" is that creates demand for your service and how your approach relieves that pain. (1000 character limit)
- What organizations in the area you serve provide a solution that seeks to achieve the same outcomes? (List organization names) (255 character limit)
- How is your project more effective than similar solutions in achieving your desired outcome(s)? Please provide specific metrics (costs, performance, price, features, etc.). (255 character limit)
- What percentage of the beneficiaries achieves the intended outcome(s) (e.g., a workforce development program's outcome is to get beneficiaries jobs. The program serves 100 people, 40 people get jobs, therefore, 40% of beneficiaries achieve intended outcomes)?
  - How does that percentage compare to baseline (provide sources of information if you know baseline)? (1000 character limit)
- Does your solution have a social benefit calculated?
    - Yes
    - No
  - If yes, is it health related?
    - Yes
    - No
  - If you do have a social benefit calculated, what is the social benefit? (Please provide dollar figure.)

  - How is the social benefit calculated? What are the assumptions? (1000 character limit)

Additional Organization Detail

- What is your organization's approved vision statement? (1000 character limit)
- What is your organization's approved mission statement? (1000 character limit)
- If AARP Foundation were to give you funding, would you be willing to scale this project with AARP Foundation as the lead?
    - Yes
    - No
- How did your organization learn about this grant competition? (Select from list)
  - AARP Foundation directly
  - AARP State Office
  - Twitter
  - Chronicle of Philanthropy
  - Professional Association
  - Other: *please list* (255 character limit)

Appendix B: Full Application Questions (For Invited Applicants)

Additional Proposal Information

- What is next best solution, if any, for beneficiaries that do not receive your solution and what are the beneficiary outcomes as a result? (2500 character limit)
- Please list the factors that would prevent low-income older adults from using your solution.
  - How are you addressing those factors? (2500 character limit)
- What is the principal risk, if any, to achieving your intended social benefit and financial sustainability? (1000 character limit)
- Do you require partners to implement the solution or achieve the program's outcomes? If yes, please list the partners and their role. (2500 character limit)
- Beyond funding, how can AARP Foundation help you achieve your solutions outcome, such as evaluating your solution and, when applicable, scaling your solution? (2500 character limit)

Organization Information

- What is your experience in serving older adults? (1000 character limit)
- What is your experience in providing your solution or comparable solutions? (1000 character limit)
- Please list employees leading the project and how their experiences and skills are relevant to the project and its success. (2500 character limit)

Market Information

- What is the specific demographic your solution is seeking to serve? Please be specific in terms of age ranges, income levels, race and ethnicity and any other factors you wish to highlight. If there are multiple approaches for different demographics, please include that information here. (2500 character limit)
- What is the actual addressable market where the solution is currently available? Please include size of customer base (business-to-business and/or business-to-customer) and funding as well as geography. (2500 character limit)
    - What percentage of your current market do you plan to serve and over what period of time?
    - What percentage of the current market you plan to serve is low-income older adults?
- What is the actual addressable market nationally? Please include size of customer base (business-to-business and/or business-to-customer) and funding as well as geography. (2500 character limit)
    - What percentage of the national market do you plan to serve and over what period of time?
    - What percentage of the national market you plan to serve is low-income older adults?
- How do you currently reach your customers? How do you plan on reaching them in the future in order to achieve proposed market penetration (in current markets and in new markets)? (2500 character limit)

Scaling Information

- How do/would you replicate your program? (2500 character limit)
- How do/would you ensure it is replicated with fidelity? (2500 character limit)
- How do/would you ensure you are replicating your program with fidelity as you enter new markets? (2500 character limit)
- What will your method of distribution be in order to enter new markets with your program? (2500 character limit)

Financial Information

- Is your solution sustainable now (i.e., it generates enough revenue – without donations – to cover operational costs)?
    - If yes, what are those revenue sources? (2500 character limit)

    - If no, do you think it could be sustainable without donations?
        - If yes, what is the business model (revenue and expenses, market opportunity, etc.) to achieve sustainability? Include evidence of the price buyers will pay at your program’s price. How long would it take to be sustainable based upon best case scenario, moderate scenario, worst case

        - scenario (please provide total months and probability for each scenario)? (2500 character limit)
        - If no, what would be the mixture of revenue sources to keep the program operating at current level? To achieve your proposed market penetration? (2500 character limit)
- What does it cost to acquire a new customer? (250 character limit)
    - What are the assumptions behind your cost? (1000 character limit)
- What is your requested grant amount?
    - Please provide budget narrative to explain line items and how the grant will help you achieve a greater level of evidence and the opportunity to scale. (5000 character limit)
- What is the start date of the grant-funded project?
- What is the end date of the grant-funded project?
- Please attach most recent audited financial statements.
- Please include financial statements for your current fiscal year (include actuals to date through most recent reportable month and projections through end of fiscal year).