Voice-Connected Communities
Request for Application (RFA)

Application Deadline: May 31, 2018, 11:59pm ET

AARP Foundation is requesting applications from eligible organizations to develop and implement a project using voice-assisted technology with the goal of informing AARP Foundation strategy related to voice-assisted technology. Through this mini-grant we seek to extend AARP Foundation’s on-going project utilizing voice-assisted technology to facilitate and nurture community in senior housing settings.

This is an innovation project, and recipients will be expected to participate in requisite data collection, to contribute to knowledge development, and to contribute to building a body of tools for effective voice-assisted technology programming, to be integrated into AARP Foundation’s development of a voice-assisted technology intervention to help prevent and reduce social isolation among low-income people 50 and over. Recipients of this award will be expected to develop and execute an implementation plan for deploying Amazon Echo devices (purchased by the applicant) in the homes of at least 50 qualified participants, and training and supporting those participants in use of the device.

Application Deadline: Applications are due May 31, 2018 by 11:59pm Eastern time and must be completed online here.

AARP Foundation Overview

AARP Foundation focuses on supporting and advancing effective solutions to help vulnerable older adults transform their lives today and secure the essentials for their future. AARP Foundation is working side by side with other organizations to reach more people, work more efficiently and make resources go further. AARP Foundation seeks to support organizations whose evidence-based interventions can make a direct impact on the low-income 50+ and that align with the Foundation’s strategic priorities.

Program Overview

AARP Foundation is researching how voice-controlled technology can be used to facilitate and nurture a community that is vibrant and where every person feels connected. A 12-month pilot study to investigate the viability of hands-free, voice-controlled technology in reducing or delaying isolation and its adverse health outcomes in adults over the age of 50 is currently underway, with 270 voice-controlled Amazon Echo devices distributed to seniors who live in senior housing communities across four sites in Washington, DC, and Baltimore, MD, and who
are at risk of isolation. The devices, featuring relevant capabilities developed in partnership with senior communities.

Eighty-one percent of seniors say technology is essential to staying in touch with family and friends. AARP Foundation’s proposed solution is to harness both the simplicity and the vast capability of hands-free, voice-controlled devices to encourage active living, medication adherence and social connections to help prevent or alleviate the effects of isolation.

The Foundation has developed voice-assistive technology training, training content, and materials designed for older adults. We have seen that older adults are eager to learn and use new technologies but need additional support at the onset in order to build confidence and troubleshoot problems as they arise. For many, voice-controlled technology is providing them their first experience in using the internet and is giving them open access to information that is less intimidating than using a computer or smartphone. Participants report feeling empowered by the new technology.

This Request for Applications seeks to extend the above project, creating an additional deployment of devices in a senior community, to be managed exclusively by the community’s operators. Selected applicants will design a plan to install voice-assistive technology in seniors’ homes and then train and support those seniors in use of the device. The applicant will document and share lessons learned with AARP Foundation, with the goal of helping to inform AARP Foundation’s wider implementation strategy. While methods and goals of the project will be determined by the applicant, AARP Foundation will most favorably consider models that focuses on the resident on-boarding/training experience in order to: 1) foster a sense of community and connectedness among residents through voice-controlled technology; 2) utilize the devices to connect residents to additional resources and information that support healthy aging; and 3) capture and share data with AARP Foundation – e.g., measuring participant outcomes, documenting lessons learned, measuring method of training, training content and materials, efficacy of training, efficacy of implementation, method of onboarding, efficacy of onboarding, etc.

What AARP Foundation can provide:

- Strategic planning for implementing voice-assisted technology in your community
- Facilitated Bulk purchasing of voice-assisted technology
- Voice-assisted technology training, training content, and materials designed for older adults
- Fleet management capabilities of voice-assisted devices (no cost for the duration of the grant period)
- Smart community online portal integrated with voice-assisted technology that allows residents to sign up for events, receive community announcements and alerts (no cost for the duration of the grant period)
Eligibility Information

This funding opportunity is available to organizations that include institutions of higher education, public entities or nonprofit organizations that are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, as well as other types of nonprofit and for-profit organizations. Applicant organizations must be based in the United States or its territories.

The following are not eligible for funding:

- Grants for individuals;
- Capital campaigns;
- Debt retirement or operating deficits;
- Endowments or reserve funds;
- Political organizations or campaigns;
- Lobbying legislators or influencing elections;
- Sponsorship of fundraising events;
- Marketing endeavors and personal research; and
- Indirect expenses unrelated to the project being funded.

Grant Award Information

Potential Award Range: $2,500-$5,000 (covers training costs, dependent upon on service numbers; hardware and devices costs are not eligible expenses)

Grant Period: June 2018 – January 2019

Reporting Requirements: The grantee is required to submit a programmatic and financial report upon completion of the grant period. Monthly or more frequent phone calls for informal reporting and knowledge sharing will also be required.

Application Process

Applications must be submitted online by May 31 by 11:59pm Eastern Time. Applicants can access the full Application through AARP Foundation’s online system, here.

The following documents must be uploaded and attached to the Attachments section of the application:

- Documentation stating existing tax status
- A proposed project plan and timeline that includes:
  - Distribution and installation of hardware
  - On-boarding of residents
  - Training and education of residents
  - Initial and on-going support of residents
  - Project evaluation goals and methods
  - Staffing and other resource allocation
Applicants may be contacted for clarifications to their Applications. Further details about the clarification process will be provided as appropriate. AARP Foundation may also hold site visits for applicants. These site visits may be actual or virtual (e.g. video conferencing). More information about the site visit will be provided during the clarification period.

Please send any questions to AARP_Foundation_Grants@aarp.org

**Application Information**

The application allows for the applicant to provide details on the proposed project, what the applicant hopes to achieve with the project and how the applicant expects to achieve those results. Please be specific and concise.

- **Proposed Project Summary** (5000 character maximum): In a few sentences, briefly explain your proposed VCT project, including how many participants will be served and how they will be engaged. Be sure to include information about how this project fits into your organizational mission and what specific resources and capacity your organization will contribute to ensure the project’s success.

- **Key Project Milestones and Timeline** (1000 character maximum)
  Please provide an overview of your proposed project timeline and key milestones.

- **Geography** (2500 character maximum)
  What are the specific areas (buildings, communities, neighborhoods, cities) the proposed program will serve, and why has this specific area been selected?

- **Population Demographics and Recruitment** (2500 character maximum)
  What are the population demographics (gender, race, ethnicity, income and age) the proposed project will serve? AARP Foundation’s target population is low-income or vulnerable older adults. Will your project serve this target? Please describe how or explain why not. With this target in mind, how will your project identify and recruit qualified participants?

- **Experience of Individuals Involved in the Leadership and Execution of Project** (2500 character maximum)
  Please provide details on how the experiences of the organizations and individuals associated with the project are relevant for the execution of the proposed project. Who will be the project lead? How much time will the person dedicate towards the project? How many other individuals will be associated with this project and what will be their roles? Please include key staff biographies or resumes.
• Other Funding Sources (2500 character maximum)
What, if any, other funding or revenue sources, if any, will fund this project? What level of match, including through funding, resource/staff allocation, or other, will your organization provide to the project?

• Volunteer Recruitment and Management (2500 character maximum)
Will your project utilize members of the project’s community to help execute the project? If so, please describe your plans to on-board, train, monitor, manage, and evaluate volunteers who help execute the project.

• Data Management (10000 character maximum)
What are the specific systems to be used to capture and manage information related to the project? Who will capture and maintain this information and how will it be shared with AARP Foundation and your organization?

• Risks Associated with the Projects (2500 character maximum)
What are the risks associated with the project that could diminish its ability to achieve its goal(s)? How will the risks be mitigated?

• Budget Line Narrative (5000 character maximum)
Please explain line items for the project budget. This funding opportunity primarily covers training costs, dependent upon on service numbers; hardware and devices costs are not eligible expenses. Please also clearly indicate your organization’s resource commitment to the project. Grant funds may only be used for execution of the grant, and no funding may be used for political or lobbying purposes.

• Required Attachments
Applicant should upload the following components when completing the application:
  o Form 990/Documentation stating existing tax status.
  o Project Plan (refer to “Application Process” section for details)

Review Criteria
Application submissions will undergo a thorough review process. During review, you may receive clarification questions and follow up. Among other considerations, our major criteria for selecting the winning applicant will be:
  • A clear plan for project implementation and management, including dedicated staff with sufficient managerial and decision-making authority to successfully execute the project.
  • If applicable, an appropriate plan for recruiting, training, and managing volunteers associated with the project.
• Infrastructure and appropriate staff commitment necessary to document the project, including required reporting and lessons learned on an on-going basis.
• A clear and well-informed plan for training, supporting, and engaging residents in adopting sustained use of the devices.

Timeline

April 30, 2018: Request for Application released
May 31, 2018: Applications due no later than 11:59pm Eastern Time
July 2018: All applicants are notified regarding the status of their application