

NJAAW Proposal to the Friends Foundation for the Aging

Date: August 12, 2024

Organization: New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well

TIN & Formal organization name: 22-3569599

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Amount requested: \$13,500

Project title: Rebuilding NJ Senior Center Association

Summary Description:

NJAAW will work with Old Bridge Township's Business Administrator and Aging professional, Anahita Feltz to rebuild an association of senior centers for New Jersey.

Please answer the following questions

1. What is the problem you have identified?

New Jersey no longer has an association of senior centers. The once thriving association went defunct over 10 years ago, due to several leaders retiring within a short period of time. With an increased focus on age-friendly communities and the state's age-friendly state efforts, it is time to rebuild the association. Some New Jersey senior centers are county-run with resources passed down from the state; others are run by nonprofits and municipalities. The range can be from a well-staffed Resource Center that serves congregate meals and has full-time social workers to part-time, recreational programs.

A senior center is the first place many people turn to for help, support, resources and social interaction. As so many are under-resourced and operating in a silo, they cannot meet the growing needs of people in their service area.

2. What is the solution you propose to address the problem?

We will restart and reinvigorate the New Jersey Association of Senior Centers (NJASC). At this critical time in the aging of our population, and recognizing the diverse needs of our older adults, it is imperative to rebuild the Senior Center association in order to share resources, knowledge, and support. This will enable senior centers to serve the growing number of older adults no matter what their structure is.

By leveraging resources, training, and connectivity, NJASC will enhance the quality of services provided to seniors, ensure their well-being, and build active engagement within the community.

This proposal seeks funding to establish the association, develop its programs, and create a sustainable framework for long-term operations

3. What actions will you take?

NJAAW will work with Anahita Feltz to establish NJSCA. We have broken the implementation into 4 phases:

Phase 1: Establishment and Initial Development (Months 1-6)

- Register NJASC as a nonprofit organization (501c3) and develop its governing structure.
- Develop a detailed business plan outlining the association's vision, mission, goals, and operational strategies.
- Develop a website and branding/communications plan.
- Launch a membership drive to enroll senior centers and professionals across NJ.

Phase 2: Resource Training and Development (Months 7-12)

- Conduct a needs assessment to identify key areas for training and resource development.
- Develop training modules on topics such as program management, fundraising, volunteer coordination, and senior care best practices.
- Create an online resource hub with access to toolkits, templates, and funding databases.

Phase 3: Networking and Advocacy (Months 13-18)

- Host quarterly webinars and regional forums to facilitate ongoing learning and collaboration.
- Develop an advocacy strategy to engage policymakers
- Organize an annual conference for Senior Center professionals to share knowledge and build networks.

4: evaluation and sustainability

- Evaluate the effectiveness of training programs and resource utilization through surveys and feedback.
- Adjust programs based on evaluation results and emerging needs develop a sustainability plan, including diversified funding sources, partnerships, and member engagement strategies.

After two years, the association will become self-sustaining through grants and low association member fees. The ongoing costs will only be for website maintenance and events.

4. Describe the population to be served.

New Jersey has over 1.2 million residents over the age of 65 spread out among 564 municipalities, with at least 250 senior centers of varying size, resources, and staffing.

With a growing population age 65+, more people rely on senior centers for social interaction, physical activities, educational programs, and essential services than ever before. Having one of the most diverse populations in the nation, it is imperative that senior

centers are prepared to meet a wide range of residents' needs. Despite their critical role, senior centers often face challenges related to funding, staff training, and access to resources. A unified state association to address these challenges at the local and state levels, provide professional development and foster collaboration among senior center professionals will help serve older adults from diverse backgrounds, abilities, and income levels.

5. Are there partners/collaborators for implementation or funding-who? Has the solution been tried by other organizations?

NJAAW and Anahita Felz, Business Administrator for the Township of Old Bridge, are collaborating on this project. Anahita used to run the Old Bridge Senior Center and has been an active member of the National Council on Aging and National Institute of Seniors Center. She was also a member of the advisory committee for NCOA's Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Centers program. Last year, she attended a White House Summit on building a better NJ to speak on the aging field here in NJ.

NJAAW has an extensive contact list of seniors centers throughout the state and has hosted 2 virtual events this year specifically for senior centers (you can see the recordings of the "Breaking the Mold" and "No Wrong Door" events here: <https://www.njaaw.org/events/> under past events.) We know from many attendees at these events that there is interest in reviving this association.

6. How will you know your actions are having an impact? How will you measure outputs and outcomes?

Our actions will help senior center professionals as well as professionals in the senior programming/services field have access to key resources and tools so that they can continue to successfully provide the services needed for the older adults in their communities. We will measure outputs and outcomes by membership size and through survey and feedback from these professionals.