



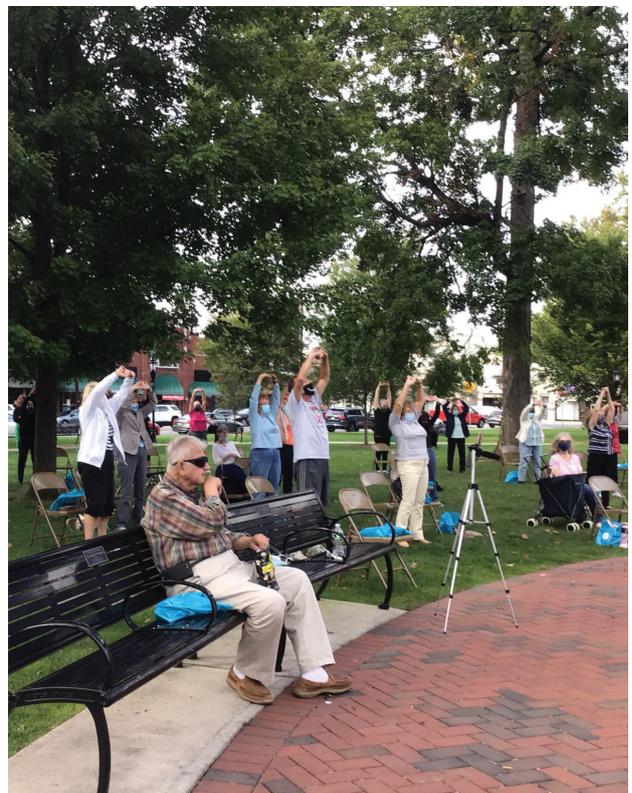
Age-Friendly Community Initiatives in Northern New Jersey

Four Years into Grant Funding

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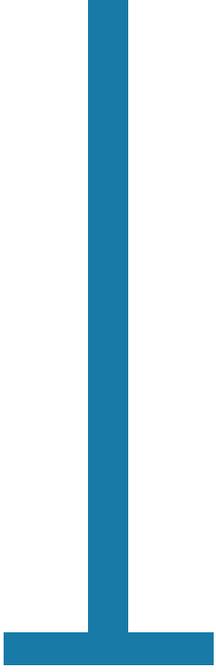


Speakers present at a kick-off event for "Let's Cuff It" Blood Pressure Monitoring Program by the Englewood Health Department. (Age Friendly Englewood)



Community members participate in an outdoor exercise activity at an age-friendly initiative's Social Connections event. (Westwood for All Ages)

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Section 1

Introduction

Age-friendly community initiatives (AFCIs) are expanding across municipalities in New Jersey (NJ). These initiatives are working to improve the social, built, and service environments of their local communities to make NJ a better place for people to live throughout the entirety of their lives. Age-friendly efforts are part of a larger global movement, with over 1,000 cities, communities, and subnational governments as members of the World Health Organization’s Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.¹

To date, much of the expansion of AFCIs in NJ has been the result of a grantmaking program of local philanthropy in the northern region of the state. In 2015, The Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation and The Grotta Fund for Senior Care program began working together to support the development of AFCIs in their geographic catchment areas. Eight initiatives covering 11 municipalities received age-friendly planning grants beginning in 2016. With continued support from the grantmakers, these inaugural members of the North Jersey Alliance of Age-Friendly Communities (NJAAFC)² have been leading collaborative, community-level work toward age-friendly goals, such as coordinated outreach to residents aging in place, diversifying local housing and transportation options, and improving pedestrian safety.

This report presents information about these inaugural members of the NJAAFC based on a survey conducted with their core teams in the summer of 2020. Findings from this survey provide a unique opportunity to describe grant-funded AFCIs in northern NJ four years into their development.

This report addresses key questions, such as:

- » Who are the people leading the AFCIs in northern New Jersey?
- » How do groups work together toward age-friendly goals?
- » What resources support the work of age-friendly core teams and their partners?

Findings in response to these questions can help guide policy and practice to support local leaders in NJ and beyond who strive to make their communities better places to grow up and grow older.

This first section of this report provides background information about the eight AFCIs that participated in the survey. The second section addresses how the AFCIs are structured in terms of their auspice organizations, core teams, advisory groups, and partner groups and organizations. The third section describes the initiatives’ primary sources of financial and non-financial support four years into the regional grantmaking program. The fourth section addresses the core teams’ perceptions of their AFCIs’ long-term sustainability as distinct programs. The final section summarizes key points and implications for the future of AFCIs.



High school students selected for Age-Friendly Teaneck’s Geriatric Careers Exploration summer internship program craft with residents of a local affordable assisted living residence. (Age-Friendly Teaneck)

Table 1: List of the Eight Inaugural Members of the NJA AFC

Initiative	Municipality(ies)	Website
Age-Friendly Englewood	Englewood	www.age-friendlyenglewood.org
Age-Friendly Ridgewood	Ridgewood	www.agefriendlyridgewood.org
Age-Friendly Teaneck	Teaneck	www.agefriendlyteaneck.org
Generations for Garfield	Garfield	www.generations4garfield.org
Lifelong Elizabeth	Elizabeth	www.jfscentralnj.org/lifelongelizabeth/about-us.php
SOMA: Two Towns for All Ages	South Orange and Maplewood	www.somatwotownsforallages.org
Tri-Town 55+	Chatham Borough, Chatham Township, and Madison Borough	www.tritown55plus.org
Westwood for All Ages	Westwood	www.westwoodforallages.org

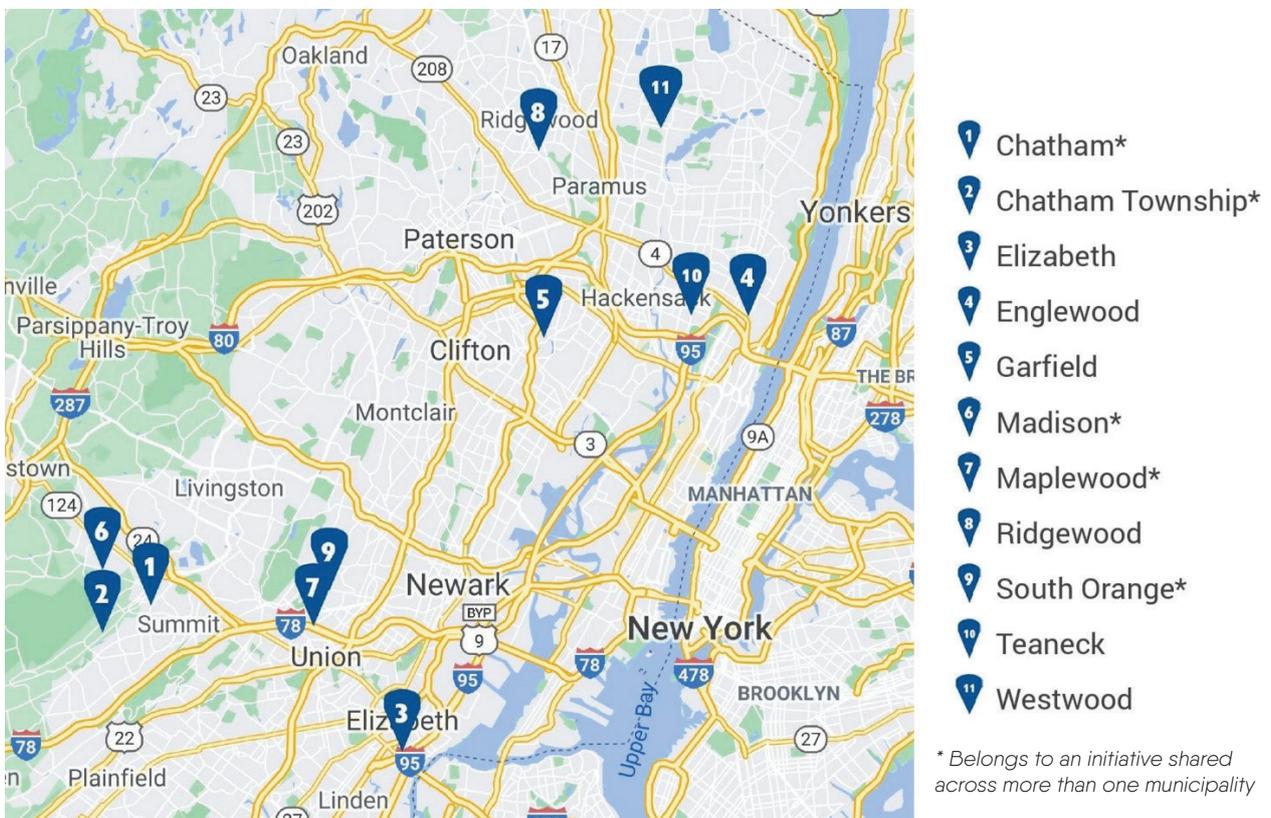
Figure 1: Map of the Eight Inaugural Members of the NJA AFC

Table 2 displays a summary of the sociodemographic characteristics of the AFCIs. The eight initiatives vary in their number of residents, education levels, as well as age and racial composition. The communities are also economically diverse: some have median household incomes much higher than the state average of \$79,363, while others have lower.

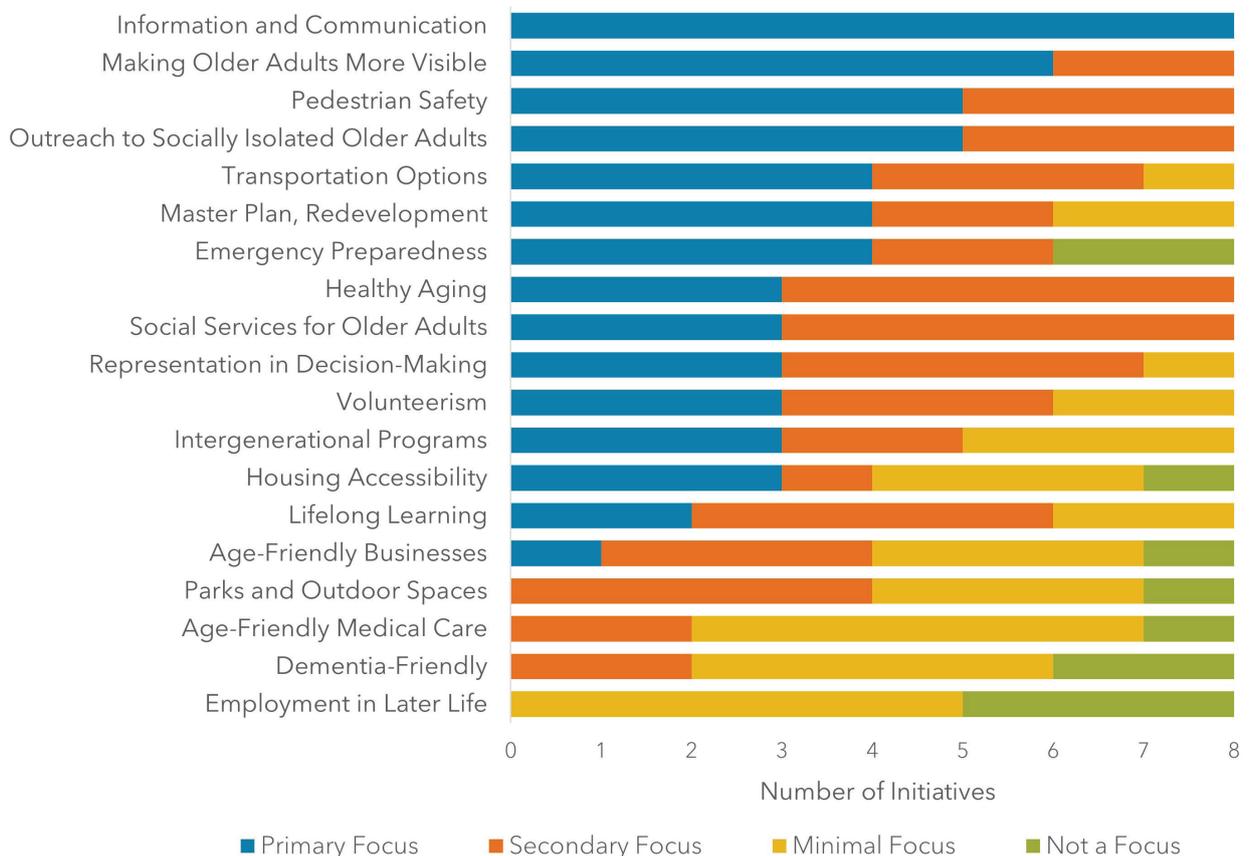
Despite their sociodemographic diversity, the eight initiatives reported similar priorities as the focus of their age-friendly efforts. As Figure 2 displays, each initiative reported information and communication as a primary focus. They also rated making older adults more visible within their communities, pedestrian safety, outreach to socially isolated older adults, healthy aging, and social services for older adults as either primary or secondary areas of focus.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Municipalities Comprising the Eight Inaugural Members of the NJAAFC

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Number of residents	43,039	11,078	129,216
Median household income (in 2018 dollars)	\$107,240	\$46,975	\$168,608
% of residents ages 65+	13.90%	9.90%	19.00%
% of residents non-Hispanic White	52.68%	13.30%	79.37%
% of residents with bachelor's or higher	49.91%	13.20%	75.40%

Note: Data retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts> on October 19, 2020. Weighted sums were calculated for two of the AFCIs' catchment areas that encompassed more than one municipality.

Figure 2: Priority Areas of the Eight Inaugural Members of the NJAAFC



Section 2

Organizational Structure

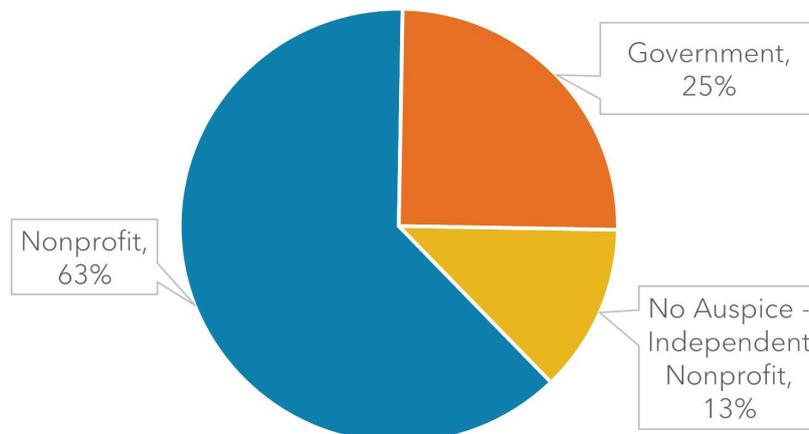
2.1 Auspice Organizations

Whether an AFCL is fully incorporated into a formal organization, or embeds part of its operations within another organization, auspice organizations are fundamental to the structure of how an initiative is organized. The majority of AFCLs (7 of 8) were situated within an auspice organization to some degree. Five of the eight AFCLs were aligned with an auspice organization as a program of the organization, and two AFCLs were aligned with the auspice organization mostly in a fiduciary capacity (i.e., the auspice organization provided the structures for processing finances, such as grants and salaries). As shown in Figure 3, one of the AFCLs reported having its own independent nonprofit organization. The majority (5 of 7) auspice organizations were nonprofits, and two were part of municipal government systems. Three of the five nonprofit auspice organizations were social service entities, one was a foundation, and the third was a housing-related organization.



Seven of the eight AFCLs were situated within an auspice organization.

Figure 3: Auspice Organization Types of the Eight Inaugural Members of the NJAFCC



2.2 Core Teams

Core teams are the groups of people with primary responsibility for advancing the work of the AFCIs as a whole. Seven out of the eight AFCIs were led by small groups of people who met regularly, whereas one AFCI had a single leader at the time the survey was conducted. Although leaders of the initiatives referred to these groups using a variety of terms (e.g., “Executive Board,” “Leadership Team”), we refer to them as “core teams.” The seven initiatives with core teams reported having two to five core team members (mean = 3.6) (See Figure 4). Six of the seven core teams reported having an individual designated as the leader, often titled “coordinator” or “manager,” while two of the core teams had two co-coordinators or co-managers (Figure 5). Additionally, five of the seven teams reported meeting at least once per week.



Most core teams reported meeting at least once per week.

The survey asked questions about each of the initiative’s core team members. The eight initiatives collectively reported on 26 individuals. As Figure 6 demonstrates (p. 6), core team members across the eight initiatives were relatively homogeneous in terms of race/ethnicity and gender. Out of the 26 core team members, 24 (92%) were identified as non-Hispanic White, and none were identified as Black or African American. Similarly, 22 (85%) were identified as female.

Figure 4: Core Team Size

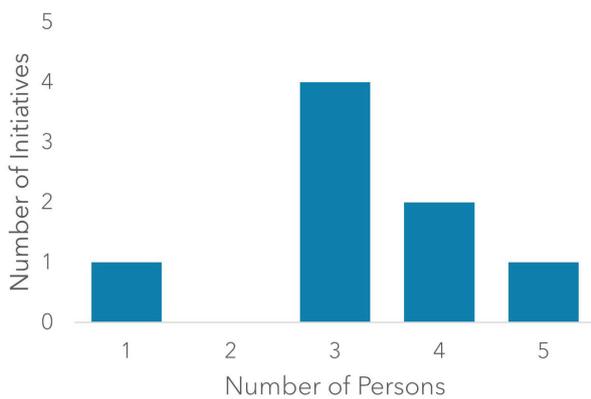
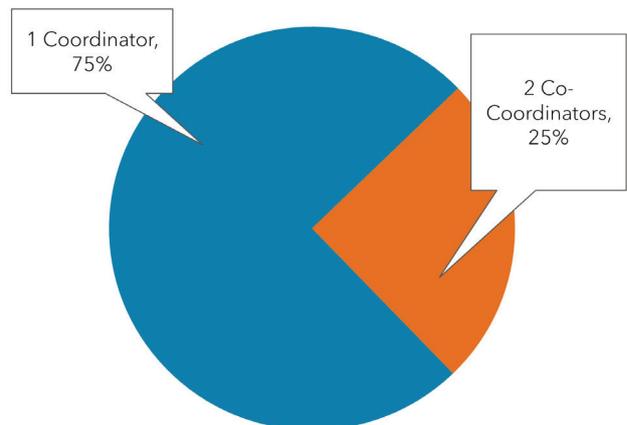


Figure 5: Number of Coordinators Per Initiative



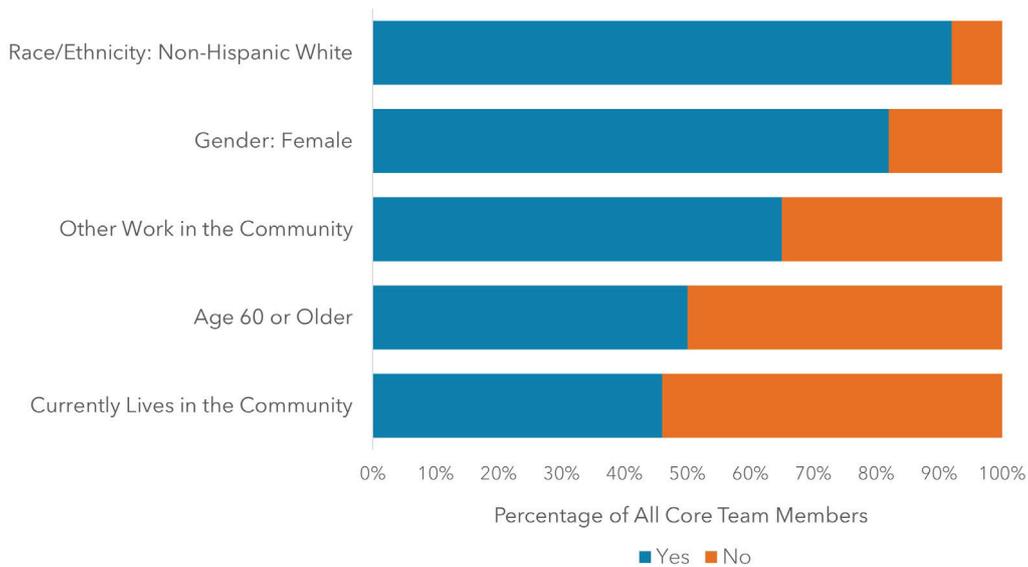
Despite similarities by race/ethnicity and gender, the 26 core team members across the eight initiatives differed from each other in terms of other characteristics, including age, connection to the focal community, professional background, and whether or not they were paid through the AFCI budget for their time:

- » Thirteen members (50%) were 59 or younger while the other half were 60 or older.
- » Nearly half (46%) of core team members reported living in the community of their AFCI.
- » Seven out of the eight initiatives had at least one core team member who resided in the community.
- » Among the 24 core team members who reported having lived and/or worked in the focal community, fifteen (62.5%) reported a history in the community of 20 or more years.



Age-friendly leaders share information about a community transportation pilot program for older residents of Madison and the Chatham. (Tri-Town 55+ Coalition)

Figure 6: Characteristics of the 26 Core Team Members across All Eight Initiatives



As displayed in Figure 7, the professions of core team members represented a range of disciplines. The most frequently listed professions were social work, communications, public health, and research. Other professions of core team members included law enforcement, nursing, human resources, nonprofit management, and consulting.

Core team members also differed from each other in terms of whether their time on the project was paid as part of the AFCI's budget: seventeen (65%)

of the 26 core team members were reported as having paid time as part of the AFCI's budget. However, 17 (65%) core team members reported working for other organizations in the focal community, for which they may have been allowed to use paid time toward the work of the initiative. Despite these differences, all initiatives reported paying at least one core team member (Figure 8), and, on average, core teams had 32 hours per week of staff time paid out of the AFCI's budget (Figure 9).

Figure 7: Career Areas of Core Team Members
(not weighted by frequency)

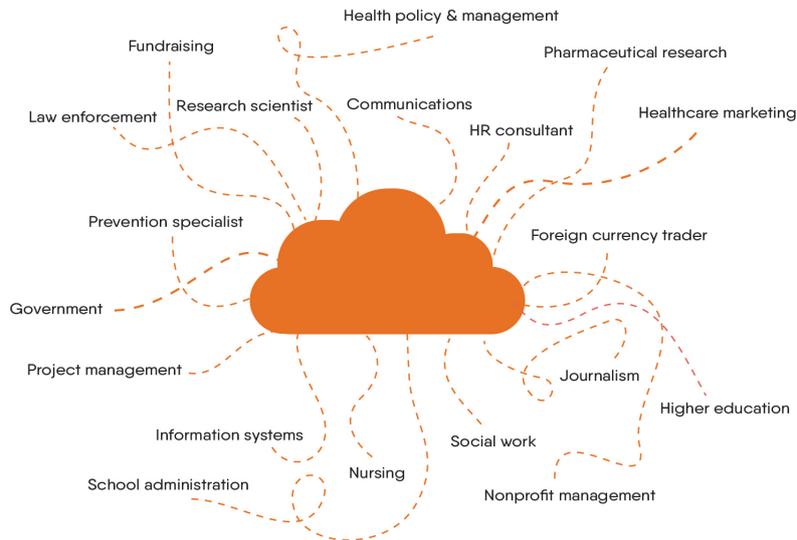


Figure 8: Initiatives with One or More Staff Members Paid from the AFCI Budget

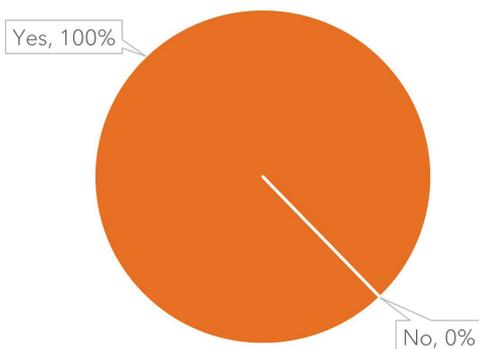
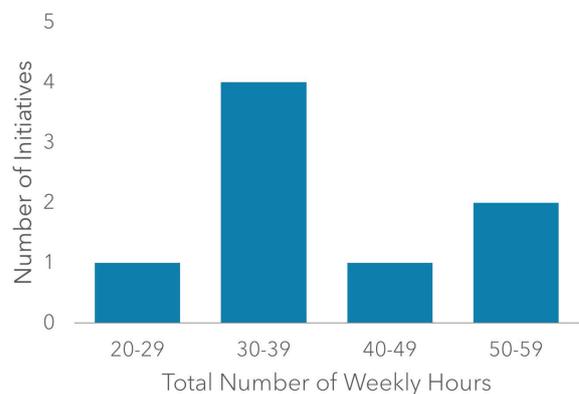


Figure 9: Weekly Paid Staff Time



2.3 Advisory Groups

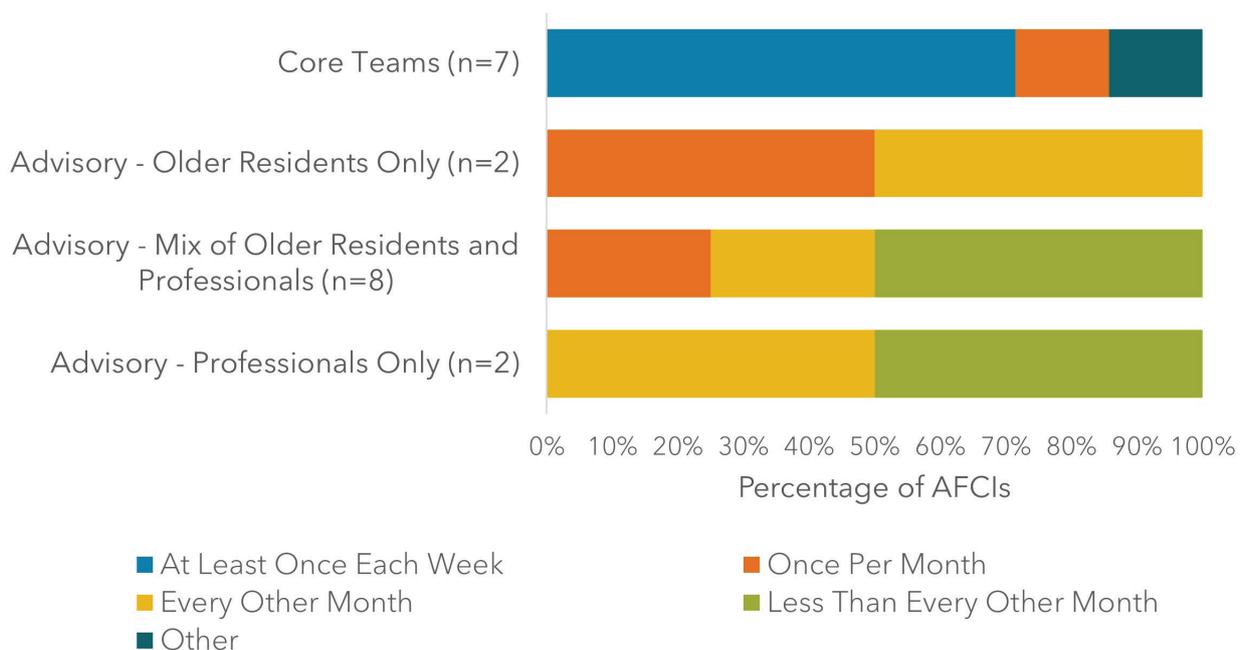
In addition to core teams, survey respondents reported a variety of other groups that helped guide the initiatives. We refer to these groups as “advisory groups,” consisting of individuals who periodically convene as part of the AFCI. All eight initiatives reported having an advisory group that included both older adults and professionals from partnering organizations. Two initiatives also reported having a group only for older adults, and two reported having a group just for professionals. Five of the eight initiatives also had a task force or committee focused on a particular domain of age-friendliness.

AFCIs used different names for these groups, most commonly “Steering Committee,” as well as “Senior Advisory Committee,” “Older Adult Advisory Committee,” “Advisory Board,” or “Coalition.” These groups were reported as convening with variable frequency (before the outbreak of COVID-19 in the region), ranging from once per month, every other month, or less frequently than every other month.



All eight initiatives reported having an advisory group that included both older adults and professionals from partnering organizations.

Figure 10: How Often Age-Friendly Groups Meet



2.4 Partnering Organizations

Partners are groups and organizations with whom the AFCI core teams exchange assistance, as well as plan and implement projects, toward age-friendly goals. Excluding any new partnerships developed during COVID-19, the eight initiatives collectively reported a total of 76 partners when asked to list up to 10 key partners.

As Figure 11 indicates, half of the partners listed were nonprofits (a category that also included senior centers, community centers, and libraries), and a little more than a third (37%) were part of government systems. Core teams reported a diversity of partners spanning 43 unique organization types, the full list of which can be seen in Figure 12. The most frequent organization type was municipal offices and departments (24%, n = 18), such as municipal administration and parks and recreation. Other common organization types included libraries (8%, n = 6), elected officials (8%, n = 6), hospitals (7%, n = 5), and senior and community centers (7%, n = 5).

Figure 11: Sector of Partners

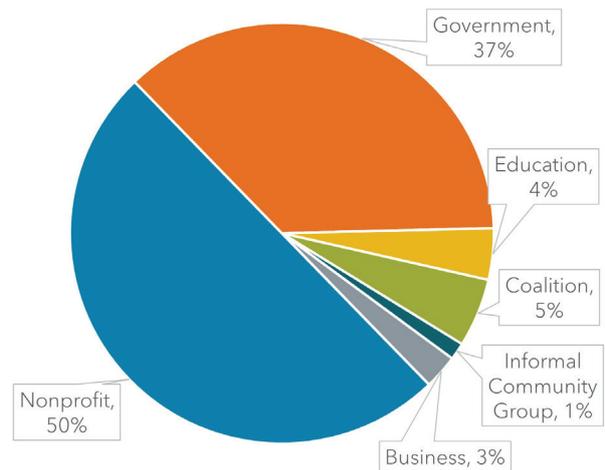
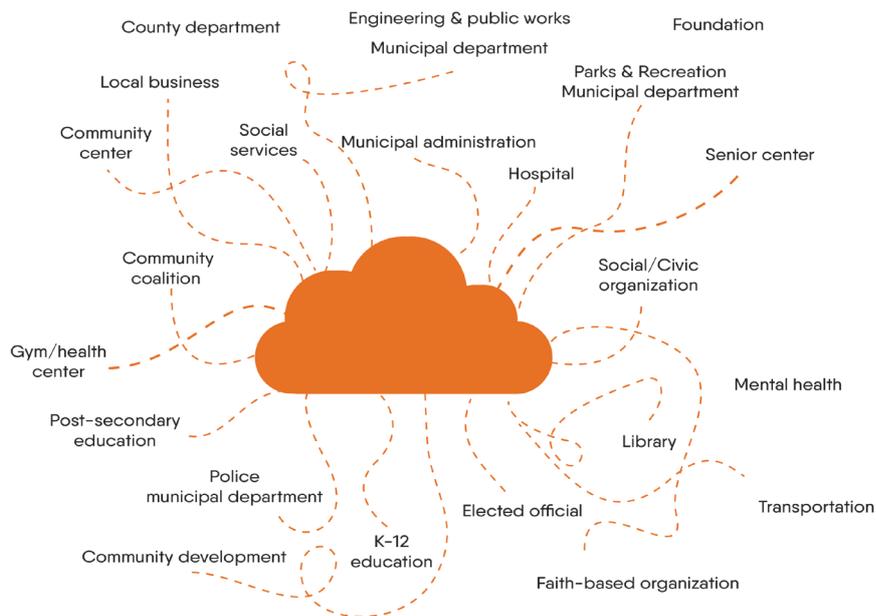


Figure 12: Partner Organization Types (not weighted by frequency)



As Figure 13 indicates, most of the partners (82%, n = 62) were geographically located within the respective municipalities of the AFCI, reflecting the localized nature of their age-friendly efforts. The core teams also reported that most partnerships (76%) had been established for three or more years (Figure 14). Partnerships with aging-related organizations were among the longer-standing: 92% of aging-related partnerships (including 100% of senior centers) had been established three or more years previously, suggesting that AFCIs developed partnerships with aging-related organizations early in their initiatives' development. Elected officials were one of the relatively newer types of partners, with 50% of these partnerships initiated in the past one to three years.

Core teams also were asked to list up to three new organizational partnerships developed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, 2020. The eight initiatives collectively listed a total of 16 new partners, with two new partners on average. In comparison to the longer-standing partners, the new partners were more likely to be nonprofits (75%, n = 12) and also were more likely to be located outside of the initiatives' focal catchment areas (43%, n = 7). Also, none of the new partners identified were aging-oriented groups or organizations. Three of the 16 new partners were faith-based organizations, and six were related to nutrition, food access, housing, or homelessness services.

Figure 13: Geography of Partner Organizations

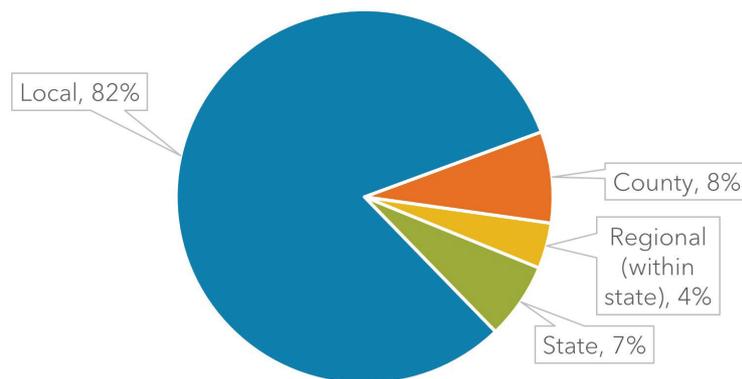
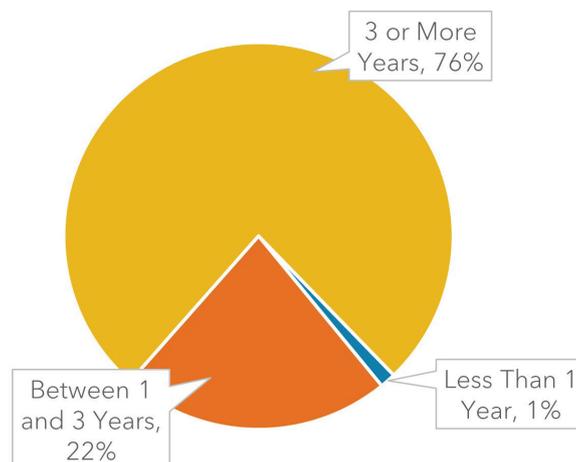


Figure 14: Duration of Partnerships



Section 3

Budgets and Resources

3.1 Financial Support

All eight AFCIs were receiving financial support from private philanthropy when the survey was conducted, and thus all reported having annual budgets. The average annual budget for the AFCIs was approximately \$88,300, ranging from \$75,000 to \$109,000. Respondents were asked to report the percentage of their initiative’s budget from specific sources, with averages displayed in Figure 15. Funding sources were rather homogenous: three of the eight initiatives reported foundations as their only budget source, and seven of the eight reported that foundation support comprised at least 80% of their budgets. Only two of the eight initiatives reported receiving funding from three different sources. Though presented as options in the survey, none of the AFCIs reported receiving funding from county government, federal government, businesses, donors, or fundraising.

AFCIs reported spending their budgets predominantly on personnel. The average percent of budget spent on personnel was 63%, followed by events (19%), professional services (8%), and other (10%). Only one initiative reported spending less than half of its budget on personnel; this initiative allocated 40% of its budget toward outside professional services (such as website design or data analysis) and 35% of their budget towards events and programs.



Age-friendly leaders provide information about the AFCI at a community event. (Lifelong Elizabeth)

Figure 15: Average Portfolio of Budget Sources

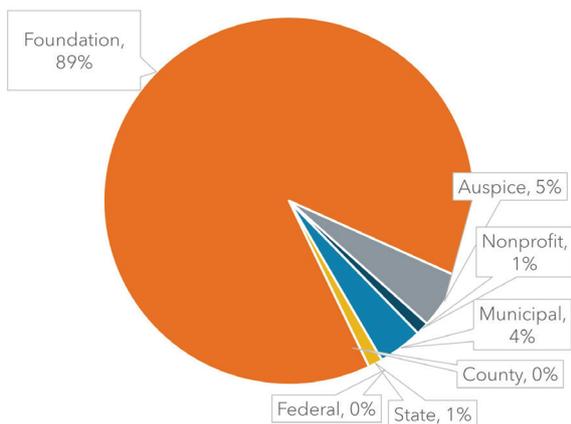
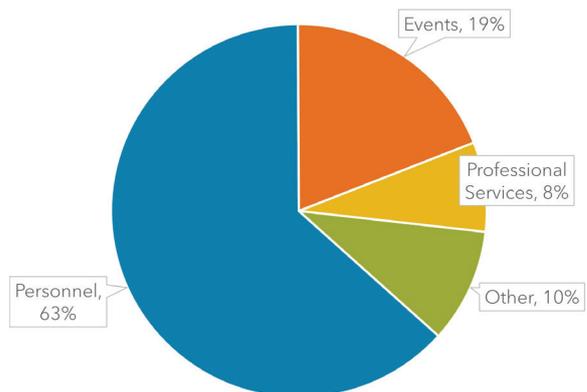


Figure 16: Average Portfolio of Expenditures

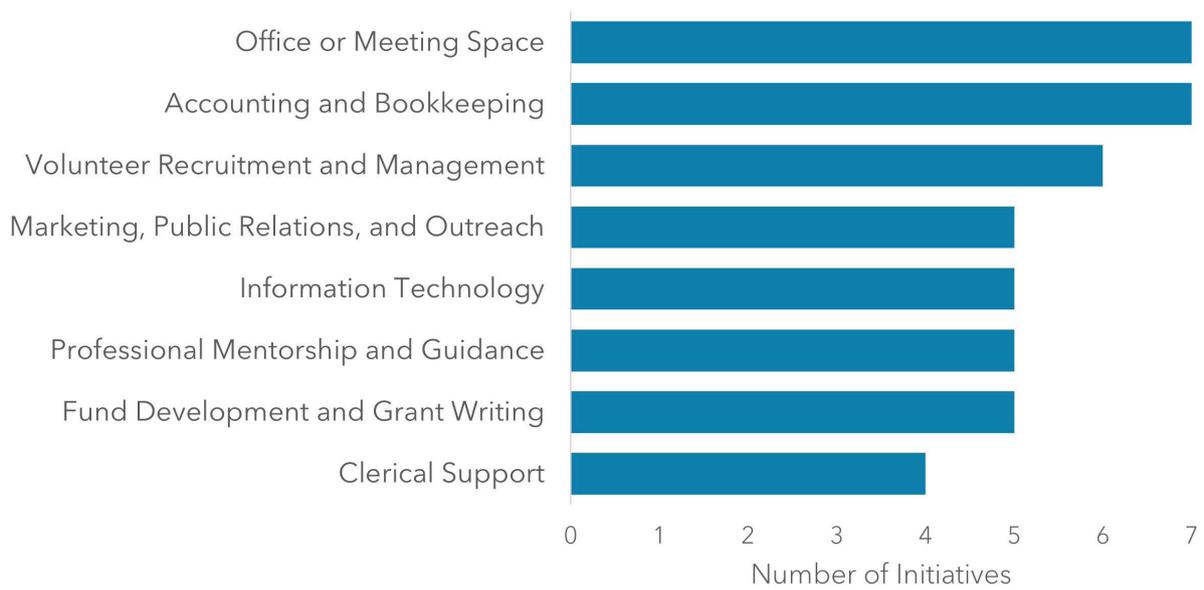


3.2 Support from Auspice Organizations

The seven AFCIs embedded within an auspice organization reported receiving various types of non-monetary support from that organization (Figure 17). All seven initiatives reported receiving support in accounting and bookkeeping as well

as office or meeting space. Five (71%) reported also receiving assistance with fund development and grant writing; professional mentorship and guidance; information technology; and/or marketing from their auspice organizations.

Figure 17: Types of Support from Auspice Organization



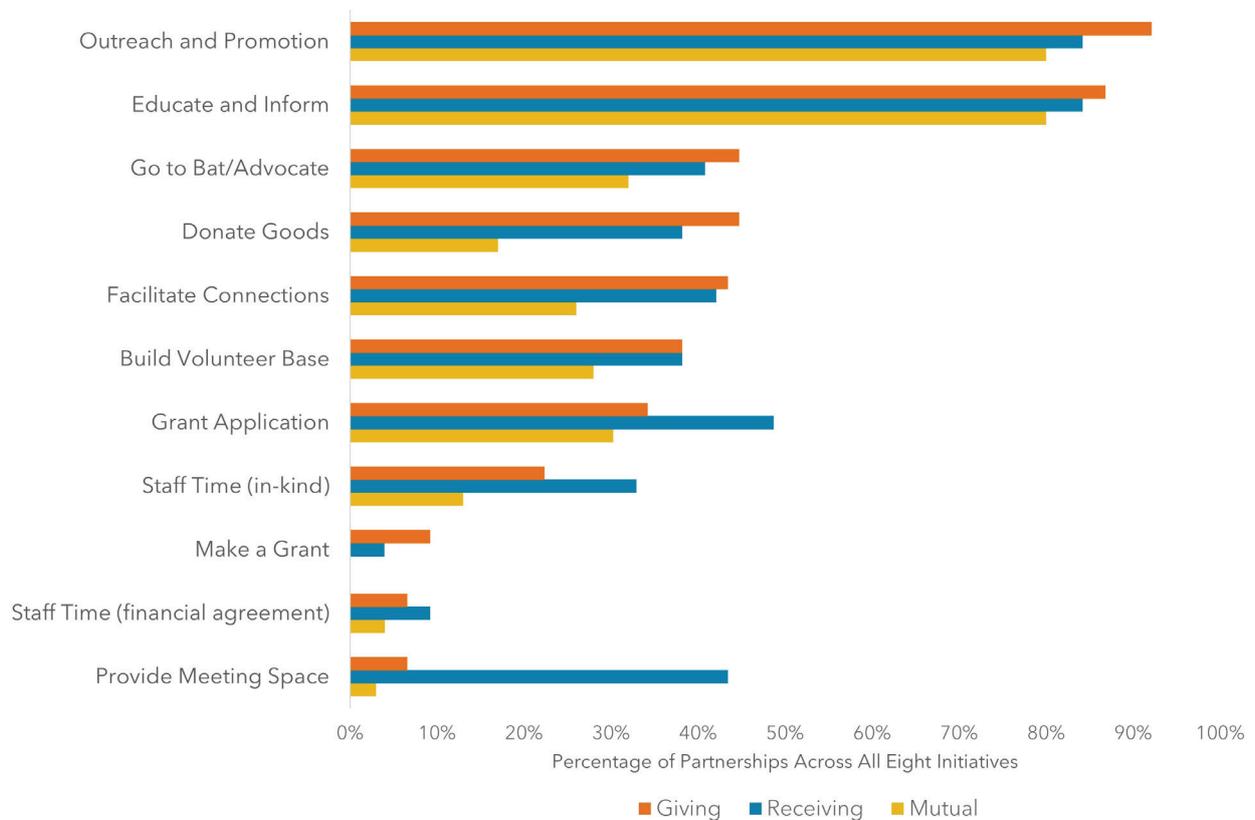
Age-friendly leaders conduct a sidewalk assessment in their community's central business district. (Age-Friendly Ridgewood)

3.3 Support to and from Partner Organizations

The eight core teams answered questions about the types of assistance in which they engaged with each of their partners – both giving and receiving. As Figure 18 displays, the most common type of assistance that the initiatives reported both giving (92%) and receiving (84%) was outreach and promotion. Educating and informing also was common, with core teams receiving this category of assistance from 87% of their partners and providing to 84%. The least common activities were making a grant to each other and providing staff time through financial agreements (e.g., contracts).

While levels of assistance to and from core teams and their partners were overall similar, they did not always receive and provide the same type to any specific partner (i.e., mutuality). Outreach and promotion, as well as to educate and inform, had the highest levels of mutuality, indicating that these may be more shared and reciprocal activities that occur within an organization-to-organization relationship. Meeting space, paid staff time, making a grant, in-kind staff time, and donating goods had lower levels of mutuality. These types of assistance may involve sharing more limited resources across a community’s ecosystem of organizations.

Figure 18: Types of Assistance Received from and Provided to Organizational Partners



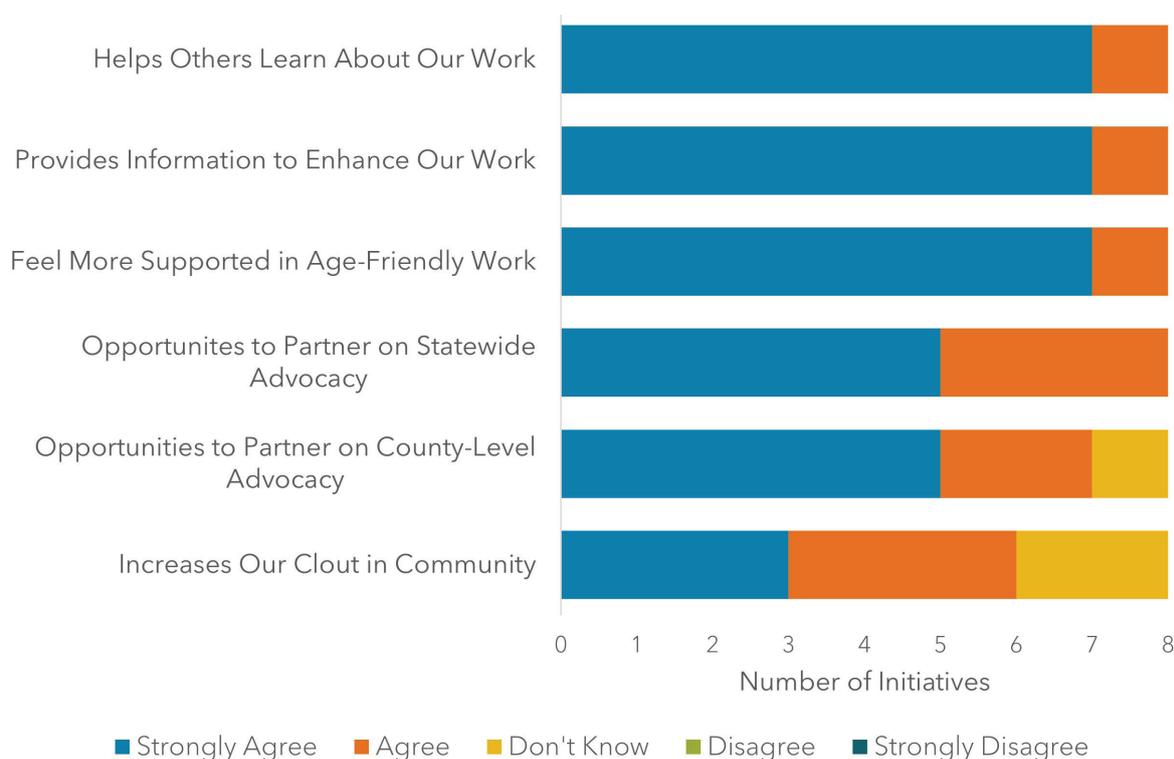
3.4 Support from the NJAAFC

AFCIs participating in the North Jersey Alliance of Age-Friendly Communities (NJAAFC) have access to regular networking and professional development opportunities largely facilitated by the sponsoring philanthropic organizations. Overall, AFCI core teams viewed their membership in the NJAAFC as highly valuable, as indicated by their responses to six Likert scale questions (Figure 19). All but one of the teams “strongly agreed” that the NJAAFC has helped people outside of their immediate communities learn about their work; has provided their initiatives with meaningful and important information; and/or has made them feel more supported in their efforts. Responses to statements about the role of the NJAAFC in county- and state-level advocacy, as well as giving their initiative greater “clout” among local community leaders, were more variable, but still overall positive. These results demonstrate that the NJAAFC serves as a valuable source of information, helps build partnerships, and provides support to the local AFCIs.

3.5 Support from Older Adult Community Members

Respondents were asked to estimate the number of individuals 60 years and older who live within their communities and who are engaged in the initiative by volunteering to help with specific tasks towards age-friendly action goals or offering feedback, ideas, and opinions to the AFCI’s core team. Overall, core teams estimated a wide range of numbers of older adults who were involved in these two ways in a typical month (pre-COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020). On average, 13.6 older adults volunteered with each initiative each month, with a range of 1 to 50. More older adults offered feedback in a typical month, with an average of 33 and a range from 5 to 100 across AFCIs. Older residents’ contributions as volunteers and informants are likely to also be facilitated through the structures described in other sections of this report, including as core team members (2.2), advisory group members (2.3), and as part of partnering organizations (2.4).

Figure 19: Perceptions of Benefits from the NJAAFC



Section 4

Perceptions of Sustainability

Core teams were asked to rate the likelihood, from 0 to 100, that their AFCI would still exist in three years as a named initiative. They also were asked to rate the likelihood of their initiative being institutionalized, defined as being included as part of the regular budget of an organization or public body. Overall, the core teams were moderately confident that their AFCI would still exist in three years, either as a named entity (mean = 68.13) or as part of an organization or public body (mean = 57.06).

Perceptions of future sustainability varied based on budget size and diversification of budget sources, as Figures 20 and 21 indicate. AFCIs with larger budgets generally believed they would be more likely to exist in three years: those with the four largest budgets gave an average confidence of 77.50 that they would exist as a named program in three years, in contrast to those with the smallest four budgets, which gave an average confidence of 58.75. Similarly, AFCIs with the largest four budgets gave an average confidence of 68.75 that they would exist as an institutionalized entity in three years, compared to an average 45.38 confidence of those with the smallest four budgets. Moreover, AFCIs with only one budget source had less confidence in their continued existence in three years than those with two or three budget sources.



Residents participate in a Repair Café at a park in South Orange. (SOMA: Two Towns for All Ages)

Figure 20: Average Confidence in Sustainability in 3 Years by Budget Size

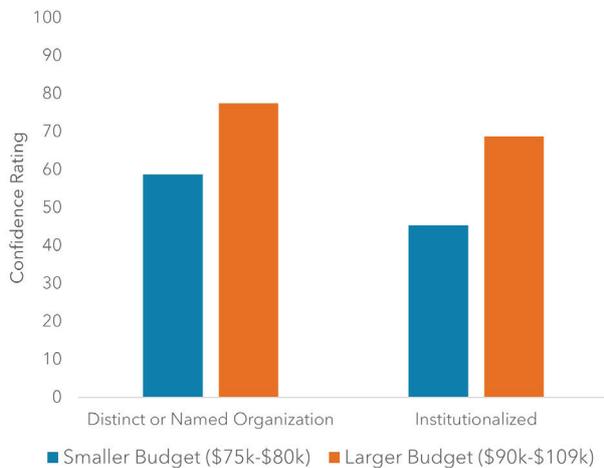
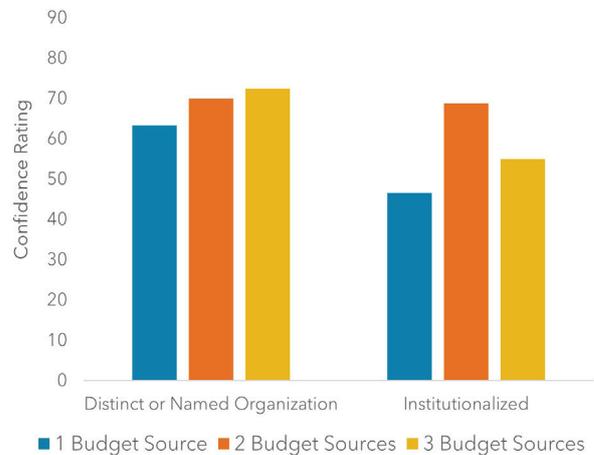


Figure 21: Average Confidence in Sustainability in 3 Years by Budget Diversity



Section 5

Conclusions and Implications

This report presents findings from a 2020 survey of eight AFCIs in northern New Jersey. These initiatives have received grants from private philanthropies to lead local age-friendly community change efforts since 2016. These findings can help inform strategic decisions for long-standing initiatives, initiatives that are beginning to launch, as well as communities that seek to begin deliberate age-friendly community change processes.

Developing an AFCI involves choices beyond the identification of age-friendly goals and associated actions. Central to these processes are decisions concerning the age-friendly vehicles for change in terms of the individuals, groups, and organizations that will engage, and how these efforts will be coordinated and organized in relationship to each other. For example, which groups and organizations can be engaged as partners from the launch of an AFCI, and who might be unintentionally left out? What roles should the groups and individuals involved in an AFCI play relative to each other? By understanding how eight initiatives in northern New Jersey have come together over four years, we can better address these questions for the future.

It is important to note that the AFCIs in this report are four years into grant funding. They did not assume their structure nor their operations right from their launch. For example, fewer initiatives started as a program under an auspice organization. Additionally, we cannot conclude from survey findings alone what features are most optimal for long-term sustainability and impact.

However, some commonalities across the alliance suggest promising directions, including:

- » A core team that meets regularly
- » Organizing advisory groups with both older adults and professionals
- » Engaging partners within a locality from both the public and private sectors, as well as both aging and non-aging-oriented organizations
- » Maintaining long-term progress on information and communication

Other findings in this report suggest areas for continued progress, including:

- » Addressing the shortage of core team members from historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups
- » Intentionally involving residents ages 60+ with a diversity of social positions (e.g., young-old and old-old, race, education, and neighborhood residence) on core teams
- » More possibilities for alliance members to coordinate advocacy on State and County levels

In addition, our findings lend themselves to a deeper understanding of how these AFCIs build capacities of the communities in which they are embedded. To illustrate, the AFCIs in our study gave supports to their community partners almost just as much as they received, indicating that they are not just using the resources in the community, but expanding capacities. Further, AFCIs do not merely comprise one core group of a few individuals, but also encompass other groups and partnerships that move the work forward. Not all of these relationships are formalized or with formal organizations; not all, even the core teams, are even named. These relationships are likely to change and grow as the AFCI progresses.

Finally, while the AFCIs in our study reported many different types of non-financial supports and resources from various partners and organizations, they largely relied on a single foundation for financial support to fund staff, programming, and other functions. Allocating significant portions—if not a majority—of their budgets on personnel demonstrates that investing in human capital is a necessary and critical aspect to the operations of most of the AFCIs in this study. Foundation funding may be sufficient for AFCIs establishing and starting, but uncertainty remains as to whether they need to identify other funding sources, such as auspice organizations or municipal governments, or re-organize within their communities, to sustain. As initial grant programs sunset, philanthropic organizations may also want to examine their roles in supporting these initiatives in all stages by curating resources, such as curricula and networks, for communities to use in their continued and new endeavors.

Notes

¹ World Health Organization (n.d.). About the Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities. <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/who-network>

² North Jersey Alliance of Age-Friendly Communities. (n.d.) New Jersey's age-friendly movement is growing. <https://taubfoundation.org/age-friendly-blog/new-jerseys-age-friendly-movement-is-growing/>

Acknowledgements

Photos in this report have been graciously provided by the age-friendly community initiatives represented in this report and are reprinted with their permission.

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This report is available at https://taubfoundation.org/greenfield/2020_njaafc_survey.



*Age-friendly leaders and partners organize a community food distribution event.
(Generations for Garfield)*

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