REDUCING ISOLATION IN SENIORS:
A Collective Impact Approach
AOHC Conference, June 2017

KEEPING OTTAWA SENIORS CONNECTED
GARDANT LES AÎNÉS D'OTTAWA CONNECTÉ

Funded in part by the Government of Canada’s New Horizons for Seniors Program
Disclosure

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Relationships to commercial interests:

Grants/Research Support: None
Speakers Bureau/Honoraria: None
Consulting Fees: None
Other: None
Social Isolation

Social isolation is defined as a low quantity & quality of contacts with others, where an individual has a very limited social network, or maintains few social roles, and is living in the absence of mutual rewarding relationships.

(National Seniors Council, 2014)

Associated with “increased rates of premature death, lower general well-being, more depression, and higher level of disability from chronic diseases.”

(World Health Association)
Efforts to address senior social isolation in Ottawa are numerous but fragmented

There is an abundance of programs, services, and activities intended to reduce senior social isolation in Ottawa, but these are:

- Fragmented
- Uncoordinated
- Difficult to navigate
Call for proposals

Employment and Social Development Canada’s (ESDC) New Horizons for Seniors Program held a Pan-Canadian Call for Proposals

- Collective approach
- Population impact
- Specific outcomes
Pan-Canadian Projects

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)
New Horizons for Seniors

Vancouver
- Vancouver Intentional Connection Seniors
  - Nanaimo Seniors Connect
    - www.nanaimoseniorsconnect.ca
- Edmonton PEGASIS
  - http://www.seniorscouncil.net/pegasis
- Saskatchewan
  - Reducing Isolation of seniors in South and Central Saskatchewan
- Ottawa Keeping Ottawa Seniors Connected
- Toronto ENRICHES
  - www.enriches.ca
- Hamilton Greater Hamilton Seniors Isolation Population
  - www.socialisolation.ca
- Quebec City
- Montreal Caregivers
Keeping Ottawa Seniors Connected
Collective Impact Plan

Council on Aging of Ottawa

Catholic Centre for Immigration

Nepean, Rideau and Osgoode Community Resource Centre

Ottawa West Community Support

Social Planning Council of Ottawa

South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre

Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre

Backbone Organization

Senior Centred ESL Program

Elder Abuse Response and Referral Service

Healthy Connections; Healthy Communities

Creating Community for Isolated Ethno-Cultural Seniors

Strengthening Senior Neighbourhood Networks

Reducing Rural Isolation
Theory of Change

IMPACT PLAN OUTCOMES

Reduce seniors’ social isolation by increasing the proportion of seniors who:

- Have support and help when they need it by 8%
- Participate regularly in activities by 20%
- Feel connected by 16%
- Feel valued by 10%

PROJECT LEVEL OUTCOMES

- Isolated seniors are identified.
- Isolated seniors are aware of available supports and know how to access them.
- Isolated seniors are connected to and engage in knowledge-building activities.
- Isolated seniors develop and engage in new opportunities to socialize.
- Isolated seniors are empowered to contribute their knowledge and skills.

TARGETED BARRIERS TO SOCIAL INCLUSION

- Low-Income
- Poor Official Language Skills
- Disability
- Abuse
- Rural Living

ENABLING PROJECTS

- Backbone Organization
- Senior Centred ESL Program
- Elder Abuse Response and Referral Service
- Healthy Connections; Healthy Communities
- Creating Community for Isolated Ethno-Cultural Seniors
- Strengthening Senior Neighbourhood Networks
- Reducing Rural Isolation
Strengthening Senior Neighbourhood Networks

SSNN will use a community development approach to strengthen networks, at a neighbourhood level, to reduce isolation of seniors in a sustainable way.

Year 1: Focusing on five neighbourhoods within the catchment of SEOCHC.

Year 2: 5 more neighbourhoods

Year 3: 5 more neighbourhoods
This project will:

• Identify isolated seniors
• Connect socially isolated to existing supports, enable them to better access them
• Engage them in knowledge building activities
• Engage seniors in new opportunities to socialize
• Empower seniors to contribute their knowledge and skills
• Engage seniors in the way they want to be engaged (focus groups & developed relationships, partner feedback)
• Cultivate relationships with partners & community members
• Find leaders in the senior community
How?

- Focus groups (5-10)
- Reach 975 seniors
- Training seniors on how to identify and help isolated neighbours
- Establish Senior Network Groups
- 340 Knowledge building workshops, presentations about the supports available to them
- Outings
  - Community kitchens, cooking together, crafts, dance
- Develop strong working relationships with partners to create services and opportunities that will attract isolated seniors
- Develop systems to share information with service providers helping to identify isolated seniors
SSNN Goals

1. Produce evidence-based and research informed guidelines for practices that reduce seniors social isolation and that have implications for health outcomes.

2. Demonstrate the effectiveness of investments in building vital neighbourhood networks as important in reducing health care spending.

3. Generate impacts at an individual level, as well as at a population level.
Evaluation

Shared measurement system:

- Activity Records
- Participant Records
- Pre/Post participation survey embedded with Be Well questions

Interviews

Mapping of partnerships
How are we measuring?

How many friends and relatives do you have who you feel close to?
By close to, we mean people with whom you feel at ease, can talk to about what is on your mind, and/or can call on when you need help; for example to drive you to an appointment, or to help with daily chores. (Measured 0 – 5)

I socialize with friends and/or family... (never, once/yr, once/month, once/week, every day)

I feel connected to my local community. (strongly disagree to strongly agree)

I feel connected to family, friends, neighbours

How would you describe your sense of belonging to your community?
(Sense of belonging is feeling like you are part of something, connected and accepted) Very strong, to very weak
Year one results & lessons:

Language Barrier (N = 297)

Yes 27%
Are we reaching isolated seniors?

I socialize with friends and family

- Every day: 20%
- At least once per week: 40%
- At least once per month: 27%
- At least once per year: 7%
- Never: 7%
Are we reaching isolated seniors?

How many relatives and close friends do you have who you feel close to?

- 0: 13%
- 1: 19%
- 2: 25%
- 3: 6%
- 4: 6%
- 5 or more: 31%
Are we reaching isolated seniors?

I have someone I can count on to listen to me when I need to talk

- Always: 25%
- Most of the time: 19%
- Some of the time: 38%
- Little of the time: 6%
- None of the time: 13%
Lessons from Year one:

1. FOOD! Serving food is the best way to get people there.
2. Personal, consistent contact.
3. Working within partnerships
4. Enlist the help of engaged seniors to reach out to isolated seniors
5. Take it slow. TRUST is key.
6. Layer services in order to have diversity
7. Be aware of diverse needs
8. Know what can negatively affect participation
9. Increasing diversity without creating conflict - painting, dancing etc.
Lessons from Year one:

As a collective:

1. Build trust
2. Build relationships among the collective
3. Be mindful of the Organizational cultural differences between partners (ie. volunteer run vs CHC with board of directors).
4. Learn how to accommodate those differences.
5. Meet regularly
6. Regular reflection and flexibility
7. Develop sustainability plan
What role for the Social Inclusion Committee?

There is an incredible amount of knowledge and know-how assembled around this table. The Social Inclusion Committee is still taking shape and this provide an opportunity.

For example, the Social Inclusion Committee could:

• Take time to better understand the drivers of senior social isolation in Ottawa

• Identify promising practices and devise collective strategies to prevent and to reduce senior social isolation in Ottawa

• Create working groups and social action networks to tackle systemic barriers to the social connection, inclusion, and participation of seniors
Need to improve equity and inclusion

Two complimentary promising strategies:

1. Combat discriminatory and exclusionary attitudes and practices, particularly:
   - Ableism
   - Ageism
   - Anti LGBT sentiment
   - Anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiment
   - Colonialist attitudes
   - Racism
   - Religious Intolerance
   - Sexism

2. Adopt an Equity and Inclusion lens to be responsive to the realities of difference communities, including:
   - Ethno-cultural minorities
   - Francophone communities
   - Immigrants
   - Indigenous peoples
   - LGBT communities
   - People living in poverty
   - People living with a disability
   - Racialized people
   - Refugees
   - Rural residents
   - Women and men