



**The Future of Senior Centers:
How Your AAA Can Make a Difference**

7/17/2024

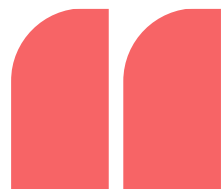
Senior Centers and AAAs

Dianne Stone

Associate Director, NCOA

July 10, 2024





**Aging with dignity shouldn't
be a stroke of luck.**

NCOA's Role With Senior Centers

Leadership



NCOA is the voice of senior centers, trusted by the aging network as the authority on senior centers.

NISC – Building the Network



NISC is the largest (and only) national organization dedicated to senior centers.

Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center



Building capacity through training, technical assistance, and a clearinghouse of resources, funded by ACL

Piloting Innovation



NCOA connects to older adults through the senior center network, delivering innovative programs and connecting to business.



1943

The New York Department of Welfare establishes the first senior center in the U.S., the William Hodson Community Center.

1965

President Lyndon Johnson signs the Older Americans Act into law, with senior centers identified as primary organizations for service delivery.



1971

NISC forms a Delegate Council to serve as an elected advisory committee of regional representatives.

1985

NISC works to have President Ronald Reagan sign the first Senior Center Week Presidential Proclamation.

2007

NISC designates September as Senior Center Month.

1963

NCOA forms a National Advisory Committee on senior centers with broad geographic and professional representation.

1970

NCOA forms the National Institute of Senior Centers (NISC) to support the growth of senior centers and the professionals who manage them.



1978

NISC publishes the Senior Center Standards and Self-Assessment Workbook and develops a senior center management training course.

1996

NISC develops the nation's first Senior Center Accreditation program, and awards the first accreditation in 1998.





2011

Initial Programs of Excellence Awards competition held

2019

1st NCOA Conference with dedicated senior center track Washington, DC



2021

NCOA awarded a cooperative agreement with the Administration for Community Living to establish the Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center (MSCRC). The MSCRC provides leadership, training, technical assistance and peer networking, and a clearinghouse of best practices.

2023

Programs of Excellence clearinghouse established on ncoa.org.

2013

1st National Senior Center Conference in partnership with Massachusetts Councils on Aging.

And, the Aging Mastery Program (AMP) piloted with 5 accredited sites.

2020

Provided resources and shared best practices to support senior centers during COVID-19 Pandemic.

Convened a NISC Leadership Collaborative with representatives across the nation.

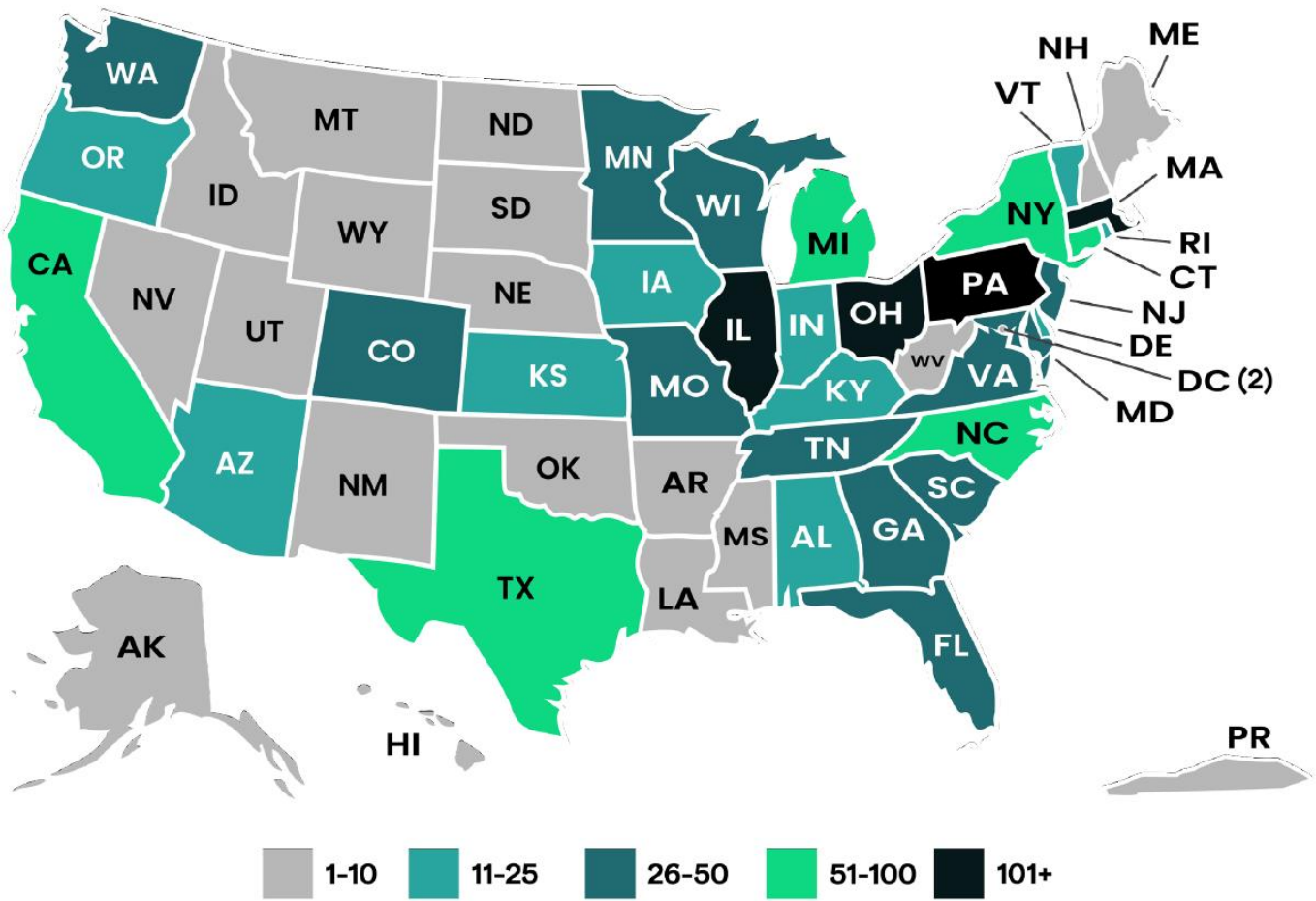
2022

NCOA moved to a free Affiliate Membership model with exponential growth. Announced the sunsetting of the Accreditation program as part of an effort to broaden reach of standards.



NISC – The National Network for Senior Center Professionals

NCOA Senior Center Affiliates: 2,000+ Nationwide



Free to join!

For more than 50 years, the National Institute of Senior Centers has been the nation's only membership network for senior centers

Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center[®]

Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center for Professionals

Senior centers nationwide are at a critical juncture and stand to benefit collectively from NCOA's Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center. Browse our clearinghouse of tools and resources to support your programs and services striving to meet the ever-changing needs of our communities.



Ensuring senior centers have the capacity, tools, and resources necessary to develop and implement programs that meet the current and future needs of diverse older adults across the U.S.

[National Institute of Senior Centers](#)



[Programs of Excellence](#)



[Senior Center Spotlights](#)



[Today's Senior Centers](#)



This project is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$250,000 with 75 percentage funded by ACL/HHS and \$83,000 and 25 percentage funded by non-government source(s). The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

What does modernization mean?



Senior Centers – Modernizing for 80 Years



Townsend Clubs



Social clubs

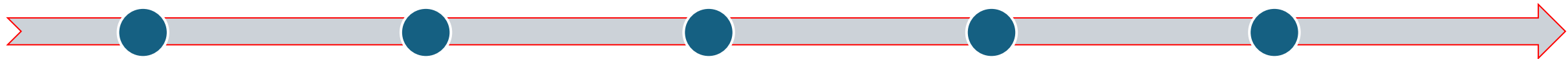


Traditional Senior Center



Multipurpose Senior Centers

Today's Senior Center



Continued Evolution of Senior Centers



Today there are more than 10,000 Senior Centers across the country. They come in all shapes and sizes – no two look alike – and reflect the community they serve.

Senior Centers continue to evolve. Drivers of change include:

- *Shifting Generations*
- *Longevity*
- *Aging in Place*
- *Establishment of evidence-based interventions*
- *COVID*

Shifting Generations

Greatest Generation Born between 1901-1924

- Youngest are now 100
- Valued collective organization, patriotism, neighborliness
- Experiences include: WWI, Great Depression, America's first Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts,, worked easily in groups
- No television
- Translation
 - Potlucks
 - Sing-alongs
 - Games
 - Pitching in

Silent Generation Born between 1925-1945

- They are 79-99 now
- Value more individual focus, rules and policies, price conscious
- Experiences include post WWII, Cold War, Korean Conflict, Civil Rights
- Television
- Translation
 - Congregate meals
 - Organized clubs
 - Free classes

Boomers Born between 1946-1964

- They are 60-78 now
- The largest cohort in the U.S. Ever. Best Educated. Most affluent. Healthiest
- Value choice, quality, making a difference.
- Experiences include Vietnam War, Beatniks/Woodstock, Civil Rights
- Television, video, dawn of personal computers
- Translation
 - High quality programming
 - Short-term/focused commitments
 - Demonstrated impact
 - Choices in everything



The COVID-19 Effect

Lessons Learned/Key Takeaways

The State of Today's Senior Centers: Successes, Challenges, and Opportunities

May 2023



National Council on Aging — Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center



- Eagerness to learn, network, access best practices
- Senior centers are innovating through their programs, facilities, populations served – they are willing to take risks
- Senior centers want standards/benchmarks/identified core components
- There remains an unevenness in capacity, vision, and support
- The biggest challenge for senior centers is visibility and recognition

Themes

Who do senior centers serve?

Increased numbers and diversity, stigma and ageism about who senior centers serve. Perceptions of the public, including older adults, that senior centers are for “people in need.”

Trends in staffing and leadership

“People in my generation are retiring. COVID was tough on many of us. We need new energy and ideas.” Hope that the younger generation of leaders could help reimagine senior centers and modernize them to keep up with the changing world, need for professional development

Image and messaging

Senior centers are viewed as “old fashioned,” “stuck in the past,” “programming for our parents’ generation,” and “boring.”

Funding and resources

“”We have really shown what we can do but we are not recognized. We need more funding.”

Senior Center Modernization needs...

National standards for programming and operations

Standards that impact quality and reflect the indicators of success for senior centers today. Benchmarks will help revitalize senior centers, raise their profile nationally, and allow them to advocate for greater funding and resources.

Accreditation re-imagined

Processes for senior centers to meaningfully engage with the standards that is manageable and cost-effective will encourage senior centers to pursue quality improvement

Upgraded facilities and programming

Inclusive and comprehensive programs offered in safe, inviting environments would be critical to their future survival.

Senior Center Modernization needs...

Defining the senior center consumer

Knowing the community, focus on a segment of the older adult cohort that they need to reach and serve. Partner with other community stakeholders in new and creative ways to reach more people and address diverse needs, ensuring that all older adults have access to opportunities to age well.

Integration of technology

The integration of technology in senior center programming and activities needs to be prioritized

Focus on health and well-being

focusing on comprehensive health and well-being of older adults, senior center programs can be upgraded and enhanced, attract new participants and tap into new sources of funding.

Senior Center Modernization needs...

Research and evaluation

Assessing impact of participation must become routine; partnerships with universities and public health departments, collecting and analyzing standardized data to demonstrate impact locally, regionally, nationally that can support marketing efforts and lead to new resources and funding.

Professional workforce

As the demands and expectations of senior centers change to meet growing and diverse needs, we must address professional workforce needs, ensure a professional workforce, providing guidance for expectations of knowledge, skills and experience, core responsibilities and pathways to professional development

Building capacity

With additional and targeted funding, used strategically, senior centers would reach more people and have greater impact, address facility and staffing needs and have the resources to engage in professional development and quality improvement, build the case

Senior Centers and Social Engagement

- Benefits
 - Increased socialization and expanded social networks
 - Increased friendship formations
 - Greater involvement in physical activity
 - Increased engagement in recreational activities
 - Improvement in mental health, lower depressive symptoms
 - Decreased stress levels
 - Compared with their peers, senior center participants
 - have better health outcomes and life satisfaction

Source: Pardasani M, Silberman LV, & Silberman S. (2019) Senior centers: if you build, will they come?, *Educational Gerontology*, Vol. 45, No.2, 120-133.

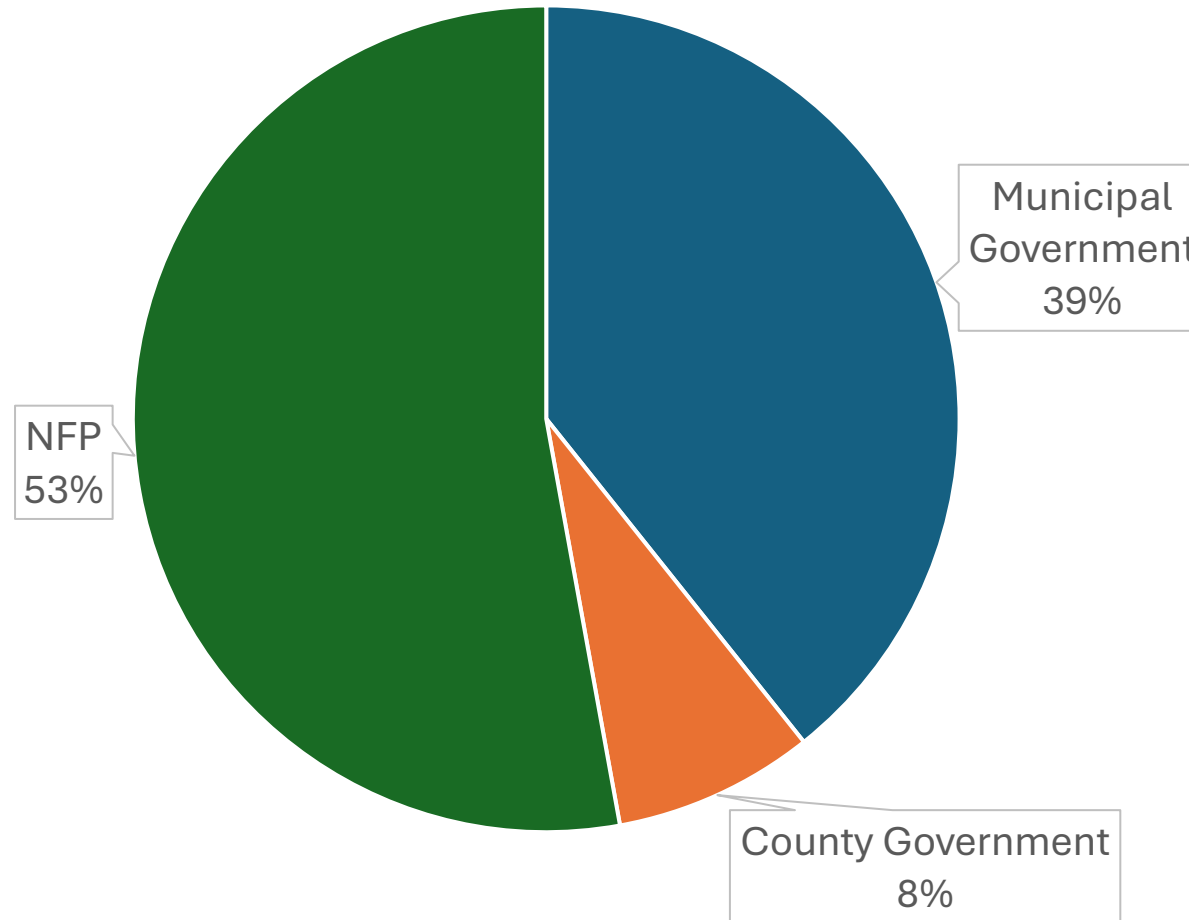
NISC Profile of Senior Centers

Survey sent to all NISC affiliate members (2400) through Salesforce.

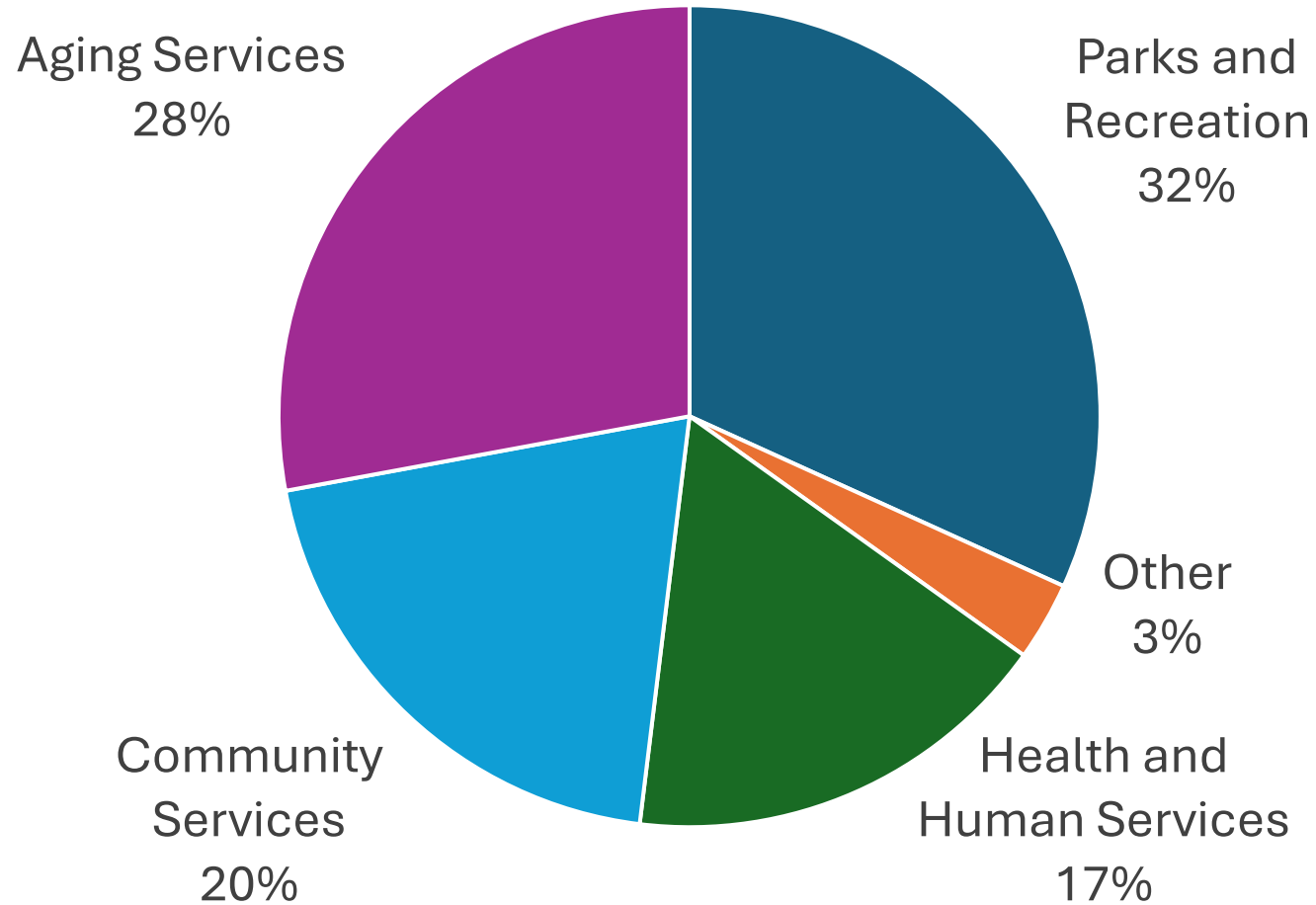
To date, 15% response rate.

- Organizational structure
- Facility
- Participants
- Staffing
- Budgets/funding
- Programs
- Data collection/evaluation
- Partnerships
- Nutrition
- Relationship with AAA

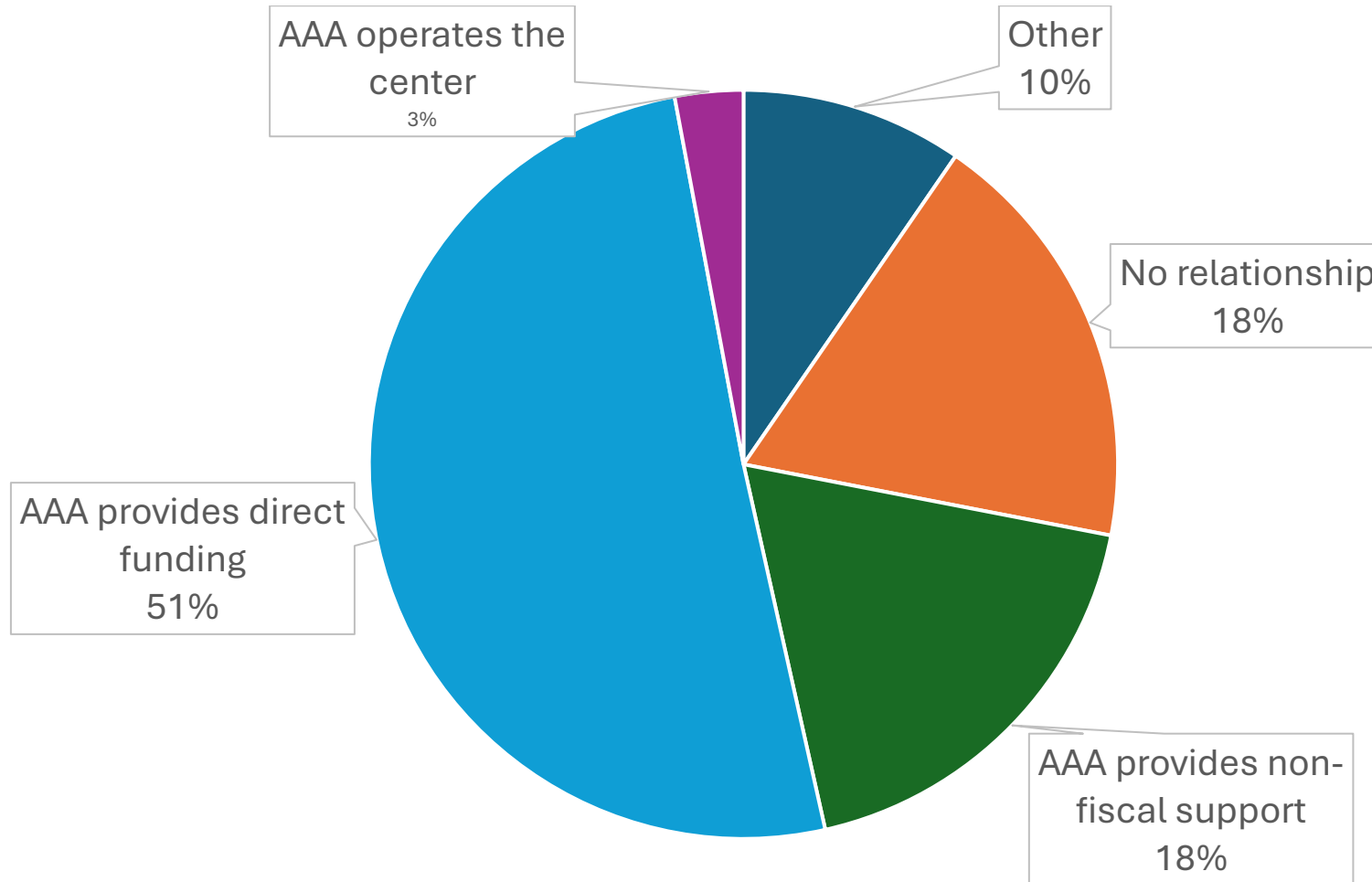
Who operates senior centers?

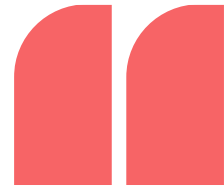


Where do senior centers sit in local government?



Senior centers relationship to AAAs





*If you've seen one senior center,
you've seen one senior center.*



How Senior Centers Improve Lives



- Meal and nutrition programs
- Health Promotion - fitness, and wellness programs, including evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention programs
- Transportation services
- Social Services – I&R, Benefits Counseling, Housing

- Emergency Response
- Employment support
- Community events
- Volunteer and civic engagement opportunities
- Connecting older adults to community and innovation

- Social Engagement
- Lifelong learning - educational and arts programs
- Intergenerational engagement
- Creative Self Expression

Modernizing Nutrition



Greenberry's Coffee Co. provides a modern, inviting space to grab a coffee and socialize at The Center at Belvedere in Charlottesville, Virginia. Credit: Virginia Harwick Photography. Image courtesy of The Center at Belvedere

Alicia Trevino Lopez Senior Center, San Antonio



Highlights:

- Strong collaboration between City and Well Med
- Holistic model with Fitness Advisors and Nutrition Specialist.



Northeast Senior Center, San Antonio



Highlights:

- New facility with fitness front and center
- Pickleball
- Staff training provided!



Wood County Committee on Aging Inc., Ohio

Danielle Brogley, Director of Programs



Highlights:

- Strong connection with Bowling Green State University
- 7 satellite sites provide diverse services
- Nutrition provider

ONEgeneration Senior Enrichment Center, Reseda, California

Jenna Hauss, President and CEO



Highlights:

- Intergenerational programming with high school student, older adults at adult day and daycare children.
- Electric home delivered meal fleet
- Comprehensive social services and focused attention on homelessness.



Spotlighting Senior Centers

[Ncoa.org](https://www.ncoa.org)



Programs of Excellence



National Institute of Senior Centers'
Programs of Excellence Clearinghouse

The National Institute of Senior Centers (NISC) Annual Programs of Excellence Awards give senior centers an opportunity to share their innovative programs and the impact they have on the people they serve and their communities. A peer-reviewed competition, winning programs are featured in this clearinghouse on ncoa.org, celebrated at NCOA's Age+ Action Conference, featured in our Programs of Excellence Webinar Series, and receive a cash prize.



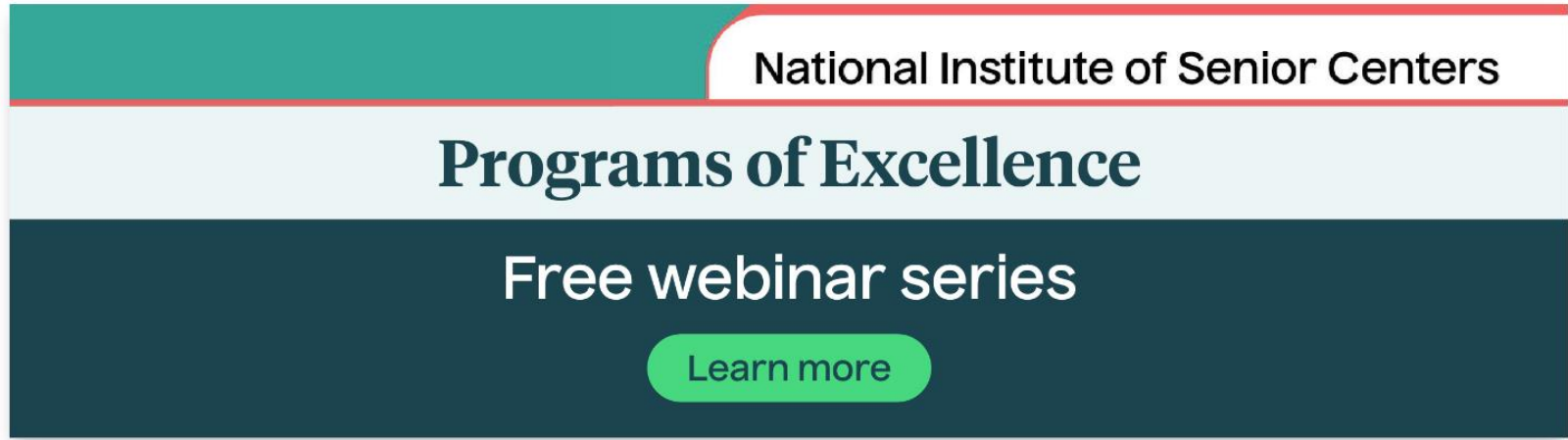
Filter by:

Resources from:

Show Filters

All Years

Showing 10 of 29 results for Programs of Excellence



National Institute of Senior Centers

Programs of Excellence

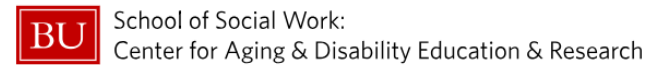
Free webinar series

[Learn more](#)

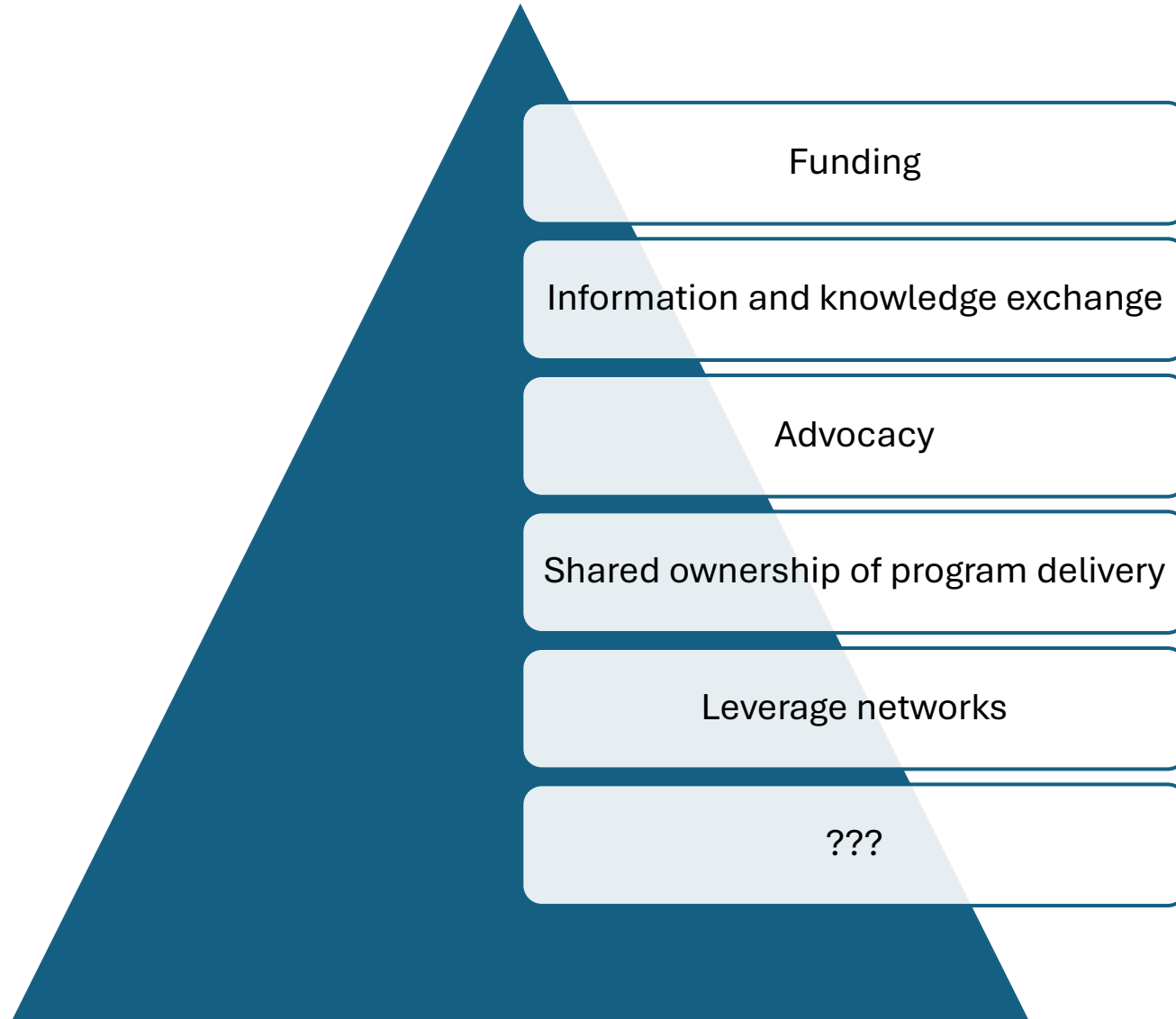
Connections and resources

Vaccine Uptake

Through NCOA's initiative with ACL, we awarded contracts to 150 senior centers to vaccinate older adults during the fall 2023 respiratory season.



Leveraging the AAA and Senior Centers for greater impact





AAA Provider Partners: Senior Centers

Show of Hands...

- What is your agency's organizational structure?
 - AAA within county/city government
 - AAA - Independent nonprofit
 - AAA - Council of Governments/Regional Planning and Development Agency
 - Tribal organization
 - Other

The 2022 National Survey of Area Agencies on Aging

- Survey was open fall 2022; 74 percent response rate
- Senior center questions were developed in partnership with the National Council on Aging's (NCOA) Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center.
- **THANK YOU** for taking the survey and encouraging your peers to do so!

Acknowledgement: This work was supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$562,397 (75 percent) funded by ACL/HHS and \$202,618 (25 percent) funded by non-government source(s). The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, ACL/HHS or the U.S. Government.

FAST FACTS

AAA Provider Partners: Senior Centers

Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) across the country work to help older adults and people with disabilities live with optimal health, well-being, independence and dignity in their homes and communities. Formally established by the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1973, AAAs assess needs and plan, coordinate and deliver a range of long-term services and supports to consumers in their local planning and service areas (PSA).

AAAs coordinate and provide services that support older adults by funding a variety of community-based providers, including many senior centers.

96%
of AAAs have a formal relationship with one or more senior centers in their PSA.

Data from USAging's 2022 National Survey of Area Agencies on Aging highlight the ways that senior centers in respondents' PSAs are funded and how AAAs support and deliver programming in the senior centers.

On average there are 11 senior centers per PSA. However, the number of senior centers per PSA ranges from 0 to 321 with only a handful of AAAs without a senior center in their PSA.

The scope of these relationships and the role of local senior centers varies; senior centers may be one of many contracted providers under the Older Americans Act and other contracted funding streams.

39%
of AAAs provide transportation to one or more senior centers.

25%
of AAAs own or operate one or more senior centers.



AAAs Told Us about the Senior Centers in their Planning and Service Area

11 senior centers per PSA
(median value)
Range from 0 to 321

96% of AAAs have a **formal relationship** with one or more senior centers in their PSA

87% of AAAs directly fund senior centers and senior center programs

39% of AAAs provide transportation to one or more senior centers in their PSA

Ownership of Local Senior Centers

Table 1: Percentage of PSAs with Senior Centers Owned/Operated by Various Entities

One or more senior center(s) within the PSA are owned/operated by:	Percent of PSAs
Municipal, local or county government agency	67
Parks and Recreation	30
Health and Human Services	17
Other municipal or local government agency	33
Other county government agency	24
Independent nonprofit organization	60
Area Agency on Aging	25
Faith-based organization	12
Other organization type	5

n=405. Note: Respondents could select more than one option.

AAAs Directly Fund Senior Centers

Table 2: Percentage of AAAs Directly Funding Senior Centers for Various Activities

AAA Provides Direct Funding For:	Percent of AAAs
Any senior center program or activity listed below	87
Congregate meals provided by the senior center	67
Non-nutrition programs delivered at the senior center (e.g., health and wellness, social engagement)	48
Other providers for programs or meals delivered at a senior center	46
Senior center personnel or operational support	44

n=397. Note: Respondents could select more than one option.

Table 3: AAA Perspectives on Greatest Needs of Senior Centers in their PSA

Senior Center Greatest Needs	Percent of AAAs
Attracting new audiences (generations, race, ethnicity, etc.)	74
New or upgraded facilities	48
Greater diversity or range of programs	41
Private fundraising	32
Promotion and marketing, branding, messaging	32
Offering senior center activities in different community settings (e.g., all-purpose community center, library, mall)	29
Increased facility access (through transportation or relocation)	21
Skills training for staff	18

n=397. Note: Respondents could select up to three items from the list.

To the best of your knowledge, what is the primary source of operational funding for most senior centers in your PSA?

Answer	Percent
Municipal	21
County	22
State	10
Federal	23
Tax levy or lottery	5
Fund development	6
Other (please describe)	6
Don't know	7



Bringing the Perspectives Together

Discussion Questions

- How would you characterize the AAA/Senior Center relationship in your PSA?
- If you have a great relationship, what contributes to that?
- How can we best leverage the AAA and Senior Center collaboration for greater impact?
- What are the challenges to effective collaboration?
- What is YOUR vision for the future of AAA/Senior Center Collaboration?

Contact Us!

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