

# Northland Foundation's **INTEGRATED RURAL COMMUNITY AGING PROGRAM 2020-2022**



**NORTHLAND  
FOUNDATION**

## OVERVIEW

In January 2020, the Northland Foundation launched a three-year program to help rural northeast Minnesota older adults, Elders, and their caregivers to better access services and supports to live with dignity, independence, and social connectedness.

### Goals were to:

- Strengthen community partnerships to improve awareness and availability of aging services and supports.
- Reduce isolation of older adults through community-based intergenerational programming.
- Develop new avenues to increase the quality and quantity of direct care workforce serving older adults and family caregivers.

### PARTNERS

Key partners included 7 aging services organizations that led local coalitions, 3 Tribal Nations, 16 AGE to age sites, and 2 regional workforce partners. Other partners came online during the COVID-19 pandemic to support relief efforts. The Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging played a crucial role with planning assistance and maximizing resources.

A multi-faceted approach resulted in better-integrated services, cross-collaboration, greater awareness and use of existing services, and new services and supports.

### PROGRAM DESIGN

The original design incorporated three comprehensive strategies. When COVID-19 emerged in 2020, Northland launched a fourth strategy to help communities meet the critical needs of older adults and Native American Elders during a global pandemic.

#### Community Planning and Care Coordination

Provide tailored technical assistance, peer learning, strategic multi-year grants, and evaluation support for 7 aging services organizations and their community coalitions, and culturally responsive partnerships with 3 Tribal Nations.

### Social Engagement

Enhance intergenerational and other social engagement opportunities fostering health and well-being in 16 AGE to age communities across the region.

### Quality of Care

Promote innovative approaches to improve the quality and quantity of the direct care workforce with multi-year, pilot program funding to 2 regional workforce solutions partners.

### COVID-19 Relief

Deploy emergency funding to 16 aging services organizations and Tribal Nations to meet the needs of older adults and Elders during the pandemic. Northland secured relief funding and adapted its strategies to help community partners continue their work.

### WHAT'S NEXT

In early 2023, the Northland Foundation began a new three-year phase of the Integrated Rural Community Aging Program. The goal is to develop stronger, sustainable networks of services, socialization, and high-quality care to support older adults, Elders, and their caregivers in Aitkin, Itasca, and Lake Counties and the Tribal Nations of Bois Forte, Fond du Lac, and Grand Portage.

## HIGHLIGHTED OVERARCHING OUTCOMES



**15,160**  
RURAL OLDER  
ADULTS/ELDERS/  
CAREGIVERS  
SERVED



**\$2.33 MILLION**  
AWARDED THROUGH  
**70 GRANTS**  
TO AGING SERVICES AND  
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS



**32 PARTNER  
ORGANIZATIONS**  
ENGAGED ACROSS  
THE REGION

# MULTI-FACETED STRATEGY OUTCOMES



## COMMUNITY PLANNING AND CARE COORDINATION

**7 rural coalitions engaged 200 organizations** to expand or create **30 programs** and services.

**3 Tribal Nations served 1,381 Elders** during the pandemic and with new and expanded services.

**98% of community partners** reported improved awareness of and access to aging services.



## SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

**8,323 older adults** participated in **500+ activities** across 16 rural communities including 3 Tribal Nations.

**18,377 youth** benefited from older adults' talent, wisdom, and volunteer support with reading, tutoring, cultural learning, and more.

**97% of older adults** report decreased social isolation and improved well-being.



## QUALITY OF CARE

**635 high school students** attended **4 healthcare career camps** and 1 daylong career fair.

**17 healthcare employers** formed a consortium and online hub to boost career training and hiring.

**361 youth and adults** participated in health care experiential clinical learning in partnership with **30+ area providers**.



## COVID-19 RESPONSE

**\$250,000 in funding for 16 projects** helped older adults and Elders with essential needs including food, pharmacy delivery, and sanitation supplies such as masks.



## LESSONS LEARNED

### CROSS-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT BOLSTERS AGING SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

Intentional community planning joins diverse sectors e.g. health care, aging services, civic organizations, and faith communities to work together to diversify services and supports, cultivate sources of informal and formal caregivers, and build lasting partnerships.

### PEER LEARNING PLAYS AN INTEGRAL ROLE IN NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

Bringing people together at the local and regional levels spurs idea-sharing and disseminates promising strategies. Convening regional thought leaders and program participants for peer learning improves outcomes in the near term and helps them sustain success over time.

### INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING REDUCES ISOLATION

Intergenerational activities in rural communities and Native nations help reduce social isolation. AGE to age partners found creative ways to build social connections among older adults and youth during the pandemic, such as virtual reading clubs, outdoor activities, and pen pal programs.

### RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH TRIBAL NATIONS YIELD OPPORTUNITIES

Attending to relationships and honoring sovereignty fosters partnership opportunities. As COVID-19 took hold, Northland was able to quickly connect with leaders, learn what they needed, and respond with urgent support for their Elder-care efforts above and beyond their non-pandemic related projects, such as home safety modifications and chore services.

### INNOVATION FUNDING SPURS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

Flexible, multi-year funding for pilot projects catalyzes creativity. Partners had the time and resources to explore ways to boost the aging services workforce, from career camps and job opportunities for youth to a health care consortium training/hiring website and more.

### CRISIS RESPONSE SHOULD BE FAST AND FLEXIBLE

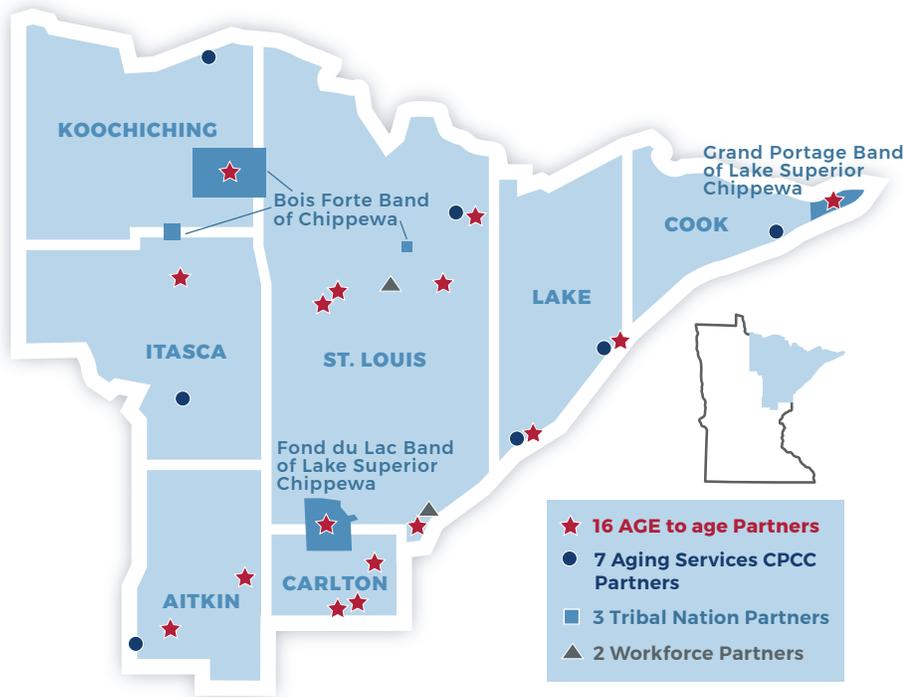
In times of social reckonings, natural disasters, or disease pandemics, leaders must be nimble. Foundations can play important roles by stepping up quickly, dispersing funds to those on the ground, and bringing new public and philanthropic resources to bear.

# THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

The Northland Foundation is grateful to the many Integrated Rural Community Aging Program Partners; expert Program Consultants Catherine Sampson, Lynn Haglin, Chandra Mehrotra, and Scott Chazdon; and thousands of engaged community members all across our rural region. This program was made possible with funding from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies.



## INTEGRATED RURAL COMMUNITY AGING PARTNER SITES



- **Aging Services/CPCC Partners:** Aitkin County CARE, Care Partners of Cook County, Community Partners–Two Harbors, ElderCircle, Koochiching Aging Options, North Shore Area Partners, and Northwoods Partners
- **AGE to age Communities:** Aitkin, Barnum, Bigfork/Itasca Area, Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Chisholm, Cloquet, East Range Communities, Ely Area, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Hibbing, McGregor, Moose Lake, Proctor/Hermantown, North Shore Area, and Two Harbors
- **Tribal Nation Partners:** Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, and Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- **Regional Workforce Solutions Partners:** Applied Learning Institute and Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging
- **COVID-19 Response Funding Recipients:** Aging Services/CPCC Partners, Tribal Nation Partners, Age Well Arrowhead, ANGELS of McGregor, Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency, Area Agency on Aging, Lighthouse Center for Vital Living, and Volunteer Services of Carlton County