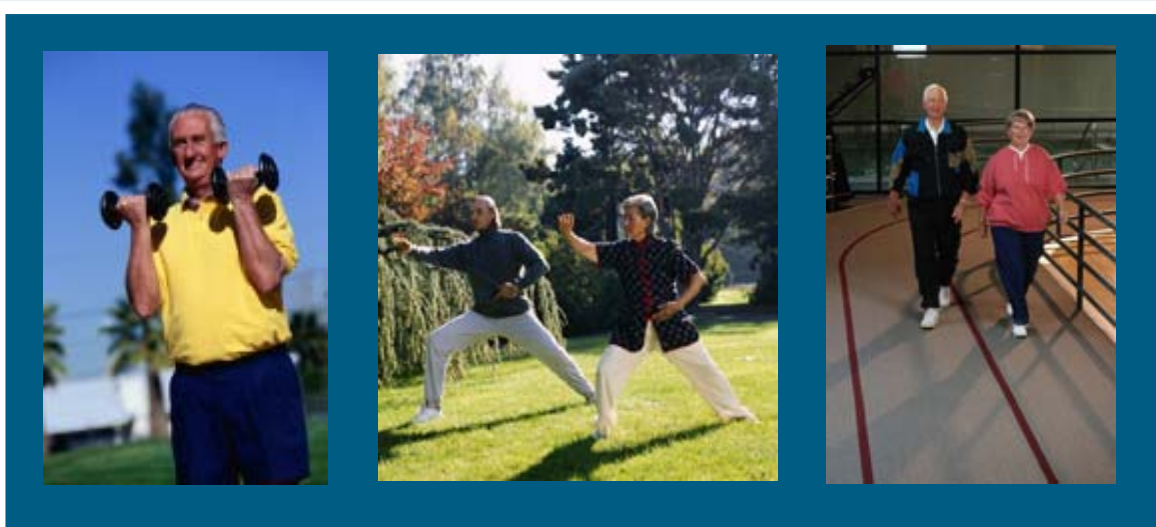


NATIONAL BLUEPRINT: Increasing Physical Activity Among Adults Aged 50 and Older Blueprint Mini-Grant Update



The National Blueprint Office at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has awarded \$473,000 to fund 20 community programs and coalitions to help midlife and older adults live active lifestyles.

The Mini-Grant program is an initiative of the National Blueprint Partners Project that joins more than 50 national organizations with similar priorities and objectives in increasing physical activity among Americans age 50+. A key priority of the Blueprint project is to foster local partnerships among community organizations and private sector agencies in the areas of health, environment, transportation, and social services.

The program sought proposals from local agencies nationwide to develop innovative and sustainable approaches to reducing barriers to physical activity. More than 460 applicants from across the U.S. submitted proposals for the Mini-Grant program. A maximum of \$25,000 was awarded to fund each program for a 15-month period.

Many of the funded programs provide targeted interventions for specific segments of the older adult population, such as minorities, low-income adults, or the frail elderly. Other programs provide an intergenerational component or creative incentives to motivate midlife and older adults to increase their physical activity levels. Among the 20 innovative programs include:

- **The Greater Southern Brooklyn Health Coalition (NY)** will partner with the parks association and New York City Police Department to provide weekly walk-a-thons, identifying safe spaces for pedestrians. The coalition will also provide grants to community and faith-based organizations to hire exercise leaders for on-site classes.
- **Cabarrus County Department on Aging (NC)** offers a *30 Minutes For Life* program to caregivers age 50+, providing education, respite, transportation, and information/referrals to physical activity resources. Once caregivers receive initial training, they may use the fitness equipment for free at various community locations.

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- **Supporters of Doelger Senior Center (CA)** connects three generations in a training program to increase physical activity. Grandparents and their grandchildren complete a 12-week regimen of physical, educational, and social activities. At the end of the program, grandparents can receive a stipend to volunteer in caregiving activities for toddlers and preschoolers at various community sites.
- **Texas Cooperative Extension (TX)** promotes physical activity for Hispanic and African American older adults through the *Walk Across Texas* program, a peer-support program in which teams of older adults pool their weekly walking mileage to compete in a race to walk from the east to the west border of Texas.

The successful programs all foster partnerships with various community groups that may include health organizations, senior centers, parks, athletic clubs, aging networks, public health, and faith-based organizations to maximize resources and promote sustainability. Another common characteristic of Mini-Grant supported programs is a solid infrastructure that enabled the programs to implement activities within weeks of grant notification. These programs can serve as “best practices” models for similar coalitions in other communities nationwide.

Mini-Grant Survey

Nearly 120 applicants that did not receive Mini-Grant funding completed a survey for the National Blueprint Office, indicating that 48 percent of respondents plan to implement their projects without Mini-Grant funding. Barriers that inhibit new physical activity projects for older adults include a lack of funding (100%), competing priorities (35%), and a lack of time (25%). Still, 84 percent of respondents have maintained an active working relationship with partner organizations.

Resources that the National Blueprint Office can provide to unsuccessful applicants that would be most beneficial include information on other funding sources (91%), access to communication and marketing tools (52%), access to printed resources on physical activity and aging (43%), and referrals to communities with best practices to share (42%).

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