

# Village Networks

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

# The Village Network

- The goal of a Village Network is to promote a sense of community, allowing seniors to live active lives in their own homes for as long as possible.
- The Village Network makes available an array of services, programs, and events to enhance overall quality of life and well-being among Network members.

# The Current Problem

- Currently seniors living in a community have differing levels of awareness of services and programs available to them
- Seniors often feel isolated and separated from the community in which they reside
- Poor health, difficulty with transportation, and depression are commonly reported barriers to utilizing services and programs.

# The Village Concept

- Connect community residents through a Village Network that provides them with:
  - Health and Social Services
  - Exercise and Wellness Activities
  - Social Gatherings
  - Education and Learning
- Most importantly, the Village Network provides residents with a sense of community

# Getting Started

1. Community leaders come together with a commitment to form a Network
1. Begin with focus groups of community residents to determine what type of services and programs they want in their Network, and how they should be delivered or provided

# Network Structure & Organization

- Once community leaders are at the formation table of their Network, initial decisions include:
  1. Whether to form the Network as an independent tax-exempt organization (or possibly piggy-back with an existing non-profit organization)
  2. Whether to establish and operate the Network with volunteers or paid staff

# Advantages of Tax Exempt Status

1. Enhances ability to fund-raise with individual and corporate donations since donors receive a tax deduction
2. Helps to legally protect board members
3. Provides a foundation from bylaws from which to operate

# Disadvantages of Tax-Exempt Status

1. Costs money and takes time with the use of lawyers to file corporate filings with I.R.S. and State
2. Operation of the Network must be in accordance with the foundation bylaws

# The Focus Groups

- Since different groups of residents may want different things from a Village Network, separate focus groups should be considered based on:
  1. Age (55-65, 65-75, 75+)
  2. Current users of social services
  3. Current non-users of social services
  4. Race/Ethnicity

# Next Steps

1. Based on focus group results, a written survey is developed and disseminated in the community for completion
2. Post-survey focus groups may be used to better clarify written survey results
3. The Network goals are defined

# The Written Survey

The written survey is designed to determine 5 key questions relating to existing, or possible, services/programs:

1. Awareness of service/program
2. Desirability of service/program
3. Availability of service/program
4. Accessibility of service/program
5. Acceptability of service/program

# The Written Survey

The survey can be disseminated to community members either:

1. Randomly, with *every* effort made to capture the member's completed survey from a representative sampling of the community
2. Large Convenience Sample, with *every* effort made to seek out completed surveys from a representative sampling of the community

# The Written Survey

- The written survey can either be administered by trained volunteers, or self-completed by survey-takers
- Administered surveys can be done with face-to-face interviews, over the phone, or on the internet

# Post-Survey Focus Groups

Focus groups may be used after the written survey to better understand aspects of the written survey results among targeted members

# Setting Up the Network

Once the community survey is completed the leadership in the community can better define the goals of the Village Network, and better define the scope and variety of services and programs to offer to accomplish the Network's goals

# Setting Up the Network

- Service providers will need to be identified and agree to the terms of the Network
- Service providers can either be non-profit organizations, governmental entities, or for-profit companies
- Memoranda of understanding can be used in lieu of contracts

# Key Issues At Start-Up

1. Location of Network Offices
2. Volunteer management versus paid staff
3. Sustainability of the Network
  - ❖ Member dues
  - ❖ Corporate sponsorship
  - ❖ Fund raising activities
  - ❖ All of the above

# Promoting the Network

Once the Network is created it must be promoted to attract members and to serve existing members. Methods can include:

1. Network brochures and flyers
2. Community presentations
3. Direct mail
4. Advertising
5. Press Releases

# Sustaining the Network

- Once created, ongoing effort, energy, and money will be required to sustain its operations
- Communities interested in starting a Village Network should think carefully about how the Network will be funded 5 years after it has begun, and how the Network might grow along the way

# Community Resources

Government and non-profit providers are coming together to establish tool kits and resources to support communities in their efforts to establish their own Village Network.

Take advantage of these resources!

# Community Partners

- Area Agency on Aging, Region One  
1366 E. Thomas Rd., suite 108  
Phoenix, AZ 85014  
602-264-2255 or [www.aaaphx.org](http://www.aaaphx.org)
- Maricopa Association of Governments  
302 N. 1<sup>ST</sup> Ave., suite 300  
Phoenix, AZ 85003  
602-254-6300 or [www.azmag.gov](http://www.azmag.gov)