



## Best Practices for Outreach and Enrollment to Special & Underserved Populations

**T**his tip sheet discusses the key practices that community-based organizations can use when working to connect older adults to benefits that ensure greater financial and physical security. These outreach methods (implemented pre-COVID and appropriate for when physical distancing is relaxed) can complement existing efforts to enroll older adults into benefits and empower them in what is expected to be another critically challenging year.

### 1. Invest in Person-Focused Methods

**Bring the clients to you.** Watts Labor Community Action Committee of South-Central Los Angeles specializes in serving the African American community, adults with disabilities, and persons experiencing homelessness. One of their most effective approaches is to provide transportation to their offices. This is coordinated through their multi-purpose centers and their transportation program. By providing this transportation, individuals are more inclined to spend additional time at the site, and as a result, they are connected to multiple benefits.

**Use images and messages that reflect your clientele.** The Diverse Elders Coalition (DEC), in partnership with NCOA, conducted focus groups on the power of **visuals** and **messages** in influencing and motivating diverse minority and LGBTQ older adults to apply for key federal benefits. Messaging geared towards “independence” of older adults resonated strongly with participants, as well as the use of images that “reflected the identities and lived experiences of the focus group members.” Focus group participants also suggested that images used for outreach should be brightly colored because it translates feelings of optimism and positivity. Lastly, it was suggested that when translating marketing materials the translators should be native speakers of the language and the materials should be verified by a second native speaker to ensure accuracy.

### 2. Identify and Empower Community Champions

In fall 2018, NCOA conducted a series of focus groups with support from the Health Foundation of Western and Central New York to better understand the challenges to enrollment and

utilization of programs like Medicaid, Medicare, CHIP, and the Health Exchanges. One key finding was that trust is low when it comes to reliable information, and without trust, individuals are less likely to enroll in benefits.

Coalition building and activating partners local to communities is the best way to amplify the voice of those who know what their community needs. Investing in an approach around collaborative leadership is what allows for shared resources and a shared investment in social impact in a community over time.

Identifying local champions and investing in them, through resources and providing forums for empowering their organizations or causes, can shift the tide in communities and create broad support for your organization's campaigns or initiatives down the line when trust is necessary. Community Champions are vital to the success of any enrollment focused group, especially in rural/frontier areas where concerns about "someone knowing my business" is a realistic sentiment for many living in these areas.

### **3. Provide Benefits Education and Awareness Across Generations**

Latinos for a Secure Retirement (LSR) and NCOA partnered to boost benefits outreach and education in communities where access to benefits is critical to helping Hispanic/Latino older adults make ends meet. Latinos consistently follow the pattern that as they age, they remain in intergenerational households. LSR has found success engaged Latinos across the country in critical discussions on retirement readiness and life planning through two lenses: (1) the emerging young professional Latino, and (2) the Latino family preparing for retirement. By hosting *Cafecitos*, or "Coffee Talks" (routinely referring to a culturally responsive way that Hispanic/Latinos "talk about" key issues that impact their lives – over a cup of coffee) LSR provided an effective outreach method to educate families about benefits and positively impact the retirement security of future generations.

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#### **For more information**

[Aging on the Rio Grande](#)

[Best Practices from Capacity-Building BECs](#)

[A Culturally Relative Approach to Reaching Rural & Frontier Populations](#)

[A Dream Becomes Reality in Service to Community](#)

[Lessons Learned in SNAP Outreach to Immigrant & Rural Seniors](#)

[Managing the COVID-19 Crisis for Vulnerable Populations](#)

[NCOA partners with Black, Latinx, and LGBTQ+ organizations to address growing economic insecurity amid pandemic](#)

[To Serve ALL Seniors: Reaching LGBT Older Adults](#)