

## **Neighbor to Neighbor Summary Report**

### **Information about the Applicant**

Founded in 2004 as Faith in Action, our mission is to connect residents age 60 and older to compassionate volunteers and a network of businesses, organizations and faith communities committed to supporting them. Our volunteer assistance helps seniors “age in place,” living as independently as possible in their own homes.

We are rebranding as Neighbor to Neighbor and relocating from a church on the edge of town to our own office space in downtown Spooner. This will increase visibility and attract more recipients, volunteers and donors. The new name, "Neighbor to Neighbor," emphasizes the localized, personalized, volunteer-based connections our organization means for seniors. We serve approximately 160 seniors with free services including transportation; weekly grocery shopping and delivery; monthly delivery of Food Pantry items; free boxes of food to low-income residents furnished by the Hunger Relief Federation of Wisconsin; errands; library books; home and yard upkeep; individualized instruction on use of the internet; and friendly visits.

Currently, 67 Neighbor to Neighbor volunteers donate a total of 200 hours/month and 15,000 miles/year with their own vehicles. More than a dozen area businesses are sponsors of the organization, and we receive donations of more than \$100,000/year from individuals, businesses, grants and faith communities. In 2022, a three-year Challenge Grant from a community donor pledges a total of \$150,000 to Neighbor to Neighbor through three annual \$50,000 grants, contingent on our raising a matching amount. We have achieved the first year's match. Neighbor to Neighbor is governed by a volunteer board of directors. Our staff consists of a part-time director and two part-time program assistants, comprising 1.5 FTE.

In conjunction with our rebranding, we are launching an innovative series of interactive events for seniors called Coffee & Connections. Twice each month, Neighbor to Neighbor will host educational and entertaining events that will be a unique opportunity for seniors to learn, socialize and stay connected to their community. We anticipate approximately 30 seniors, and an equal number of our own volunteers, will participate monthly.

### **Statement of Need**

Imagine yourself a senior living in northern Wisconsin, miles from your nearest neighbor. Your spouse may still be alive, but it's more likely you live alone and probably do not drive – especially during northern Wisconsin winters. The rural nature of our county limits economic opportunities for younger people, so they move away, leaving you and many seniors living alone without family nearby. You need help accessing basic needs, such as food, as well as multiple other community services and sustaining personal contact to avoid isolation. Neighbor to Neighbor is a volunteer organization here to provide all of that to you through our volunteers. An additional use of Wistpac Foundation funds would be to contract for free round-trip transportation for seniors to attend the Coffee & Connections events at our new location.

### **Project Goals and Expected Benefits**

The expected outcomes of Coffee & Connections program, as with all our programs, are to provide seniors with assistance to live independently, safely and comfortably in their homes; to help seniors gain more understanding of local resources; and to help them expand the network they can rely on for information and community connections.

Based on preliminary research among volunteers and community experts, we have prepared an initial list of topics that will create interest and drive attendance. Examples include senior scams; elder and special needs law; estate planning; trusts; negative prescription interactions; computer and internet use;

healthy eating; exercise at home; Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security; book discussions; elder abuse; pets; non-partisan overview of voting procedures; mental health; and music performances. Several of these align well with Wispact Foundation's programming for disabled clientele, so our program would be helping you reach a specific target audience consisting of seniors in Washburn County. We will continually update our topic schedule based on suggestions from seniors, volunteers and community partners, and would welcome Wispact Foundation participation as presenters and advisers on programming.

Potential presenters will include dietitians; nutritionists; law enforcement officers; social workers; librarians; pharmacists; local authors; newsmakers; naturalists; actors; hobbyists; genealogist; and musicians; plus our own volunteers who have special talents. Examples of presenting organizations include the Humane Society, League of Women Voters, Chamber of Commerce, Aging and Disability Resource Center, cultural organizations, outdoor groups and Wispact Foundation.

### **Project Implementation Plan**

The Coffee & Connection work plan covers an 18-month period from October 2022 – March 2024.

<b>Phase 1: Launch and Organizational Plan</b>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Timing</b>
Creation of program logo	Graphic artist	10/22
Form program committee of board, volunteers, staff	Board	10/22
Community input on topics	Director	10/22
Finalize first phase of events with community organizations	Director	11/22
Contract for transportation service	Director	11/22
Hire program coordinator	Director	11/22
Update volunteers on program and schedule	Volunteer coord	Ongoing
<b>Phase 2 Launch</b>		
Update event schedule	Program coord.	Quarterly
Advertise schedule	Mktg. coord.	Quarterly
Publicize individual events	Mktg. coord.	Monthly
Ongoing suggestions for topics from seniors and community	Program coord.	Ongoing
<b>Phase 3 Evaluate and leverage for fundraising</b>		
Ongoing evaluations from participants	Program coord.	Monthly
Survey participants, presenters, volunteers	Program coord.	2-3/24
Final report and presentation for community orgs	Director	3/24
Feature story in weekly newspaper	Mktg. coord.	3/24
Fundraising presentations to potential donors	Director, Board	3/24

### **Evaluation Plan**

As stated above, the expected outcomes of Coffee & Connections, as with all Neighbor to Neighbor programs, are to provide seniors with information and assistance to live independently, safely and comfortably in their homes; to help seniors gain more understanding of local resources; and to help seniors expand the network they can rely on for information, community connections and a sense of "belonging." Our goals are:

- 1) To have 15 seniors attend each of the 32 Coffee & Connections events, for a total of 480.
- 2) Through visibility created by the program, add 15 new recipients and 10 new volunteers.

3) Through the collaboration with local organizations, professionals and businesses that is inherent in scheduling speakers, increase familiarity with Neighbor to Neighbor, leading to donations of at least \$75,000. These metrics, plus regular evaluations by participating seniors and editorial coverage by local media will be used to monitor program effectiveness.

At the end of the funding period, the director will conduct an analysis of use of a cargo van for combined deliveries to multiple seniors compared to our current model of individual deliveries by individual volunteers. We will also measure volunteer satisfaction with the revised delivery model. Our expectation is that we will require fewer volunteers for these services, freeing up volunteer time for other programs and that volunteers will appreciate not having to use their own vehicles and fuel. We will also evaluate if this approach attracts additional volunteers.

### **Budget**

This application requests Wispact Foundation funds to offset the transportation costs for several other programs – costs currently absorbed by volunteers. Weekly delivery of groceries; monthly delivery of Food Pantry items and large Hunger Relief food boxes; frequent delivery of prescriptions and library books; and ongoing yard and home maintenance all require our volunteers to make frequent trips to seniors' homes, often with bulky items. Rising fuel prices are leading some volunteers to balk at using their own vehicles so much.

Through Wispact funds, we would lease a cargo van volunteers and staff would use primarily for food delivery and transporting equipment for yard work, snow removal and home maintenance. Combining multiple loads would reduce trips and number of volunteers needed for grocery and food delivery and significantly cut the amount of fuel donated by volunteers using their own vehicles. The van would have magnetic Neighbor to Neighbor signs on both sides and rear to increase visibility for the organization and our services.

We will also use Wispact Foundation funds to contract with Namekogen Transit for chartered round-trip transportation for seniors who register in advance for the events. We have negotiated a special rate of \$2.00 round trip for each senior who attends. The total transportation cost for 12 months would total \$480. We would plan to renew this request for the duration of the 18-month initial program and perhaps longer.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Namekogen Transit 12-month contract	\$480
Cargo van 12-month lease	\$5,000
3 magnetic signs for van	\$800
Gasoline for cargo van (approximately 12,000 mi./yr.	\$2,500
Van regular maintenance	\$300
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9,080</b>

### **Staff Recommendation**

The grant application can be recommended for approval. This will support the programs transportation needs and aligns with the initiatives of the foundation.