

Equity in Benefits: Best Practices from the Community

What does it mean to ensure equitable access to benefits programs—and how do we achieve it together? The National Council on Aging (NCOA) invited a small group of local partners to tackle this question. They collaborated on best practices in outreach, awareness, and enrollment among diverse older adults who face systemic barriers to aging well.

Participant Organizations

Pars Equality Center, Los Angeles, California



Population: **3,898,747**



% under age 65 with a disability: **6.4%**



% age 65 and older: **12.9%**



Median household income: **\$65,290**

Pars is home away from home for refugees and immigrants. Established in 2010, it was the first community-based nonprofit organization providing direct legal and social services to the Iranian American community, particularly for asylees and vulnerable noncitizens.

- **Peyman Malaz, Senior Director**

Thea Bowman Center, Cleveland, Ohio



Population: **372,624**



% under age 65 with a disability: **15.8%**



% age 65 and older: **14.3%**



Median household income: **\$31,838**

Our new mission statement is: We listen to the people of Mt. Pleasant, Learn, and Do what they Want and Need. Our little bitty center provides hope for this community. They reach out to us because they trust us, and we honor that privilege by doing what we can to assist.

- **BJ Brown, Seniors Services Coordinator**

Borderland Rainbow Center, El Paso, Texas



Population: **678,815**



% under age 65 with a disability: **9.2%**



% age 65 and older: **12.9%**



Median household income: **\$48,866**

The seniors we serve, many of them only understand English or only know enough to get by. This means that outreach has to have a strong focus on Spanish language materials. It's a city that is 80% Latinx, making us a proudly bicultural community.

- **Brenda Risch, Executive Director, BRC.**

Capacity Building

The six-month collaborative project effectively built the capacity of these local organizations that provide critical services to people in need in their communities.

40% changed their services and programs for older adult participants

Our outreach to seniors is to further engage them and introduce them to resources available to them in the community.

100% said their organizations are able to serve more older adults

We were able to secure tablets and staff that are able to go out into the community to help them process the BenefitsCheckUp tool. We were able to print up flyers and then increase our visibility with advertising on public buses.

100% said their organizations have submitted a proposal for funding

We are seeking funding to expand our programming such as public benefits enrollment assistance and trainings.

75% strongly agreed that the collaboration improved their work

- Increased their knowledge around effective strategies for successful programming
- Helped them reach and educate more older adults
- Helped their organization successfully replicate new outreach and engagement strategies at the local level
- Improved their comfort level with using BenefitsCheckUp to screen individuals for benefits programs

