

NCOA'S NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SENIOR CENTERS

National engagement of Senior Center professionals

2020 Operating Model

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The Work of NCOA's National Institute of Senior Centers

The [National Council on Aging \(NCOA\)](#) [National Institute of Senior Centers \(NISC\)](#) supports a national network of over 2,000 senior center professionals dedicated to helping older adults remain active, engaged, and independent in their communities. NISC is setting the standard for the future of senior centers by promoting cutting-edge research, promising practices, professional development, and advocacy. NISC also offers the nation's only National Senior Center Accreditation Program. Accreditation provides official recognition that a senior center meets nine national standards of senior center operations.

The goals of NISC include:

- Strengthening senior centers to improve the lives of older adults
- Engaging NISC members in NCOA's social impact goals of enhancing economic security, improving health, and advocating for older adults, especially those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged

Through conference calls, webinars, and the NCOA Crossroads online community, senior center professionals throughout the country have an opportunity to share their experiences and take action on policy and advocacy issues and community-based initiatives; participate in NISC Teams and other opportunities for engagement; contribute their best practice knowledge to NCOA/NISC staff, programs and initiatives and share their promising practices, experiences and local resources nationally.

The NISC Executive Committee coordinates the work of the seven virtual NISC Teams. It is comprised of the Chair, Chair-Elect, and Chairs of each Team. The NISC Program Manager is an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee. During monthly conference calls and an annual in-person meeting, Teams provide progress reports, discuss integration of outcomes, and make decisions regarding leadership, strategy, and activities.

Operating Model for NCOA's National Institute of Senior Centers

Purpose of the NISC Network Operating Model:

1. To provide an opportunity for an extensive network, that reflects the geographic, ethnic and cultural diversity of the nation's older adults, of NISC members to be involved in the work of NISC, including NISC leadership alumni, leaders of NISC accredited centers, state association leaders, and any other interested NISC members.
2. To provide flexible time commitments for participation
3. To offer immediate involvement of new leaders from within the NISC membership in the work of NISC to actively recruit and engage leaders new to the field to NISC membership and active involvement.
4. To enable NISC members to be highly involved in the work of NISC without the need for travel.

Components of the Model

- NISC Executive Committee
- Outcome-focused Teams
- NISC Senior Center Leadership Collaborative
- NISC Network

NISC Executive Committee

1. Executive Committee Positions

- Executive Committee Chair
- Executive Committee Chair-Elect
- NISC Team Chairs
 - Standards & Accreditation Team Chair
 - Best Practices Team Chair
 - Economic Security Team Chair
 - Improving Health Team Chair
 - 100 Million Healthier Lives Chair
 - Membership Team Chair
 - Public Policy & Advocacy Team Chair

2. Selection of NISC Executive Committee Members

- a. Any current NISC member can apply for a leadership position or recommend other members for positions.
- b. Interested members will complete a Leadership Position Application
- c. The Executive Committee in consultation with NCOA staff will select members to fill open positions.

3. Requirements for serving on the NISC Executive Committee

- a. Maintain NISC membership while serving on the Executive Committee
- b. Have completed a Leadership Position Application
- c. Actively participate in monthly Executive Committee conference calls.
- d. Committed to attend one in-person meeting of the Executive Committee annually

Active participation in monthly conference calls is required and expected. Two consecutive absences from a conference call will initiate contact by the Chair to ascertain intention/ability for service.

4. NISC Executive Committee Terms

- a. Members of the Executive Committee will serve two-year terms.
- b. Term end dates will be staggered to facilitate continuity of leadership on the Committee.
- c. One year after completing a term of service on the Executive Committee, a member can re-apply for any open position on the Executive Committee.

5. NCOA Staff Relationship
 - a. The NISC Program Manager will be the primary NCOA staff contact for the NISC Executive Committee. Other staff will be invited to participate in Executive Committee meetings based on agenda items being addressed.

6. NISC Teams Relationship
 - a. The Executive Committee's primary point of contact with each of the Teams will be through the Team Chair who is a member of Executive Committee.

7. NISC Senior Center Leadership Collaborative Relationship
 - a. The NISC Program Manager will be responsible for managing communications with the NISC Collaborative. The Program Manager will work with the Chair of the Executive Committee in developing the agenda for NISC Senior Center Leadership Collaborative meetings, which will be chaired by the Executive Committee Chair.

8. Executive Committee Meetings
 - a. The Executive Committee will meet monthly via a conference call.
 - b. The Executive Committee will meet at least one time a year in person. Executive Committee members will be responsible for covering their travel costs for attending in-person meetings.
 - c. The NISC Program Manager will work with the Chair in developing meeting agendas.
 - d. The Chair will be responsible for leading meetings.

9. Executive Committee Responsibilities.

The responsibilities of the Executive Committee will fall into two primary categories:

- a. In an advisory/collaborative role with the NCOA staff responsible for managing NISC programs and services.
- b. In a leadership role, initiating and leading NISC member networking opportunities, for which NCOA staff would not be assuming responsibility.

Examples advisory/collaborative role:

- a. Advise and collaborate with NCOA staff on NISC program planning and in identifying potential synergies and opportunities across Teams.
- b. Keep NCOA staff informed on current issues, challenges and opportunities that impact senior centers nationally.

- c. Work with NCOA staff to identify new leaders for participation in the NISC Senior Center Leadership Collaborative, Teams and other opportunities to engage NISC members in the work of NISC.
- d. Advise and collaborate with NCOA staff in developing and maintaining an active NISC Network.
- e. Work with NCOA staff to educate senior center professionals on the value of standards and to promote NISC Accreditation.
- f. Work with NCOA staff to annually evaluate the effectiveness of the NISC operational model and update as needed.

Examples of initiating/leading role:

- a. Facilitate the participation of NISC members as speakers at NCOA's conferences and at other events.
- b. Initiate opportunities for NISC members to connect and network in-person at state senior center association meetings and events of other senior center related networks.
- c. Facilitate requests by state associations or other state senior center related groups for consultation and connections with other state association leaders.

The Executive Committee may create-time limited taskforces to address specific issues or projects within their work plan and recruit additional NISC members to participate.

NISC Teams

The primary opportunity for NISC members to be actively involved in the work of NISC will be through participation in one of seven NISC Teams. Four of the NISC Teams will be focused on activities and outcomes that directly impact the operation of senior centers and the work of senior center professionals:

Diversity Goal

Diversity enriches NISC Teams and Leadership by including individuals that differ from themselves in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, social economic status, religious affiliation, gender, and ability and shares information with senior centers that supports diversity.

All team chairs will:

- Actively recruit diverse team members.
- Make sure photographs used in NISC team materials contain the diversity we seek.
- Be mindful of religious observances and arrange team schedules around these dates.
- Explicitly state in team outreach that you are seeking certain types of people (i.e. “People of color and LGBT individuals are strongly encouraged to apply.”)

The NISC Executive Committee will seek to connect with other nonprofit organizations that specifically target minorities and create partnerships with them.

NISC Team Descriptions:

Standards and Accreditation Team

Mission of team:

Work to ensure an efficient, effective and professional national accreditation program

Goals:

- Continue the national senior center accreditation process in an efficient manner
- Review and make recommendations for a more inclusive process that retains the majority of sites involved in the process
- Review and update national senior center standards.

Senior center standards and accreditation are important to NCOA for the following reasons:

- Accredited senior centers are high-performing community-based organizations involved in innovative and effective programs and services for older adults—potentially strong partners for NCOA in meeting its social impact goals.
- Accredited senior centers and the accreditation process provide a rich a knowledge-base from which all senior centers can benefit. Accredited centers demonstrate the positive impact that the senior center standards have in raising the bar for quality operations and programming.
- For older adults who live with chronic health issues or economic insecurity, a local senior center often plays an important role in getting their needs met. Well managed and financially sustainable senior centers are critical to maintaining access to these services in all communities.

Benefits of Accreditation

1. Team builds capacity and increases the quality of senior centers through the Self-Assessment and Accreditation Program. Accredited senior centers are high-performing community-based organizations involved in innovative and effective programs and services for older adults—potentially strong partners for NCOA in meeting its social impact goals.
2. Accredited senior centers and the accreditation process provide a rich a knowledge-base from which all senior centers can benefit. Accredited centers demonstrate the positive impact that the senior center standards have in raising the bar for quality operations and programming.
3. For older adults who live with chronic health issues or economic insecurity, a local senior center often plays an important role in getting their needs met. Well managed and financially sustainable senior centers are critical to maintaining access to these services in all communities.
4. There are a large number of senior centers that are struggling. They need help in making the transition to professionally managed operations that are financially viable and highly responsive to the need of the older adults living in their community—many of whom are vulnerable and disadvantaged. The senior center standards can be an important tool in helping these centers survive and thrive.

Best Practices Team

Mission

Share knowledge with senior centers gained through program development, networking and face-to-face contact, allowing NISC members and senior centers to remain in the forefront as the premiere resource for older adults and their families and to improve centers by bringing the newest and best ideas in easy-to-replicate, understandable formats.

Goals

- Administer and promote the annual Programs of Excellence Awards
- Assist in selecting Senior Center month theme and publicity materials
- Review applications for Research Award (presently on hold)
- Assist with NCOA Conference Planning Committee or state/regional conferenciers, if requested
- Advocate for the development of a searchable program database to house the eight years of program awards submissions.

Membership Team

Mission of team:

Grow NISC membership by engaging with senior center professionals through incentives, professional development and networking opportunities.

Grow and support engagement of a diverse and inclusive network of senior center professionals, with representation from all states.

Goals:

- Create incentives to become NISC members through promotions such as National Senior Center Month
- Provide professional development and training through educational webinars
- Provide recognition of NISC members with marketing and social media, incentivizing continued membership
- Ensure members receive timely messages and opportunities to connect face to face and virtually.

Four of the Teams will be focused on activities and outcomes that directly connect the work of NISC with other NCOA programs and NCOA's social impact mission and goals.

Economic Security Team

Mission of team:

Improve the economic status of older adults by providing access to a range of economic programs offered through senior centers.

Goals:

- To promote senior center awareness, understanding of and use of senior economic security and resource programs provided by NCOA.
- We will look to the national organizations for resources, such as Administration for Community Living (ACL), the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and their "No Wrong Door" resources (<https://nwd.acl.gov/index.html>) and national programs like AARP's livable communities/ Age Friendly campaign
- Promote best practices of senior economic security programs in senior centers doable options that would benefit senior center participants, senior centers.
- Promote senior economic security educational opportunities for senior center professionals.

Improving Health Team

Mission of team:

Improve the health of senior center participants through excellence in senior center programming and service. Improving the health of older adults is a strategic focus of NCOA.

Goals:

- Promote the availability of health programs and resources through Senior Center Voice, emails and from NCOA's Center for Healthy Aging.
- Work with other NISC teams to champion positive health outcomes like the 100 Million Healthier Lives initiative.
- Connect and assist national programs like USDA's Food Safety 101

100 Million Healthier Lives Team

A subgroup of the Improving Health Team

Mission of team:

To administer the Adult Well-Being Assessment (AWA) in as many sites as possible to develop a shared knowledge base of what drives impact quality of life (QoL) of older adults.

Goals:

- Educate the aging network on the Adult Well-Being Assessment tool and its practical use to Aging Well Hub members
- Describe the methodology and results from current users.
- Connect sites implementing the Adult Well-Being Assessment to share best practices, suggestions for changes to measure results.
- To encourage sites to become members of NCOA's Aging Well Hub.

Public Policy Team

Mission of team:

- Support public policy that impact older adults and/or aging issues and which senior centers can contribute unique expertise.
- Mobilize targeted and effective responses to advocacy needs

Goals:

- Expand Public Policy Team members and engage in regular teleconferences
- Include senior center network in advocacy for reauthorization of Older Americans Act (OAA)
- Provide resources to advocate for OAA reauthorization with webinar

1. Selection of Team Members

- a. NISC members may volunteer to serve on a Team or can be recruited by the team Chair to participate.
- b. NISC leadership alumni will be encouraged to serve on Teams.
- c. Team Chairs will utilize the Interests and Expertise Inventories completed by NISC members to identify potential Team members who match the skill sets needed to accomplish the Team's goals.
- d. Each Team will determine the optimum size of the group needed to accomplish its goals and outcomes.
- e. Teams may create time-limited taskforces to address specific issues or project within their work plan and recruit additional NISC member to participate.

2. Requirements for serving on a Team

- a. Maintain NISC membership while serving on the Team. A non-NISC member can be invited onto a team by a team chair.
- b. Actively participate in Team conference calls and assignments.

Active participation in monthly conference calls is required and expected. Two consecutive absences from a conference call will initiate contact by the Team Chair to ascertain intention/ability for service.

3. NCOA Staff Support

- a. Each Team will have an NCOA Staff person assigned as their primary staff contact.
- b. The NISC Program Manager will be the staff person working with the Standards and Accreditation and the Best Practices Teams.
- c. A staff person from the Center for Healthy Aging will work with the Improving Health Team.
- d. A staff person from the Center for Benefits Outreach and Enrollment or NCOA's Economic Security Initiative will work with the Economic Security Team.
- e. The Director, Public Policy and Advocacy (Marci Phillips) will work with the Policy and Advocacy Team.
- f. The NCOA staff contact will be responsible for involving other NCOA staff with the Team as needed.

4. Team Responsibilities

- a. The Team Chair and NCOA staff person assigned will work together to develop goals and expected outcomes for each Team on an annual basis.
- b. Team goals and outcomes will be reviewed by the NISC Executive Committee and NISC Program Manager. Purpose of review:
 - To ensure goals and expected outcomes are realistic

- To facilitate cross-Team communication and collaboration
- c. The Executive Committee will adopt a standard format to be used by all Teams to develop goals and expected outcomes, and reporting monthly progress.
- d. Each Team will be responsible for developing and implementing an action plan for accomplishing their goals and expected outcomes.
- e. On an annual basis the Executive Committee and NCOA staff will evaluate the effectiveness of each Team, based on the group's established goals and expected outcomes for the previous year.
- f. A summary of Team outcomes will be included in the NISC Annual Report.
- g. Each Team will determine the time commitment expected of group members based on the action plan they have developed.

NISC Senior Center Leadership Collaborative

The NISC Senior Center Leadership Collaborative welcomes appointed state association and network leaders and leaders of NISC accredited centers.

1. NISC Leadership Collaborative Goal

The goal of this initiative is to create a cohesive national, senior center network organized to participate in a collaborative learning environment to share best practices, national initiatives, strategies and resources to spur innovation and to identify national senior center leaders.

2. Expectations of a NCOA/NISC Senior Center Leadership Collaborative leaders

NISC state appointed collaborative members would be tasked with sharing promising practices from their state, learning from other state leaders, learning about NCOA and NISC initiatives, tools, and resources and then communicating that information back to their state colleagues through their professional network, such as state associations.

NISC accredited center leaders would be invited to participate in the collaborative to enhance the learning environment. They will be invited to share best practices, participate in webinars and NISC teams and attend educational meetings.

The Leadership Collaborative would also work to strengthen national resources thereby increasing NISC membership value, the national standards and accreditation process, engage new leaders, market NCOA/NISC products and increase professional development. The group would be advisory in nature and not a voting body.

This is a mutually beneficial relationship. NCOA benefits by sharing national information and resources and by learning from the expertise of the field. Senior Center state associations and networks benefit by exposure to national and other state initiatives, being made aware of trends, innovations and potential resources for their state members.

Collaborative members would be expected to:

- a. Attend quarterly conference call meetings;
- b. Support participation in a NISC team by participating or by encouraging others in the state to participate.
- c. Meet in person at the NCOA conference, paying their own way; If travel is not possible accommodations may be available for attendance through a zoom conference call.
- d. Share information about NCOA and NISC program initiatives within their state;

- e. Collaborative members would be elected by their state association or network. When no state organization is available, they would apply to NISC leadership.

Collaborative accredited center leaders would be expected to:

- a. Share promising practices
- b. Contribute content to national resources for example templates to illustrate strategic, marketing or evaluation plans, etc.
- c. Consider participating in webinars or conference workshops
- d. If no state representative is available in the accredited center leaders state, they would share information and resources with state colleagues.

NCOA/NISC would:

- 3. NCOA will work with NISC leaders to set criteria for involvement, term limits and expectations.
- 4. Develop advertising material to solicit nominations, ensuring that the content portrays a national opportunity of prestige.
- 5. Create a nomination plan to fill the Collaborative members state roster and advertise with accredited senior centers, peer reviewers, AMP sites, past delegates, new directors at those senior centers found to be strong or innovative and State Senior Center Associations.
- 6. Provide resources to the Collaborative members such as, explain NCOA resources; provide learning experiences on important topics such as 100 Million Healthier Lives and AWA Assessment; Social and Behavioral Determinants of Health, Aging Mastery Program, Concept of Aging Well Centers.
- 7. Convene a first meeting at NCOA conference. NCOA could pay for lunch at the conference. No other expenses would be anticipated in FY20.

NISC Network

The NISC network refers to all NISC members, state association and network leaders and any senior center professional that seeks to engage with NISC.

Communication with NISC Network

- a. The NISC Program Manager and NISC Senior Membership Coordinator are responsible for managing communications with the NISC Network.
- b. The NISC Network engages through conference calls, webinars, an online community, online surveys, email communication.
- c. Participants in NISC Network have the opportunity to meet and network in-person at the NCOA conference and online on NCOA crossroads.

1. Role of the NISC Network

The NISC Network will be tapped for input on policy and advocacy issues and planning of community-based initiatives, recruited to participate in NISC Teams and projects, and asked to contribute their best-practice knowledge to NISC programs.

The key to maintaining and increasing member involvement in the work of NISC will be engaging members in issues they are passionate about and that require their professional knowledge and expertise to address. Seeing tangible results will be essential in keeping members engaged virtually. Additional ideas include:

- a) Have realistic expectations about what can be accomplished, with specific action steps.
- b) Get buy in from NISC members' supervisor by providing a formal letter of acceptance into national Team or task force.
- c) Create virtual deadlines—tasks that have to be completed before the next meeting.
- d) Provide recognition for work well done and tasks that have been accomplished.
- e) Seek opportunities to personalize virtual connections—e.g. use of web-based video conferencing as more low-cost options become available.
- f) Take advantage of in-person meeting opportunities when available to get better acquainted with NISC members who are part of the NISC Network, Teams and the Executive Committee.

NISC History

- 1943 William Hodson Community Center, 1st in the nation (government)
- 1947 San Francisco Senior Center/Philadelphia Center for Older People (Voluntary Sector)
- **1950 - National Council on Aging, first national organization of professionals in the field of Aging, founded in 1950**
 - Original intent – to promote dignity, self-determination, well – being and contributions of older persons
 - NCOA home of 10 Constituent units
- 1959 Ohio State Association for Centers for Senior Citizens
- **1962 NCOA exploratory conference on senior centers**
- 1964 First annual conference on senior centers
- 1965 Older Americans Act with senior centers identified as primary organization for service delivery
- 1966 NCOA develops first senior center directory – 360 centers
- **1970 – NISC formed, there are 1,200 centers**
- 1971 NISC Delegate council, an elected advisory committee formed. WHCO recommends a multipurpose senior center in every community
- 1978 NISC publishes Senior Center Standards and Self-Assessment Workbook and develops management training course
- 1980's Senior Center management training
- 1991 NCOA awarded AOA grant to develop The National Institute on Multi-Purpose Senior Centers
- National Eldercare Institute/NISC develop technical assistance guides
- 1995 – NISC celebrates 25 years
- 1996 AT &T grant to fund the development and implementation of national senior center accreditation
- 1997 8 sites selected for national accreditation
- 1998 First senior center accreditation awarded
- **1999 Accreditation rolled out nationally**
- 2000 Full time director hired for NISC; NISC develops a business plan
- 2001 Memorandum of Understanding developed with NCOA and NISC
- 2002 Research & Wellness Committee works with Dr. Ron Aday on survey of senior centers in 5 states to research outcomes of senior center participation
- 2003 NCOA implements new strategic plan introducing Carver Board model
- 2005 Sponsorship package developed
- 2006 New Models and Product Development taskforce implemented

- 2010 40th Anniversary of NISC
- 2010 - NCOA membership discontinued; NISC membership continued to be offered
- 2010 – In March, New Models Task Force Report released on CD, a member benefit.
- 2011 – Initial Excellence in Programming Awards competition held
- 2013 – Oct 2-4, 2015, 1st National Conference in partnership with MCOA
- 2013 – NISC BenefitsCheckUp® Private Label piloted
- 2013 – NISC Health Survey – 3 articles developed
- 2013 - The Aging Mastery Program (AMP) piloted with 5 accredited sites
- 2014 – AMP kick-off in MA
- 2014 – August 4-6 NISC Conference in partnership with FCOA and FASC
- 2015 – March 27 – ASA Senior Center Summit
- 2015 – June – Music Performance Trust Fund Partnership
- 2015 – July 13, White House Council on Aging 57 members attended Watch Parties
- 2015 – Sept 20-22 – NISC conference Indiana with the Mill Race Center
- 2015 – SAGE/NISC Photo Contest partnership
- 2015 – Falls Prevention Survey disseminated
- 2016 – NISC Conference Pennsylvania with Philadelphia Corporation for Aging and Pennsylvania Senior Center Association
- 2017 & 2018 – National NISC Conference help in partnership with NANASP – Chicago & Charleston, SC
- 2019 – NCOA Conference, June, Washington, DC
- 2019 – Nine Programs of Excellence Awards Competitions have been held since 2011 with 765 entries of programming examples.
- As of Dec. 5, 2019 - To date there have been 438 individual accreditations at 264 senior centers, 137 one time, 90 two times, 30 three times and 7 four times. An average of 23 per year for 19 years. 115 are currently accredited.

NISC Team Contact Information

Best Practices Team

Connects center professionals nationally to promote and disseminate new ideas and research.

Chair: Malia Fox, mfox@ci.winona.mn.us

Economic Security Team

Connects senior centers with information about economic security and benefits programs, tools to implement programs, and professionals with expertise.

Co-Chairs: Laura Cisneros, LCisneros@wellmed.net & Beverly Ferry, BeverlyF@livingwellinwabashcounty.org

Improving Health Team

Provides easy access to information on implementation of evidence-based programs.

Position open contact; NISC Chair: Elizabeth Bernat, elizabeth.bernat@rsfh.com

100 Million Healthier Lives Team

To administer the Adult Well-Being Assessment (AWA) in as many sites as possible to develop a shared knowledge base of what drivers impact quality of life (QoL) of older adults.

Chair: Jill Hall, jphall@baltimorecountymd.gov

Public Policy Team

Educates and engages all senior centers and provides information on long-term advocacy issues.

Chair: Patricia Branson, scokinc@ak.net

Accreditation Board

Builds capacity and advances the quality of senior centers nationwide through National Senior Center Standards and Accreditation.

To learn more contact Maureen O'Leary or Christine to find out how to become a NISC Peer reviewer. Chair: Christine Beatty, chris_fred@att.net

Membership Team

Supports building greater value for NISC members and engaging state networks.

Chair: Tracey Colagrossi, TColagrossi@hanover-township.org

NISC Executive Committee: Contact NISC Chair Elizabeth Bernat elizabeth.bernat@rsfh.com

Incoming Chair: Tracey Colagrossi; Past Chair: Lynn Fields Harris, lynnfharris@outlook.com

NCOA/NISC Staff: Maureen O'Leary, NISC Program Manager, Maureen.oleary@ncoa.org

Scott Harlow, NISC Senior Membership Coordinator, scott.harlow@ncoa.org

For more information about NISC go to www.ncoa.org/nisc .