

4th Annual NCACDSS Best Practices Awards Nomination Form

Category: PCC#11 Tier 3
Profiles in Community Collaboration

Project Title: Planning for a Senior Friendly Future

1. **1 Project/Program Summary:** Briefly summarize the project's history, purpose, timeline and budget. **Purpose:** The Status Of Seniors Initiative (SOSI) is an ongoing community collaboration to improve the quality of life for all older adults, and the baby boom generation. Our Vision is "To foster a Senior-Friendly community that values dignity and independence for all older adults."

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Have you ever heard someone say "I can't read the little (& hidden) street signs" or "Who do I call to find out how to help my Dad" or "How can I manage to have Mom live closer to me"? These kinds of issues are addressed in the 2005 SOSI Strategic Planning Report that lays out the following initial Recommendations and Strategies: a Center For Aging; Caregiver Celebration & Support; Community Safety; Transportation Independence; Community Education & Information; Health Public Policies; and Physical Environment. We expect that groups (businesses, agencies and organizations) will adopt many of them and undertake the suggested changes in their areas of influence.

History: The SOSI prepared a background report in 2003 and a first set of recommendations in 2004. The SOSI is led by an Executive Advisory Board and a Steering Committee. Recently SOSI community volunteers, under the leadership of our Executive Advisory Board (EAB) and Steering Committee, completed the 2005 Strategic Planning report with specific strategies. The Board and Committee grew out of the working group that developed the 2003 background report who wanted to be sure their efforts did not just sit on the shelf.

The three reports have been paid for from contributions from the private sector and the Department of Social Services. There is no specific timeline since the planning and implementaiton work is on-going. Over time, our planning process will develop recommendaitons around most of the Topic Areas identified in the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services' Senior Friendly Matrix which has been slightly modified for Mecklenburg.

2. **Innovation:** Why is the program unique? How does your project differ from similar projects? **_This program is unique in that it very broadly defines Long Term Care; it was initiated from providers at the "grass roots", and because almost all of its work and progress has been accomplished with no budget and by volunteers from the community and in for-profit and non-profit organizations**

3. **Project Success and Impact:** What were the objectives? How well were they met? How widespread is the impact of the project/program? What is the anticipated long-term impact? Did the project involve collaboration with other agencies, non-profits, businesses, etc.? Describe the outcome of the collaboration. **Rather than objectives the SOSI developed the following Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles: Vision - To foster a senior-friendly community that values dignity and independence for all older adults Mission - To engage the community in creating a dynamic plan that enhances the quality of life for older adults by focusing resources on their needs - Guiding Principles: Mecklenburg County become a “Senior Friendly Community” that:**

- Values seniors’ contributions to the community.
- Promotes positive intergenerational relations.
- Considers the needs and interests of seniors in the physical environment and in community planning.
- Respects and supports seniors’ desire and efforts to live independently
- Acknowledges the primary role that families, friends and neighbors play in the lives of older adults.

The community should allow seniors the opportunity to “Age in Place” whenever it is reasonably possible. The Initiative’s intent is to review the existence, adequacy and accessibility of needed services for seniors of all income levels. Over the last 3 years the SOSI has involved well over 200 individuals in its collaboration and almost as many organizations who are interested in older adults. The outcomes and impact to date include:

- Holding a forum on The Business of Building a Senior Friendly Mecklenburg sponsored by Charlotte Regional Realtor Association, Home Builders Association of Charlotte, Charlotte Chamber, the Real Estate, Building and Industry Coalition (REBIC), and the Status of Seniors Initiative. Each sponsor is adopting policies to respond to the SOSI recommendations.
- Securing seed money from Mecklenburg County for a Center For Aging and to increase the marketing of Just1Call (an Information and Assistance service for older adults and caregivers).
- Persuading the United Way, the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County to accept and embrace the Status of Seniors Initiative (SOSI) recommendations. \
- Reaching agreement in principal with the Council On Aging to merge with the SOSI to form a Center For Aging type organization that will be a community wide focal point for aging issues, information, and planning.
- Presented to over 55 community organizations with an audience of over 1,000 persons.

What is the anticipated long-term impact? The SOSI partners' goal is for businesses, non-profits and local governments to refer to these and subsequent recommendations to prioritize their annual goals and funding allocations which impact older adults and their caregivers

4. **Project Effort and Difficulty:** How well did the program use limited resources? What obstacles or challenges did you overcome? How was this done? **As the Senior-Friendly Matrix demonstrates, planning for the older adults area is extensive, broad and difuse and can only be accomplished through collaboration. The SOSI project only sought significant resources in the last 6 months since it was not a formal part of any one organization and had to shepherd its minimal resources very carefully, utilizing the resources of many of its volunteers as needed. Mecklenburg County DSS bore the cost**

of a consultant to assist with the 2004 Strategic Planning Report and covered the cost of printing the 2003 and 2004 reports. Since the Board of County Commissioners asked for the 2003 report, DSS provided staff time to develop the 2003 Status of Seniors background report which has taken on a life of its own through the SOSI.

5. **Ability to Replicate Project:** Can this project be duplicated in other counties? What could counties do to minimize obstacles and problems? **The project can be generally duplicated in other counties. In order to be successful, a county needs to share ownership and have established (or establish) a collaborative working relationship with other providers (public and private) of older adult services and with advocacy organizations. Long term success with require developing awareness in the community about how the age wave of baby boomers will impact all businesses and agencies.**