

# The New Horizons for Seniors Program and Addressing Social Isolation



# Background

The New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP) is a federal grants and contributions program that supports projects led or inspired by seniors who make a difference in the lives of others and their communities. Through the NHSP, the Government of Canada encourages seniors to share their knowledge, skills and experiences to the benefit of others.

The objectives of the NHSP are:

- promoting volunteerism among seniors;
- engaging seniors in the community through mentoring of others;
- expanding awareness of elder abuse, including financial abuse;
- supporting social participation and inclusion of seniors; and
- providing capital assistance for new and existing community projects and/or programs for seniors.



# Funding Streams

NHSP funding has two funding streams: community-based projects and pan-Canadian projects.

## Community-based Projects

- Community-based project funding supports activities that engage seniors and address one or more of the program's five objectives. These projects are eligible to receive up to \$25,000 per year per organization in grant funding.

## Pan-Canadian Projects

- Pan-Canadian projects focus on the prevention and reduction of social isolation of seniors, using collaborative approaches and with an emphasis on results. These projects are eligible to receive up to \$750,000 and can be funded for up to 3 years.



# Funded Projects and their Impact

- Since the program started in 2004, close to 17,800 projects have been funded in over 1,000 communities across Canada.
- From 2007-2015, the pan-Canadian stream of the program has funded 75 funded projects focused on increasing the awareness of elder abuse, including financial abuse. These projects resulted in the development, replication, adaptation and dissemination of tools, resources and promising practices across the country.



# Move to Social Isolation

- The focus on social isolation aligns with the work of the National Seniors Council and the Forum of Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors and was informed by community consultations.
  - In early 2014, the National Seniors Council held community consultations across Canada with 305 stakeholders which endorsed the theme of seniors' social isolation for this stream of funding (moving away from elder abuse awareness), and an integration of social innovation principles.
  - Following these consultations, a roundtable was held in July 2014 that involved key experts and national level stakeholders to validate the findings from the consultations.
  - At the Fall 2014 Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors meeting, Ministers agreed to “share promising approaches that lead to innovative solutions to address social isolation among seniors, including those living in rural and remote communities” in the context of their next work cycle.
- This aligns well with the new focus of the pan-Canadian stream of NHSP to integrate a socially innovative approach to measurably reduce the social isolation of seniors



## Move to Social Isolation (cont'd)

- Many seniors in Canada experience or are at risk of experiencing social isolation, which can have a substantial impact on seniors' lives.
- Some of the key risk factors include:
  - Lack of awareness of or access to community services and programs
  - Lack of accessible and affordable transportation options
  - Challenges relating to technology
  - Lack of affordable and suitable housing
  - Health Issues
  - Loss of sense of community
- Social isolation is a multifaceted issue that intersects with many seniors' issues. As such, a variety of other issues facing seniors, such as elder abuse, caregiving, transportation and age-friendly communities, are covered under this new theme.



# Current Projects focussed on Social Isolation

- 24 pilot projects were funded through the NHSP Community-based stream to address social isolation of seniors.
- In 2015, three pilot projects (funded for up to two years and up to \$150K ) were approved to test social innovation principles in service delivery models that perform a 'navigator' role for isolated seniors and their caregivers.
- A Pan-Canadian Call for Proposals (CFP) was launched between 29 May – 10 July 2015. Projects funded through this call will address seniors' social isolation using a social innovation approach.

