Toolkit

The Nelson Allan Project
Connecting Seniors
From Isolation to Activation

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PREFACE

The literature and research review provides confirmation that social isolation and its impact on seniors continues to emerge as a local, national and international issue. It is clear that it is a complex issue and that while efforts are being made to address it at all levels there is still much to be done to ensure a continued quality of life for a valued and potentially vulnerable segment of our population.

The toolkit serves as a resource for those who wish to provide support services to seniors who are socially isolated. The toolkit works for a "neighbour to neighbour" grass roots approach; a community "partnership centered" approach with existing senior service agencies but can also address the needs of a community that has no senior service agencies who may want to establish their own "service delivery" model. The process is not linear and the resources for each step may be used in any order. You may find that your community only wants to go as far as Step 3 - Starting the Program - that is up to you, your group and community to decide. **The ultimate goal is fully engaged seniors and seniors actively running programs for themselves. H**ave fun with the toolkit and please keep us informed of your progress, testimonials or concerns by contacting Laura Pizzacalla at lpizzacalla@burlingtonfoundation.org

Connecting Seniors
From Isolation to Activation

PROJECT BACKGROUND

This toolkit is a result of a successful program created by a very thoughtful, insightful gentleman by the name of Nelson Allan. It is a tribute to his vision.

His actions began, in a small yet meaningful way, with an "idea" to assist seniors, by bringing small groups of eldery men together regularly for discussion and nourishment.

J. Nelson Allan

Nelson proceeded to arrange for speakers from the local community to share their expertise on a wide variety of topics, on a monthly basis, at his retirement residence. He developed provocative questions to promote discussion and exchange of ideas and opinions within the group as a stimulating follow up to the speaker's presentation.

He realized that this informal model he had organized in both settings would also be effective in reaching out to those seniors who would not have the same opportunities to be together. At this point, Nelson sought out others of like mind, involved with the Burlington Community Foundation, to collaborate with him.

Nelson and the volunteer collaborative team realized that they wanted to create a more formalized project as a pilot, one that would be based on Nelson's informal grassroots model of providing supports for seniors. Arrangements were made for project funding through annual earned income from the Nelson Allan Endowment Fund with the Burlington Community Foundation.

Over the past five years, winter and spring sessions of recreational programming has been provided for ten participants. Endorsements indicate that due to their involvement with the programs offered through Nelson's project, the seniors from Acclaim Health experienced an improved quality of life, made new acquaintances and looked forward to their weekly outings at the centre. Recreation programs chosen helped them to gain new skills and rewarded them with the evidence of their creativity in jewellery making, learning of card games, computer skills and participation in current affairs dialogue. The congregate dining was an important part of the program. Healthy, nutritious lunches along with the opportunity to spend time with other seniors were eagerly anticipated and enjoyed.

This toolkit shares the lessons learned and steps involved in establishing a program of support for isolated seniors in your community - from a grass roots approach to a more formalized partnership with a seniors service agency; to a service delivery model approach. We hope you find it helpful!

TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

PURPOSE AND GOALS

The purpose of the toolkit is to share a successful grassroots model of support to seniors who are socially isolated. This will be accomplished through meeting the following outcomes:

- To increase awareness in the community about isolated seniors and the need for social inclusion
- To support and encourage effective sharing of ideas for support for seniors who are isolated in your own community
- To increase awareness of the community supports and programming available for seniors in your community
- To share best practices in the field related to seniors vulnerable to isolation
- To help grassroots organizations and community groups to develop supports for socially isolated seniors in their community by sharing our story in an easy to use format.

The goal of the project is to improve the quality of life of socially isolated seniors by linking them with suitable community activities in order to increase their social inclusion. The toolkit is targeted at seniors 65 and over, who have less social contact than they wish and who face possible negative consequences as a result. Male seniors are an important target group for the project. This does not limit the participation of other interested organizations or providers.

WHO ARE THE POTENTIAL USERS OF THE TOOLKIT?

Isolated seniors are difficult to identify and reach. The use of the toolkit is targeted at grassroots organizations, community groups and staff ranging from informal to more mature non-profit groups with governance structure and paid staff e.g. service groups, local neighbourhood groups who share a common interest of local people working together to find solutions to needs within their communities and neighbourhoods. The initial rollout of this toolkit will target local grass roots community groups such as faith organizations, women's and men's groups, ethnocultural groups, service clubs, interest groups (e.g. CARP, retired teachers groups and seniors clubs). This does not limit the participation of other interested organizations or providers.

HOW TO USE THE TOOLKIT:

The toolkit has eight important steps to guide users when considering, designing and implementing a community-based program for isolated seniors. It provides a basic framework to implement your program. Users can customize the toolkit to meet their unique needs.

Throughout the document you will find specific icons that when you click on them will connect you to various tools that provide specific suggestions and templates. Various tips and stories of past participants will also provide context to the project. Additional information to assist the toolkit user with some of the more complex steps, as well as, sample forms, agreements and templates based on best practises research are available in a separate, supplementary resource document. If you are just starting out for the first time to develop your program, you may find these resources helpful.

TOOLKIT OVERVIEW: THE STEPS

1

ASSESSING YOUR INTEREST TO GET STARTED

Assess your level of interest and commitment to becoming involved in a program. It will give you a "first look" assessment of your ability to develop and deliver the program; and identify challenges before you begin.

2

CREATING A SOLID FOUNDATION

Set your goals and orient yourself to isolated seniors and best practices in the field in working with isolated seniors. **Remember that you must** consult with seniors to see if this interests them.

3

STARTING THE PROGRAM

Identify the isolated seniors you want to assist, locate and communicate with them; Decide what you need to deliver the program and how to find the supports needed through linking with local groups. Start small – pilot test this grassroots approach to identify any challenges, what works, and fine tune the program. You may stay at this step and not move on, depending on your context.

4

DEVELOPING THE PARTNERSHIPS

After piloting the program and evaluating your groups interests, decide whether or not you will continue to deliver the program within your group or through a more formalised partnership model.   *If you chose to develop a more formalized program -you must partner for support. Get started! Identify and contact partners who provide services for seniors in your community and has a method to engage seniors.*

5

DESIGNING THE PROGRAM

Begin collaborating with your partners to design the "nuts and bolts" of your program. If you live in a community with no seniors service agencies, you may consider starting your own service delivery model. Click here for more resources.

6

IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM

Get started! Contact the isolated seniors by telephone, arrange an in-home visit(s) to start an on-going relationship and to determine their program needs and preferences and then put the program into action!

7

EVALUATE, REPORT & COMMUNICATE THE PROGRAM

Once the program is over, complete an evaluation with input from key stakeholders, prepare a report on the outcomes and communicate the success of the program to relevant audiences.

8

KEEPING YOUR PROGRAM STRONG & HEALTHY

Your stakeholders have a role in keeping your program strong and healthy. Engaging the media will help communicate your program to a broader audience and the use of technology will make your job easier. A well developed volunteer training program and recruitment strategy is fundamental in sustaining your program. Build upon existing partnerships and explore new ones to grow the program.

ASSESSING YOUR COMMITMENT TO GET STARTED

PURPOSE

In your neighbourhood or community assess your level of interest and commitment to developing a support intervention for isolated seniors. This will give you a "first look" at your ability to brainstorm and identify challenges you may want to consider before moving on to the next step.

OBJECTIVES

1.   Determine the level of commitment and interest of the group to the idea
2.   Assess how good the "fit" is with what you do already.
3.   Identify benefits and challenges to undertaking this initiative

OUTCOME

Group has decided whether or not they will take action.

TOOLKIT USERS

This step can be done by one lead person in your group, or by a group of people who have shown a level of interest and commitment to providing support to reduce social isolation in seniors. If you are initiating this step by yourself and are thinking of bringing others into the process, start them with Tool A- Assessing Your Commitment to Get Started so you can collectively develop a commitment to move forward with the idea development or not.

TOOL DESCRIPTION AND USE

Since this tool is designed to help you determine if you should proceed or not, it should be approached with an honest and realistic appraisal of what you can and cannot undertake and should be used to generate discussion and diverse points of view.

TIMING

The amount of time spent at this stage of your decision-making process will depend on your group's commitment and on the type of program you are thinking of delivering. Take enough time to be sure you are confident about your ability to undertake such a program.

PROFILE	DOROTHY

Dorothy, a senior living alone in an apartment was not able to leave her home after her husband died. She reluctantly tried the program and says "Once I got going, by golly I wanted to go back." After five years of continuing in the program the people she has met there are "like another family" to her. "The program has made all the difference in my life" she says, she now has something to look forward to all week.

TOOL A - ASSESSING YOUR COMMITMENT

Your goal is to discuss your purpose. It should summarize the answers to the following questions :
1.   Why you are doing what you are doing?
2.   Who you are doing it for?
3.   How you will do it?
4.   What will be the result/outcome of what you are doing for isolated seniors?

Rank each question 1, 2 or 3 in the table below. A score of 1 is low, meaning you will have some challenges and 3 mean you have a high level of confidence that you can meet that requirement. Use the comments section to generate discussion and thoughts about the question and to come up with the final ranking. Use more paper if needed!

Questions to Ask	Low 1	Med 2	High 3
Why do we want to do this program? How compelling is it for us to do? Comments:			
How closely does providing services to isolated seniors fit with what we do already and our organizations mission statement? Comments:			
Do we have someone to lead this program from start to finish? Comments:			
Are we confident that we have or will be able to get the resources we need for the program (e.g. people, money, effort, time)? Comments:			
Do we know of seniors we believe are isolated and would benefit from a program to reduce isolation and how to reach them? Comments:			
What are our concerns about doing this program? Is this a deterrent? Comments:			
What are the benefits of doing this program? Comments:			

Take a look at your scores. If you have more than two responses in the low (1) category, reconsider before moving on. If you are not clear about who or what is prompting this new program, a sense of your ability and commitment to carrying it out, and who and where the isolated seniors are, then either pause to decide whether or not proceed with the program or identify strategies that will enable you to proceed (e.g. recruiting a program leader; engage a community partner or sponsor(s), secure a financial grant).

CREATING A SOLID FOUNDATION

PURPOSE

Once you have explored this idea in Step 1 and have decided to move forward you then will want to establish what you want to accomplish by providing this program, understand the unique needs and challenges of isolated seniors, and understand what the best practices are in this field in providing support to isolated seniors.

OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the characteristics and needs of isolated seniors.
2. Identify best practices for supporting isolated seniors and how you plan to apply them in your program
3. Consult with local seniors.

OUTCOME

This step can work as a checkpoint and a learning tool for you and your group. Effective completion of this step will create a successful foundation by clarifying your intent, checking your knowledge about isolated seniors, and help you identify approaches that will inform your plan. Keep notes as to what works for your group and comment on our blog.

TOOLKIT USERS

The leader and all group members involved in the idea should complete this step.

TOOL DESCRIPTION AND USE

There are two tools that we suggest would be beneficial in this step. They are:
- Use Tool A - Isolated Seniors Descriptive List to review the risk factors and characteristics of isolated seniors. You can add new information, if relevant, to the list to further customize your profile of isolated seniors in your community.
- Complete Tool B- Best Practices Checklist to create the foundation of your program. This is an important activity to complete before you proceed. Add to this list based on your experience.

TIMING

These exercises can be done fairly quickly or you can take more time depending on your preferences. Take as much time as you need to feel comfortable with these exercises and confirm agreement before proceeding to the next step.

WHO IS AN ISOLATED SENIOR?

Identifying isolated seniors who are interested and will benefit from your program can be challenging. Research provides three different profiles that will help you "see" a population that can seem invisible. Being aware of these profiles and characteristics will help you identify vulnerable seniors in your community.

Profile 1 – Factors that put seniors at risk of social isolation are listed below. The more risk factors, the greater the likelihood of social isolation

- Disabilities
- Chronic illness/poor health
- Experiencing a loss (of spouse, home, job)
- Experiencing abuse, sexism, racism, homophobia, financial issues
- Language issues
- Living alone
- Reduced social networks
- Transportation issues
- Poverty or low income
- Low self esteem
- Being female
- Being a single man
- New to country
- Lack of housing

Profile 2 – Characteristics of seniors most vulnerable to isolation are:

- Men and women who have limited assistance with routine activities such as meal preparation, shopping, and transportation, with low emotional support
- Women who have had low support with routine activities, reduced physical leisure activities and/or live alone
- Men who are vulnerable to social isolation and have low emotional support
- Older seniors (age 80 and older) compared to younger seniors (age 65-69) are more vulnerable to social isolation if they have low support with routine activities, and reduced engagement in physical leisure activities and/or live alone
- Those who have experienced the death of spouse, close relative or friends

Profile 3 - Seniors most likely to experience the most social exclusion:

• Are older
• Live in urban areas
• Have no partner
• Have activity limitations due to health
• Are born outside of Canada
• Have lower levels of education

Using these three different profiles, create your own "watch" list for isolated seniors in your community. Add other relevant factors (e.g. specific groups, living areas where seniors are most likely to be vulnerable). Add specific names if you have them.

Our Watch List:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you have knowledgeable, committed individuals who will help you identify these seniors? If no, how will you find and train them?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

Image credit: Arvind Balaraman

TOOL B - BEST PRACTICES IN PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT FOR ISOLATED SENIORS

This tool will help you decide if you have, or can get the elements that are needed to develop your program for isolated seniors before you make a commitment to start the program.

Questions to Ask	Yes	No
1. Do you have an effective leader who is passionate about the program and who will be committed for the short and longer term?		
2. Do you have a person or persons who have credibility and who actively support your program and champion it? This may or may not be the same person as the leader. It is preferable to have additional/different people to take on this role.		
3. Do you have/ will you be able to get volunteers/staff who respect isolated seniors, understands their needs and who can cultivate a good relationship with the isolated senior?		
4. Do you have a good understanding of seniors who are in need of social inclusion? This is necessary before considering any "interventions". Who do you want to serve?		
5. Will this program be supported by your organization/group? Does what you do fit with your organizations/groups goals and objectives or with existing membership/clients?		
6. Do you have a broad knowledge of programs and activities already existing in your community? Community agencies who provide programs services for seniors?		

If you answer **Yes** to all of these questions, you are ready to move to Step 3. If you have 1 or more **No's,** then revisit those questions and determine what options might be available to change the answer to a **Yes** response.

STARTING THE PROGRAM

PURPOSE

This step will move you into the next stage of your program by confirming and identifying the seniors you may be aware of through your associations/outreach who you want to assist, doing an initial assessment of their needs and interests, and establishing the requirements for your program.

OBJECTIVES

1. Define the population of the isolated seniors you will assist
2. Connect with the senior(s) through informal visits to get an initial understanding of their interest and thoughts about the program
3. Identify what community activities are of interest to seniors in your community
4. Put your basic program requirements in place that will make the activity suitable for the senior and will address any of their needs. These may include:
   - Partnerships within the community to enable participation in the activity of choice
   - Finding the program and connecting with the provider
   - Transportation
   - Clothing and necessary program supplies, i.e. swimming apparel
   - Program fees
   - Food
   - Encouraging support and coaching
5. Pilot with a small group project and see if it is what you want

OUTCOME

You will have the elements in place that are required to start the program. You will have an idea of the scope of the program you want to provide and how you will be providing it. You will have contacted seniors about the program and know their interests.

TOOLKIT USERS

Start this step with your leader and others who have agreed to support the program.

TOOL DESCRIPTION AND USE

You should invest the required time to do this step well, particularly as you identify the seniors you want to serve and make initial connections with them or others who know them, to understand their needs. See Tool A - Identify Seniors at Risk of Isolation for help.

TIMING

There are two fundamental tools to work through to achieve the outcomes. Finding and linking with groups and individuals who can help you connect with vulnerable seniors will be one of the cornerstones of the project and the most challenging. It will however be one of the defining elements of your program so take the time and effort to carry it through.

DEFINE THE ISOLATED SENIORS YOU WANT TO ASSIST

Identifying isolated seniors can be done in various ways. There are three options outlined below. The first method is to look within your existing membership/participants for seniors who could be socially isolated. This "informal" method can be a good starting point. In addition, you may apply a best practices approach and either map and/or identify targeted groups of seniors who might benefit from social inclusion as you pilot this first model.

METHOD 1: IDENTIFY SENIORS AT RISK OF ISOLATION THROUGH INFORMAL CONNECTIONS

Look within your own network to identify or have others identify seniors who may be at risk of isolation or be isolated.

- Do you know of seniors in your neighbourhood or group who you feel might be socially isolated or want to be more involved in the community?
- Do you know a senior who is part of your group who has not been attending as regularly as they used to?
- Do you know someone who has expressed concern about an elderly family member or neighbour?

Name	Reason	Contact

METHOD 2: IDENTIFY SENIORS AT RISK OF ISOLATION THROUGH SHARED CHARACTERISTICS

Using the following tool, create a list of possible groups who you would contact to discuss your proposed program. The local information services will be an excellent resource for this. Some are listed below.

- Associations where seniors of common gender might be found i.e. retired firefighters association
- Associations where seniors with common interests might be found i.e. Legion, University Women's Club, YMCA
- Associations where seniors with common backgrounds might be found i.e., retired teachers associations, ethnocultural associations
- Agencies or community groups known to you who may have a known population of seniors who would benefit from your program e.g. social service agencies; faith organizations, salvation army
- Groups where seniors at risk of isolation might be found e.g. widows bereavement group

Name	Address	Phone	E-mail

Image credit: Suat Eman

METHOD 3: IDENTIFY SENIORS AT RISK OF ISOLATION THROUGH MAPPING HOUSING TYPES AND/OR GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

If you live in a community with no service agencies this tool can help you with identifying seniors who live in housing types that are more likely to lead to isolation or a specific geographical location with a high seniors population. If you have local information services they can be a helpful resource or connect to information services in your area. For more resources on starting your own agency see Step 5 Tools.

Using the following suggestions, identify the area and the possible contact to discuss your proposed program.   Where in your community are the following types of housing?

- Apartments/condos with a high percentage of seniors
- Retirement homes
- Nursing homes
- Townhouses
- Other: _____

PURPOSE

After piloting the informal approach you may want to discuss whether or not you will continue to deliver the informal program within your organization/group (i.e. stay in Step 3) or move forward through a partnership model (i.e. start in Step 4).   A partnership model helps you to deliver the program   in a more formalized way in collaboration with existing senior support agencies.

OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the needs of seniors to attend program
2. Determine funding required
3. Develop inventory of potential partners in community to support program
4. Establish partnerships that meet program needs

OUTCOME

• Increased awareness of seniors within your community
• Engaged interest of isolated seniors in participating in a program in their community
• Partnerships developed to enable program planning
• Funding requirements identified/available

TOOLKIT USERS

The program leader and the support staff/volunteers will determine the most appropriate delivery system for this program. Trained volunteers and/or staff will lead the procedures for contacting and assessing the identified isolated seniors and will secure the program that meets their needs.

TOOL DESCRIPTION AND USE

Here are some helpful tips as you build your partnership program
1. Determine what is needed to fund to meet needs (Tool A - What Do I Need to Start the Program?)
2. Action plan for securing resources (Tool B - Action Plan for Securing Resources)

TIMING

This step may be fairly brief if you decide to provide the entire delivery system in- house. If you have partners to deliver part, or the entire program, allow for more time.

All of these components are necessary to have in place before moving to the next step. The time is well spent at the front end of this process to ensure success.

> # TIP   Establish a partnership or local agency
>
> If you have worked with seniors in your community and want to take the initiative a step further, you may want to establish a partnership with a local senior service agency. Your role then as a volunteer group could be:
> • Volunteering with the agency
> • Driving
> • Fundraising or grant writing
> • Or as an advisory role
>
> For more resources see Step 5 Tools

TOOL A - WHAT DO I NEED TO START THE PROGRAM?

This tool will help you determine where the resources are coming from to provide the program. Complete the table below.

What I Need to Start the Program	Where I Will Get it	
	I have or will find this requirement "in–house" Specify Who or What	**I will find this requirement through a partner. Specify who the partner(s) might be**
People (one or more depending upon the needs) to support the program by: • Acting as the contact person for program enquiries • Contacting the senior about the program • Finding the resources needed to deliver the program • Doing communication and or promotional activities for the program • Meeting with isolated Seniors and be their "guide", connection and ongoing support to link with community resources		
Resource Items: • Transportation • Participation fees • Food or refreshments • Program and promotional materials (e.g. flyers, brochures, website)		
Communication: • Internal • External		
Training for all involved in program - design/delivery		
Knowledge and information on a range of activities or programs that isolated seniors can be involved in outside of their home		
List anything else you think you need.		

TOOL B - ACTION PLAN FOR SECURING RESOURCES

Complete the following tool to identify how you will secure all resources and timing.

Resource (Type)	Source (Where will it come from?)	Lead Role (Who will get it & how?)	Amount (How much do you need?)	Timing (When do you need it?)	Status (Confirmed, Not Confirmed)

STEP 5
DESIGNING THE PROGRAM

PURPOSE

With your partners develop the "nuts and bolts" of the program.

OBJECTIVES

Begin to plan the program
1. Describe the program.
2. Define roles & responsibilities of volunteers and partners
3. Ensure the legal requirements are met and forms and agreements are in place
4. Establish a budget with your partners
5. Build your partnerships and put in place partner contracts
6. Determine how seniors will access the program

OUTCOME

A well-developed program that meets the needs of seniors and engages the community partners and project volunteers is ready to be implemented.

TOOLKIT USERS

There may be a variety of individuals responsible for these activities based on your assigned roles and responsibilities.

TOOL DESCRIPTION AND USE

For the most part these activities are standard to many programs and you may have your own templates in place. Your group or organization may also have specific requirements that need to be added. Use the following tools to guide you, Tool A - Develop a Program Description, Tool B - Confirm who is doing what & their accountability, Tool C - Establish a Budget with your Partners, Tool D - Determine how Seniors will access the Program, Tool E - Sample Volunteer Registration Form, Tool F - In-Home Assessment Form, Tool G - Sample Client Agreement, Tool H - Service Delivery Flow Diagram . You can find other resources through related websites.

TIMING

This step requires time and commitment to develop the relationship with your partners. It is important that you all understand, respect and appreciate each other's skills, roles and boundaries.

TIP

If you are located in a community with no community services - you may consider starting your own service. Step 5 outlines the tools you would need to start the process

TOOL A - DEVELOP A PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The basic program description builds on the work you did in Step 2 and provides information that can be used to develop program brochures, web page information, letters asking for support for the program, etc.

Use the following sample template to develop your program description.

a)   The (name of program)_____

b)   Which is run by (agency or group)_____

c)   Who it is for (who, age target group)_____

d)   Why (program goals what you want to accomplish for the senior) _____

e)   The program (what services will it provide)_____

f)   It is (cost and how supported)_____

g)   Seniors will enjoy (meals, linked recreation programs supports etc)_____

h)   It will be done (approach - respect, at seniors pace etc)_____

i)   Timing (begin anytime)_____

j)   Contact (who, how when, who can contact)_____
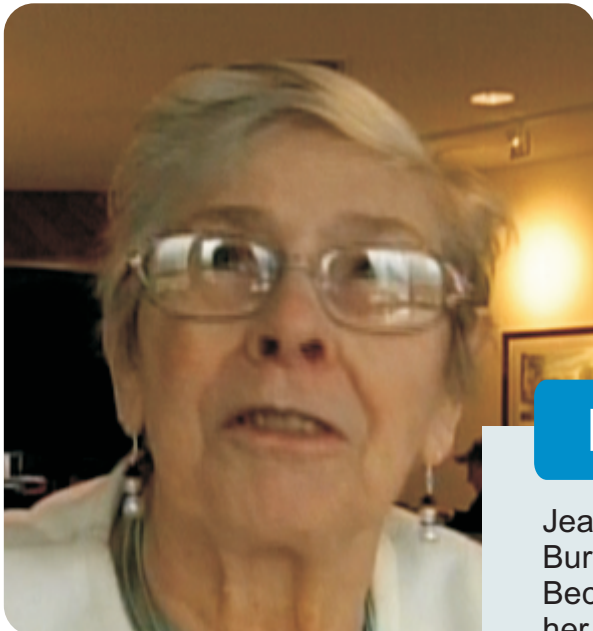
PROFILE   JEAN

Jean, a participant in the Nelson Allan Project at the Burlington Senior's Centre, is a widow who lives alone. Because she is confined to a wheelchair, she cannot leave her home without help. She joined the program three years ago and hasn't looked back since. She says she enjoys the program so much because it gives her something to look forward to each week by getting out of her apartment and engaging in her community. She will definitely continue participating in the program.

TOOL B - CONFIRM WHO IS DOING WHAT & THEIR ACCOUNTABILITY

This tool will help make your program successful. Descriptions for specific duties, responsibilities, qualifications and reporting are invaluable because they:

- Set clear expectations for the people involved
- Make sure everyone is aligned with what you want to accomplish
- Help you clarify what it is you want and expect
- Help you cover your legal bases

This step can be quite simple or more complex depending on the size/type of your program and your group or organization. Regardless of the size or approach, you will need the following:

- An accountability structure so everyone knows who to communicate to
- Knowledge about who is doing what
- Clear expectations of people, not only in what they do but how they do it (i.e. respectfully, on time, etc.)

What you decide to put in place can range from simple accountability and responsibilities lists to more detailed job descriptions and flow charts. It is important that the following fundamental information be put in place:

Accountability

This can be described in words and/or supported by a visual flow diagram. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who is the lead person for this program? (this person is also accountable for what happens)
- Who (if anyone) would the lead person need to report to if anything went wrong?
- Who are the other people involved in carrying out the program and what are their areas of responsibility?

Responsibilities

For each area of responsibility, ask the following questions to assist you in developing job descriptions. Depending on your program, you may want to add more questions that are relevant to the responsibilities.

- What is their overall role - the purpose of what they do?
- What are their responsibilities and, if necessary, tasks?
- Who do they report to?
- What is the length of time they are expected to commit to this program?
- What are the training requirements?

Limits and Expectations

It is important that everyone involved in the program is clear about the breadth and limitations of their roles and responsibilities in order to manage expectations. When you are putting together information about who is doing what, include items such as:

- Travelling
- Cultural expectations
- Dress codes

STEP 5

TOOL C - ESTABLISH A BUDGET WITH YOUR PARTNERS

Here is a general outline of how to prepare a program summary budget. Once you fill it in, add other items to personalize it to meet your program requirements.

PROGRAM BUDGET TEMPLATE

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	$ COST
1. General Program Costs		
Staff Costs	salary, benefits, travel	
Volunteer Costs	travel, police checks, recognition	
Training Costs	manual production, rooms	
General Program Supplies	program & office supplies	
Marketing and Promotion	brochures, web enhancement, printing	
2. Costs Related To Clients		
Transportation	taxi service, volunteer drivers	
Meals/food	lunches, food	
Program related costs	program & activity fees	
3. Office		
	telephone, rent, internet	
Total Costs		
4. Revenues		
Sponsors	local businesses, grants, charities	
Fees	user fees	
Total Revenues		
Net Budget **(total costs minus revenues)**		

TOOL D - DETERMINE HOW SENIORS WILL ACCESS THE PROGRAM

Before initiating your program you need to decide what type of program will meet your program needs. This tool will help you develop the system by taking you through a series of questions.

1.   How will seniors or others contact you?

Decide which of the following (or other) methods you will use to connect with the senior(s) and outline it below:

- Who are the people (or network of people) who will call in to identify potentially isolated seniors?
- Who do they phone? (i.e. first point of contact; centralized number)
- What are referring people told when they call in?
- What call tracking system will you have in place? (i.e. tracking number of calls of people inquiring about the program)
- Who will check the messages and respond in a timely manner?
- Who will co-ordinate and document the follow-up to the first telephone call?
-

_____

_____

_____

_____

2.   How will you connect with and get to know isolated seniors?

Decide which of the following (or other) methods you will use to connect with and get to know the senior(s) and outline it below:

- Introductory phone call (identify who you are, how you got their name and the reason for your call).
- In- home visit or telephone call (in-home visit is recommended).
- Make sure volunteers or staff connecting with the seniors are kind and caring and follow best practises in communication to make the senior comfortable.
- Use an in-home assessment tool and confidentiality to make sure you get all the information you need.
- Give the senior control of the decision-making; include their family or friends in the in-home visit (if appropriate); explore why they may be feeling uncertain about participating in your program, etc.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. How to make the "best" program fit for the isolated senior:

Decide which of the following (or other) methods you will use to connect with the senior(s) and outline it below:

- Know the characteristics of an isolated senior. This, together with the information you got during the in-home visit gives you a detailed profile of a successful program match.
- Determine if you can provide the program in-house or will look outside your organization.
- Know what programs are in your community. If you don't know, find someone who does. Once you think you have the right program identified, call the potential provider and make arrangements. Remember, group situations are recommended by best practises.
- Identify the other things you need to complete the package. Ideally using the resources you have already to put together the full package for the senior, use what you already have and build upon it gradually by starting small.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Getting things set and ready to go:

Decide which of the following (or other) methods you will use to connect with the seniors and outline it below:

- Contact the senior to confirm their participation and go over the program details (i.e. time, location, transportation, type of program, what to wear).
- Complete all forms and sign-offs with the senior and/or their family (i.e. Assessment Form, Confidentiality Form). This can be done in person or through the mail (include a self addressed envelope and stamp).
- Confirm final details with the program provider (if applicable).
- Bring together the isolated senior, volunteer and program provider(s).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

TOOL E - SAMPLE VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION FORM

The following Volunteer Registration form will be completed by every volunteer participating in the program and kept on file. This form contains personal information and should be considered confidential. The information on the form is only used for the sole purpose of this program. You can add more content to suit your program needs.

General Information:

Date:				
Name:				
Address:				
Telephone Number:	Home:		Work:	
	Cell Phone:		E-mail:	

Emergency Contact: In case of an emergency, please notify:
Name: _____

Telephone Number or Cell Phone Number: _____

1. Why are you interested in being a volunteer for this program?
_____

2. Describe your past volunteer work experience.
_____

3. What unique skills do you bring to this work?
_____

4. What language(s) do you speak and/or write?
_____

5. When would you be available?

morning _____ afternoon _____ evening _____weekend _____

6.   How long would you be available?

_____ hour _____half day   _____full day _____week(s)_____other

7.   Clients:
I prefer to be with a: male senior _____   female senior _____   doesn't matter _____

Do you mind if the client is a smoker? Yes _____   No _____

8.   Transportation:
Do you have your own transportation?   Yes _____   No _____

Do you hold a valid Ontario Driver's License?   Yes _____   No _____

Do you carry current insurance coverage?   Yes _____   No _____

If yes, are you willing to drive a program participant?   Yes _____   No _____

9.   Participation Limitations:
Do you have any health concerns that might affect your ability to participate in this program?
Yes (please specify) _____   No_____

10.   Allergies:
Do you have any allergy(s):
Yes (please specify) _____   No_____

11.   Other Considerations:

•   Up-to-date Police Checks – vulnerable participants
•   References (2-3) – non-family members. Ask the volunteer for permission to contact these people
•   Insurance form – for volunteers who maybe driving the isolated senior to and from the program

PROFILE   Acclaim Health & Seniors

Loneliness and/or isolation have long been established as a major problem that seniors face. These issues often occur in our senior population because they tend to suffer greater losses and become more vulnerable. Some of the changes are loss of role identity, changes in lifestyle, death of loved ones, illness of loved ones and poor health. The emotional drain of trying to cope leaves a person vulnerable to loneliness and depression.

In 2006 the Friendly Visiting, Special Step program of ACCLAIM Health serviced 575 socially isolated individuals. Need exceeded the supply of volunteers: at the end of the 2006 fiscal year there was a waiting list of 60 new clients. In recent years this has grown to over 200 seniors waiting for service.

All of the clients are frail and have multiple health problems and 26% have memory impairments. Caregivers of these clients also experience feelings of loneliness and often helplessness. Volunteers are matched with clients on a one to-one basis and assist in alleviating isolation, loneliness and depression by providing friendship. They assist in activating social skills and maintaining community contacts.

This checklist is based on best practices from Acclaim Health. It has been modified to suit the isolated seniors project. This information must be kept in a locked location according to legislation.

Instructions:
- Complete the checklist during your first in-home visit based on your observations
- Submit completed checklist to supervisor for client file
- If there is an unexpected/immediate safety or health issue when you arrive, contact your supervisor immediately or 911 if warranted

General Information		
Name		
Male Female	Telephone Number	
Marital Status Married Single Widowed	Address	
Email		
Living Profile	**Comments**	
Type of Housing:		
	House	☐	
	Apartment/Condo	☐	
	Townhouse	☐	
	Retirement Home	☐	
	Other	☐	
Living Arrangement:		
	Alone	☐	
	Spouse	☐	
	Family	☐	
	Other	☐	

TOOL F - IN-HOME ASSESSMENT FORM

Pets:			
Yes	No		If Yes, what type of pet?
Smoker:			
Yes	No		
Physical Limitations:			
	Walking	☐	
	Sitting	☐	
	Hearing	☐	
	Eye Sight	☐	
	Speech	☐	
	Diet Restrictions	☐	
	Other	☐	

Program Participation:
Was the senior interested in the program you are offering? Did they seem interested in participating?

Yes: _____   No: _____   If No, give reason(s): _____

Senior - Interests:
What kinds of programs did the senior tell you he/she would be interested in participating?

_____

_____

What participation barriers were identified?
_____

Do you think this isolated senior can participate in your program if the right supports are provided?
Yes: _____   No: _____

Name of Volunteer doing the assessment: _____

Contact Information: _____

Date: _____

This sample was based on a client agreement used by Acclaim Health, with a few modifications to fit this program. It is strongly recommended that you engage the services of a lawyer to review all contractual forms that you need to implement your program, to protect the client and the organization/group or partner that are involved.

Client Name

_____

Address

_____

_____ (Name of the group or organization) will protect the privacy and confidentiality of your personal health information as outlined in the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act. _____ (Name of the group or organization) will only collect, use and disclose the personal health information of the client to the extent necessary for providing a leisure/recreational program.

I, the under-signed, have received and reviewed the _____ (name of the group or organization) privacy statement outlining the personal information practices of _____ (name of the group or organization). I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered regarding these practices and I understand the purposes for which my personal health information will be collected, used and disclosed.

I hereby authorize the collection, use, disclosure and storage of my personal health information by _____ (name of the group or organization) to facilitate participation in a leisure/recreational program as described in the _____ (name of the group or organization) Privacy Statement.

I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time, subject to legal restrictions and reasonable notice and that _____ (name of the group or organization) will inform me of any implications of such withdrawal.

_____ (PRINT)

_____ (SIGNATURE)

Signature of Client/Substitute Decision Maker

Relationship to Client: _____

_____ (PRINT)

_____ (SIGNATURE)
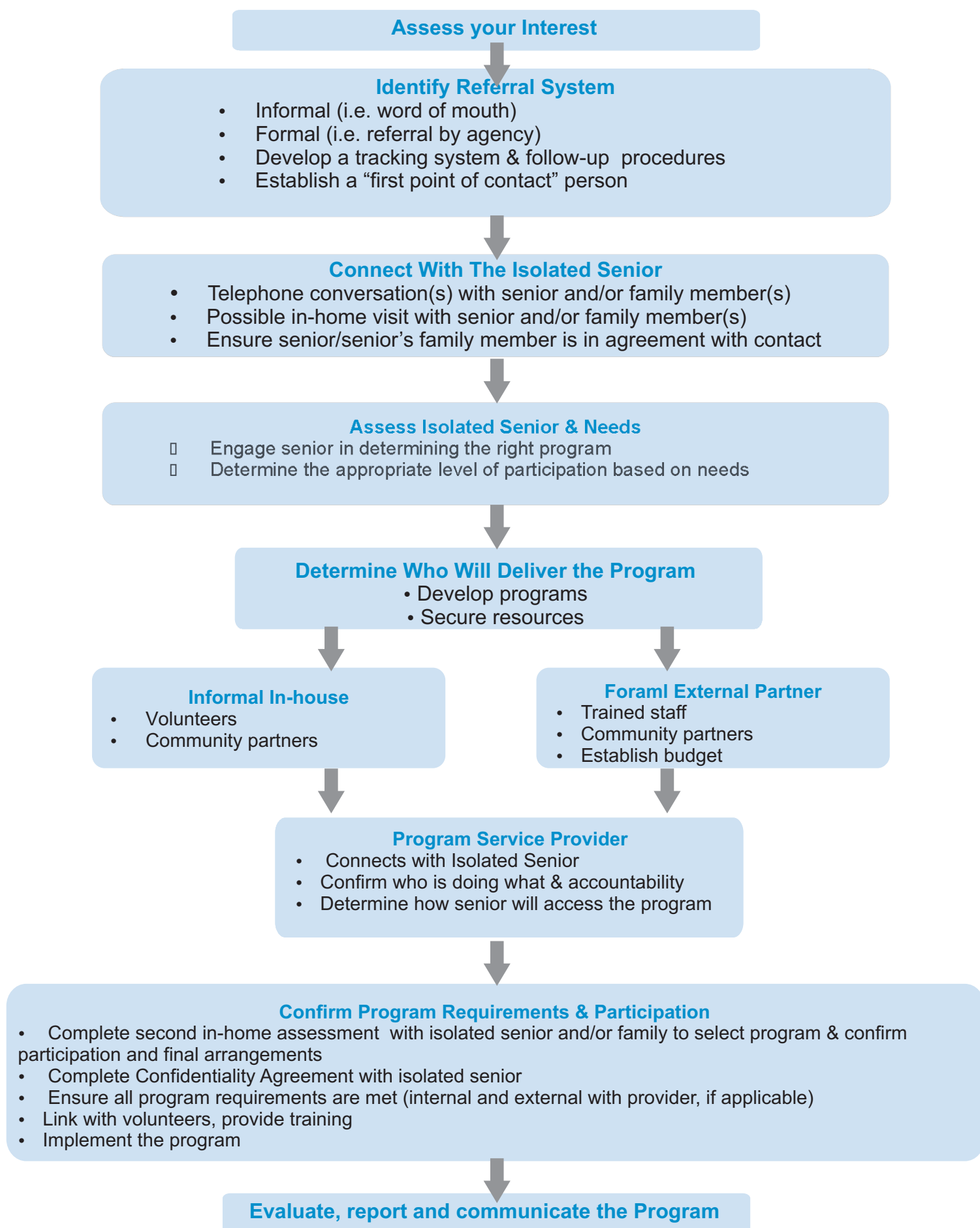Signature of Witness

Date: _____

TOOL H - SERVICE DELIVERY FLOW DIAGRAM

Assess your Interest

Identify Referral System
- Informal (i.e. word of mouth)
- Formal (i.e. referral by agency)
- Develop a tracking system & follow-up procedures
- Establish a "first point of contact" person

Connect With The Isolated Senior
- Telephone conversation(s) with senior and/or family member(s)
- Possible in-home visit with senior and/or family member(s)
- Ensure senior/senior's family member is in agreement with contact

Assess Isolated Senior & Needs
- Engage senior in determining the right program
- Determine the appropriate level of participation based on needs

Determine Who Will Deliver the Program
- Develop programs
- Secure resources

Informal In-house
- Volunteers
- Community partners

Foraml External Partner
- Trained staff
- Community partners
- Establish budget

Program Service Provider
- Connects with Isolated Senior
- Confirm who is doing what & accountability
- Determine how senior will access the program

Confirm Program Requirements & Participation
- Complete second in-home assessment with isolated senior and/or family to select program & confirm participation and final arrangements
- Complete Confidentiality Agreement with isolated senior
- Ensure all program requirements are met (internal and external with provider, if applicable)
- Link with volunteers, provide training
- Implement the program

Evaluate, report and communicate the Program

IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM

PURPOSE

To begin the program with a positive experience for seniors and others who are involved in the delivery.

OBJECTIVES

1.   Seniors will have a successful beginning to the program.
2.   The delivery system is successfully operationalized.
3.   Volunteers/staff and partners carryout their roles and provide feedback.

OUTCOMES

•   Program is implemented successfully.
•   Challenges are addressed and program modified if necessary.
•   Seniors continue to participate regularly.

TOOLKIT USERS

All partners, volunteers and staff will be fully involved in carrying out their roles to ensure program success.

TOOL DESCRIPTION AND USE

Tool A - Launch Checklist is provided to assist the team in getting the program underway.

TIMING

You most likely will have committed to a start date at this point and ideally you will have worked through the steps to this point so you have a good base to begin the program.

A program review of what needs to be done so any gaps or needs could be identified. ☐

Confident/confirmed that, volunteers and staff are ready and clear on what they are doing, when they are doing it, and have everything they need to do their job. ☐

You have observed the programs that your senior will be attending? ☐

Supports the seniors requested and/or need are in place? ☐

A pre-program phone call has been made to senior participants? ☐

Paperwork in place? ☐

PROFILE   Reluctant Seniors

Working with family members to help aging parents to become engaged in the community/seniors centre can be a slow process. While the adult children want this experience for mom/dad, sometimes the parents are reluctant. At Burlington Seniors' Centre, we invite the senior to attend the monthly breakfast /entertainment program and bring their **adult child** with them. This is a 1 time only commitment and is seen positively by the senior. This can lead to greater interest in joining activities and becoming a regular participant.

Sometimes **neighbours** can be of help. At Burlington Seniors' Centre, a neighbour offered to go with staff to visit the senior who had been in her home for some time. The neighbour to neighbour contact worked well and that senior is now participating in the program.

Image credit: jscreationzs

EVALUATE, REPORT & COMMUNICATE THE PROGRAM

PURPOSE

To help you decide what evaluation, reporting and communication tools to use for your program.

OBJECTIVES

1. Present program results (e.g. successes, challenges and solutions) to stakeholders and staff/volunteers.
2. Modify program, if appropriate.
3. Increase community awareness of the program.

OUTCOMES

• Evaluation tools will give you immediate feedback on what worked well, what may need to be changed and ideas for future program development from the various participants.

• The report will provide formal closure to the program and a permanent record for future reference. The report may fulfill a funding requirement as part of a grant application process.

• Program outcomes will be communicated to the various stakeholders, including the broader community, providing an opportunity to showcase the success of the program and positioning your program for future partnerships, funding, etc. to grow and sustain your program for isolated seniors.

TOOLKIT USERS

This evaluation should be completed by all participants: the isolated senior, program leader, volunteer, staff (if applicable), community partner(s), sponsor(s) and/or the funding agency/ individual.

TIMING

It is recommended that all three tools (e.g. surveys, program evaluation and report/presentation) be completed within 4-6 weeks following the program. A longer time frame may effect the positive momentum that you have created. The timing may need to be adjusted if you are required to report back through a more formal process (e.g. council, boards, foundations or granting organization), in which case you will follow their timelines.

TOOL DESCRIPTION AND USE

Depending on the program, your available resources and team skills, you will need to decide what tool or combination of tools is most appropriate to evaluate your program. Samples of evaluation tools have been provided to assist you in this step (Tool A - Sample Volunteer Survey, Tool B - Sample Partner Survey, Tool C Sample Client/Senior Survey, Tool D- Sample Program Evaluation Form, Tool E - Sample Report Template)

TOOL A - SAMPLE VOLUNTEER SURVEY

This is a sample program evaluation survey to get you started after the program is finished. You may want to customize the questions to fit your specific program. Not all questions may apply to you, please customize it to meet your requirements. It is important to include feedback from the isolated senior, program leader, staff/volunteers, partner(s), etc.

Volunteer Survey (telephone, in-person, focus group, online)			
Did the training meet your needs?			
What improvements to the training program would you suggest?			
Would you be interested in being a volunteer trainer?			
Did you encounter any challenges? If yes, please specify.			
How would you rate the following on a scale of 1-3? 1-fair 2-good 3-excellent			
Seniors level of engagement in the program		Program location	
		Length of program	
In-home visit with senior		Program instructor	
Use of forms and agreements		On-site staff	
Program content		partners	
What 3 things did you like about the toolkit?			
What didn't you like about the toolkit?			
What 3 improvements would you like to see incorporated into the toolkit?			
Would you be interested in volunteering in future programs? If yes, what type of programs?			
What positive things did you see in the senior during the length of the program?			
How satisfied were the seniors and their families (if applicable) in the program?			
Do you have any other comments you would like to share?			

TOOL B - SAMPLE PARTNER SURVEY

Partner Survey (telephone, on-line, in-person)	
Would you be interested in continuing with this partnership for future programs?	
Did the program meet your expectations? If no, what were the shortfalls and what improvements would you recommend?	
Did you get any feedback from the client? If yes, please specify.	
Would you display/distribute program promotional materials?	
Would you consider becoming a program sponsor?	

TIP   PROGRAM EVALUATION AND REPORTING

Here are some tips when completing your program evaluation and reporting.

Evaluation Tips:
- Seniors prefer personal contact and conversation – an interview is recommended
- Evaluations should be done in a timely manner by all stakeholders
- Testimonials from stakeholders are powerful communication and promotional tools
  Evaluation leads to strong and healthy programs and promotes continuous learning

Report Tips:
- Write the report in plain language for a broad audience
- Be clear, concise and focus on what made the Program successful
- Recognize the efforts of the various stakeholders involved in the process
- Ensure that the report and presentation materials are web-friendly
- Include testimonials (e.g. from participant interviews or surveys) to reinforce participant feedback, giving the program a "human face"
- Be consistent with format, fonts, wording, and include, if appropriate, a list of definitions and references in the back of the report
- Use graphics such as tables, charts, diagrams, photographs, etc. to add visual interest and clarity to the report and presentation, where appropriate

This table provides one way to evaluate the overall quality and performance of the program. It's recommended that you get input from the isolated senior (with the assistance of a volunteer), staff/volunteer and/or program provider.

Program Components	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	N/A
Quality of the Program					
Length of Program					
Facility					
Location					
Size of group					
Volunteer Support					
Service Provider					

Add up the number of check marks in each column to determine areas of success and improvement. You may want to meet with your stakeholders to brainstorm/identify what to change in the program to improve overall performance and desired outcomes.

Other Comments:

_____

_____

_____

Survey Tool			
In Person Client Survey (Seniors)			
What did you like about the program?			
What didn't you like about the program?			
What changes would you recommend?			
What other programs would you be interested in participating in?			
Did the volunteer meet your expectations? If no, why?			
How would you rate the following on a scale of 1-3? 1-fair 2-good 3-excellent			
The program		Transportation	
The location		Meals/snacks	
The instructor		Staff on site	
The length of the program		Volunteers	
Would you be interested in participating in future programs?			
How do you want to be contacted about other social functions or programs?			
Other comments?			

TOOL D - SAMPLE PROGRAM EVALUATION FORM

General Information	
Date	
Name of Evaluator	Program Duration
Program Name	Number of Participants
Program Description	

Program Details When evaluating your program, you may want to ask these types of questions		
Did the program meet its goals, objectives and outcomes? Comments	Yes	No
Did the program meet our expectations? Comments	Yes	No
Did the participants enjoy the program? Comments	Yes	No
Where the service providers satisfied? Comments	Yes	No
Was the program within the approved budget? Comments	Yes	No
Did the training program meet the needs of the volunteers? Comments	Yes	No
Did the media engage in the program (e.g. coverage)? Comments	Yes	No
What changes, if any, would you make to the program? Comments	Yes	No

TOOL E - SAMPLE REPORT TEMPLATE

This report template provides a framework for your report at the end of the program. It can be modified to meet your specific requirements. Each section of report template poses some questions to think about that will assist you in building the content.

General Information	
Program Name	
Date	Report Number
Author of Report	File Number
Report Details	

Purpose of the Report

a)   Why are you writing the report?

Background

a)   Why did you develop the program?
b)   What steps did you take in developing the program?
c)   Who was involved in developing the program?
d)   What research did you do? Best Practices?

Overview of Program

a)   Describe the program including goals and objectives
b)   Who are the participants? (i.e. isolated seniors profile, program providers,   community partners)
c)   What was the budget?
d)   How long was the program?
e)   Where was it located?
f)   How did you promote your program?

Results of Program

a)   Was the program successful?
b)   What was the feedback from stakeholders and participants?
c)   What did you learn?
d)   What program changes would you make (if applicable)
e)   Did the program meet your desired results?

Program Recommendation(s)

a)   What recommendations will you make to continue to build upon this program moving forward to keep it strong and healthy over the long-term?
b)   Will you continue to provide this type of program?
c)   What other considerations should you think about moving forward? (i.e. budget increase, pursuing grants, sponsors and community partners)

Conclusion

A summary paragraph(s) that wraps up the purpose of the report and outcomes.

KEEPING YOUR PROGRAM STRONG & HEALTHY

PURPOSE

This step will help you develop strategies and actions to ensure your program remains healthy.

OBJECTIVES

1.   Maintain and strengthen the program.
2.   Increase efficiency, where possible.
3.   Fill in the gaps that need to be addressed in a timely manner.
4.   Build upon the program when the timing is right.

OUTCOMES

Your program will remain vibrant and relevant. A strong valid program will help secure potential partners or longer term funding, will support solid long term growth and viability of the program and most importantly create a program which will support isolated seniors over the long term.

TOOLKIT USERS

All stakeholders have a role in the program by being accountable and taking responsibility for ensuring the program remains strong.

TIMING

Programs go through cycles and phases. Paying attention to what is needed at each stage is important to keeping the program strong. Sustaining and building the program is an on-going activity. The team championing this program should be evaluating, promoting and adjusting the program throughout the process in order to make timely adjustments.

TOOL DESCRIPTION AND USE

Tool A - Growing & Maintaining a healthy program can be used by the project team as a tool to "step back" and look at the program to determine what might be needed to strengthen it. The evaluation process will give you valuable information, helping you build on the success of the program. However this sample tool will help you to build on the positives that are in place.

Image credit: luigi diamanti

TOOL A - GROWING AND MAINTAINING A HEALTHY PROGRAM

Complete these questions to develop a set of timely strategies for your program.

Where are we in the program cycle and what is it we need to do right?
- If a new program – Are we on top and investing energy to get it on track?
- If an existing program – Are we paying attention to the evaluation to modify it?
- If an older program – Are we keeping relevant? What does it need?

_____

_____

_____

Are we celebrating what we have done? If No, why not and what do we need to do to be ready to celebrate?

_____

_____

_____

Have we looked ahead 2 years to determine what we would like to do? If Yes, what do we want to do and how will we get it done?

_____

_____

_____

Are our champions still engaging and seeing the value and importance of what we do? If No, who is going to do this?

_____

_____

_____

The seniors are the strength of the program and our raison d'etre. Are they our central focus of what we are doing? If No, what is getting in the way?

_____

_____

_____

Have we encouraged or developed the seniors to become more actively involved in the program design and decision making?

_____

_____

_____

A RESEARCH REVIEW OF SENIORS, ISOLATION, AND BEST PRACTISES IN SERVICE PROVISION

Marg MacVinnie and Catherine Talbot for the Nelson Allan Project
February 2011

Seniors and Social Isolation: A Complex Issue

Social isolation can be defined as less social contact than an individual wishes and that may lead to negative outcomes such as poor health loneliness or other emotional distress[1].

As the proportion of older people in the population increases and more live alone, the problem of social isolation among this age group is a growing concern (World Health Organization 2002). It is widely accepted that social support has a strong protective effect on health. The prevailing belief, as stated by the World Health Organization, is that social isolation and exclusion are associated with "increased rated of premature death, lower general well-being, more depression, and a higher level of disability from chronic diseases"[2]. This is echoed by studies that show social isolation has predictors such as poor perceived health[3], a higher number of chronic illnesses[4] and compromised mental health[5].

Seniors clearly value their social relationships as those 65 and over "consistently rank relationships with family and friends second only to health as the most important area of life"[6].

Not all socially isolated seniors experience negative consequences and some seniors may prefer to be alone and do not experience loneliness. This statement, found in the literature review "Social Isolation Among Seniors: An Emerging Issue, An Investigation by the Children's, Women's and Seniors Health Branch of the British Columbia Ministry of Health, March 2004", points out that social isolation is not a straightforward issue and those providing services cannot make easy assumptions about causes or relationships. The investigative review provides an in-depth look at seniors and isolation and is helpful for those who want a greater understanding of the prevalence of social isolation in older persons, its risk factors and the relationship between isolation and loneliness in seniors.

Which Seniors Are Vulnerable to Social Isolation?

Understanding the factors that can contribute to social isolation helps identify vulnerable seniors and barriers to participation and inclusion. Even if programs are not specifically

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[1] Working Together for Seniors: A Toolkit to Promote Seniors Social Integration in Community Services, Programs and Policies; Federal Provincial Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors November 2007
[2] Social Isolation Among Seniors: An Emerging Issue; An Investigation by the Children's, Women's and Senior's Health Branch, British Columbia Ministry of Health, March 2004
[3] Hall and Havnes, 1999
[4] Hall and Havnes, 1999
[5] Victor et al, 2000
[6] Victor et al, 2000 pg 409

designed to address social isolation, supporting seniors' strengths, enhancing social networks, removing barriers to social participation and fostering social inclusion will have positive impacts for both the individual and society[7].

Keefe and her colleagues[8] studied Canadian data to profile individual and social characteristics and situations that make seniors vulnerable to isolation. Their profile of seniors most likely to experience social exclusion indicated that they:

· Are older
· Live in urban areas
· Have no partner
· Have activity limitations due to health
· Were born outside of Canada
· Have lower levels of education

The Investigation by the Children's, Women's and Senior's Health Branch of the British Columbia Ministry of Health: Social Isolation Among Seniors: An Emerging Issue, supports the above and provides some further considerations about factors relating to social isolation and loneliness including:

· Gender: women's tendency to outlive male partners and other family members and their role as caretakers place them at greater risk, however when studies controlled for the additive risk factors that disproportionately affect women, several studies found the opposite: that greater loneliness was expressed by men[9]
· Loss of a spouse or intimate relationship" is a strong determinant of both loneliness and social isolation[10]
· Aging: several researchers have found loneliness to be a correlate of aging itself[11] and that there was a gradual increase in loneliness until age 90 and then it levelled off
· Transportation Issues: driving status and transportation have an effect on loneliness and social isolation of the elderly because they facilitate access to the social network.

These factors, while they help shine a light on seniors who are vulnerable to isolation, should not be considered as definitive causes. The authors' cite a "chicken and egg" effect between isolation and the risk factors and emphasize that risk factor are just that – factors that may put someone at risk of loneliness or isolation.

[7]Working Together for Seniors: A Toolkit to Promote Seniors Social Integration in Community Services, Programs and Policies, Federal Provincial Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors November 2007

[8]Keefe, J., Fancey, P., Andrew, M., Hall, M., A Profile of Social Isolation in Canada. Prepared for Federal/Provincial/Territorial Constitute of Officials (Seniors)

[9]Mullins, Elston and Gutkowski, 1996; Mullins, Smith et al 1996

[10]Havens and Hall 2003;Ber, Mellstrom, Personn and Swangborg, 1981 Moinnis 2000

[11]Tijhuis et al 1999

APPENDIX
A RESEARCH REVIEW OF SENIORS, ISOLATION, AND BEST PRACTISES IN SERVICE PROVISION

Intervention Programs and Socially Isolated Seniors – a Challenge

There is no doubt that while the need for and benefits of social connections and inclusion are clear for seniors, there are considerations in providing services to this group. A literature review that was part of a study on seniors and the impacts of leisure activity[12] highlighted the following challenges:

· Connecting to services
· Perception of barriers to participation e.g. clothing, funding
· Factors that contribute to social isolation such as loss, poor physical health, low morale, being a caregiver, geographic isolation, and transportation difficulties are often beyond the socially isolated person's control and therefore not obviously susceptible to improvement. Thus designing effective interventions to address the problem may be difficult.

There have been numerous interventions implemented worldwide, but few systematic reviews have been done to assess the effectiveness of these interventions in addressing social isolation in seniors. In fact, "research evidence to support the belief that intervention can counteract social isolation and its adverse effects on older people is almost non-existent"[13].

While research confirming the effectiveness of interventions is not easily available – what is clear are the positive benefits of social inclusion. Evidence consistently supports the idea that out-of-home activity levels affect health status, well-being and survival in old age. "Disengagement from out of home activities is associated with declines in cognitive functioning among elderly persons" (Marottti, Mendes de Leon, Glass, Williams Cooney and Berkman 2000)

Best Practises in Interventions to Address Social Isolation in Seniors

The core principles of the Canadian National Framework on Aging[14], developed through an extensive consultation with seniors and other stakeholders, provide a solid foundation on which to build programs:

•Dignity: being treated with respect, regardless of the situation and having a sense of self esteem
•Independence: being in control of one's life, being able to do as much as possible and making one's own choice
•Participation: getting involved, staying active and taking part n the community, being consulted and having one's views considered by Government
•Fairness: having seniors real needs in all their diversity, considered equally those of other Canadians

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[12]Leisure Activities and Health: A commentary on and by isolated seniors: Douglas R. Nichols University of Victoria
[13] Interventions to Reduce Social Isolation Amongst Older People: Where is the Evidence?" Robyn Findlay
[14]National Framework on Aging, Ministers Responsible for Seniors 1996

A RESEARCH REVIEW OF SENIORS, ISOLATION, AND BEST PRACTISES IN SERVICE PROVISION

•Security: having adequate income as one ages and having access to a sage and supportive living environment

Catte and White in 1998 reviewed 21 studies and identified the following characteristics of effective interventions:
•Participation in group activities
•Targeting common groups e.g. women, the widowed, retired firefighters,
•Using more than one method of intervention and those that are effective across a broad range of outcomes
•Allowing participants some level of control
•Ensuring the evaluation fits the intervention and includes a process evaluation

 comprehensive study by Robyn Findlay: Interventions to Reduce Social Isolation Amongst Older People: Where is the Evidence?[15] reviewed 17 studies   to determine the effectiveness of various interventions with isolated seniors. These included one-on- one intervention, telephone support, gatekeeper programs, group interventions of teleconferencing, support proision, Internet groups, and support groups. While there were not enough commonality in the types of interventions to consider the results conclusive, the authors felt the results could provide guidelines for Future Development. They confirmed that it is very important to:

•Have high quality approaches to the selection, training and support of the facilitator or coordinators of the intervention
•Involve older people in the planning implementation and evaluation stages
•Use existing community resources and build capacity
•Evaluate and disseminate the research

It is difficult to quantify the exact number of isolated seniors in a community however in a survey of the empirical literature published between 1948 and 1991[16] it was found that between 2 and 20 percent of people over the age of 65 were socially isolated.

In Halton, the ESAC Quality of Life Report for Seniors in Halton, used national data to identify that levels of social support decline with age, and up to 8% of seniors have no close relatives and 14% no close friends putting them at risk of becoming isolated.

In 2006 the Friendly Visiting, Special Step program of ACCLAIM Health serviced 575 socially isolated individuals. Need exceeded the supply of volunteers: at the end of the 2006 fiscal year there was a waiting list of 60 new clients. In recent years this has grown to over 200 seniors waiting for service.

[15]Interventions to Reduce Social Isolation Amongst Older People: Where is the Evidence?" Robyn A. Findlay 2003 Cambridge University Press
[16]Working Together for Seniors: A Toolkit to Promote Seniors Social Integration in Community Services, Programs and Policies, Federal Provincial Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors November 2007

All of the clients are frail and have multiple health problems and 26% have memory impairments. Caregivers of these clients also experience feelings of loneliness and often helplessness. Volunteers are matched with clients on a one to-one basis and assist in alleviating isolation, loneliness and depression by providing friendship. They assist in activating social skills and maintaining community contacts.

Conclusion

The literature and research review provides confirmation that social isolation and its impact on seniors continues to emerge as a local, national and international issue. It is clear that it is a complex issue and that while efforts are being made to address it at all levels there is still much to be done to ensure a continued quality of life for a valued and potentially vulnerable segment of our population.