



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Neighborhood Outreach Programs Listening Sessions

OVERVIEW:

Eras Senior Network (Eras) was engaged in 2019 to provide interim services for the Milwaukee County-based Neighborhood Outreach Program (NOP) following the closure of its previous provider, Unison. In order to **evaluate the potential future role** of Eras in serving Milwaukee County seniors, the organization held a **series of eight community listening sessions**, focus groups and workshops during the summer of 2019.

The primary focus of these listening sessions was to **learn and formally document the needs and expectations of Milwaukee County's older adult population**. Stakeholders including NOP staff, supporting congregations, Milwaukee County advisory council members, and other interested groups participated.

KEY FINDINGS:

Participants expressed that their biggest concerns were around **providing high-quality services** to clients, **maintaining positive relationships** with volunteers, and establishing a **program that will be successful into the future**.

CLIENT SERVICES:

Participants also identified the **most prevalent needs of Milwaukee County seniors**, including:

- **Transportation** to appointments, food pantries or grocery stores;
- **Socialization** opportunities;
- **Assistance** with home and household maintenance; and
- **Access** to information and resources.

COMMUNICATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS:

Participants expressed concern about the **lack of communication over the last year** (during the closure of Unison and beyond). The lack of communication **had been harmful to relationships with volunteers and donors**. Eras recognizes this as an area of critical need, which is one of the reasons for the listening sessions.

FUTURE SUCCESS:

Overall, participants **want a program that is successful and provides assistance to seniors who need it**. They expressed that, in order to be successful, the program will be:

- **Collaborative**;
- **Communicative**;
- **Faith-based**;
- **Effective** at meeting the vast majority of client service requests; and
- **Is regularly reviewed** by the clients it serves.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE:

When asked about how the program should be structured, feedback demonstrated the following characteristics as important to the program:

- **FUNDING:** Participants felt strongly that **funds donated to programs in a local area were to be spent in that locality** – there was concern that dollars raised in Milwaukee County would be spent in Waukesha County. Generally, there was misunderstanding about where funds went prior to Eras' engagement.
- **OFFICES:** In terms of office locations, participants expressed interest that **local Milwaukee County neighborhood offices remain functional** as a resource to those local seniors.
- **MISSION:** Feedback indicated that this program was created to be mission-driven, and that **this purpose should remain the focus**.

MILWAUKEE & WAUKESHA COUNTIES:

Listening session participants recognized that **seniors across both counties value independence and benefit from reliable services**. There was a perception, however, that differences in demographics, population density, socio-economic levels, family dynamics or political persuasion may exist.

Overall, key Waukesha County stakeholders expressed the **desire to help where they could**, so long as there were no negative impacts on the clients who were already being served in Waukesha County.

Long-term sustainability of the joint program was on the minds of participants, both in terms of creating a **mutually beneficial culture** for Milwaukee and Waukesha County staff and volunteers, as well as developing **stable funding**.