

# Creating a Sustainable Network for the Rural Aging Movement



## Aging in the country

Rural America represents nearly 75 percent of America's landmass but is home to only 15 percent of the population. It has long symbolized an important aspect of the nation's heritage, but in recent years, as younger people and even some older people have begun to move away, America's rural population has begun to shrink for the first time in history.

One major consequence is that rural America is now getting old, even faster than the rest of the nation. With a 65+ population of about 17 percent, rural areas are now considerably older than suburban and metro areas.

Rural aging can also be more difficult. The 7.5 million older Americans in rural areas may share the wish of older people everywhere to age in place, near the people and places they care about, but higher rates of poverty and isolation, and greater difficulty finding services can make this challenging.

## A tradition of caring, stretched thin

While the tradition of neighbors coming together to help each other is strong, many older adults in rural areas have little access to formal supports, such as health care, long-term care services, transportation, and appropriate housing. Organizations tasked with serving rural older adults often operate with limited resources and conventional age-friendly models of service delivery may not be adaptable to the unique character of rural communities.

That's why Grantmakers In Aging (GIA) has launched a new initiative, **Creating a Sustainable Network for the Rural Aging Movement**. The project seeks to improve the experience of rural aging using an assets-based approach, by building on existing strengths while attracting new partners and resources and seeking ways to expand and support local solutions that are working.

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CREATING A SUSTAINABLE NETWORK FOR THE RURAL AGING MOVEMENT IS AN INITIATIVE OF

WITH GENEROUS FUNDING PROVIDED BY





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## Building a network of support

The **Creating a Sustainable Network for the Rural Aging Movement** initiative will address isolation and stimulate community cohesion in two key ways to make life better for older people in rural America.

***First, the project will work to strengthen existing connections and promote new partnerships, by***

- Establishing a broad-based, partners-in-funding group comprised of government, civic organizations, United Ways, Area Agencies on Aging, philanthropy, and other key players;

***Second, the network will gather and expand information resources, by***

- Establishing a “Rural Aging in America” website and associated Learning Community, to be housed on GIA’s website, [GIAging.org](http://GIAging.org);
- Collecting the most useful information and materials on rural aging that are already available, and creating and sharing new resources as needed;
- Creating a short video and several infographics on rural aging to raise awareness of strengths and needs; and
- Developing a messaging tool, “Talking about Rural Aging,” to help practitioners share messages and strategies that have been effective in raising the profile of rural aging.

## For More Information

Grantmakers In Aging is leading the project with the support of a \$350,000 grant from the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation. The project began on December 1, 2015, and will run for three years. GIA is an affinity group whose membership includes all types of funders with a common dedication to improving the experience of aging. GIA members have a shared recognition that a society that is better for older adults is better for people of all ages.



Visit [GIAging.org/rural-aging](http://GIAging.org/rural-aging)



Contact GIA at (703) 413-0413