

Embarking on a Community Wellness Journey

Frequently-Asked Questions

Q. Why was North Ottawa Wellness Foundation formed?

- A. Its purpose was to bring awareness of the disconnect between our physical and emotional health, and further educate community leaders about the debilitating consequences of this disconnect to our long term health and wellbeing.

Q. Why did you choose a collaborative instead of one organization?

- A. Wellness is a complex topic. No one organization understands all aspects of the problem, nor can one organization address all of it. A collaborative can help bring together organizations that impact all the wellness components. This approach helped us think about wellness as more than just "avoiding illness." Each organization could look holistically at the community to identify gaps and ways to fill them through their own unique programming.

Q. What is the role of the collaborative and how many organizations should participate?

- A. The collaborative comes together as a catalyst, but the individual organizations are the ones implementing opportunities and connecting with people in the community. There's no magic size, but you do need enough organizations to generate and maintain critical mass. We recommend you have at least 4-6 organizations in your collaborative, and more is better.

Q. Is this for nonprofits only, or can the business community participate?

- A. Look beyond health care providers/social net services – get employers and schools and other facets of the community involved. The brilliance is in the public/private partnership. The work may already be happening in some places. You want diversity in the collaborative. Everyone can relate, but from different perspectives.

Q. Where should we start?

- A. Identifying community needs is the first step of the journey. In our community, we started with Stress Management & Emotional Balance because that's where we saw universal need. You can use United Way Community Assessments, Health Department information, Census data and more to identify priorities. Start with whatever resonates in your community. Every little step is positive.

Q. Who leads the work?

- A. The collaborative needs a champion who provides leadership and energy. Someone needs to convene meetings, plan agendas, bring new ideas forward, and ensure that the work continues. The members participate to learn and share, but then go back and do the actual work through their own organizations.

Q. How is the work funded?

- A. You will need a funding source to help with big-picture work and structuring resources, but much of the work is about having a collaborative doing things that are related to their everyday mission and don't need separate funding. We recommend that you get organizations involved without a financial buy-in.