



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Health Foundation Awards Grants to Three Counties to Develop Age-Friendly Centers of Excellence**

***Grants support New York State's Age-Friendly NYS/Health Across All Policies Approach***

BUFFALO, NY—The [Health Foundation for Western and Central New York](#) today announced it will award grants of \$100,000 each to three New York counties to support the development of Age-Friendly Centers of Excellence. Erie, Tompkins and Oneida counties are recipients of the Health Foundation awards, and each county will partner with local community organizations to fulfill the program's goals.

The Health Foundation grants are part of a partnership with the New York State Office for the Aging's Age-Friendly Planning Grant Program, an initiative that recently awarded similar grants to other counties across the state. The program is designed to help communities and local governments incorporate healthy, age-friendly community principles into all relevant policies, plans, ordinances and programs. The Health Foundation is providing additional support for the state's program by underwriting a learning collaborative and technical assistance program, led by the New York Academy of Medicine.

These grant programs support two initiatives launched by Governor Andrew Cuomo in 2017 and 2018—Health Across All Policies and Age-Friendly NYS. The governor's approach employs systems-level changes in pursuit of creating healthier, more integrated communities that allow New Yorkers of all ages to access services, participate in civic activities and travel safely and efficiently in their community. New York State was certified as the first age-friendly state in 2017 by AARP and the World Health Organization. In May 2019, the National Network of Public Health Institutes recognized New York's Health Across All Policies/Age-Friendly NYS Initiative with its Public Health Innovation Award.

These age-friendly programs recognize that community health improvement strategies must address the social determinants of health in order to build healthier communities. Social determinants of health are factors and conditions that have an impact on the health and well-being of residents, including housing, transportation, education, and environment.

“The Health Foundation is proud to support these grantees in their ongoing, comprehensive efforts to build Age-Friendly Centers of Excellence,” said Nora OBrien-Suric, PhD, Health Foundation President. “Addressing the social determinants of health is a key part of improving health outcomes for all New Yorkers, and especially older adults. Age-friendly communities are the future of a healthy New York State, and we are pleased and grateful to play a role in this initiative.”

“As the first age-friendly state in the nation, we are working in New York to help ensure seniors have a high quality of life that is second to none,” said Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul. “The three new Age-Friendly Centers of Excellence further our commitment to incorporating the unique needs of older New Yorkers into all facets of public policy in communities across the state. We are focused on good housing and nutrition programs, access to high-quality health care, and improved well-being for all seniors.”

### **About the Grantees**

- **Erie County will partner with the Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access** at the University at Buffalo (the IDEA Center) to integrate inclusive design and livable communities strategies across all Erie County departments. Goals for this program include incorporating universal design into public spaces, technology training for older adults, establishing a homeshare program for older adults and improving access to public transportation. These efforts will align with and accelerate the recently launched Live Well Erie initiative, a cross-systems collaborative to improve the health and well-being of Erie County residents.

“Erie County is proud to accept this grant and to be able to accelerate its work of becoming an age-friendly community. Through the Live Well Erie effort, my administration has an ambitious agenda for supporting our older adults. This grant will allow Erie County to partner with UB’s Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access to implement initiatives identified in the Live Well Erie process that are crucial to our older population. This is another example of County government helping ensure residents’ golden years are truly golden,” said County Executive Mark Poloncarz.

“The IDEA Center is thrilled that the leadership in Erie County sees value in weaving universal design into the fabric of Live Well Erie and across their departments. Universal design is a process that can be used to create inclusive buildings and spaces, programs, products, and policies to increase community participation for people of all ages. Our partnership with the County will put universal design research into practice, and our team is looking forward to participating in New York State’s Age Friendly learning collaborative to learn and share best practices,” said Brittany Perez, Director of Outreach and Engagement for the IDEA Center. Perez is a graduate of the Health Foundation’s [Health Leadership Fellows program](#).

- **The Oneida County Office for the Aging and Continuing Care, the Parkway Center and the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties** will collaborate to develop an Age-Friendly Center of Excellence by capitalizing on ongoing livability efforts

in the county. This collaborative effort will focus on a number of livability factors in their community, including: improving accessibility to public buildings and spaces for all ages and abilities; analyzing the county's rural transit system; improving communication around community programs and events that serve older adults; and developing county initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion and give older adults the opportunity to interact with other generations.

"Oneida County has led the Livable Community Project locally since 2016. Because we believe that planning for a community that serves all ages in an inclusive manner is essential, several County's departments have had a role on the Age Friendly Steering Committee. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties and the Parkway Center to develop an Age Friendly Community of Excellence. This additional support from the Health Foundation for Central and Western New York and the New York State Office for the Aging will help all of the project partners in Oneida County further our age friendly accomplishments," said Michael Romano, Director of the Oneida County Office for the Aging and Continuing Care.

"As a collaborative partner in Livable Communities Oneida County, the Parkway Center is thrilled that Oneida County has been selected by the Health Foundation for this grant. This initiative helps further the work that has begun on moving toward an Age-Friendly Center of Excellence in Oneida County," said Kelly Walters, Executive Director of the Parkway Center.

- **The Tompkins County Office for Aging** will collaborate with several local organizations to continue implementing age-friendly initiatives in their community. These collaborators include the Finger Lakes Independence Center, Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County, Ithaca College Gerontology Institute, Ithaca College, Wonderful Wheelchairs, and Esther Greenhouse, an expert in universal design and aging in place. The grant from the Health Foundation will allow the Tompkins County Age-Friendly Center of Excellence to become a regional hub of expertise in order to educate and assist other partners and institutions in incorporating age-friendly practices. The Tompkins County Office for the Aging also is participating in the Health Foundation's [Aging by Design](#) program to support their age-friendly initiatives.

"Tompkins County Office for the Aging and our collaborating partners are very excited to accept this Age-Friendly Center of Excellence grant. We are looking forward to furthering our efforts in Tompkins County, creating a hub of resources and information to those engaged in the Age-Friendly process as well as being part of a larger learning collaborative. As the older population expands and lives longer than ever before, this work will be critical to support aging well. We know that when Age-Friendly principles are applied to the environment, individuals can benefit through improved health and overall wellbeing, increased independence and greater social interaction. These are benefits people of all ages can take advantage of as they grow older," said Lisa Monroe, Director of the Tompkins County Office for the Aging.

“Governor Cuomo continues to move New York ahead of the rest of the nation on public health policies and age-friendly communities. The State’s partnership with the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York on this innovative grant program will take New York State to the next level in becoming the healthiest and most age-friendly state in the nation,” said New York Secretary of State Rossana Rosado.

“As the first age-friendly state, New York is committed to creating thriving communities that support and attract people of all ages. Through this innovative public/private partnership between New York State, the Health Foundation of Western and Central New York, the New York Academy of Medicine, and AARP, these Age-Friendly Centers of Excellence will help incorporate age-friendly, smart growth principles into the fabric of our communities, improve the health and quality of life of all New Yorkers, and further our goal of making New York the healthiest state in the country,” said Greg Olsen, Acting Director of the New York State Office for the Aging.

“By implementing age-friendly practices and focusing on health across all policies, New York is leading the way at the state and local level to address health for all. We’re proud to be a partner in this effort with the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York, by creating a tailored Health and Age Across All Policies technical assistance program for these grantees. Congratulations to all the recipients of the Age-friendly Planning Grant. We look forward to working with you, and together helping to make New York the healthiest state for people of all ages,” said New York Academy of Medicine President Dr. Judith Salerno.

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**About the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York**

The Health Foundation for Western and Central New York is an independent private foundation that advocates for continuous improvement in health and health care by investing in the people and organizations that serve young children and older adults. For more information, visit [www.hfwcnny.org](http://www.hfwcnny.org).