



Small Grants Program Press Release

Aug. 12, 2015 -- Following the release of its small grants program announcement in April 2015, the Osteoarthritis Action Alliance (OAAA) is pleased to announce the program's successes to date, including the recipients of its small grant awards.

Briefly, the purpose of the small grant program is to engage community organizations and to advance the objectives of the 2011 report, [Environmental and Policy Strategies to Increase Physical Activity Among Adults With Arthritis](#), which focuses on the benefits of physical activity and ways to make it more convenient and accessible to people with arthritis. The strategies in this report, and its online companion [Implementation Guide](#), were designed to be implemented by organizations that work in and influence six key sectors: 1) community & public health; 2) health care professionals; 3) transportation, land use, & community design; 4) business & industry; 5) park, recreation, fitness & sport; and 6) mass media & communication.

OAAA Director Leigh F. Callahan, PhD was excited to release the Request for Applications (RFA) but unsure what the response would be. "We are an emerging coalition of organizations in the community and public health and health care sectors, primarily, and we do not yet have a large number of direct followers. We were a bit concerned that we would publish this RFA but have no one show up to the party, so to speak."

As it happens, she had little reason to be apprehensive. The OAAA leveraged the reach of its member organizations to spread the word and one month later, they received 51 letters of intent from 21 states across the US. One month after that, they received 38 full applications from 19 states.

"We could not believe the response in such a short time," said Grants Program Officer, Yvonne Golightly, PT, PhD. "We were excited and a little overwhelmed. Clearly, there is a need for funding for arthritis education and physical activity resources out in the communities."

Applicants proposed projects to implement one or more strategies outlined in the online Implementation Guide that would provide physical activity-related resources for their community members with arthritis. The 2015 awardees include:

Arizona State University and the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Wellness Program, WellPath. This project will evaluate the feasibility of implementing two evidence-based arthritis management programs – Fit and Strong! and the online Chronic Disease Arthritis Self-Management program (Better Health, Better Choices-Arthritis) – and the use of policy-based incentive strategies for participation within an established worksite wellness program, WellPath. WellPath serves employees and dependents in the Salt River Pima Indian Community in Maricopa, AZ.

Associated Recreation Council of Seattle: This project seeks to extend the reach and impact of its "Back in Motion Fitness Program," an exercise program offered through Seattle Parks & Recreation, to reengage former users who have "aged out" due to arthritis pain or other physical limitations. The program will offer the Aquatic Exercise Association's (AEA) Arthritis Foundation (AF) Aquatic program and the AF Walk with Ease program, Enhance®Fitness, Tai Chi for Arthritis, Chair Yoga, citywide outdoor walking programs and other outdoor activity programs in partnership with the local non-profit, Outdoors for All Foundation.

Texas State University Employee Wellness Pilot Program: This project introduces multifaceted arthritis programming into an Employee Wellness Pilot Program and includes general education for chronic disease, nutrition education and counseling for weight management, evidence-based physical activity (AF Walk With Ease, AEA's AF Aquatic program), walkability ratings for on-campus routes and arthritis/chronic disease education and training for instructors.

While each project is uniquely compelling, all were notable for their ability to identify and attract their intended population, plans to implement the proposed activities, the strength of community partnerships to leverage resources and extend program reach, and the potential for sustainability at the end of the funding period. Each project will be highlighted individually on the [OAAA website](#).

Given the positive response to this year's RFA, the OAAA would like to provide this opportunity again but will need to raise funds. "We received many wonderful applications, and we wish we had funds available to support at least three more projects. We would also like to publish the RFA again next year so our goal is to identify sponsors who would be interested in funding this type of program and having a real impact on a grassroots level," says OAAA Program Manager, Kirsten Ambrose, MS.

The OAAA is a coalition of public health leaders and stakeholders committed to elevating osteoarthritis as a national health priority. It is based at the Thurston Arthritis Research Center, University of North Carolina School of Medicine and supported by the Arthritis Foundation's Cooperative Agreement Number DP0032828 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.