Rural Contracting Quick Start Guide

Rural Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) are the local heartbeat of their communities. They understand their population better than outside organizations. With workforce, geographic, and economic challenges exasperating rural CBOs, it is imperative to find new funding sources for your organization to continue to grow.

Step 1: Seek External Partners to Diversify Funding Sources

- **Medicaid Managed Care and/or Medicaid Health Plans**: Medicaid-funded programs represent a slightly higher proportion of rural AAA budgets
- **Medicare Advantage Plans**: typically incentivized to provide supplemental benefits such as health and wellness services and preventative care
- **Accountable Care Organizations**: held to specific and measurable participant experience, preventative, and care coordination goals
- **Federally Qualified Health Centers/Rural Health Clinics**: interested in addressing the full continuum of care i.e., clinical, functional, and social needs
- **Hospitals and Health Systems**: if available in your organization’s service area

Step 2: Partner to Expand Capacity Geographic Reach

- **Community Care Hub**: Partnering with an existing, trusted CBO network can plug your organization into a wealth of contracting resources.
- **Other Community-Based Organizations**: Partnering with nearby CBOs can offer more expansive geography and reduce travel time for staff.

Step 3: Align Your Organization with New and Innovative Programming

- **Analyze**: Assess and survey your community to discover social engagement needs at health promotion events, health fairs, or clinics.
- **Align**: Discover the measures that matter most to your partners i.e., loneliness, social needs, reduced hospitalizations, transitions of care, etc.
- **Package**: Train and prepare staff to align with your partner’s program goals.
- **Sell**: Evaluate your program’s return on investment, cost analysis, and pricing for the partner you are contracting with.
- **Deliver**: Continuously monitor to comply with contracts and improve the quality of services over time to enhance the sustainability of programs.

Additional Tips for Overcoming Unique Rural Challenges

- **Creative workforce strategies**: cross-train staff, augment with volunteers where possible, and watch for burnout to ensure a well-staffed program.
- **Media and marketing**: consider broadband access limitations & find your local niche by advertising and promoting services in local newspapers, radio stations, and other innovative places to reach rural populations.