

Adapting measures for diverse populations

CASE STUDY: Front Porch Connection Programs

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front porch

Front Porch is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering individuals to live connected and fulfilled lives through community and innovation. Front Porch provides quality, accessible, and engaging programs and services to approximately 7,500 residents in over 50 housing communities, and programs address housing, creative engagement, and social connection engage over 7,000 individuals annually throughout the country.

front porch

Housing

(Life Plan, Market Rate, Affordable, Home Sharing)

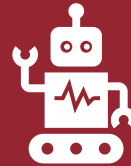
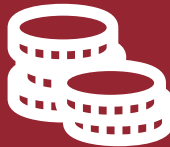


Culture & Community

(Connection & Creative Engagement)

Philanthropy

(Program & Resident Support)



Innovation

(Center for Innovation & Wellbeing)

Connect

Collaborate

Inspire
Creativity

Build
Trust

Lead
Responsibly

Embrace
Change

Loneliness and social isolation significantly increase health risks for older adults. Social isolation is associated with a 50% increased risk of dementia. Prolonged loneliness can be as harmful to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Nearly one in four adults aged 65 and older are socially isolated. Loneliness is linked to higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide. Older adults from marginalized communities face compounded risks of social isolation. The economic cost of social isolation among older adults is estimated at \$6.7 billion annually.

“While loneliness has the potential to kill, connection has even more potential to heal.”

~Dr. Vivek Murthy

R-BASIC Pilot

Social Connection

Well Connected

The Well Connected programs connect English and Spanish-speaking older adults with virtual participation and volunteer opportunities.

Well Connected Español

Social Call
(program ended 8/25)

Social Call fosters new friendships and a sense of belonging by thoughtfully matching older adults and volunteers for weekly phone conversations.

- 57% live alone
- Average age 77
- 28% low-vision or blind
- 24% low hearing or deaf
- 48% limited mobility
- Surveys administered by phone, mail, and email

Key measurement challenge: Capacity

- **Staffing**

Evaluation tasks such as mailing surveys, making phone calls, and entering data require significant staff time, while existing program responsibilities continue uninterrupted.

- **Survey Administration**

Because about 40% of program participants rely on the phone, evaluations must include individual phone outreach, which is time-intensive and difficult to scale.

- **Costs**

Paper surveys require printing, postage, and return envelopes, creating ongoing material costs for programs with limited budgets.

Key measurement challenge: Accessibility

- **Digital Literacy**

Many older adults are not comfortable with or do not have access to online surveys, meaning digital-only evaluations exclude a portion of participants.

- **Literacy Levels**

Lower reading literacy among some older adults, particularly in our Spanish-speaking community, complicates written surveys and requires simplified or alternative formats.

- **General Accessibility**

To ensure participation, evaluations must be available in multiple formats (large print, phone, online, screen-reader compatible, simple language, mailed surveys, etc.), which increases complexity and cost

Key measurement challenge: Equity

- **Limited data is available about Spanish-speaking older adults**
U.S. research is heavily weighted toward English-speaking populations, leaving gaps in evidence about Spanish-speaking older adults.
- **Lack of Validated Spanish Evaluation Tools**
Few evaluation instruments are validated in Spanish, limiting the ability to measure outcomes using established tools.
- **Translation Challenges**
Direct translations may miss cultural nuance or produce phrasing that is unclear or inappropriate for participants.
- **English-Only Systems**
Research tools and IRB systems often require English data entry, creating duplicative translation and data-entry processes.

Key measurement challenge: Other

- **Methodological Bias**
When staff or volunteers conduct surveys, responses may be influenced by participants wanting to please the program or avoid criticism.
- **Trust & Engagement Barriers**
Current political and social climates may make some members, particularly immigrants or Spanish-speaking older adults, hesitant to share personal information. Programs must invest additional time explaining why evaluations matter, how information is used, and how privacy is protected to encourage participation.
- **Survey Fatigue**
Repeated surveys, long questionnaires, and follow-ups can discourage participation, especially when evaluations require multiple formats or contacts.
- **Other**

Priority questions to help us better understand social connection

How do we effectively measure the quality of meaningful connection?

How do we distinguish activity from authentic connection, determine what “dose” works, how participation and volunteerism differ or enhance connection?

How does social connection impact health, resilience, and system costs?

There is clear evidence linking meaningful connection to morbidity, mortality, cognitive decline, and healthcare utilization - what is the ROI of investing in it, and how do we create cross-sector infrastructure and systems that prioritizes it?

What does effective, culturally responsive connection look like across diverse populations and settings?

How should approaches and measures differ for individuals with disabilities, lack of digital literacy, cognitive decline, varying income levels, or different cultural and linguistic backgrounds?

What if...

A Collective Poem

What if meeting people, learning, and getting new ideas to advance the field,
Could solve for measurement challenges like nuanced language, competing priorities,
limited capacity, digital access and literacy, and even understanding who most
benefits from measurement and evaluation?

What if talking to people, eating, sharing stories, laughing, coordinating events, and
enjoying music,

Could bring us unity, joy, creativity, empathy, fearlessness, flourish, and calm?

Because eating, reading, talking, and listening

Were once as challenging as living in a world with Donald Trump.

What if?

Questions?

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