



NORC Ambassadors Program Inspiration Book



Welcome to the NORC Ambassadors Program Inspiration Book!

This is your one stop shop to get ideas for your aging in place initiative. Here you can get inspired by what residents and partners have already done within each category — real examples that spark ideas and show what's possible.

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NORC Building Blocks

The NORC Building Blocks are four categories that help communities become more connected, supportive, and resilient over time. They were shaped by learning what works best to support health and wellness in aging in place communities, including scanning health research and tracking what successful groups have done.



Finding Local Partners to Work With

NORC Ambassadors Groups thrive when resident leaders and their neighbours identify areas of opportunity and interests in their building. These needs and interests can inform new activities, events, and programs you may want to start up in your building. Many of these activities build off the skills, abilities and knowledge of neighbours.

But what if your group needs to find expertise outside of your building to meet residents' needs? That is when it is time to seek a local service provider as an aging in place partner.

- **Designate a Champion** — One person leads outreach to keep communication clear and consistent.
- **Be Specific** — Know exactly what you're asking for before reaching out, whether that's a speaker, a program, or a paid/free service.
- **Do Your Homework** — Review the agency's website, know your venue details, and be ready to describe your group's vision and your role.
- **Find the Right Partner** — Use resources like [211 Ontario](#), the [Ontario Health Team website](#), or the [NORC Innovation Centre](#) to identify agencies already set up to help.
- **Be Ready to Act** — Know before you make contact whether you can commit on the spot, and always follow up with a thank you after they've delivered.

How to Use This Book

This Inspiration Book is designed to spark ideas and get you excited about what's possible in your community. You'll find real examples organized across the four NORC Building Blocks categories — Healthy People, Healthy Communities, Healthy System, and Healthy Growth — so you can easily browse what's been done in areas that matter most to your neighbours.

Each section is divided into resident-led and partner-led ideas.

- **Resident-led ideas** are activities and initiatives that you and your neighbours can start on your own — no outside expertise required, just enthusiasm and a willingness to bring people together.
- **Partner-led ideas** show what becomes possible when you connect with a local organization or service provider who can bring professional skills, resources, or programming directly to your building.

There's no right way to use this book — flip through it freely, let one idea lead to another, and don't be afraid to dream a little. You might find something that fits your community perfectly as-is, or something that sparks a completely new idea of your own.

For even more inspiration, visit the **Idea Bank** at norcambassadors.ca, where you'll find an expanded collection of ideas to help your group keep growing.

Healthy People

RESIDENT-LED IDEAS

Resident-Led Dance Class

Find a neighbour with a love of dance and invite them to lead a weekly class — no experience required, just a willingness to have fun and keep moving.

Walking Club

Start a regular walking group in and around the building. Take turns leading the route and watch connections grow with every lap.

Games Night

Set up a regular evening of cards, puzzles, or board games to keep minds sharp, share a laugh, and build lasting friendships.

Neighbourhood Garden Patch

Claim a balcony, rooftop, or outdoor corner and grow herbs or vegetables together. Tending a shared garden gives neighbours a reason to meet daily and a harvest to enjoy together.

PARTNER-LED IDEAS

Fitness Classes

Fitness organizations could bring professional instructors to lead classes right in the building — from chair yoga to balance training, making expert-led exercise accessible to all.

Dietician Talk

Invite a registered dietician from your local public health organization to speak on nutrition and healthy eating. A practical session that gives residents the knowledge to make informed choices about their diet.

Dementia Prevention & Support Services

Partner with a local health organization, like Alzheimer Society of Canada, to offer information and resources on memory care, and dementia support.

Healthy Communities

RESIDENT-LED IDEAS

Coffee Club

Pick a time, put on a pot, and open the door. A recurring coffee or tea gathering is one of the easiest ways to help neighbours feel at home.

Errand & Rides Buddy System

Pair up neighbours to help each other with everyday tasks like rides to appointments or picking up groceries — a simple system that keeps everyone connected and independent.

Common Interest Groups

Organize around what you love — books, gardening, crafts, current events. Give neighbours a regular reason to gather and a community within the community.

Buddy System for Caregiver Respite

Pair up neighbours so caregivers can take a short, much-needed break — a small act of support that can make a big difference.

PARTNER-LED IDEAS

Art Class

A local arts organization might lead a creative class in a shared space, offering residents a chance to explore a new skill while connecting with neighbours.

Comfortable and Accessible Common Spaces

Advocate for practical improvements like comfortable seating, scooter parking, and reserved spots for neighbours with visual or hearing impairments — small changes that make a big difference to daily life.

Healthy System

RESIDENT-LED IDEAS

Accessible Transportation Advocacy

Host a paperwork party to fill out accessible transit applications like WheelTrans together, making the process less daunting and helping more neighbours access the transportation they need.

Chronic Condition Peer Group

Connect residents living with diabetes, arthritis, or other ongoing conditions to meet regularly, share experiences, and support one another through workshops or peer-led sessions.

Paperwork Party

Tackle accessible transit applications like WheelTrans as a group — it's faster, friendlier, and a lot less stressful than doing it alone.

PARTNER-LED IDEAS

Build Strong Family Doctor Connections

One of the best ways to support timely access to care when you need it is to make sure you have a family doctor. The Ontario government is investing \$3.4 billion to connect every person in Ontario to a family doctor or primary care team by 2029. If neighbours are looking for a family doctor, let them know they can register with Health Care Connect, search the CPSO Physician Register, or call 811. A valid Ontario health card (OHIP) is required for Health Care Connect.

On-Call Health Advice: Call 811

Let people know about the option to call 811 if they have questions about their health. Registered nurses are available 24/7 to provide free health advice and help people decide if a symptom needs a doctor or emergency room visit, or getting connected to home care and other health system supports. Calling 811 first can help people avoid unnecessary calls to 911 or trips to the emergency department when a symptom doesn't require emergency care.

Partner-Led Ideas (continued)

Health Information Talk

Invite a local health agency to give a talk on a topic that matters to your neighbours — often the ones people hesitate to bring up on their own. Pick a focus based on what your community is curious (or quietly worried) about, and let the agency bring the expertise.

Examples of topics and partners:

- Hearing loss & hearing aids — Canadian Hearing Services, a local audiologist
- Diabetes management — Diabetes Canada, a public health dietitian
- Dementia & memory care — Alzheimer Society of Canada
- Fall prevention & mobility — a physiotherapy clinic, March of Dimes Canada
- Vision health — CNIB
- Heart health — Heart & Stroke Foundation
- Medication management — a local pharmacist

Community Programs & Services: Call 211

Share 211 as a trusted resource for finding local support. Community Navigators can help people find local services such as meal delivery, transportation subsidies, financial assistance, or social and recreational programs. Ask whether your city or province keeps a directory of seniors' services, too; it's often the fastest way to see everything that's already out there.

Do-It-Yourself Partner Resource List

Keep a running list of trusted partners your group has worked with — organizations, speakers, or private service providers who showed up and delivered. This might include health and wellness partners (a dietitian who ran a workshop, a physiotherapist who led a gentle exercise class), community organizations (a local settlement agency, a dementia support group), speakers from past events, or everyday service providers residents vouch for — a hairdresser, cleaner, or handyperson. Share your list with neighbours, and invite fellow residents to add their own recommendations when a partnership goes well.

Healthy Growth

RESIDENT-LED IDEAS

Proactive Communications

Build an email list, put up flyers, and make it easy for neighbours to stay informed and get involved — good communication is the backbone of a thriving community.

Common Space Makeover

Gather neighbours to spruce up shared spaces with comfortable seating, plants, and a community notice board — small touches that make everyone feel more at home.

Event Helper Squad

Invite neighbours to join a planning team for community events — a great way to build skills, share responsibility, and grow new friendships along the way.

PARTNER-LED IDEAS

Applying for Grants

Work with a local community organization to apply for small grants that can support activities, programs, or shared spaces in the building. Working together can help bring more resources and make it easier for your group to create projects that support aging in place.

Community Advocacy

Join local advocacy groups to raise concerns, share ideas, and work together on issues that matter to older adults aging in place.

NORC Talks

Learn practical skills that draw on community expertise, share ideas and experience with other community leaders, and learn about partnerships and activities that you can bring to your community.

Go to: norcinnovationcentre.ca/#connect to join the mailing list.