

# SeniorTrust Digital Literacy and Inclusion for Older Tennesseans

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

**Grant Program: Reducing Social Isolation and Increasing Access to Essential Services through Digital Literacy and Inclusion for Older Tennesseans Grant Program.**

**RFP Release Date:** January 10, 2022

**Application Due Date:** April 1, 2022

**Grant Period:** Grant period will be up to one year. Grant funds will be available beginning July 1, 2022, with all proposed projects beginning no later than September 1, 2022 and ending no later than August 31, 2023.

**Background:** This grant funding is available pursuant to Case No. 11-1548-III, Davidson County Chancery Court, Division III. The Chancery Court decreed that the “funds shall be used to sustain and improve the quality of life for the elderly of Tennessee.” The full amount of funding originally available from this court case was \$40 million. The majority of these funds have been used to support four statewide initiatives to benefit older adults – dental, transportation, home repair and mobility modification, and legal services. Approximately \$3.8 million is remaining from the case and has been dedicated to this grant program. The West End Home Foundation, in partnership with the statewide SeniorTrust Consortium, is serving as fiscal and administrative agent.

**Eligibility:** To be eligible for funding, applicant must be a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization or a governmental entity located in Tennessee.

**Target Population to be Served:** Tennesseans aged 60 or older

### **Problem to be Addressed:**

The Coronavirus Pandemic has exposed a crisis in connectivity for our country’s older adults. An estimated 21.8 million older adults are offline at home, with only 58% of Americans aged 65 and older with broadband internet service. The negative ramifications of this lack of connectivity became all too clear during the pandemic as older adults became cut-off from their families, friends and communities. Older adults are more likely to experience life events and transitions that decrease the size of their networks, including family dispersal, health issues, cognitive decline, role losses or changes, mobility limitations and living alone, all of which are risk factors for social isolation and loneliness. Research shows that when older adults

are connected to technology, they become less isolated and more engaged in their communities. Those without internet access suffered more extreme levels of social isolation, were unable to access essential services and products, and could not take advantage of telehealth, telecounseling and other telesupport services. Internet access and digital readiness are no longer a luxury. Digital literacy and inclusion are now considered to be social determinants of health with far-reaching implications. Studies indicate that the impact of our social connections on health rivals those of biological factors, with social isolation contributing to physical illness or impairment, depression and cognitive decline. Being on the wrong side of the digital divide means older Americans are not using the tools that could help them live happier, healthier lives. As we face the challenge of navigating our world's growing reliance on technology, it is vital for older adults to have access to the internet, age-appropriate devices, and digital support and training.

### **Purpose of Grant Program and Intended Outcomes:**

The purpose of this grant program is to increase social supports and access to essential services among older Tennesseans through digital literacy and inclusion. This grant program will develop and/or expand the capacity of community-based organizations to assist older adults in utilizing technology in meaningful ways to break down the barriers to full participation in their communities. The intended outcomes are a reduction in social isolation and an improvement in overall health and well-being through expanded community connections and support services.

To achieve the stated outcomes, the grant program will expand access to culturally sensitive digital training and technical support, provide access to age-appropriate devices and facilitate affordable internet access. Expanding digital literacy and inclusion will enable older adults to access education and enrichment services, physical and behavioral health services, caregiver support, and other essential resources that promote increased community connection. Decreasing the barriers to digital access, strengthening the digital skills of older adults, and expanding/enhancing community engagement opportunities are critical to improving overall well-being for older adults in Tennessee.

### **Types of Programs Eligible for Funding:**

Community-based programs that increase older adults' access to social supports and essential services through digital literacy training and support are eligible to apply for funding. Organizations that apply must be able to demonstrate that they are a trusted resource for the older adults in their communities, have the capacity to provide age and culturally sensitive digital literacy training and support, and are able to help promote meaningful connections for older adults, including those who are homebound and/or isolated.

Clearly defined partnerships and collaborations are strongly encouraged, especially those that leverage volunteers and intergenerational learning and discovery.

The applicant agency may be a provider of a direct service (enrichment services, telehealth, etc.) but must also offer or make available a robust digital literacy training and support component targeted specifically to older adults that will enhance access to essential digital services. The applicant agency may also focus exclusively on the digital literacy training and support component but must demonstrate that the services provided are age-appropriate and breaking down barriers to accessing essential services, reducing social isolation and building social connections. Strong applications will clearly demonstrate how the proposed program will reduce barriers to essential services as well as expand social connections and social supports.

### **Cyber Security:**

Internet safety and security has become an increasing concern for everyone but even more so for older adults. Scams targeting older adults are prevalent and can lead to devastating results. Every successful grant must include a cyber safety and security component to provide clients with the information and skills necessary to protect them from scams, phishing and other internet threats and abuses.

### **Eligible Expenses:**

The following expense categories are examples of those that can be included in the grants:

- Digital Literacy Training (staff, materials, etc.)
- Age-appropriate devices
- Subsidies for internet access
- Transportation to ensure access to training
- Incentives to encourage participation (snacks, meals, etc.)
- Virtual programming content creation and implementation
- Administrative overhead costs associated with the program

### **Information Sessions:**

Information sessions for the grant program will be held virtually on the following days:

- January 27, 2:30-3:30 PM Central Time
- February 9, 9:00-10:00 AM Central Time
- February, 15, 9:00-10:00 AM Central Time
- March 3, 10:00-11:00 AM Central Time

**Applicants are required to attend one of these sessions.** These sessions will offer an opportunity for potential applicants to ask questions and learn more about the grant process and timeline.

**Point of Contact:**

For inquiries and questions please contact Chandra Allen, Program Officer at The West End Home Foundation at [Chandra.allen@westendhomefoundation.org](mailto:Chandra.allen@westendhomefoundation.org) or 629-240-5838.