



WisdomWorks® Training

Background

WisdomWorks® Teams (WWT) is a National Council on Aging (NCOA) model for civic engagement based on diverse, multi-skilled volunteer groups of adults 55 and older who share responsibility for identifying and/or addressing a challenge or opportunity in their local community, or in their sponsoring agency. The team is empowered and accountable for the process it uses and the results it achieves, working within general parameters set by the team itself and/or the sponsoring organization. The WisdomWorks self-directed team concept expands the reach and capacity of the sponsoring organization, addresses community issues, and provides personal satisfaction and other benefits to older adult volunteers.

The WWT model has been developed to provide a standard by which to guide older adult self-directed teams in civic engagement. WWT represents a carefully designed set of elements, supported by current literature on team development, as well as in-the-trenches evidence from successful WWT programs.

The key elements of WWT have been codified and documented—with supporting tools, templates and guides—and are intended for implementation in various NPO settings. NCOA provides training and certification for organization representatives and other training professionals to prepare them for effective development and facilitation of WWT teams. Each team can draw on the support and experience of a national network. That network, in turn, is supported and managed by the NCOA national office, which systematically sets and reviews performance standards via access to its Continuous Learning and Innovations Community (CLIC).

The Training Program

The training program begins with a two-day intensive workshop in which participants are introduced to the WisdomWorks® Teams model and learn how to draw on the talents, skills, and passions of volunteers 50+ in self-directed teams designed to address opportunities or challenges in their local communities. The workshop provides practical “how-to’s”, identifies key WWT success factors, and prepares participants for hands-on facilitation of teams and projects. Participants are expected to have completed Modules 1 and 2 of the WWT curriculum materials (“Introduction to WisdomWorks Teams” and the “WWT Readiness Assessment”) on their own prior to the workshop.

In addition to the workshop, NCOA provides:

- A one-hour Webinar on WWT financial sustainability held within six weeks of the workshop. Participation is required for certification.
- A series of monthly one-hour Technical Assistance conference calls—open to all participants—to address issues encountered in forming and gaining the greatest benefit from their teams, as well as to engage in collective knowledge sharing and problem solving.
- Templates to assist in shaping their team projects and evaluating their teams’ progress and achievements.