

The 34 projects funded through the Action Awards grants program showcased the improvements that interprofessional teams can bring to light by implementing evidence-based programs into targeted care settings in local environments. These one-year grants for up to \$10,000 were available to interprofessional teams led by Change AGENTS for the purpose of achieving meaningful change to practice or policy that will improve the health and wellbeing of older adults and/or their families.

The Change AGENTS Initiative viewed changing practice as a collaborative and interprofessional process that uses strong evidence to achieve results. It sought to foster practice change efforts that reflect the following attributes or principles:

- Interprofessional collaboration and team care
- Organizational partnerships across settings and with the community
- Evidence informed
- Geriatric and gerontological excellence and best practice
- Person- and family-centered care
- Promote equity and access



Purpose

The purpose of the Change AGENTS Action Awards was to achieve meaningful and demonstrable improvement(s) in care by the end of the one-year grant period. It was expected that most proposals would be more focused on implementation (and less on development) of a program, policy or tool to ensure that change can occur by the end of one year. Similarly, it was also expected that most of the funded projects would build on past work and investments by various stakeholders that have laid the foundation for this demonstrable improvement. The Change AGENTS Leadership Team challenged Change AGENTS to use these relatively modest awards and leverage other available resources to catalyze improvements in care of older adults and/or their families.

Settings and Focus

Action Awards projects were implemented in a variety of settings, including hospitals, skilled nursing facilities and community based organizations. The interprofessional Action Awards project teams included a cross-section of disciplines, including physicians, nurses, social workers and other clinicians. While project focus and settings varied, a common thread among the Action Awards grantees were their passionate desire to make meaningful change in practice that would improve the wellbeing and health of older adults and their families. For many of the projects, the Action Award served as the fuel needed to ignite the project.

Over their grant year, the Change AGENTS Action Award teams participated in regular conference calls and had the opportunity to share challenges and seek assistance from one another, the Initiative's Leadership Team and experts from a variety of fields being gathered to provide support to AGENTS. Teams were also encouraged to participate in skill development training in key areas such as communication, business development, interprofessional leadership, improved science, and policy through the Action Award Institute, Policy Institute, Communications Institute, and Change AGENTS Conference.

Impact

The impact Action Award projects had over the course of the award year was significant, as illustrated in the table below. In addition to touching the lives of older adults and their families, Action Awards also impacted health professionals. For example, a number of projects were designed to engage staff in project sites in improving care like one project designed to educate nurses on perioperative geriatric principles and another project that trained food service workers to identify depression in residents.

Number of End Users Impacted by Action Awards Projects August 1, 2014 – May 31, 2016 (Cycles 1-3) ¹	
Older Adults and Their Family Members ²	17,405
Health Professionals	2,968
Staff Members at Project Sites	401
Total Number of End Users Impacted	20,774

Notes

1. Information self-reported by project teams to The Gerontological Society of America. Based on information provided by 23 of 25 Action Awards projects. The Cycle 4 Action Award year, consisting of nine projects, ends 12/31/16 and is not included in this table.
2. Includes one team from Cycle 2 reporting over 7,000 people impacted and another team from Cycle 2 reporting 3,000 people. The other teams reported numbers ranged from 37 – 900 people.

Leverage

Another benefit generated from the award was that it served as the catalyst to leverage further support to sustain and grow projects. The initial investment of \$10,000 in their Action Award project allowed 9 of the Action Award teams to secure additional funding that totals almost \$2.1 million. One grantee reported that her organization is now funding their Action Award project from internal sources and another grantee was able to secure funding to expand the training developed as part of their Action Award to another state beginning in summer 2017.



Catalyze Change

As illustrated in the previous section, Action Award projects not only impacted a range of end users, they also helped project teams attract new funding to support and expand their work. While the funding was a key element, recipients also noted that the ongoing technical assistance they received from the program staff and thought leaders of the John A. Hartford Foundation Change AGENTS Initiative, including skills building training sessions and check-in calls with other award recipients, was a vital and welcomed component of the award:

“Our Action Award helped attract a group of student volunteers to the hospitals to serve older inpatients in entirely new ways.” – Susan Lee, PhD, RN, NP-C, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Cycle 1 Action Award Recipient

“The Action Award was much more than the money we got. It was also the support we got from the Change AGENTS Initiative. Without that support, I don’t think we would have been able to pull this off.” - Evelyn Duffy, DNP, AGPCNP-BC, FAANP, Case Western Reserve University, Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing, Cycle 2 Action Award Recipient

“We are proud of our coalition because we have high trust. I’m thankful for the support through Change AGENTS. We needed sustenance to keep us going, keep us inspired.” - Tam Perry, PhD, MSSW, MA, Wayne State University, Cycle 2 Action Award Recipient

“As a result of better communication among members of a dedicated team of professionals and enhanced support made possible through this Action Award, we are making changes that really are improving our health system.” – Sharon Foerster, LCSW, MSW, MaineHealth, Cycle 3 Action Award Recipient

“Building on the work we accomplished during the Action Award, we successfully submitted a proposal to implement the CCR care model in a pragmatic randomized control trial to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Systems for Action Portfolio. Funding for this solicitation had a 1.2% success rate, and our Action Award was crucial in demonstrating proof of concept as well as the history of collaboration among the many partner agencies.” – Carolyn Pickering, PhD, RN, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Cycle 3 Action Award Recipient



Individual Stories

Improving healthcare for older adults was at the heart of the Action Award program. Large scale change is desired and some of the 34 funded projects have the potential to achieve this. Whether a project ultimately impacts just a few or thousands, Action Award teams shared their pride on how their projects made a difference in individual lives. Below are two examples:

“After viewing the video with her husband, a family member commented that she had always wanted to be engaged in her husband’s care but never knew what would be helpful. The video and discussions with the nurses helped her to understand her role in medication reconciliation.” – Mary Dolansky, PhD, RN, Case Western Reserve University, Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing, Cycle 2 Action Award Recipient

“One participant is the full-time caregiver of her husband. She has two days a week when he goes to an adult day center; providing her time to get things done. She chose to spend that time participating in this project. At the first performance, she brought her husband; which surprised us as the script includes content that is emotional, raw, and might seem hurtful to those receiving care. One part of the play portrays her experience singing with her husband, as he enjoyed performing and participating in choir before being diagnosed with dementia. During the post-performance discussion, we asked what it was like seeing their words performed by others. This woman raised her hand and said, “I feel validated. I feel heard.” She told us after the discussion, that during the moment in the play when the man sings to his wife, her husband leaned over to her and told her that was his favorite character. She was so appreciative to have that opportunity to share that moment with him. While he didn’t recognize it as himself, he resonated with the familiar.” – Jackie Eaton, PhD, University of Utah, Cycle 3 Action Award Recipient

Overall, the Action Award grants program precipitated practice change by engaging new and emerging leaders in the field of aging using evidence-based tools and collaborative perspectives to accelerate change. Together, these projects facilitated collaboration between and across professions to overcome silos, share their experiences with their colleagues, and learn and support one another in exploring new ways of transforming care delivery.



The John A. Hartford Foundation's Change AGENTS Initiative

The Change AGENTS Initiative was a three-year effort dedicated to improving the health of older Americans, their families, and their communities through practice change. The initiative harnessed the collective strengths, resources, and expertise of the John A. Hartford Foundation's interprofessional community of scholars, clinicians, and health system leaders. The initiative was managed by The Gerontological Society of America with support from the John A. Hartford Foundation.