



# Business Acumen Initiative

A RESOURCE FOR COMPETING IN THE NEW MARKETPLACE

**Health care in the United States is undergoing rapid change, which is having a major impact on aging and disability community-based organizations (CBOs). These organizations seek to meet the needs of older adults and people with disabilities, but resources can be scarce as these populations continue to grow.**

**The Administration for Community Living (ACL), with public and private partners, created its Business Acumen Initiative (BAI) to help aging and disability networks meet this challenge. Launched in 2012, the BAI aims to strengthen networks from the inside, building their business skills and enhancing their effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.**

## How Business Acumen Helps

The BAI brings together practical resources, subject matter experts, and technical assistance to offer participants the best chance at success, regardless of federal funding changes. It also aids health care providers and payers in delivery system reform. The fundamental idea is this: when services from CBOs and health care entities are well integrated, consumers win. CBOs are critical because they provide day-to-day community supports, such as person-centered planning, transportation, training on independent living skills, and

information and other assistance. These supports can help older adults and people with disabilities to enjoy better health and independence in communities of their choice.

Medicaid, Medicare, Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs), private insurers, and other private pay models offer opportunities for CBOs to tap into new revenue streams outside of government grants. However, securing contracts with such payers – and performing effectively under them – requires thinking and operating differently.

To successfully participate in this environment, aging and disability organizations must understand critical business skills and be prepared to:

- build relationships with health care providers and payers;
- price and bill for services;
- describe how services will generate return on investment and cost savings for payers;
- negotiate contracts;
- manage interoperable data systems;
- access electronic health records; and
- report data to payers.

Last Updated: July 2017

**ACL.gov**

ACL is an operating division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



# BUSINESS ACUMEN INITIATIVE: A RESOURCE FOR COMPETING IN THE NEW MARKETPLACE

## How The BAI Works

ACL, in collaboration with private foundations and other national partners, provides aging and disability networks with the tools they need to successfully partner and contract in the area of delivery system reform. Public-private partnerships are a hallmark of both ACL's approach to supporting the networks and the sustainability strategies for CBOs.

The goal of ACL's work in this area is to help states and CBOs develop innovative business models that enable them to market their services, compete in a changing marketplace, ensure funding for services, and help payers to achieve quality goals and cost savings. Since its inception, the BAI has approached this goal by two major means: learning collaboratives and grants.

### Learning Collaboratives

From 2013 to 2016, ACL convened two learning collaboratives composed of networks of CBOs interested in improving their business capacity. The goal for each of the 20 participating networks was to secure at least one new contract with a health care provider or payer by the end of the collaboratives. Various training and technical assistance resources,

including webinars, targeted business areas such as marketing, contracting, and pricing services.

The networks also engaged in peer-to-peer learning – exchanging experiences, innovative ideas, and promising practices for providing integrated care in a range of community settings. These exchanges occurred amongst the networks and with other communities and local agencies facing similar challenges.

---

**By the end of the collaboratives, the networks signed 28 contracts with a variety of health care providers and payers including health plans, physician practices, accountable care organizations (ACOs), and hospitals.**

---

### Business Acumen Grants

In 2012, ACL funded two grants to build the business capacity of aging and disability organizations for managed long-term services and support. In 2016, ACL continued to expand the BAI by issuing three-year grants to the National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD) and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a).

## BUSINESS ACUMEN INITIATIVE: A RESOURCE FOR COMPETING IN THE NEW MARKETPLACE

---

**The grantees are working together to build on accomplishments of ACL's work. They complement other publicly- and privately-funded technical assistance centers that work to build business capacity in their respective networks.**

---

### ***Business Acumen for Disability Organizations***

*Awardee:* NASUAD

*Funding:* \$750,000 per year for 3 years

#### *Objectives:*

- Develop baseline and increase knowledge of CBOs
- Provide broad-based training and technical assistance for networks to build capacity
- Convene and provide targeted technical assistance utilizing a learning collaborative model
- Engage integrated care organizations, managed care plans, and other health care entities to improve awareness of consumer needs and the role CBOs can play in the health care system

#### *Partners:*

American Association on Health and Disabilities, American Network of Community Options and Resources, Autistic Self Advocacy Network, National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disability Services, National Council on Independent Living, National Council on Aging, National Disability Rights Network, UCSF Community Living Policy Center, University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration, Mercer Human Services Government Consulting

### ***Learning Collaboratives for Advanced Business Acumen Skills***

*Awardee:* n4a

*Funding:* \$500,000 per year for 3 years

#### *Objectives:*

- Capture lessons learned from trailblazers in the aging and disability networks
- Partner with health care system leaders
- Address common challenges in business and partnership by sharing breakthrough strategies
- Develop a multi-pronged dissemination strategy to spread the learnings from the Advanced Learning Collaboratives to a broad network of CBOs and other key stakeholders

#### *Partners:*

American Society on Aging, Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley/Healthy Living Center of Excellence, Evidence-Based Leadership Council, Independent Living Research Utilization, National Council on Aging, Meals on Wheels America, Partners in Care Foundation