

Programs Supporting Encore Purpose: Mapping an Emerging Landscape



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About This Report

Programs Supporting Encore Purpose: Mapping an Emerging Landscape is part of the **Pathways to Encore Purpose (PEP)** project, a collaboration between the Stanford Graduate School of Education's Center on Adolescence and Encore.org. The overall goals of the project were to:

- learn about the prevalence and the nature of purpose beyond the self among U.S. adults aged 50 and over;
- document the landscape of organizations that support the development of purpose in older adults; and
- disseminate the research findings to a wide audience.

The project defines purpose as a **sustained commitment to goals that are meaningful to the self** and that also **contribute in some way to the common good**, to something larger than or beyond the self. A full report on the Stanford team's findings, *Purpose in the Encore Years: Shaping Lives of Meaning and Contribution*, is available at encore.org/research/purpose. A summary of the findings is included in this report as Appendix A.

Programs Supporting Encore Purpose describes, in part, the national context in which the Stanford team's inquiry about purpose took place. To complement the Stanford study, Encore.org conducted its own online survey to learn more about the landscape of programs and organizations that support older adults' purposeful goals. The landscape mapping survey sought to better understand the services available to **individuals** seeking pro bono and paid engagements with mission-related organizations; and the services available to mission-related **organizations** seeking to engage this demographic of purpose-seekers. In the course of analyzing the survey responses, and based on decades of work in this field, Encore.org staff also identified opportunities for new programs and offerings to fill gaps that became apparent.

About Encore.org

Encore.org is an innovation hub that taps the talent of the 50+ population as a force for good.

Acknowledgements

The members of the study team are grateful for the time given to this project by the encore programs that completed this survey, providing valuable insights on the growing encore field.

Our deepest appreciation goes to the John Templeton Foundation for providing grant support to Stanford University for the Pathways to Encore Purpose project.

[Jim Emerman](#) leads Encore.org's collaboration with the Stanford team. [Betsy Werley](#) leads Encore.org's efforts to expand the network of organizations engaged in programming for people 50+ both in the US and across the globe.

The Encore Program Survey

Encore.org developed an online survey, composed primarily of closed-ended questions, and emailed it to a list of approximately 200 leaders from organizations known to us from our work in the encore field. Of these, 72 completed the survey between August 2016 and March 2017. These organizations focus on the growing population of older adults seeking purpose, either by providing services directly to older adults or by working with nonprofits and other groups to help them tap the talent of experienced adults. (While organizations in every community support volunteering and pro bono work, the Encore.org survey focused only on those that have an intentional focus on older adults in these roles.) We are confident that the respondents are representative of the current landscape of these types of programs.

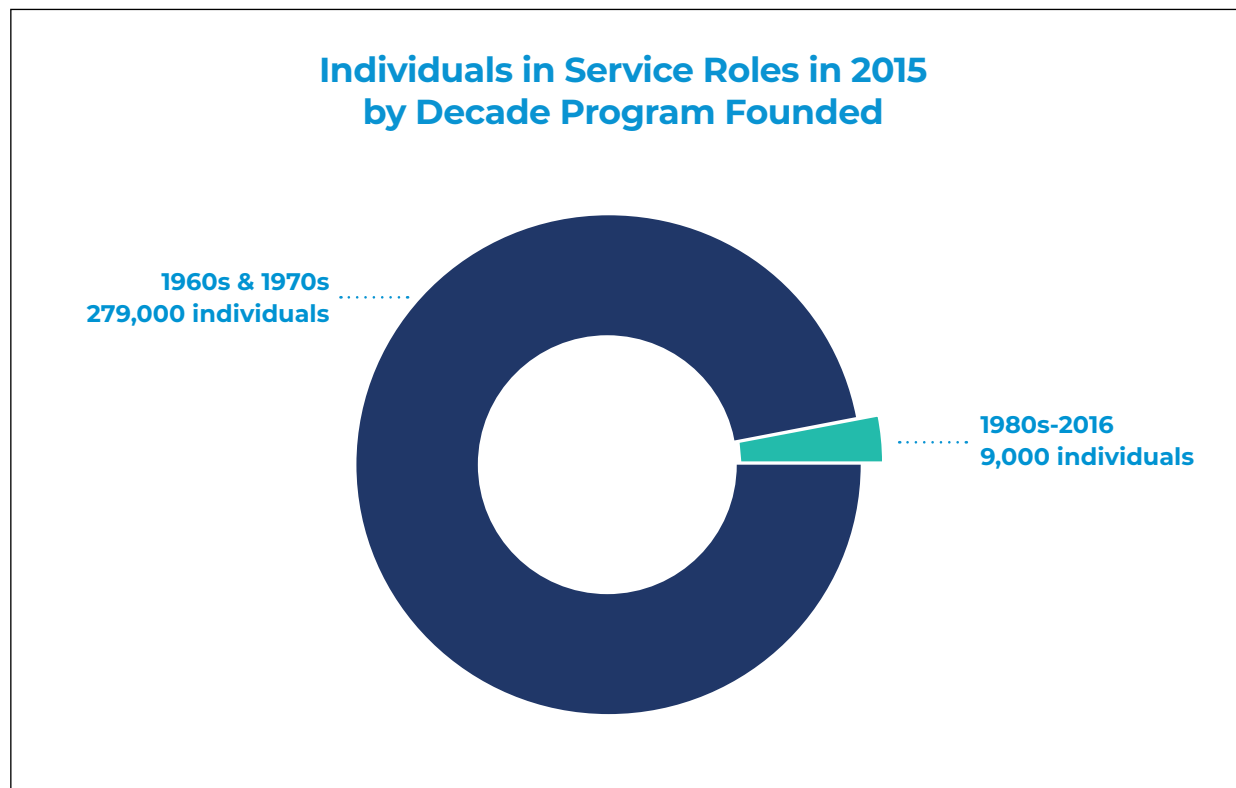
For a list of the 72 respondents, please see Appendix C. More information about the program survey questions is available in Appendix D.

Survey Findings

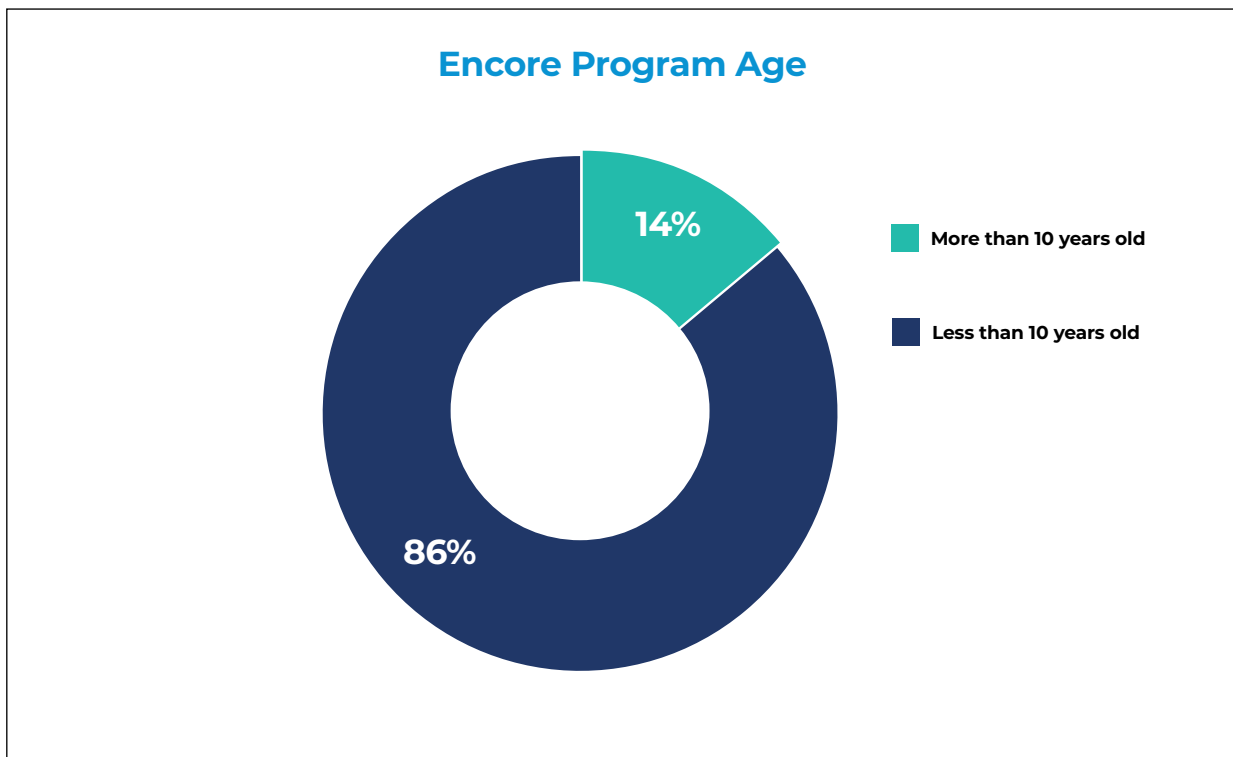
Program Age, Size and Reach

Through the written survey of programs serving individuals, organizations, or networks, Encore.org found that:

- The oldest and largest organizations with the greatest reach primarily match older adults with volunteer opportunities, including stipended opportunities for lower-income adults to work with children or with adults who need caregiving assistance at home.



- Newer organizations are smaller, but offer a greater array of services designed to match older adults with purposeful activities — including programs that offer modestly compensated professional work, stipends for people across income levels, programs that combine learning and work opportunities, and those that combine service or other activities with spiritual community.
- Collectively, the organizations surveyed delivered 76 million hours of service in 2015; however, all but ½ million of those hours were provided through Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and RSVP — three Senior Corps¹ programs that operate in every state and in most counties in the United States.
- With the exception of the oldest and largest programs, most of the newer offerings are located in major cities, particularly cities on the east and west coasts and those in the southwest. Gaps in rural areas and in the Plains states, Texas, the South, and parts of the Midwest leave large parts of the older population underserved.
- There is considerable overlap among populations served; that is, many survey respondents serve both individuals and nonprofit organizations.



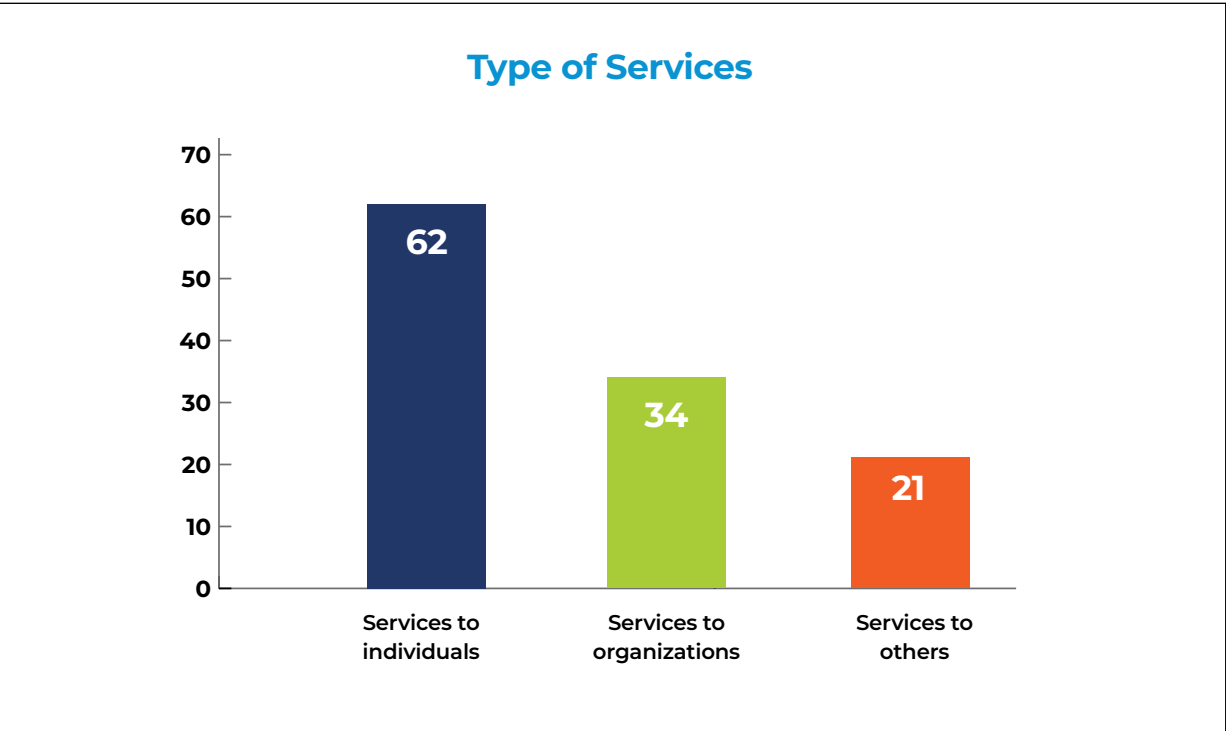
¹ For more information, [click here](#). Note that the Foster Grandparent Program and Senior Companion program were designed for lower-income older adults, and include the possibility of a stipend based on the number of hours served; RSVP engages a broader population and does not allow stipended service.

The following sections provide further detail about the overall landscape, the types of services currently available to individuals and to organizations, and gaps in service.

Overall landscape

The programs Encore.org surveyed represent a diverse landscape that ranges from federal programs created in the 1960s² to a newer breed of groups that not only place volunteers in community service roles, but also offer workshops, training, coaching and other services to individuals and to organizations.

About three-quarters of the 72 programs provide services directly to older adults who are seeking guidance, pathways and connections to opportunities to fulfill their purpose goals. Forty percent provide services to organizations in the nonprofit sector that are looking for ways to connect with older adults who may be able to fulfill these purpose goals as volunteers or in paid roles. Additionally, over one-quarter indicate that they provide services to “other” audiences — including researchers, policy-makers, and intermediaries who work directly with individuals, such as networks of coaches and counselors or retirement associations.



² In addition to the three Senior Corps programs, the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a community service and work-based job training program for older Americans administered by the U.S. Department of Labor. Authorized by the Older Americans Act in 1965, the program provides training each year for thousands of low-income, unemployed seniors in nearly every county in the U.S. Participants also have access to employment assistance through American Job Centers. The principal objective of this training is to provide a bridge to unsubsidized employment opportunities for participants. As such, its primary goal is not specifically to address the purpose needs of older adults as defined in this research. However, because the training takes place in nonprofit organizations, it can also help participants find paid work that addresses their purpose goals.

Services to individual purpose seekers

Just four long-standing national programs provide the vast majority of connections for individuals to community service: [Oasis](#), a national network of nonprofit programs that offers intergenerational tutoring and a range of other volunteer opportunities; and the three Senior Corps programs (Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and RSVP), supported by a federal agency³ and delivered through nonprofit organizations in each state.

Founded in 1982, Oasis is a non-profit educational organization that is active in 40 cities and reaches more than 50,000 individuals each year through its programs focused on lifelong learning, active lifestyles, and volunteer engagement. (See [Oasisnet.org](#).) In 2015, the last year for which numbers were available, Senior Corps engaged 245,000 Americans age 55 and over in a wide range of activities, including tutoring and mentoring, helping frail elders remain in their homes, and responding to natural disasters. Each of the three Senior Corps programs has a distinct history and focus; the oldest of the three programs, Foster Grandparents, began in 1965. ([Click here.](#))

Just four long-standing national programs provide the vast majority of connections for individuals to community service.

Newer organizations offer services such as:

- Individual or group coaching (34)⁴
- Transition services for individuals such as coaching, life planning, workshops, resume preparation assistance (30)
- Training for skill development or work readiness (28)
- Matching individuals with fellowships or other opportunities for pay or stipends (19)
- Advocacy (18)

More than 60% of responding organizations say they offer services to the general public; other populations served include professionals (54%), career switchers (41%), and segments of the older adult population including veterans, LGBT elders, people with disabilities, and those who are economically disadvantaged (20%).

Appendix B describes a few examples of these newer programs.

³ Corporation for National and Community Service.

⁴ The numbers in parentheses, here and in the following sections, refer to how many of the 72 programs provided this service in 2015. As noted in the findings, many respondents offer more than one kind of opportunity.

Services to organizations

Organizations that help the nonprofit sector work more effectively with older adults, either as volunteers or as paid staff, are a relatively recent feature of the landscape. Some of these place older adults in these roles directly, bringing skills honed in corporate careers to nonprofits.

For organizations interested in engaging older adult or “encore” talent, services include:

- Training or advice on best practices to engage encore talent (22)
- Recruitment or matching – volunteer or stipended workers (19)
- Consulting (19)
- Program development or operations (17)
- Volunteer/job fairs or events (13)
- Policy development (12)
- Research (9)
- Recruitment or hiring – paid encore workers (7)
- Funding assistance (6)⁵

Organizations that match skilled professionals with high-impact, short-term assignments in nonprofits through Encore Fellowships programs offer good examples of these types of services. (See Appendix B for more information about the Encore Fellowships Network.)

Gaps in service

Based on our analysis of what is available and what is not, other service gaps in the existing landscape include:

- Individuals who want engagements other than unpaid and/or unskilled volunteering;
- Organizations that want help engaging encore talent;
- Geographic areas including the Plains, Mountain states, Texas and much of the South; and
- Services focused on communities of color or on people for whom spirituality/religion is important.

Programs that focus specifically on older adult purpose appear to be less prevalent in minority communities and faith settings. Given the high prevalence of purpose in minority ethnic groups⁶ and in spiritually connected older adults, we believe more research is needed to understand how these communities are supporting purpose in ways that fall outside conventional programs. As noted above, while older organizations like Oasis and the Senior Corps programs cover most of the country, the majority of the newer offerings are located in major coastal cities or in the Southwestern United States. Gaps in rural areas and in the Plains states, Texas, the South, and parts of the Midwest leave large parts of the older population underserved.

⁵ For example, organizations like The Dayton Foundation and Empower Success Corps (formerly ESC of New England) that manage Encore Fellows programs.

⁶ See Appendix A, finding 3. More detail is available in Purpose in the Encore Years: Shaping Lives of Meaning and Contribution, at encore.org/research/purpose.

Emerging innovations

Some emerging innovations, still in early stages, promise to expand the range of services to new institutions and populations. These include programs on entrepreneurship, faith-based programs and higher education programs that combine education with work experience. See Appendix B for some illustrative examples.

Opportunities for older adults to pursue purpose are also expanding to new geographies. For example, [Encore Palm Beach County](#), which proudly identifies as “part of a national movement,” connects individuals to new volunteer and work opportunities. Their vision statement says, “Encore PBC offers mid-life adults the opportunity to use their life and work experience in new careers, paid and unpaid, to improve their communities.” [Cincinnati’s Inspiring Service](#) program supports the region’s volunteer ecosystem, describing their work as “inspiring those who are just beginning to volunteer in schools to those who are ready for an ‘Encore’ volunteer experience later in life, and everyone in between.” The way these new programs describe themselves also signals a shift in language toward the idea of an encore as part of the lifespan experience.

In higher education, the [University of Minnesota](#) and St. Paul MN-based [Hamline University](#) launched 2017 encore transition programs combining classroom and hands-on learning. The University of [Connecticut’s Encore!Hartford](#) program (now Encore!Connecticut) expanded its program to a second location in Fairfield County. UMN’s program is particularly interesting since it is the first program in a state university that combines class-based learning with an experiential component. The [University of Washington’s](#) Encore program supports staff and faculty retirees in using their experience for the greater good.

Programs combining spirituality, community and social justice service represent another emerging area. [Union Theological Seminary](#) (NYC) offers a semester-long encore program. The [JV EnCorps](#) (in the Pacific Northwest) and [Ignatian Volunteer Corps](#) continue to expand. Twin Cities-based [Kaleo](#) affiliated with United Theological Seminary, is also launching an encore program. The [Conscious Elders Network](#) offers a national community leading advocacy in social justice and climate action.

While these programs are still relatively small, they offer helpful models for others. Encore.org, particularly through its [Encore Network](#), has provided valuable resources, connections and visibility for these new efforts.

Recommendations

The gaps described in this report represent a huge opportunity for nonprofit organizations, state and local agencies, and philanthropic supporters motivated to respond to older adults' desire to pursue contributions to the common good. Where programs already exist, there is room for them to grow in size and scope. Where no formal programs exist, now is the perfect moment for local leaders to adopt and support strategies that can best serve their communities, building on proven models. Further, researchers interested in healthy aging, development across the lifespan, and building the talent pipeline for the social sector can continue contributing to the knowledge base for an emerging field.

More specifically, this report's authors suggest that:

Public and private funders can follow the lead of community foundations and others who have invested in initiatives that capture the time and talent of people 50+ to serve their communities. This is an emerging area of philanthropy that offers significant opportunities for innovation and leadership. The now-completed [Community Experience Partnership](#) offers lessons learned from nine different community foundation efforts, including some serving rural areas of the country. [Grantmakers in Aging's](#) current initiatives engage multiple partners in ways that show promise for closing some of the gaps identified in this report. Other sources of inspiration include The Dayton Foundation (Dayton, OH), The Cleveland Foundation (Cleveland, OH), Rose Community Foundation (Denver, CO), Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust (Maricopa County, AZ), and the new NextFifty Initiative (Colorado).

Organizational leaders and practitioners can look for opportunities to use recent research, community demographics, and observations about community needs to adapt existing innovations to fit their own communities; shape new initiatives that draw in older adults who want, but haven't yet found, purpose-filled opportunities; encourage funders to support both research and practice related to a lifespan approach to community service and careers; and advocate for the expansion of public and private funding streams — such as AmeriCorps and Senior Corps, as well as emerging internships and fellowships — that allow for expense reimbursement, transit passes, stipends, or other modest compensation in order to make it easier for a more economically diverse group of people to engage in purposeful, community-focused work.

Researchers can deepen the study of how people over 50 experience and express the idea of “purpose,” and help practitioners, policymakers, and philanthropists better understand how both spirituality and racial/ethnic identity intersect with purpose. One avenue for promising research could be longitudinal studies that track individuals over time to better understand the factors that lead some people to purposeful engagement, while others decrease their engagement or never find a way to actualize their purpose goals.

In conclusion

Taken together, the Pathways to Encore Purpose studies offer very good news about the prevalence of purpose and the availability of its benefits to older adults across the demographic spectrum. The findings present a hopeful and highly egalitarian view of the accessibility of purpose for all of us as we age. At the same time, they offer a big challenge to all sectors of society to create a diverse array of ways to tap into older adults' wellspring of purpose so that more people in more places can benefit.

APPENDIX A: PATHWAYS TO ENCORE PURPOSE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Stanford Graduate School of Education's Center on Adolescence

Based on nearly 1,200 survey responses and 102 one-hour interviews, the Pathways to Encore Purpose [encore.org/research/purpose] study found that:

1. **The majority of older adults exhibit high levels of prosocial values and behaviors**, such as helping and caring for others, caring for nature and the environment, endorsing equal treatment for all, and seeking to understand people who are different from them.
2. **Nearly a third of older adults in the United States (31 percent) exhibit purpose beyond the self** – that is, they identify, prioritize, adopt and actively pursue goals that are both personally meaningful and contribute to the greater good. These commitments are central to these older adults' identity and sense of meaning in life. Extrapolating to the population as a whole, that's more than 34 million people dedicating themselves to making their corner of the world a better place.
3. **Purpose is an equal-opportunity pursuit.** The prevalence of purposeful living does not vary significantly across income, health status or geography. The one meaningful difference is that the prevalence of purpose was higher among people of color than among whites. Overall, however, what stands out is that purpose is available to all.
4. **Purposeful living is not a zero-sum game.** Purposeful living does not crowd out other pleasures and personal goals. People who place a high priority on beyond-the-self goals often consider more self-oriented goals – travel, family, friends, learning — equally important in their lives.
5. **People who are purposeful have a positive outlook on life.** The great majority (94 percent) of those interviewed who were unambiguously purposeful share a trait we call “positivity,” which refers to joy, hopefulness, optimism and other related emotions. Though many people in this group were dealing with serious life problems — such as poverty, poor health, family difficulties and bereavement — they emphasized the joy and satisfaction they experience in their lives, especially in their beyond-the-self engagements.
6. **Freedom is important to purposeful and non-purposeful people in different ways.** In the interview analyses comparing purposeful and non-purposeful adults, half of each group said that a significant source of their well-being was their appreciation of the freedom they were experiencing at this time in their lives. The non-purposeful interviewees mostly described freedom from burdensome responsibilities like paid work and childrearing. The purposeful ones highlighted the ways they used their freedom for the benefit of all; they loved having the freedom to get more involved beyond the self.

The first four findings are supported by the nationally representative survey data. The last two are based primarily on the interviews. Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative data give us a first-ever picture of how purpose beyond the self looks and functions among older adults.

APPENDIX B: ENCORE PROGRAM EXAMPLES

The selected list of programs below represent some of the types of innovations that can fill current gaps in service. It is not an exhaustive list. For a more extensive list of programs, see Appendix C or the program map [on this page](#).

FOR INDIVIDUALS SEEKING PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES

Entry points for individuals include issue areas, peer support networks, leadership development. In addition, see the section in this report on emerging opportunities for examples of programs working in faith/spiritual communities and through institutions of higher education.

Business startups. Founded in 1964, [SCORE](#) is a network of volunteer, expert business mentors, with approximately 10,000 volunteers in 300 chapters nationwide.

Children/youth. In addition to Oasis and Foster Grandparents (a Senior Corps program), AARP Experience Corps offers adults 50+ the chance to tutor young children in 23 urban and suburban areas across the country. One emerging program is GrandInvolve, currently only serving schools in lower-income areas of Fairfax County, VA. They offer a variety of “volunteer jobs” for older adults, [described here](#).

Health. Launched in 2010, [Boomers Leading Change](#) (formerly Boomers Leading Change in Health) channels the skills and experience of adults 50+ toward helping others in the Denver Metro area of Colorado live their healthiest lives. Volunteers receive education and training before being matched with a direct-service or advocacy opportunity.

Leadership development. [Maine’s Encore Leadership Corps](#) (ENCORPS) trains older adults from across the state to be ENCORPS volunteer leaders. The focus is on environmental stewardship, grassroots leadership, food security and community development, with an emphasis on making decisions that protect and improve the quality of life for all community residents.

Peer support. Minnesota’s [Vital Aging Network](#) promotes self-determination, civic engagement, and personal growth for people as they age. Programs include an eight-month leadership development course called “Evolve: Reigniting Self and Community,” Aging with Gusto, and Wellness 50+. [The Transition Network](#) offers peer transition groups as well as activity groups, learning and volunteer opportunities.

APPENDIX B: ENCORE PROGRAM EXAMPLES

FOR ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGING ADULTS 50+

ReServe works in regions across the U.S. to match people over 55 with part-time roles in government and social-service agencies. In addition, ReServe helps interested organizations and agencies develop funding proposals for bringing experienced talent into health care, education, and social welfare organizations. See also Toolkit.encore.org.

Empower Success Corps, operating in the New England region, offers a range of services to help nonprofits succeed, leveraging the talent and skills of older adults through offerings that include consulting, supplying talent for interim and transitional roles, and leadership training.

These three national initiatives hosted by Encore.org enable individuals and organizations to connect with the encore movement in a variety of ways.

The Encore Network

The Encore Network is a growing coalition of more than 80 encore leaders and organizations across the globe. It provides resources, visibility and connections that strengthen members' efforts to turn longer lives into an asset. Benefits include members-only webinars on topics of interest, connections to peers, and discounts on fees for national events.

The Encore Prize

The Encore Prize is a new social innovation prize funded by the Templeton and MetLife Foundations. Launched in 2017, the Prize stimulated the development of 80 ideas for purposefully engaging older adults with young people who can benefit from intergenerational connections. The five most promising innovations received a cash award at the end of 2017. The awardees' programs were housed in organizations new to working with older adults. Encore.org will be working with the leaders of these programs throughout 2018 to help them scale their innovations, including providing them with insights from the Pathways for Encore Purpose research. Applications for year two will open in April 2018.

Encore Fellowships Network

Encore Fellowships are designed to deliver a new source of talent to organizations solving critical social problems. These paid, time-limited fellowships match skilled, experienced professionals with social-purpose organizations in high-impact assignments. During the fellowship period (typically six to 12 months, half- to full-time), Fellows take on roles that bring significant, sustained impact to their host organizations. While they are working, Fellows earn a stipend, learn about social-purpose work and develop a new network of contacts and resources.

APPENDIX C: LIST OF PROGRAMS RESPONDING TO SURVEY

2Young2Retire
AARP Foundation Experience Corps
Advocacy Leadership for Positive Aging
Age2Age
Aging Mastery Program
ARC Innovators
Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education (AROHE)
Boomer BreakThrough
Boomerang Giving
Boomers Leading Change
Business Consultants for Non-Profits (BCNP)
BVU's Pro Bono Corps
Called to Serve
Chesapeake Chapter Life Planning Network
Coming of Age
Conscious Elders Network
Create the Good
Encore
Encore ACTS
Encore Artists Program
Encore Boston Network
Encore Career Network
Encore Del Mar Fellows Initiative
Encore Fellowships Network
Encore Louisville
Encore NEO
Encore Tampa Bay
Encore!Connecticut
EncoreConnect
EncoreOC
ESC of New England
Executive Service Corps of Southern California
Experience Matters
Foster Grandparents
Hana Hou Project (hana hou is a Hawaiian word for encore)
HOPES CAP, Inc.
InSynergy Staffing Solutions
Jesuit Volunteer EnCorps (JV EnCorps)
LifeEncore
Mather's—More Than a Cafe
New Start Career Network
New Workforce Hawaii
Next Move
Oasis Intergenerational Tutoring
Oregon Activity Professionals
Pass It On Network
PCC Gerontology Program
ReIgnite
ReServe
Retirement: Now What? /In Transition: Now What?
Revolutionize Retirement
RoseMary B. Fuss Center for Research on Aging and Intergenerational Studies
RSVP
SAGE - Senior Advocates for Generational Equity
Senior Community Service Employment Program
Senior Companions
Senior Resource Center for Douglas County, Inc.
SHIFT
Stanford Distinguished Careers Institute
Technical Corps Program
The Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative
The MAVEN Project - Medical Alumni Volunteer Expert Network
The Third Age Initiative
The Transition Network
Thrive in Retirement
Tisch College of Civic Life
UC Berkeley Retirement Center
USC Emeriti Center
UW Encore Initiative
VITAL, Inc.
Volunteer Engagment
We're Not Done Yet (WNDY)

APPENDIX D: ENCORE PROGRAM SURVEY QUESTION AREAS

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

- **Sponsoring organization:** lead organization or sponsor
- **Organization type:** nonprofit, for-profit, public/government, higher education, p-K-12 education, faith-based, philanthropy, early-stage or unincorporated
- **Program/Network affiliations:** national nonprofit, government, and/or encore.org networks or programs
- **Locations:** single or multi-site, number of sites
- **Service area:** local, regional or national geographic area served
- **Program budget**
- **Year founded**
- **Social purpose hours**

TYPES OF SERVICES

- **For 50+ individuals seeking encores:** advocacy, coaching, education, pathways, matching, training, events, transition services, newsletter/communications
- **For organizations engaging encore talent:** consulting, funding assistance, program development or operations, recruitment, hiring, matching, research, training, policy development, events
- **Other program characteristics:** virtual and/or in-person, eligibility or other requirements, fee-based

ENCORE SEEKERS SERVED

- **Types of encore seekers:** general public, professional/experienced talent, career switchers, men or women, persons with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, LGBT, veterans, unemployed, other audiences
- **Number served:** in the pipeline, on distribution list, number finding social purpose work, total served
- **Racial/ethnic background**

ORGANIZATIONS SERVED

- **Organization type:** nonprofit, for-profit, public/government, higher education, p-K-12 education, faith-based, philanthropy, early-stage or unincorporated