



NORTHEAST IOWA
Area Agency on Aging

2021

ANNUAL
REPORT

Our Mission

NEI3A helps older persons respond to their evolving needs and choices.

Our Vision

Older persons have access to supports that empower them to live with choice and dignity in their communities.



Responding to the evolving needs of older adults

America's population is maturing causing a shift in the aging demographics of our state. By 2030, 73 million - or one in five - people in America will be 65 or older. From 2010 to 2019, the overall population growth in Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging's (NEI3A) service area, remained relatively flat while the 60+ population grew 9%. In the 18 counties NEI3A serves, 43.5% of individuals 60 or older live in rural settings and approximately 30% live alone.

This growth in population, as well as dynamics of the service area, represents a tremendous opportunity to innovate and create new ways to address the needs of the expanding number of older adults. NEI3A has also faced challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic raised the stakes, putting older adults in harm's way - not just from the virus, but also from lack of proper nutrition, social isolation, and loss of independence.

That is why our mission is more critical than ever, driven, as always, by what older individuals need and providing innovative choices to empower them to live with dignity in their communities.



Reflections on 2020 - 2021



Mike Donohue
CEO



Pat Murray
Board President

What a year it has been! And to think, as your new CEO, I've only been here for a part of the year... imagine what the next year will bring! It has been an honor and a thrill for me to join NEI3A and any message from me should begin with a heartfelt thank you to the staff, volunteers, our Board of Directors, our Advisory Council, and other stakeholders who have stepped up to make a difference in the lives of the people and communities we serve. I wish I had the page space available to share with all of you, the countless stories of team members innovating, collaborating, pivoting, and going the extra mile to make sure the most vulnerable among our consumers received the necessary services, sometimes putting their own health and well-being at risk in doing so. The guidance and direction provided by our Board and Advisory Council was priceless and partnerships within our communities have never been more important. I could not be prouder of the team I inherited here at NEI3A!

This year has been a year of adaptation and innovation. As we began our fiscal year in July, the agency was adapting to providing services amidst a pandemic that looked to be with us for an extended time. Our staff pivoted from a crisis mode, providing nutrition and supplies to ensure people stay safely at home, to strategically modifying our critical support programs and creating new means of meeting the rapidly growing and evolving needs of all our consumers, new and existing. Throughout this exciting time, our staff remained true to our mission and vision of protecting and serving the most vulnerable throughout Northeast Iowa.

As the year progressed, we found ourselves continuing to adapt and innovate in this pandemic world, working hard to inform and educate our consumers, highlighting the guidance of the CDC and local public health officials to remain vigilant about social distancing to limit exposure to COVID-19. As we took action to safeguard our most vulnerable, issues such as social isolation and loneliness became even more prevalent than prior to the pandemic. The agency moved quickly to develop innovative ways to adapt our services to meet the social, health, and well-being needs of these isolated older adults – providing virtual meetings to those returning home from the hospital, offering Facebook Live events, partnering with GrandPads to offer connections for caregivers to “visit” their loved ones, offering Tai Chi classes online, providing virtual support groups, launching Virtual Senior Centers to allow people to interact with other older individuals, and stepping up elder abuse awareness efforts.

Our two national resource centers, SHIP National Technical Resource Center (SHIP TA Center) and the Senior Medicare Patrol National Resource Center (SMP National Resource Center), also quickly adapted services to help centers across the 50 states and the District of Co-

lumbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The pandemic served as a great opportunity for the criminal element to prey on isolated older individuals. The SMP National Resource Center provided valuable information to local SMP's helping to protect the public. The SHIP National TA Center provided a virtual Welcome to Medicare Event to give individuals a chance to learn the best options from the experts.

At the beginning of the new year, there was new hope with the release of a COVID vaccine. The agency stepped up, providing valuable information about where shots were available and offering transportation to older individuals needing assistance.

As the vaccination effort progressed, we looked for opportunities to resume home visits, congregate meal sites, programming in our senior centers and in-person hospital visits. The safety of our consumers, staff, volunteers, and communities continues to be our number one priority throughout this pandemic. We continue to work closely with state and local public health departments to ensure that as we looked for opportunities to resume in person services, that we were true to our commitment to the safety and well-being of all involved. One example of innovation in the nutrition area was the introduction of the Iowa Café program, a partnership with local restaurants where our consumers could obtain a meal within their own community, often in areas where no senior centers existed.

As the agency continued to navigate through the ever-changing issues related to the pandemic, the leadership team embarked on a strategic planning process to develop a fresh focus for the organization. The process was inclusive and started with all employees providing input as to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats faced by the organization. The planning team led an effort to review and refresh the agency's mission and vision statements, which were unanimously supported by both our Board of Directors and our Advisory Council. Our new Mission and Vision statement is showcased at the beginning of this report. Strategic initiatives have been developed by the planning team and are presently being cascaded down throughout the organization.

Always looking forward, we embrace our future of uncertainty as we find our way through this pandemic and are excited to tackle the challenges that we are sure to encounter along the way. We do so remaining steadfast in our commitment to our older individuals and those who care for them, to provide and collaborate for services that allow them to remain independent...for our mission is to help older persons respond to their evolving needs and choices...it's what we do!

- Mike Donohue, CEO

- Pat Murray, Board President

2021 NEI3A Board of Directors

- Dan Anderson, *Tama*
- Kathy Babcock, *Chickasaw*
- Jacob Bates, *Black Hawk*
- Dan Byrnes, *Allamakee*
- Sally Davies, *Jackson*
- Diana Dawley, *Poweshiek*
- Joyce Denczek, *Dubuque*
- Elaine Eshbaugh, *Black Hawk*
- Shirley Helmricks, *Delaware*
- Mike Holmen, *Fayette*
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- Jean Maddux, *Black Hawk*
- Marna Mitchell-Butler, *Marshall*
- Patrick Murray, *Howard*
- Greg Orwoll, *Dubuque*
- Connie Perry, *Hardin*
- Valerie Schwager, *Black Hawk*



Connecting
you to services
to remain
independent



Answering the Call *to help navigate available services*

Nearly 86% of people over age 65 wish to stay in their homes and communities as they age, yet half of them will need home and community-based services in order to do so. While the desire to remain independent is not uncommon, it can pose challenges for caregivers and the older adult themselves. NEI3A has a reputation for trusted, unmatched knowledge about available resources and the ingenuity to develop creative solutions to help fulfill older adults' desire to remain in their homes.

When faced with the reality that help is needed to remain independent, many older individuals, persons with disabilities, and their families call LifeLong Links, Iowa's Aging and Disability Resource Center. LifeLong Links provides a single point of entry to begin the process of identifying available supports and services in their area.

Last year, NEI3A assisted 8,176 individuals with information and assistance services covering a wide range of topics, as depicted in the graphic on the adjacent page. If individuals are in need of more complex services, options counseling is provided. Last year 581 individuals were provided person-centered service coordination and application assistance.





Promoting active aging with health based programs



"I especially appreciated the Virtual Senior Center program as it is my only connection with others at this time. My husband and I have changed our eating habits because of the information provided, which improved our overall health which was reflected in our last visit with the doctor! This program was of great value to me!"

- Elizabeth - Virtual Senior Center Participant

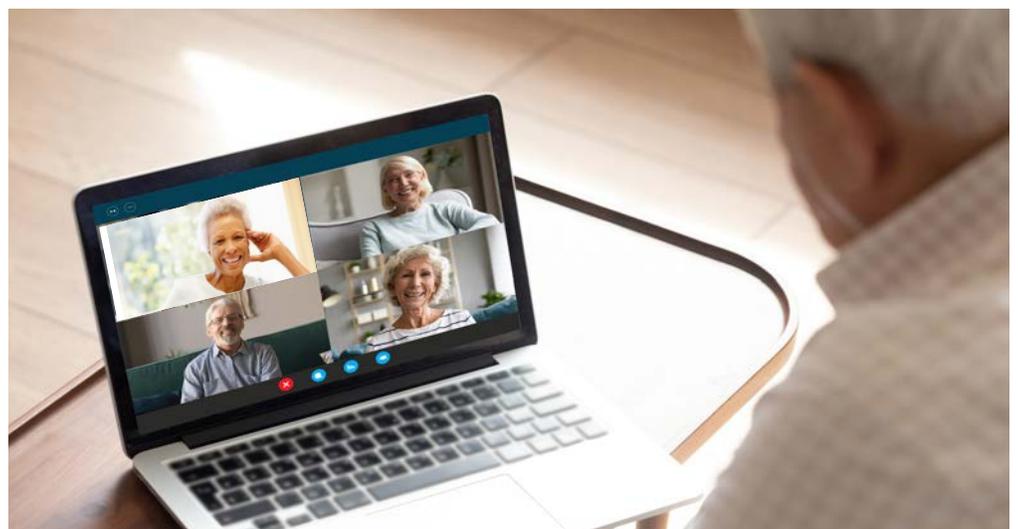
Adapting Services *to reach older adults*

NEI3A supports aging well through a variety of health promotion activities and programs. Our commitment to improving the lives of older adults was challenged as everything went “virtual” with programming and educational events. Still, the agency learned how to navigate technology along with our consumers! There was also the concern that social isolation was enhanced brought on by COVID-19 to those trying to follow health and safety guidelines, keeping them away from family and friends. Near the end of the fiscal year, there was the beginning of changes in our response to the pandemic, related primarily to vaccinations. As a result, a few in-person classes could be hosted, along with the opening of a few centers primarily for some social activities.

During the height of the pandemic, in-person activities were nearly universally prohibited. Staff stepped up and started offering virtual programs, including Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention, Nutrition Education, and our medication review program, HomeMeds. These programs are all evidence-based and required research that proved a virtual program was as effective as in-person activities. The developers responded to the needs and were able to quickly help us with training and techniques to continue to serve our community members.

To connect with consumers in their homes, the agency turned to the good old stand-by - the US postal service. This allowed the agency to connect with our consumers providing information, education, and fun activities. Home-delivered meal consumers, congregate meal consumers, and participants of our health-based activities were mailed information about upcoming virtual opportunities as well as hands-on materials to read and enjoy.

The agency piloted a Virtual Senior Center concept to help combat social isolation. While there is still some fine-tuning to be done, the program seems to be a success judging by the reports of satisfaction we received. Consumers were offered a pre-loaded tablet that could connect to the internet using cellular data, eliminating the need for wireless internet in their homes. Participants were able to connect to the Virtual Senior Centers through a Zoom invitation where they were able to participate in presentations on diverse topics, from using herbs in your everyday cooking to preparing for your financial future. In addition, virtual tours to barnyards, backyard gardens, and zoos were arranged. Trivia and BINGO games were played, and some folks just drank coffee and chatted. To reach those socially isolated individuals, we are continuing to work to improve this valuable program.





Providing caregiver support



"My social worker from NEI3A is like an angel and is always there when I need her most. Often while caring for my husband, I feel stressed, overwhelmed, confused, and I don't have my kids living near to help me. Not only is NEI3A a great resource if I have specific questions, but they also provided me with a support network by encouraging me to attend a support group. This group of caregivers is a source of advice, strength, comfort, and encouragement and reminds me that I am doing the best I can in my caregiving journey"

- Caregiver and recipient respite services and attendee of NEI3A support group

Innovative Solutions *to support caregivers*

Caregivers play a critical role and are the backbone of support to assisting older adults and people with disabilities age well in their homes and communities. Caregivers face a multitude of challenges and NEI3A strives to build their support network to carry out their obligations of keeping adults safe and secure. Family Caregivers encompass more than 1 in 5 Americans. The value of unpaid caregiving exceeds 470 billion dollars each year. NEI3A recognizes family caregivers as invaluable.

NEI3A's caregiver program provides information, assistance, and referral services, informative options for care and programs, case management, counseling, support groups, education and training, and funding for respite and other supplemental services.

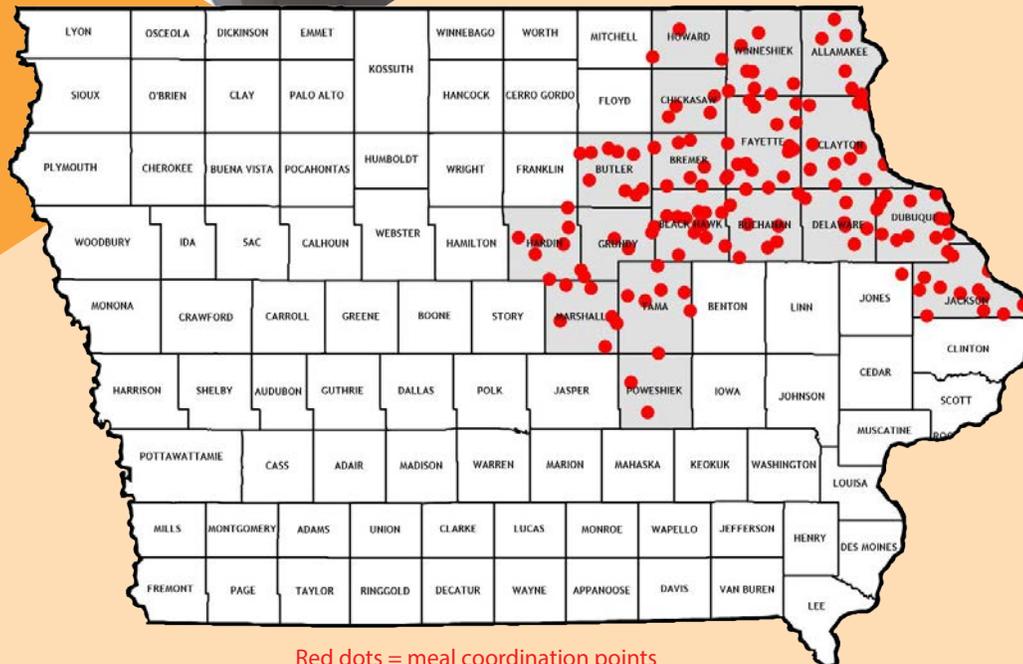
Last year NEI3A's caregiver specialist provided 571 caregivers with information, assistance, and referral assistance, provided counseling, options counseling, and support groups to 250 caregivers, and over 9,500 hours of respite services to reduce stress and burnout.

As the pandemic continues caregivers have three different options to join support groups. Either by telephone, virtual or in person with safe social distancing. A partnership with GrandPads allows Caregivers without internet service to join via a virtual platform. GrandPads are easy to use tablets that allow family and friends to connect through video calls. Additional features include email, a moods app, games, and ability to take and receive photos from their loved ones near and far.





Enhancing health with nutrition services



Red dots = meal coordination points

Providing Nutrition to help older adults remain healthy

As the COVID-19 pandemic began, it was immediately apparent that nutrition services needed to be modified. While this created some new challenges, it also offered an opportunity for new partnerships and providers to be developed included partnerships with restaurants, grocery stores, and vendors providing meal shipment options. Through these partnerships, NEI3A reached additional consumers with meals, as shown in the graphic on the previous page.

Through restaurant partnerships, NEI3A was able to serve HDM consumers in Allamakee, Fayette, and Jackson counties. Each restaurant was responsible for providing fully prepared, nutritionally balanced meals for the week. This program was very well-received and allowed NEI3A to create partnerships that have evolved into Iowa Café Congregate dining sites.

The Iowa Café model was designed with more flexibility for consumers in mind but has the added benefit of providing significant economic development in rural, smaller communities that were hit hard during the pandemic. Restaurants, cafés, and diners went through a challenging time when they were shut down and couldn't serve customers in their establishments. It is proving to be a popular program and provides a much-needed opportunity for older persons to socialize and get important nutrition benefits.

The pandemic also impacted another popular program, the Seniors Farmer Market voucher program. Farmers Markets across the state were canceled in early summer, and many did not open at all. This made it difficult for consumers to find locations to use coupons and so didn't even apply. NEI3A mailed checks to eligible consumers for the first time, distributing approximately 2,400 sets of checks with a retention rate of 80.4% for a total dollar amount of \$56,613 redeemed by local growers.



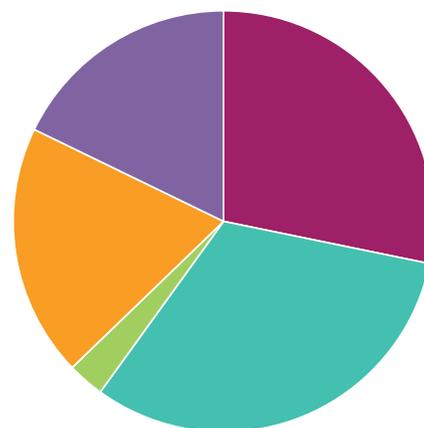
Empowering individuals *to live with choice and dignity*

Person Centered Funding

Person Centered Funding is a philosophical approach where older individuals' specific needs and situations are considered in order to identify and remove barriers to their independence.

NEI3A's Person Centered Funding is a comprehensive care management program where NEI3A Aging Specialists work with individuals and their families to assess their specific needs, develop a care plan to address those needs, and identify resources and funding to implement their care plan.

Services funded through this program include case management, chore, homemaker, home modifications and repairs, and transportation. NEI3A assisted 581 people last year with these services.



- Assisted Transportation
- Case Management
- Chore
- Homemaker
- Material Aid

Elder Abuse Prevention and Awareness (EAPA)

Elder Abuse and mistreatment affects approximately 1 in 10 Americans. This often goes unreported. Elder Abuse may be in the form of physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial exploitation, or neglect by a caregiver or self. Most seniors have been adhering to public health officials during the COVID-19 pandemic and remaining at home and socially distancing from others. These limits on in-person contact greatly limit opportunities for ongoing elder abuse to be detected by others.

NEI3A has provided 73 consumers with EAPA services, a 70% increase from the previous fiscal year. The EAPA program has provided \$23,000 in support service to help those experiencing or who were at risk of experiencing elder abuse.

The EAPA program provides public awareness and education to identify potential vulnerable adults and the strategies and resources to intervene and stop abuse. As with other services, this year's awareness activities have been adjusted to provide virtual education during World Elder Abuse Awareness Week as well as ongoing communication efforts to raise awareness about the growing concerns of elder abuse.

EAPA services make a positive impact on a person's life!

Marge called LifeLong Links in December of 2020 after leaving her son's abusive home. At the time of her call she was recovering from COVID and living in her car. NEI3A paid for her to stay in a hotel while the aging specialist worked with her to find housing options. Within a week we were able to find a senior living community where Marge could live. We paid for the security deposit and first month's rent and assisted her with the move. Marge is now doing well and is thriving in her new environment!



Special Projects



Providing Support *across the country*

NEIBA is proud to house two national resource centers: the Senior Medicare Patrol National Resource Center (SMP Center) and the SHIP National Technical Assistance Center (SHIP TA Center). The two national centers provide resources and services for each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Senior Medicare Patrol National Resource Center (SMP Center)

The SMP Center, under the direction of the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL), serves 54 SMP projects nationally and also promotes national visibility for the SMP program to assist the general public in locating their state SMP project. In 2020, SMP had 5,720 active team members. Those SMP team members conducted 9,870 group outreach and education events and 249,134 individual sessions with, or on behalf of, Medicare beneficiaries.

Additionally, the Office of Inspector General's report 2020 Performance Data for the Senior Medicare Patrol Projects reported "\$16.8 million in expected Medicare recoveries that were attributable to the projects; \$53,768 in cost avoidance on behalf of Medicare, Medicaid, beneficiaries, and others; and \$33,554 in total savings to beneficiaries and others." The report also stated, "We note that the projects may not be receiving full credit for recoveries, savings, and cost avoidance attributable to their work."

The SMP Center maintained a national SMP website, www.smpresource.org, and a password protected SMP Resource Library containing 1,346 resource entries for 5,896 users. The SMP Center produced 425 of the library's resource entries, which included webinars/trainings and mission-related resources for the 54 SMP projects to use. The Center's website houses several resources and videos it created to educate beneficiaries and their families about these pressing Medicare fraud trends.

The SMP Center creates fraud alert materials and resources for SMP projects use. The focus over the last year has been the rise of cardiac genetic testing fraud as well as staying alert to COVID-19 fraud. These resources have been placed on the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of Inspector General (OIG) website and social media platforms.



The SMP Center has also had success with outreach using social media. Since July of 2020 the Center's Facebook page had 388 posts and has seen a total of 400,267 impressions, with an average of 1,013 impressions per post. There have also been 237 new page likes and an average of 352 active daily users. The Center had 6,503 total shares and 20,575 total public engagements.

In the fall of 2020, the Center released a national commercial with the ABC network in 20 major U.S. markets. The commercial aired during Medicare Open Enrollment and was related to preventing phone scams. The total estimated impressions included 29,671,000 for individuals 55 and older, and 18,967,000 for individuals 65 and older.

In 2021, the SMP Center printed a bulk order of the rebranded My Healthcare Tracker, which are used as an education tool to prevent Medicare fraud. The SMPs use them during educational presentations and with their outreach efforts. Beneficiaries use them to record what happened in their medical appointments and compare the information with their Medicare Summary Notices (MSNs) or Explanations of Benefits (EOBs) as an early step in detecting fraud.

Lastly, we look forward to releasing a national SMP mobile application in 2021 in an effort to assist with preventing and educating on Medicare fraud.

State Health Insurance Assistance Program National Technical Assistance Center (SHIP TA Center)

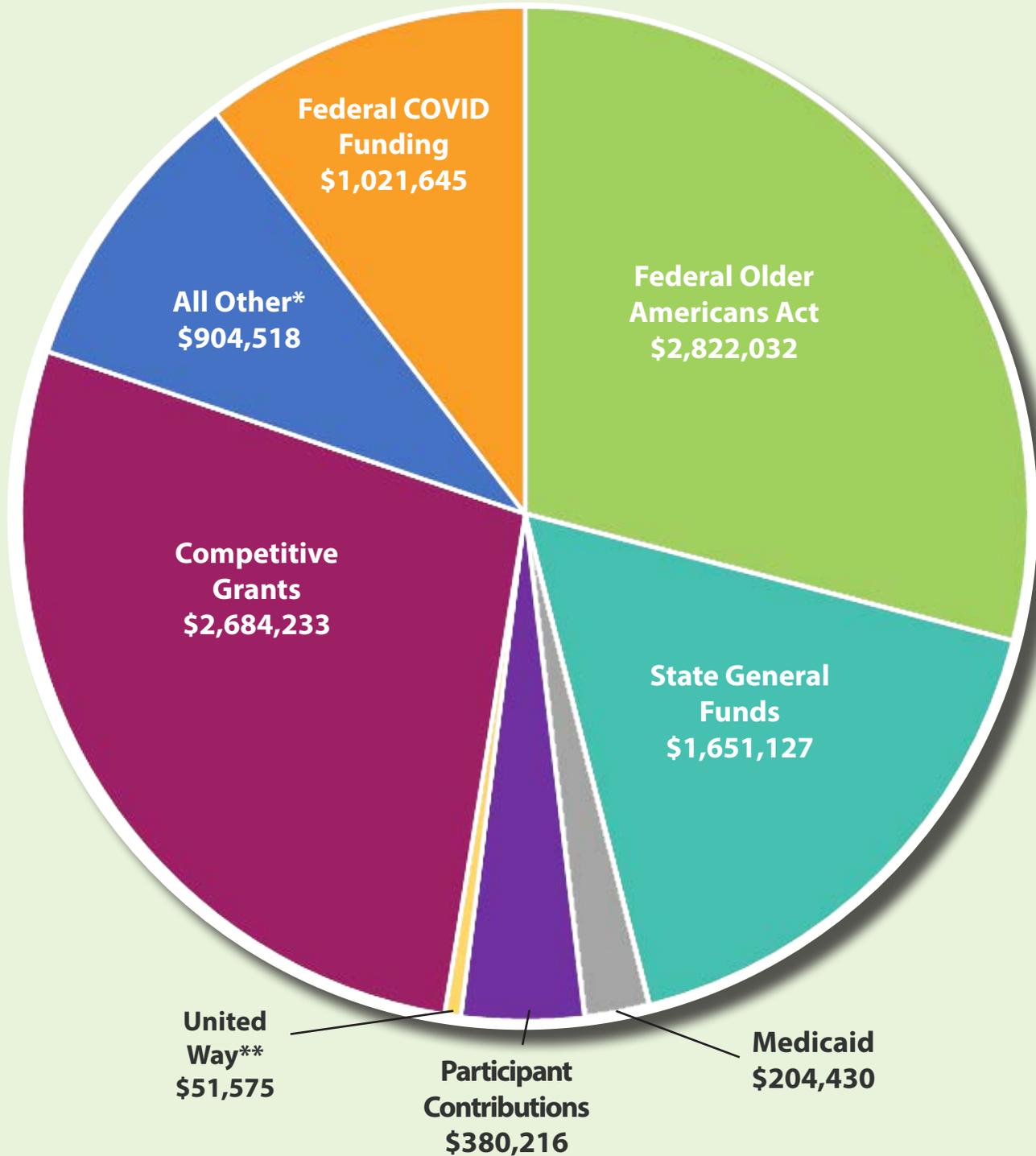
The SHIP TA Center is in its eighth year of service to the national public and the 54 national SHIP programs. The Center website, www.shiphelp.org, was visited 1.5 million times this past year. Over 12,600 SHIP staff and volunteers are registered to log in to the password-protected area and access specialized tools to help SHIPs do their work. They logged in 62,000 times. Favorite tools were our Medicare courses and certification exams (43,000 visits) and the national Medigap Plan Finder (20,000 visits).

Two major accomplishments stand out over the past year. One was the national "Managing Through COVID-19 Toolkit," published nationally on our website at <https://www.shiphelp.org/covid-19/toolkit>. Recently added is a new COVID-19 vaccine fact sheet and guide for discussing the topic sensitively. USAging provided NEI3A with additional funding for this project. Another notable accomplishment was our first national Welcome to Medicare Virtual Fair, inspired by the need to help SHIPs with outreach during COVID-19. 1,500 newly eligible Medicare beneficiaries attended and learned from over a dozen expert SHIP and national speakers. Sessions lasted between 10 and 20 minutes per topic. View them on our YouTube page, linked in the footer of www.shiphelp.org.



Sources of Funding

Total Funding FY 2021
\$9,719,776



**In Kind Contributions: \$124,522
(includes only labor)**

*Includes fundraising, private contributions and other local cash
**Includes United Way of Cedar Valley, Winneshiek County, and Marshall County



2021 Area Advisory Committee

- Les Askelson, Winneshiek
- Marcia Bauer, Black Hawk
- Bob Brown, Black Hawk
- Rosie Bruns, Black Hawk
- Sandy Chilson, Howard
- Lori Egan, Winneshiek
- Lamoyne Gaard, Poweshiek
- Jerry Gade, Grundy
- Sharon Harms, Grundy
- Heather Levinson, Winneshiek
- Paul Loucks, Delaware
- Margaret Mjones, Dubuque
- Valerie Nehl, Black Hawk
- Mary Peters, Dubuque
- Linda Ridihalgh, Fayette
- Linda Von Holten, Marshall
- Ron Welper, Black Hawk
- Fran Zichal, Clayton





NORTHEAST IOWA
Area Agency on Aging
Regional Offices

**3840 W. 9th Street
Waterloo, IA 50702**

**2728 Asbury Road
Dubuque, IA 52001**

**607 Washington Street
Decorah, IA 52101**

**123 W. Main Street
Marshalltown, IA 50158**

Phone: 319-874-6840 or 800-779-8707

Fax: 319-874-6888

www.nei3a.org

NEI3A serves older adults, caregivers, and persons with disabilities in Allamakee, Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, Clayton, Delaware, Dubuque, Fayette, Grundy, Hardin, Howard, Jackson, Marshall, Poweshiek, Tama, and Winneshiek Counties.