



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New North selected as recipient of AARP Community Challenge Grant

Funds to expand award-winning NEW BOOST™ initiative, including to age 50-plus population

NEW NORTH, June 18, 2025 – New North Inc., the regional economic development corporation for the 18 counties of Northeast Wisconsin, has been selected to receive an AARP Community Challenge Grant of \$20,000 to back expansion of its award-winning NEW BOOST™ for Hidden Talent initiative. Grant funds will be utilized for “Train the Trainer” support to organizations in the region that help individuals by providing digital-skilling opportunities.

“Digital access and skills are no longer optional – they’re essential,” says Rebecca Deschane, vice president of talent development for New North Inc. “Through the AARP Community Challenge Grant, we are able to expand the capacity of NEW BOOST™ to better meet the evolving needs of the diverse populations within our region through a trusted network of local digital navigators who can provide long-term support. Our thanks to AARP for its generous support to help make our community a great place for all ages.”

NEW BOOST™ (Building Opportunities for Overlooked Sustainable Talent) aims to expand digital access and literacy by supporting a network of community navigators across the New North region. Using a train-the-trainer model, the initiative equips local leaders with the knowledge and tools to serve as digital navigators, helping individuals and families adopt and effectively use internet and broadband services.

For age 50-plus individuals, NEW BOOST™ provides significant benefits; older adults often face unique challenges in accessing and using digital technologies, leading to isolation and a lack of access to essential services. Through tailored support and training, this demographic is able to overcome barriers to digital literacy, enabling its members to stay connected with family and friends, access healthcare information and participate in online communities.

The [AARP Community Challenge](#) is a grant program to make tangible improvements in communities that jump-start long-term change. It is part of AARP’s nationwide Livable Communities initiative, which supports the efforts of cities, towns, neighborhoods and rural areas to become great places to live for people of all ages. It is designed to fund innovative, quick-action projects that inspire change in areas such as public places, housing, transportation, digital connectivity and community resilience, among others.



New North is among 383 Community Challenge grantees – from more than 3,450 grant applications – in 2025, the program’s ninth year. AARP is investing more than \$4.2 million in total across all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Starting this month, New North Inc., in collaboration with African Heritage Inc., will begin to convene digital navigator project stakeholders and host train-the-trainer sessions. Over the second half of 2025, it will identify strategic training sites, along with promoting and hosting digital training sessions, before wrapping up this grant work in December.

An estimated 200 New North residents will directly benefit from the initiative, according to Deschane, with roughly 50 percent of those being in the age 50-plus category. She indicates that partnerships with local libraries, Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) and other community-based organizations will be key to the success of the initiative.

Deschane says that New North is seeking partnerships with organizations that offer services to age 50-plus individuals, along with those who previously have worked with New North. Interested groups can share their interest at <https://forms.office.com/r/t1Gp2QnAcb>.

###

New North, Inc., is a 501(c)3 non-profit, regional economic development corporation fostering collaboration among private and public sector leaders throughout the 18 counties of Northeast Wisconsin, known as the New North region. The New North brand unites the region both internally and externally around talent development, brand promotion and business development, signifying the collective economic power behind the 18 counties. The counties include Brown, Calumet, Door, Florence, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Marquette, Menominee, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, Sheboygan, Waupaca, Waushara and Winnebago. www.thenewnorth.com

Media Contact: Jeff Blumb, media@blumbcc.com or 920.328.5454