



How Northbridge Communities Built a Trusted Partnership with Incite to Support 22 Communities Across New England

Northbridge Communities' partnership with Incite Strategic Partners shows how a fast-growing, multi-state senior living operator can use a specialized group purchasing organization (GPO) to bring discipline to its spend, strengthen vendor relationships, and free its internal team to focus on what matters most: the residents and families they serve.

Founded in 2004 by James Coughlin and Wendy Nowokunski, Northbridge has grown from a single community in Plymouth, Massachusetts into a portfolio of 22 assisted living, independent living, and memory care communities across Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. Today the company serves more than 2,000 residents and families and has earned recognition on both the Boston Globe and USA Top Workplaces lists for its culture of care.

Drawing on an in-depth interview with Matt Tremblay, Director of Procurement and Culinary Operations, this case study explores the organization's procurement journey, the challenges that drove Northbridge to seek a new GPO partner, the solutions Incite brought to the table, and the outcomes, both measurable and immeasurable, that followed.

The Challenge: Rethinking the GPO Partnership

As Northbridge expanded across New England, the procurement function had to keep pace with a growing, geographically dispersed portfolio. Matt oversees every dollar the organization spends, from gloves to electricity to food, along with contracting and vendor relationships across all 22 communities. Before working with Incite, Northbridge was partnered with another GPO, but the relationship had stopped delivering the level of support a growing multi-state operator needed

“

“We really felt that there was more opportunity in finding a better relationship, a better support group, one that wasn't focused so much on rebates, rebates, compliance, compliance, compliance, but more focused on supporting the customer, supporting the client,”

— said Matt Tremblay, Director of Procurement and Culinary Operations.

Layered on top of that, Matt was running procurement as a department of one, trying to bring visibility and control to spend across 22 communities. Three pain points drove the search for a better partner:

A compliance-first posture. The previous GPO's focus on rebate chasing and compliance enforcement had overtaken the day-to-day support Northbridge actually needed.

A difficult unwinding. Once the incumbent learned Northbridge was leaving, communication dropped off, leaving Matt's team to untangle lingering spend connections on their own.

Limited bandwidth for a one-person department. Managing spend across 22 communities required a partner that could function like an extension of the team, not just another vendor to manage.

Incite's Solution: An Extension of the Procurement Team

Incite stood out because of their key differentiators. Compliance still mattered, but Incite built the conversation around relationships, vendor access, and the kind of opportunities that move a business forward. Despite the complexity of unwinding long-standing vendor ties to the previous GPO, the transition itself went smoothly.

"Incite made it really easy to transition over. Incite is all about the relationship and the support, not 'you need to buy this product so we can all get paid on it,'" Tremblay says.

As soon as the partnership began, Incite took initiative. Early on, the Incite team observed Northbridge's spend patterns and proactively introduced an e-procurement platform. It was a solution Matt wasn't even looking for, but one that arrived at exactly the right moment. It gave Northbridge the visibility and control it needed to manage spend across every community and laid the foundation for the coordinated procurement operation the organization runs today.

From there, the partnership expanded into active vendor advocacy. When a major supplier's customer service wasn't delivering for Northbridge's wellness teams, Incite stepped in, managed the relationship, and got service back on track. When Northbridge wanted to negotiate a better quick-pay rebate and consolidate additional categories with their broadline distributor, Incite sat on Northbridge's side of the table as a negotiating partner, not a middleman.

Key Outcomes for Northbridge

A Procurement Operation That Scales with the Business

Matt went from cleaning up a fragmented spend picture as a department of one to running a coordinated program where Incite and a vetted vendor network operate in sync across all 22 communities. The result is real-time visibility and control that would be out of reach for most operators of Northbridge's size working alone.

Financial Impact Through Advocacy, Not Just Rebates

Back-end negotiations that increased the quick-pay rebate, category consolidations with the broadline distributor, and direct vendor interventions have all translated into measurable savings and stronger cost control. As Matt puts it, "Incite's willingness to jump in, manage vendor relationships, and ultimately improve them has a direct financial impact on the business. It's the kind of everyday advocacy that a rebate-only GPO simply doesn't provide," Tremblay said.

Time and Attention Returned to the Team

With Incite in place, Matt no longer runs his own inflation reports or vets vendors from scratch. Incite's pre-qualified partner network means requests come back with real options tailored to how Northbridge operates, freeing the internal team to focus on higher-value work.

A Shared Philosophy on Managing Cost

In a market where prices only move in one direction, Matt and the Incite team are aligned on what success looks like: controlling future increases through smart purchasing and strong relationships, not chasing short-term savings that never hold. As Matt notes, there's no such thing as saving money anymore. The question is how you build the relationships and purchasing discipline to manage increases when they hit.

Cultural and Strategic Fit

The relationship works because it's genuinely mutual. Matt emphasizes that Northbridge isn't just a number in a portfolio; they have a dedicated team at Incite invested in their success. That shows up in constant communication and a willingness to advocate on Northbridge's behalf with every vendor at the table.



“

“Our relationship works because we're not just a number in a portfolio. We have a dedicated team that truly wants to see Northbridge succeed, because our success is their success. The relationship and the partnership you find with Incite, that's the real value add,” — said Tremblay.

Contact your Member Success Rep to learn more.

INCITE
STRATEGIC PARTNERS