Skowhegan’s Regional Road map for increasing health and safety for all ages
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Dear Ms. Parham,

On behalf of the town of Skowhegan, Maine, we are pleased to submit this letter of interest and commitment in the AARP/World Health Organization Network of Age-Friendly Communities.

Skowhegan recognizes the importance of encouraging and promoting age-friendly planning and policies to address changing demographics and to enhance independent living. We are committed to a process of continual improvement to support active and healthy aging. We currently are in our first year of a Betterment Foundation grant for establishing a senior gathering place through Somerset Public Health and Redington Fairview General Hospital. We are the county location for Spectrum Generations, we have additional senior housing being added to our community, and we work diligently to ensure our town businesses and organizations are handicap accessible. Led by Somerset Public Health, our community is the host site of Somerset Counties Senior Strong committee. This committee is made up of a diverse group of agencies, organizations and aging adults designed to address the issues of aging in place.

As part of our involvement and commitment, we have already conducted some baseline assessment of age friendliness. We have an active planning committee and now hold regular senior gatherings in the community to continually engage this population in planning and program implementation. We wish to have AARP’s assistance in continued assessment and action planning across the 8 domains of livability based on the findings of the assessment. With Somerset Public Health leadership, our very active group of involved older residents is deeply engaged in the planning process and we commit to monitoring progress toward implementing the action plan. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Paul York, Chairman
Betty Austin, Selectman
Soren Siren, Selectman

Darla Pickett, Vice-Chairman
E. Gene Rouse, Selectman
Executive Summary

The Age-Friendly Skowhegan Initiative:

The vast majority of seniors in Skowhegan and across the nation want to remain in their homes as they age. The Town of Skowhegan has recognized this important fact by promoting age-friendly planning and policies to make the Town more friendly/comfortable/supportive to seniors who want to age in place in the community. Some examples of the community’s commitment to its seniors include community gathering places for older adults, a very active food pantry and meals on wheels program, a strong town web site and a local cable network for programming and information sharing, community service work by MSAD 54 Adult Education where there is a student led Tech Spot to assist citizens with their technology needs, and a relatively new senior housing complex. The Town extended its work for seniors by partnering with Somerset Public Health to apply successfully in November 2017, to become an AARP Age-Friendly Community.

The AARP work has included baseline community assessment of seniors’ perceptions of how the Town can be made more age-friendly, convening focus group discussions, hosting Maine AARP coffee talks and an On Tap meet- and-greet, and sharing expertise/ideas with AARP staff and with other towns in the growing Maine AARP network of Age-Friendly communities. The assessment and planning work has been guided by a steering committee of 10 community residents that includes elderly residents (see below). This action plan is only the first step in what will be a longer multi-pronged effort to increase the livability of Skowhegan for its senior residents. The committee has deliberately chosen not to recommend a large comprehensive approach in this document. Rather, the approach is to target a manageable, select number of initiatives that the assessment shows are central to improving livability of the community, and using those initial successes as a basis for additional work later, based both on the assessment and on early implementation experiences.

About the Community:

The Town of Skowhegan, Maine is a mostly rural community of 8,344 people (2,459 Skowhegan residents were aged 60+ during the 2013-2017 period) located in southwestern Somerset County. The hydro power generated by the Kennebec River as it flows through Town helped to make it an industrial center in the late 1800s. Today, the major industries rely on New Balance footwear, forestry and agriculture, and these continue to experience growth but not without challenges. Economic development is a priority for the Town, which has an active Main Street Skowhegan, Area Chamber of Commerce, and a Wesserunsett Arts Council. Summit Natural Gas has established a natural gas pipeline to Skowhegan, and through the local efforts of the Skowhegan Grist Mill, micro brewers, and local farmers the town is again becoming a hub for agriculture.

Skowhegan is a Town that values all members of its community and recognizes that seniors are a living link with the town’s past (many are long-term residents) and a group facing many physical and economic challenges because of the realities of aging in a rural area. People 60 and over are also a significant portion of our residents (29.5 %), which makes it especially important to make the Town a welcoming place for them as they age.

The Mission, Vision and Values that Guide the Age-Friendly Work:

The mission, vision and values guiding efforts to develop the plan to make Skowhegan more friendly/comfortable/supportive to seniors who want to age in place in the community are:

Mission: The town of Skowhegan will be a resilient community that supports the health and well-being of its citizens of all ages.

Vision: An intergenerational population living, working and playing together.

Values: We value love of our neighbor, trust and respect, kindness, honesty, good communication, clear policies and procedures, local decision making.
Team Expertise and How the Team Included Older Adults and Representatives of the Diversity in Your Community:

Key roles in the steering committee’s assessment and planning work have been played by Town Manager Christine Almand and Town Economic Development Director Jeff Hewett. Facilitation and support has been provided by Bill Primmerman of Somerset Public Health, and Ken Town has provided assistance with evaluation and report-writing.

The steering committee was recruited mainly by asking persons completing the needs assessment survey if they would like to participate in this work. Residents were also invited through personal invitation and media publicity. Overall, five members are retired residents/volunteers in Skowhegan, one is an employee of Somerset Public Health, and three live and work in the Town and specialize in subjects relevant to the action plan. Taken together, the committee members have a wide range of relevant expertise and knowledge of the community.

Approach Adopted by the Team to Create the Action Plan and Engage Community in the Process:

The steering committee’s initial work involved reviewing assessment survey results and other data with the project evaluator. The committee also reviewed previous actions that have proven effective in helping seniors to thrive that were identified by the Tri-State Learning Collaborative and by other AARP Age-Friendly communities in Maine. The planning team then brought all of this information and their diverse experiences to the table and brainstormed about what actions might be included in Skowhegan’s action plan. Discussion focused on six of the AARP/World Health Organization domains of an age-friendly community: housing, transportation, community support and health services (including communication), outdoor spaces and buildings, civic participation and employment, and respect and social inclusion (including social participation). For each domain, members identified what community successes and assets might be built on further, as well as which immediate and longer-term actions could be taken by the community. These activities were then placed in a draft AARP work plan template for each domain. The work plan in this report is a draft which will be taken to the Town Selectman for initial approval and then out to community groups for feedback and volunteer recruitment for plan implementation.

Summarize Your Assessment Approach and How It Informed the Action Plan:

The goal of the assessment was to identify the key elements that would make Skowhegan more friendly/comfortable/supportive to seniors who want to age in place in the Town. The main data source was an adapted version of a survey developed by AARP, which was made available to Skowhegan residents on-line via the SurveyMonkey website. The survey was also made available in hard copy at the public library, the community recreation center, the local hospital and the town office. The Skowhegan version of the survey contained 31 questions; 119 residents completed the questionnaire. The survey sample, while not randomly selected and relatively small, appears to be fairly representative of the larger senior Skowhegan community.

The Skowhegan survey results mirror other recent research into the factors that seniors believe are important for them to successfully age in place in Maine. For example, 20 Towns and cities across the state have completed the needs assessment portion of their work on the AARP Aging in Place Initiative since 2012. It appears that virtually all of the communities so far have found that three of the eight AARP domains are the most important in the eyes of local seniors: transportation, community/health services, and housing. Some particular services also appear as priorities in much of the Town research (e.g., the importance of finding help performing household chores like shoveling and minor repairs). These three areas also emerged as most important in other studies on what it takes for Mainers to age successfully in their community and homes (e.g., a 2012 University of New England statewide assessment on aging).

Action Plan Summary in Each Domain:

As mentioned above, this action plan is only a first, limited step in a longer multi-pronged, multi-year effort to increase the livability of Skowhegan for senior residents who wish to age in place in the community. Additional findings from the
assessment will be built later into additional steps, along with insights gained from the initial efforts. The action plan’s overall goals and objectives within each of the six domains are:

**Housing Domain:**

Goal--To establish a home repair network for aging adults in Skowhegan and Madison  
Objective 1-- By September 2019 establish a volunteer coordinator to connect housing needs in the community with available resources.  
Objective 2-- By November 2019 a series of winter support services will be organized to assist the elderly living in their own homes.  
Objective 3-- By December 2019 a Madison/Skowhegan Home Repair Network will be established and delivering needs to residents.

**Transportation Domain:**

Goal-- To have a local community volunteer transportation network for aging adults  
Objective 1-- By December 2019 a Volunteer Drivers Brigade to meet local transportation needs of residents will be established.

**Community Support, Health Services and Communication Domain:**

Goal-- To develop opportunities for meaningful community connections which are inclusive across socio-economics.  
Objective 1-- By December 31, 2019 create a multimedia source for coordinating and communicating local health and volunteer services.  
Objective 2-- By January 2020 enhance access to program information for older adults through technology

**Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Domain:**

Goal-- To support the availability and accessibility of Skowhegan’s outdoor spaces and buildings for older adults  
Objective 1-- By January 2020 a meeting with town officials will be held to discuss the priorities of safe communities for the elderly.  
Objective 2-- By June 2020 access the need for railings, grab bars and handicap accessible entrance ways  
Objective 3-- By July 2020 the Skowhegan community will have increased coordination of information available regarding where to exercise in their community

**Respect and Social Inclusion Domain:**

Goal: To develop opportunities for meaningful community connections which are inclusive across socio-economics  
Objective 1-- By June 2020 there will be improved coordination/recognition of volunteer services and programs for older adults in the community  
Objective 2-- By June 2020 Increase the number of school/community activities that are intergenerational

**Civic Participation and Employment Domain:**

Goal-- To assist Skowhegan residents (of all income levels) with opportunities for civic participation and employment so they can age in place in their own home  
Objective 1-- Improve marketable skills of older residents to increase their employment/ income generating opportunities  
Objective 2-- Expand the number of social/community involvement opportunities for area seniors, to combat social isolation.
Introduction the Committee:

The assessment and planning work that has generated this action plan was directed and coordinated by a 10-member steering committee whose members are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Representing</th>
<th>Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christine Almand</td>
<td>Town Manager</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deb Casey</td>
<td>Somerset Public Health</td>
<td>Assessment and Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Hewett</td>
<td>Town Economic Development Director</td>
<td>Assessment and Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Laney</td>
<td>MSAD 54 Adult Education Director and Citizen</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Olsen</td>
<td>Caregiver and citizen</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastor Jen Reed</td>
<td>Centenary United Methodist Church</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Renfrew</td>
<td>Retired Geriatric Physician and Citizen</td>
<td>Assessment and Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dena Rich</td>
<td>Town Economic Development Assistant</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine Wallace</td>
<td>Retired Citizen</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary Wallace</td>
<td>Retired Business Owner and Citizen</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine Watts</td>
<td>Retired Teacher and Citizen</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
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</tbody>
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Community Profile

Skowhegan is the county seat of Somerset County, located in the southern part of that county on the banks of the Kennebec River at the junction of US Rte. 2 and Rte. 201. The area was originally inhabited by the Abenaki people; Europeans settled the Town in 1773.

Skowhegan’s commercial and industrial development has always revolved around the Kennebec River gorge that runs through the downtown. The waterfalls at that location provided water power for industry, and in the 19th century numerous mills were built on Skowhegan Island, which separates the river into north and south channels. Historically, the Town was once the heart of Maine’s logging industry. Today Skowhegan is home to a number of significant businesses, including SAPPI Fine Paper, Gifford’s Ice-cream, New Balance Athletic Shoe Company, Maine Grains and Redington-Fairview General Hospital. Community revitalization is being led by Maine Street Skowhegan, The Skowhegan Area Chamber of Commerce and the Wesserunsett Arts Council.

There are also numerous events in the Town throughout the year, including the Skowhegan State Fair (the oldest continuous state fair in the nation), the Kneading Conference and Artisan Bread Fair, Riverfest, the Skowhegan Maple Festival, and Snowfest. Landmarks include Lake George Regional Park, Coburn Park, the Skowhegan Historic District, the Municipal Building and Opera House, and the Swinging and Walking Bridges over the river.

Skowhegan was also home to Senator Margaret Chase Smith, the first woman to be elected to both houses of Congress. Today the Margaret Chase Smith Library is an archive, museum, educational facility, and public policy center devoted to preserving the legacy of Margaret Chase Smith, promoting research into American political history, advancing the ideals of public service, and exploring issues of civic engagement. The Skowhegan History House Museum and Research Center and the Skowhegan Public Library are vital contributors to the community’s historic fabric.

Community Demographics and Diversity:

The main source of demographic data for Skowhegan and Somerset County as a whole is the American Community Survey (ACS), released annually by the Bureau of the Census. This is a national survey using a series of monthly samples to produce annual estimates for all of the areas that the Bureau formerly surveyed via its decennial census long-form questionnaire. The Census Bureau samples about 3.54 million household addresses each year, and Survey data is...
presented in the form of five-year estimates of key demographic, housing and workforce data for each political subdivision in the nation. The most recent published Survey covers the period from 2013 to 2017.

ACS estimates for small communities like Skowhegan are limited, since sample sizes are too small to yield reliable estimates for many variable combinations. The 2013-2017 Survey estimated that there were 8,344 persons living in the Town; of these, 789 were aged 55-59, 431 aged 60-64, 1,091 aged 65-74, 698 aged 75-84, and 239 aged 85 and older. Virtually all (95 %+) were white. Of the 2,028 residents aged 65+, 895 were male and 1,133 female. Of residents aged 60+, 14.3% had lived in poverty in the last 12 months; that percentage rose to 16.8% for persons aged 65

The latest ACS provides more detailed information specifically on elderly residents at the county level, since the county sample size is large enough to allow this. Somerset County’s estimated population by 2017 was 50,994; 9,921 were aged 65 and over (4,700 male and 5,221 female).

Of the 9,921 persons over age 64 in the county:

- Over half were married/not separated (53.9%); the rest were widowed (23.4%), divorced (17.8%), separated (1.0%), or never married (3.9%).
- One-fifth had not graduated high school (19.8%); 41.9% were high school graduates or had their GED or equivalent, 19.7% had some college or an associate’s degree, and the rest (18.6%) had earned a bachelor’s degree or higher.
- A few (3.1%) were living with/had responsibility for grandchildren under 18 years of age.
- Almost a quarter (23.5%) were military veterans.
- Only 4.6% spoke a language other than English at home.
- Most (84.0%) had left the labor force, while 15.2% remained employed, and .8% were in the labor force but were unemployed.

The 9,921 persons over age 64 lived in 6,289 households. Of those households:

- 41.0% were families headed by a married couple, 4.8% were female-headed families with no husband present, and 52.0% were non-family households (with many of those living alone).
- Looking at household income in last 12 months (in 2017 inflation-adjusted dollars), a third (33.8%) had earned income (mean annual earnings of $31,565) or non-Social Security retirement income (39.1%, mean of $17,030), nearly all (92.2%) had Social Security income (mean of $17,728), and relatively few (5.8%) received Supplemental Security Income (mean $9,887), cash public assistance income (2.5%, mean $1,630), or Food Stamp/SNAP benefits (21.8%).
- 13.0% had income below 100% of poverty level, while 16.5% lived at 100-149% of poverty level, and 70.5% had income at or above 150% of poverty level.
- Of the 6,289 occupied housing units, 81.3% were owner-occupied and 18.7% were renter-occupied. Of the 5,116 owner-occupied units, nearly one-quarter (23.2%) had selected monthly owner costs exceeding 30% of their household income in last 12 months. Of the 1,173 renter-occupied units, 39.2% paid gross rent greater than 30% of their household income in past 12 months (median gross rent of $549). (30% is the figure above which individuals are considered to bear an excessive housing cost burden.)
- The civilian noninstitutionalized population was 9,633; of those, 39.9% had some form of disability.

**Share What Makes Your Community a Good Place to Live:**

Skowhegan has rich history, with the beautiful Kennebec River running through it. We have affordable housing, and the number of locations for senior housing is increasing; there are residential spaces downtown with shopping, eateries, banking and a grist mill. There are community and organization volunteers willing to help where needed and there is a local transportation system that most rural communities do not have. Health care provided by Redington Fairview General Hospital and other local providers gives residents a foundation to remain in the community as they age. The community
has a vast number of recreational activities available to citizens of all ages making our community a wonderful place to live, work, play and age.

History of the Skowhegan Age-Friendly Work

The history of the age-friendly work in your municipality includes a description of how the team is building on community strengths to make changes, tells people how you are approaching the work, and explains your broad vision for the future.

The Town of Skowhegan recognizes the importance of encouraging and promoting age-friendly planning and policies to address changing demographics and to enhance independent living. Some examples of their commitment as a community include gathering places for older adults around the community, a very active food pantry and meals on wheels program, local cable and radio networks for programming and information sharing, community service work by MSAD 54 students who do a Tech Spot for seniors, a very active Adult Education program and new senior housing complex development. In support of this process of continual improvement for active and healthy aging the Town partnered with Somerset Public Health and Redington Fairview General Hospital to submit an application to be an AARP Age-Friendly Community. This process began with approval by the Town Selectman in November of 2017 to move ahead with the application.

As part of our involvement and commitment we have already conducted a baseline community assessment of age friendliness with our citizens, conducted some focus group discussions, hosted Maine AARP coffee talks and an On Tap meet and greets, and have established an active assessment and planning committee. We now have state and regional AARP assistance in continued action planning across the eight domains of livability based on the findings of the assessment and the many resources available to us from other towns in the Maine network of Age-Friendly communities. Our very active group of involved older residents and community/school partners is deeply engaged in the planning process and we commit to monitoring progress toward implementing the proposed action plan.

Introduction to the Plan

Mission, Vision, and Values:

Mission: The Town of Skowhegan will be a resilient community that supports the health and well-being of its citizens of all ages.

Vision: An intergenerational population living, working and playing together.

We value love of our neighbor, trust and respect, kindness, honesty, good communication, clear policies and procedures, local decision making

Team Expertise and How the Team Included Older Adults and Representatives of Your Community:

The assessment and planning team evolved out of leadership from Town Manager Christine Almand and Economic Development Director Jeff Hewett. Facilitation work was conducted by Somerset Public Health, and evaluation was done by Ken Town, a contracted independent evaluator. Volunteer recruitment for the team was done through the written and on-line community assessment tool where people could sign up, through personal invitation, use of the media and by sharing the team’s work with community members.

Approach Adopted by the Team to Create the Action Plan and Engage Community in the Process:

We began by reviewing Skowhegan seniors’ needs and preferences based on our assessment survey results and a general discussion of the data with our evaluator. The assessment and planning committee also reviewed previous research by the Tri-State Aging Collaborative and action plans developed previously by some other AARP Age-Friendly communities in Maine to identify actions which have been found effective in helping seniors thrive in their communities. In the next step in the process, the assessment and planning team brought all of this information and their diverse experiences to the table and brainstormed about what actions might be included in Skowhegan’s plan for further improving town elders’ ability to remain in the community as they age. Discussion focused on six of the AARP/World Health Organization domains of an age-friendly community: housing, transportation, community support and health services (including communication), outdoor spaces and buildings, civic participation and employment, and respect and social inclusion (including social
participation). Several of these domains were created by combining two of the eight domains originally developed by AARP/WHO. For each of these domains, members identified what community successes and positives might be built on further, as well as which immediate and longer-term actions are most important for the community to take. They did this by writing their ideas on post-it notes, which were then mounted on bulletin boards. These activities were then placed in a draft AARP work plan template for each identified domain. The attached work plan in this report is still a draft which will be taken out to community groups for feedback and volunteer recruitment for plan implementation.

**Process for Compiling Needs Assessment Data:**

Recognizing that the vast majority of seniors in Skowhegan and elsewhere in the nation want to remain in their homes as they age, the goal of the assessment work was to identify the key elements that would make Skowhegan more friendly/comfortable/supportive to seniors who want to age in place in the community.

Skowhegan has followed AARP’s model process (developed in collaboration with the World Health Organization) for drafting an action plan to make the community more age-friendly. Bill Primmerman, from Somerset Public Health, has provided staff support for this work. AARP has developed a model survey that local communities can use to help assess what their residents aged 55+ view as important for a positive quality of life and for successfully aging in place. That questionnaire was adapted to Skowhegan’s needs and was the primary local data source underlying the Town’s action plan. It was made available to Skowhegan residents on-line via the Survey Monkey website. The survey was also made available in hard copy at the public library, the community recreation center, the local hospital and the town office. In final form, the Skowhegan survey contained 31 questions; 119 residents completed the questionnaire (for comparison, the Census has estimated that 2,459 Skowhegan residents were aged 60+ during the 2013-2017 period).

The survey sample, while not randomly selected and small in comparison to the size of Skowhegan’s senior population, appears to be fairly representative of the American Community Survey data profile for the community.

- The survey sample over-represents women. Just under 80% of the respondents are female; ACS estimates for persons aged 65+ in Skowhegan showed that 56% of those persons were women. Both the survey sample and the ACS reported that residents were nearly all white.
- 22% of the sample reported that they live alone; another 55% live with one other person (mostly their spouse). The rest live in larger households. ACS estimates for persons aged 65+ in the county indicated that 41.0% were in married families and that 47.7% lived alone.
- 72% of the survey sample say they own their own home; the ACS reported that 81.3% of housing units occupied by elderly county residents were owner-occupied.
- 37% of survey respondents indicate that a disability or chronic illness keeps them from being as active as they want to be. ACS data for persons over 64 years of age showed that 39.9% of the civilian noninstitutionalized population had some form of disability.

The Skowhegan’s elder survey results mirror other recent research into what factors seniors believe are important for them to successfully age in place in Maine. For example, 15 towns and cities across the state have completed the needs assessment portion of their work on the AARP Aging in Place Initiative since 2012. It appears that virtually all of the communities so far have found that three of the eight AARP domains are the most important in the eyes of local seniors: transportation, community/health services, and housing. Some particular services also appear as priorities in much of the town research (e.g., the importance of finding help performing household chores like shoveling and minor repairs).

These three areas also emerged as most important in other studies on what it takes for Mainers to age successfully in their community and homes. For example, the 2012 University of New England statewide assessment on aging (which included 11 focus groups of 80+ seniors and on-line surveys of 236 caregivers and 161 service providers) identified 18 of the services most needed by seniors. The nine most important (in order) were:

- transportation (e.g., for keeping health appointments, picking up prescriptions or shopping for food);
- food/nutrition (e.g., meals on wheels, help with meal preparation and nutrition counseling);
- home care/homemaker help (e.g., help with activities of daily living );
• physical and mental health/social care (e.g., home health, emergency care, hospital care, ambulatory care);
• financial services (e.g., money management, social security, financial concerns);
• fuel assistance;
• check-in services (e.g., a daily phone check-in or visitation service for folks who seldom leave their home to reduce isolation and spot problems);
• home repair (e.g., installation of home safety aids, home repairs, insulating windows and doors, repairing roofs);
• Medications/prescriptions (e.g., help with medication management, payment for medications, review of medications, picking up medications).

The primary limitation to the data used by the assessment and planning committee was that it mainly relied on the survey. Ideally, needs assessments are based on multiple data sources and data-gathering methods, so that the results of the various methods can be compared with each other through a triangulation process.

Synopsis of Key Learnings from the Assessment that Impact Plan Development:

Respondents to the needs assessment survey were asked to rate how important each of 46 possible services are for older people in Skowhegan. Over half of the respondents rated 37 of the 46 possible services as “very important.” Most respondents (75-97%) believed that none of these services currently exist locally, highlighting the need to more effectively communicate what exists to local residents.

Looking only at the 17 services rated as “very important” by 65% or more of respondents, these fell almost entirely into only four of the AARP domains: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings (6 services), Community Support and Health Services (including Communication ) (4), Housing (3), and Transportation (2). Thus, these four domains emerged as the most important in the minds of seniors completing the survey, and they are key elements of the action plan to promote livability in Skowhegan.

What Person and What Organization Will Manage Implementation of the Plan:

The implementation of this work plan is the responsibility of the Town of Skowhegan, AARP applicant to be a designated Age Friendly Community in Maine. This work will be overseen by the Economic Development Director for the Town of Skowhegan as part of the towns overall plan for economic development and the inclusiveness of its older citizen’s needs. The listed planning committee, in this report, will become the Age Friendly planning committee for oversight to carrying out the towns work plan implementation.

The importance of AARP’s Livability Index to Creation of the Plan:

The Committee organized its research and recommendations around eight key dimensions of aging that AARP recommends that communities should consider: outdoor space and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, and community support and health services. After seeing overlap in the domains in survey results the committee selected 6 domains to focus on. AARP Maine provided a grant to Somerset Public Health to provide facilitation and technical assistance to the town for the planning process. For purposes of this report, older residents are those 55 and over, though there is particular emphasis on residents 65 and older.

The Committee met first as an Assessment Committee, then as a Planning Committee and finally becoming the Towns Steering Committee. Meetings were held monthly with new members always welcome as the committee’s role shifted. We developed and conducted a survey of Skowhegan residents over the age of 50; held presentations and discussions at a Community Meetings with the help of AARP Maine staff and a draft report to the town selectman and its citizens is the final step in the planning process before submitting the report to the national AARP organization for approval and official designation of Skowhegan as an AARP approved Age friendly Community.
Domain-Specific Action Plans
(Action Plans for the Six Domains Addressed by the Skowhegan Assessment and Planning Committee)

Housing: Most own their homes, but many seek help with chores and renovations

Selected survey findings

- 72% of the sample say they own their own home.
- 56% reported that they might need to move to another home in their retirement; 21% said they might move to another home in Skowhegan, 34% to a home outside the town.
- When asked what type of home they would need to stay living in Skowhegan as they age, 59% said a one-level single-family home; 14% an apartment; 12% a condo; 10% a mobile home; 6% a town home or duplex; and 10% “other.”
- The most common reasons for considering a move to a home outside of Skowhegan in retirement were to get more available services, facilities (e.g., shopping, library or church) or medical care (73%); need for public or other transportation options (59%); desire to live in a different climate or an area that has a lower cost of living (58%); or preference for a smaller/more accessible home (56%).

Respondents said that they will need to modify their home in the following ways to age safely and comfortably:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modification</th>
<th>Completely Agree</th>
<th>Completely Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get a medical alert system to notify others in case of an emergency</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make bathroom modifications such as grab bars or non-slip tiles</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify my current home to stay here as long as possible</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain easier access into my home (e.g., a ramp or sturdy railings)</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a bedroom or bathroom on the first floor</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add more lighting</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make easier access within my home, such as wider doorways</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 74% reported that their home is warm enough in the winter; of those who say it is not, 55% said paying for fuel is a problem, 48% cited inadequate insulation, and 21% gave other reasons.

Respondents were also asked to rate how important each of a list of possible housing-related services are to older people in Skowhegan. Those services which more than half the sample said were “very important” (column 2 in the table) are listed below. For each service, the last column gives the percentage of respondents who said the service already exists in the town; respondents feel that crucial services are not generally available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Already Exists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home repair programs for low-income and older people</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable housing options</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable help with seasonal chores (i.e., mow or shovel)</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-home safety checks and evaluations</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment of current strengths

We have good affordable housing, and the number of locations for senior housing is increasing; there are residential spaces downtown; there are volunteers in the community willing to help work on houses requiring adaptations.

Possible immediate/short-term activities to address this domain

Organize retired volunteers to do simple housing repairs; offer a sand bucket program; identify other resources/service organizations (e.g., churches, Jobs for Maine Graduates) willing to help provide housing services; conduct “window dressers” weatherization projects to increase homes’ energy efficiency.

Possible long-term activities to address this domain

Organize a system to identify possible volunteers to help with specific housing tasks; develop funding to help seniors create one-floor housing units or make other needed changes in their homes; encourage and use student volunteers to help with seniors’ housing needs (may need to address liability issues to do this); expand local assisted living options at affordable prices; develop/encourage more senior housing (not necessarily just low-income); assess local businesses’ willingness to donate design time for housing projects (e.g., Hammond Lumber?); institute property tax breaks for seniors who invest in housing improvements; initiate a program that reduces tax liability for seniors in need.

Goal: To establish a home repair network for aging adults in Madison and Skowhegan

Collaborating organization(s) and partners: Madison and Skowhegan Municipalities, MSAD 59 and MSAD 54, area businesses, organizations and churches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>By whom</th>
<th>By when</th>
<th>Resources and support available/needed</th>
<th>Potential barriers or resistance</th>
<th>Partnerships</th>
<th>Metrics</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective #1</strong>: By January 2020 establish a volunteer coordinator to connect housing needs in the community with available resources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1-1</td>
<td>Create a coordinator position with job description</td>
<td>Madison/Skowhegan Senior Steering Committee</td>
<td>Fall 2019</td>
<td>Training for volunteer recruitment/retention</td>
<td>Training for volunteer recruitment/retention</td>
<td>Lack of expertise</td>
<td>Town Office, Steering Committee</td>
<td>Written position description and expectation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1-2</td>
<td>Appoint a Volunteer Coordinator</td>
<td>Madison/Skowhegan Senior Steering Committee</td>
<td>January 2020</td>
<td>Funding for stipend, Training</td>
<td>Funding for stipend, Training</td>
<td>Lack of qualified candidates</td>
<td>Town Office, Steering Committee</td>
<td># of applicants, Applicant hired</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective #2** By January 2020 a series of winter support services will be organized to assist the elderly living in their own homes.

| Activity 2-1 | Organize a sand bucket program | Home repair and support network | January 2020 | Volunteers to deliver buckets of town sand, Buckets, scoops for buckets SPH funds | Volunteers to deliver buckets of town sand, Buckets, scoops for buckets SPH funds | Not volunteering, Limited donations, Schools not letting students out to assist | Town Highway department, Schools and service organizations, Churches, Banks, Businesses | # of buckets prepared and delivered # of volunteers participating # of donations | Sand buckets available for elderly home owners |
| Activity 2-2 | Establish a window weatherization program pilot | Home repair and support network | January 2020 | Volunteers, Materials and training from Window Dressers, People to measure home windows, Space to do this for the communities | Volunteers, Materials and training from Window Dressers, People to measure home windows, Space to do this for the communities | Poor publicity, Not volunteering, Limited donations, Schools not letting students out to assist | Municipalities, Schools and service organizations, Churches, Banks, Businesses | # of requests for windows # of windows prepared and delivered # of volunteers participating # of donations | Windows built and made available to eligible residents |
Objective #3: By July 2020 a Madison/Skowhegan Home Repair Network will be established and delivering needs to residents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 3-1</th>
<th>Coordinate network of volunteers</th>
<th>Madison/Skowhegan Senior Steering Committee s</th>
<th>March 2020</th>
<th>In Kind Town/ School resources (space/ phone/ internet)</th>
<th>Volunteer Coordinator, funds for materials</th>
<th>Determining need from want, Coordinating volunteer schedules</th>
<th>School System, Businesses, Churches</th>
<th>Number of requests fulfilled</th>
<th>Home repair network established</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3-2</td>
<td>Home repair network established</td>
<td>Town Office</td>
<td>July 2020</td>
<td>Established relationship with businesses/ existing tax-exempt status</td>
<td>Grant funding to establish account to purchase materials</td>
<td>Pitting businesses against each other</td>
<td>Business, Town Office, School System</td>
<td>Account Established</td>
<td>Funded Account Established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3-3</td>
<td>Partner with students for prefabrication</td>
<td>MSAD 54 SCTC JMG MSAD 59 Alternative Education Program</td>
<td>Spring 2021</td>
<td>Workshops, teachers with expertise, students</td>
<td>Funding for materials, additional training</td>
<td>Competing schedule for student time</td>
<td>Town Office, School System, Businesses</td>
<td>Number of pre-fab materials (decking, window covers, etc.)</td>
<td>Pre-fab materials built and ready for install</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who is responsible for maintaining and updating information: Volunteer Coordinator, assigned Steering Committee members

Frequency of meetings: As scheduled coordinated with Steering Committee meetings.
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings: Seniors want safety and more accessible spaces/buildings

Resident Comments:
- “Better police patrols in residential areas, enforcing speed limits.”
- “Our community will not be a safer place to live as long as we continue to host a homeless shelter in the center of town. Many people are afraid to be out and about in the downtown area in the evening due to the many people hanging out in shop doorways, and in the areas behind businesses”.
- “Safety is becoming a bigger concern in Skowhegan.”
- “Improved safety in town, make downtown pedestrian-friendly. Less speeding traffic. Close off Commercial Street to vehicle traffic”.
- “There is a lot that limits older adults’ participation. A lot of stores are not handicapped accessible”
- “Bike routes to and from shopping, doctors, etc.”
- “Skowhegan is noise polluted. Many people in Skowhegan have to listen to nightly fireworks, when we have to get up at 4-6-7 a.m. to go to work. Loud exhaust trucks that do not get enforced by Skowhegan PD—warnings are not enforcement. Vehicles with loud stereos.”

Selected survey findings--
Respondents were asked to rate how important each of a list of possible outdoor spaces/buildings-related services are to older people in Skowhegan. Those services which more than half the sample said were “very important” (column 2 in the table) are listed below. For each service, the last column gives the percentage of respondents who said the service already exists in the town; respondents feel that crucial services are not generally available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Already Exists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walkable streets with sidewalks in good condition</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-lit safe intersections for walkers, bikers, and drivers</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe outdoor recreational spaces</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A community policing or neighborhood watch program</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-maintained public buildings that are easy to get into</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-maintained, accessible public restrooms</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown parking with enough handicapped spaces</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-maintained and safe parks with enough benches</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosswalks with audio/visual signs</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforced speed limits</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to read road and traffic signs</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment of current strengths
We have a number of walking trails and walking programs locally (e.g., at schools and the community center); grant funding is available for work in this area; we have Coburn Park and the concert series.

Possible immediate/short-term activities to address this domain
Work with the highway department to prioritize sidewalk improvement projects, especially near areas with significant numbers of seniors; centralize/coordinate programs for seniors; assess the accessibility of local buildings for handicapped/senior residents; work on enforcing pedestrian safety at crosswalks; improve snow/ice removal.

Possible long-term activities to address this domain
Develop more stable, less steep access to walking areas; conduct a walking audit locally.

Goal: To support the availability and accessibility of Skowhegan’s outdoor spaces and buildings for older adults.
Collaborating organization(s) and partners: Town of Skowhegan, Skowhegan Area Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Skowhegan, Somerset Public Health, Local area banks, Western Mountain Alliance, Area service organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>By whom</th>
<th>By when</th>
<th>Resources and support available/needed</th>
<th>Potential barriers or resistance</th>
<th>Partnerships</th>
<th>Metrics</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What needs to be done?</td>
<td>Who will be responsible for getting it done?</td>
<td>By what date will the action be done?</td>
<td>Resources available</td>
<td>Resources needed (financial, human, political, etc.)</td>
<td>What individuals and organizations might resist?</td>
<td>What indicators have been identified to measure progress?</td>
<td>What was the outcome of the activity? This will help you with your next plan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Objective #1: By January 2020 a meeting with town officials will be held to discuss the priorities of safe communities for the elderly.

| Activity 1-1 | Conduct a community listening session(s) with town officials to raise awareness and prioritization of safety issues for aging adults. (i.e. cross walks, driver texting, neighborhood crime, scams etc.) | Town officials steering committee members and community members | January 2020 | Town plan for sidewalks and crosswalks, neighborhood watch, Community Policing | Grant funds, donations and town finances | Tax payers, land owners, town officials | Town officials members of the community and neighborhoods identified, funders | Items identified from the listening sessions, Town plans includes written language about the needs to consider aging adults in their planning | The meeting and assessment of areas needing attention will help identify the priorities for work and resources |

| Activity 1-2 | Design a community plan to address community safety issues for aging residents | Steering committee, community members and town officials | Spring 2020 | Town plan for sidewalks and crosswalks, neighborhood watch, Community Policing | Grant funds, donations and town finances | Tax payers, land owners, town officials | Town officials members of the community and neighborhoods identified, funders | Items identified from the listening sessions, Town plans includes written language about the needs to consider aging adults in their planning | # of issues addressed and measured in the community plan |

Objective #2: By July 2020 access the need for railings, grab bars and handicap accessible entrance ways

| Activity 2-1 | Form a town group to do assessment. Find out what the town has already done. Meet with Bucksport, Bangor and other towns who have already developed the assessment tools and programs. | Code Enforcement Officer, Economic Development Director Jeff Hewett, building/business owners | April 2020 | Work already done by other Age Friendly towns, perhaps partnerships with Main Street and the Chamber | Volunteers to do the assessment, some minimal funding for the assessment tool, town approval | Businesses, Selectman, businesses, Chamber, Main Street, community organizations | Assessment tool, funding secured and final report | Assessment of accessible entrance ways/businesses completed so future work can be done to improve accessibility for entrance ways |

| Activity 2-2 | Select a tool and or program i.e. Portland’s Chamber of Commerce Age Friendly business and implement the assessment process | Code Enforcement Officer, Economic Development Director Jeff Hewett, building/business owners | July 2020 | Work already done by other Age Friendly towns, perhaps partnerships with Main Street and the Chamber | Volunteers/businesses to do the assessment, some minimal funding for the assessment tool, recognition awards, town approval | Businesses, Selectman, businesses, Chamber, Main Street, community organizations | Assessment tool results, funding secured and final report | # of businesses/organizations recognized for being Age Friendly |

Objective #3: By July 2020 the Skowhegan community will have increased coordination of information available regarding where to exercise in their community
| Activity 3-1 | More coordinated publicity Facebook, Websites, Newsletters, Channel 11, Town Line and Hooskow radio media, Passport books | Recreation department Director Denise Leblanc, SPH, media outlets, community websites, i.e. Town, KVCAP, RFGH, Chamber, etc. | July 2020 | Already existing forms of media not yet coordinated | Community newsletter funding, a communications coordinator | None we are aware of | Churches, Town, RFGH? SPH, Chamber, Main Street, service organizations, area motels, Adult Education | Visible measurable messaging done across mediums for information, # of passport books issued and utilized, assessment results of people utilizing the information as to where did they hear about it | Increased awareness of where to exercise in our community |

**Who is responsible for maintaining and updating information:** Steering Committee and Town of Skowhegan

**Frequency of meetings:** Beginning monthly then ongoing as needed
**Transportation**: Most drive but may need other transport options as they age

Selected survey findings

- The vast majority of respondents (81%) say that they drive themselves to get around for things like shopping, doctor visits, or running errands; 9% ask others to drive them, 7% report that they walk, 7% use a taxi, and 6% use public transportation.
- When asked what factors make it hard to get to the places they need to go, just over half cited need for money to cover costs of gas or car ownership, 35% cited darkness, 28% noted need for public transportation, and 22% said they are uncomfortable asking for a ride.
- When asked “If an older person who does not drive needed transportation in the Skowhegan area for things like medical appointments, errands and so forth, it would be easy to find a ride,” 17% completely agreed and 31% completely disagreed.

Respondents were also asked to rate how important each of a list of possible transportation-related services are to older people in Skowhegan. Those services which more than half the sample said were “very important” (column 2 in the table) are listed below. For each service, the last column gives the percentage of respondents who said the service already exists in the town; respondents feel that crucial services are not generally available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Already Exists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation for people with disabilities and older folk</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable &amp; reliable public transportation</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation to volunteer in the community and to participate in social and recreational opportunities</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer driver transportation program</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment of current strengths

We have KVCAP’s Somerset Explorer transportation service, volunteer drivers and local taxi service.

Possible immediate/short-term activities to address this domain

Use more volunteers (e.g., church volunteers?) to help provide rides to medical appointments; expand the number of stops and days served by the Somerset Explorer; develop a way that folks can share bikes/three-wheelers in town (there may be state money for this); provide bike lanes.

Possible long-term activities to address this domain

Increase funding for transportation expansion; expand the affordable public transportation network (e.g., by using school resources in off hours); work to better coordinate volunteer services; improve the condition of sidewalks; expand public transportation for things like medical care/appointments and grocery shopping.

**Goal**: To have a local community volunteer transportation network for aging adults

**Collaborating organization(s) and partners**: Town of Skowhegan, KVCAP agency, local businesses, Tech Spot, service organizations, churches, etc.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>By whom</th>
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<th>Resources and support available/needed</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What needs to be done?</td>
<td>Who will be responsible for getting it done?</td>
<td>By what date will the action be done?</td>
<td>Resources needed (financial, human, political, etc.)</td>
<td>What individuals and organizations might resist? How?</td>
<td>What indicators have been identified to measure progress?</td>
<td>What was the outcome of the activity? This will help you with your next plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By June 2020 research a Volunteer Drivers Brigade to meet local transportation needs of residents.

**Activity 1-1**

- **Appoint a Volunteer Coordinator**
- Skowhegan Senior Steering Committee
- January 2020
- Steering Committee Members, Access to Internet for posting
- Funding for Stipend, Training
- Lack of qualified candidates
- Town Office, Steering Committee
- # of applicants
- Position filled January 2020

**Activity 1-2**

- Research and build a network of intake for driver volunteers
- Skowhegan Senior Steering Committee
- December 2020
- In Kind Town, School, Business Resources (space/ phone/ internet)
- Volunteer Coordinator, methods for publicizing and coordinating the rides requested
- Determining Need from Want, Coordinating Volunteer Schedules, people too proud to ask for this help
- School System, Businesses, Churches
- Number of requests fulfilled
- Volunteer Driver Network Established

**Activity 1-3**

- Recruit Driver Brigade members and begin service delivery
- Volunteer Coordinator
- March 2021
- Retired members of the community, Community member volunteers, business community service volunteers
- Volunteers, insured vehicles, background checks
- Lack of volunteers, unforeseen liabilities, funding
- Businesses, churches, service organizations, community members
- Number of volunteer drivers available
- Number of rides provided by volunteers

**Activity 1-4**

- Create Local Tax Credit Program for Driver Brigade and other Volunteers
- Skowhegan Select Board
- June 2021
- State Statute allows municipalities to establish volunteer credits up to $750.00
- Training for implementation, tracking
- Lack of qualified candidates
- Town Office, Steering Committee, Select Board
- # of volunteers who apply for the credit
- Credits posted to volunteers property tax account

Who is responsible for maintaining and updating information: Volunteer Coordinator, Steering Committee, Skowhegan Town office and Channel 11, Tech Spot

**Frequency of meetings:** Ongoing for the life of the program coordinated with Steering Committee meetings.
Respect and Social Inclusion: Seniors feel respected, but want to be more active/connected in the community

Selected survey findings
- Social isolation appears to be a problem for some of the sample. When asked how often they see family, friends, or neighbors in the community, 59% said several times a week, 22% reported occasionally, 12% indicated once every few weeks, and 8% said rarely.
- By far the most common source of lifelong learning opportunities (for 52% of the sample) is the library.
- 40% of the sample said that they feel included and respected as a resident of Skowhegan; another 44% said they feel this way most of the time.

Respondents were also asked to rate how important each of a list of possible social participation/inclusion/respect-related services are to older people in Skowhegan. Those services which more than half the sample said were “very important” (column 2 in the table) are listed below. For each service, the last column gives the percentage of respondents who said the service already exists in the town; respondents feel that crucial services are not generally available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Already Exists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community activities and events that are accessible and welcoming to people of all ages</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable activities and community events</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily understood, respectful and helpful storekeepers and other services</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stores and activities that offer senior discounts</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools that involve older folk in events and activities</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment of current strengths
We have a number of activities in which seniors can participate (for example, walking programs at the recreation center, Fit for Life classes at Somerset Sports, healthy aging social gatherings twice a month at Cooperative Extension, informal gatherings at McDonald’s, a monthly caregiver support group at the Federated church, Tech Spot program which pair’s high school students with elders for technology instruction, and many opportunities to volunteer); faith-based groups provide an opportunity for folks to look out for each other.

Possible immediate/short-term activities to address this domain
Explore ways to use Google hangouts and other technology to enhance interaction; provide cooking classes for men, who often were raised without those skills; promote more intergenerational activities; be aware that isolation can be seasonal (e.g., more of a problem in cold weather months than in warm ones); create spaces on nonprofit and government Boards designated specifically for seniors, who now are often overlooked and left out of policy discussions; explore expanding use of the library as a focus for senior activities, since it is a welcoming space and offers access to technology; encourage event sponsors to consider giving seniors free/reduced admissions for their events; encourage programming (for example, speeches, entertainment, education sessions, question and answer sessions on things like Medicare, Social Security benefits and tax filing) around facilities/centers where seniors
already gather (for example, Longmeadow Apartments, Springhouse Gardens Apartments, Skowhegan Community Center).

Possible long-term activities to address this domain
Facilitate opportunities for folks to connect with each other by developing a region-wide online social group that has open connection points around town (e.g., at the Municipal Building, hospital, library, churches, and community center); make sure that groups/organizations providing activities always give specific consideration to older adults in those programs; enhance opportunities for community discussions about aging (e.g., through books and speakers); use available spaces around the community (for example, the party space at Spring House Garden) for gatherings/meals/socials that include seniors.

**Goal:** To develop opportunities for meaningful community connections which are inclusive across socio-economics

**Collaborating organization(s) and partners:** Skowhegan and Madison municipalities, SAD 54 and 59, RFGH/SPH and other health care agencies, businesses, service organizations, churches, Spectrum Generations, Somerset Economic Development, Skowhegan Area Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Skowhegan, Wesserunsett Arts Council, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
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<th>Potential barriers or resistance</th>
<th>Partnerships</th>
<th>Metrics</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1: By September 2020 there will be improved coordination/recognition of volunteer services and programs for older adults in the community</td>
<td>Possible Time bank Pamphlets, Newsletters, Online connection (use new created Communication network)</td>
<td>(TBD grow from conversation with the partners)</td>
<td>Call potential partners together January 2020 Agreement on shared path March 2020</td>
<td>Group representation Meeting space Financial resources (communication tools)</td>
<td>Reticence about strangers Organizational norms around sharing volunteers Vetting, legal aspects</td>
<td>Bright spots Potential Users/Lived experience United Way Cable TV Hooskow Radio Somerset Reporter</td>
<td>Engage 51% of partners by June 2020 (potential users) Observe sharing of resources</td>
<td>Working group meeting the objective Coordination of resources occurring Increased participation at any of the bright spots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1-1</td>
<td>Host a recognition event for organizations and their community volunteers</td>
<td>Steering committee and community partners</td>
<td>Fall 2020</td>
<td>Volunteer organization s, community volunteers</td>
<td>Financing and workers for the event</td>
<td>Those already doing their own recognition</td>
<td>Local businesses, non-profits,</td>
<td>Event participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Objective #2: By January 2021 Increase the number of school/community activities that are intergenerational | “Have conversation with schools and organizations that sponsor programs (i.e. 21st Century After School programs, arts, physical activity and nutrition programs, music programs etc. to Support the engagement of older adults and youth in their program. | Steering Committee members, school/organizational leaders | Conversation with organizations January 2020 | Senior Strong | Human resources Legal ramifications | Town, Schools, Main Street Churches Club Business | Completed conversations with identifiable groups Developed list | # of new programs developed to engage youth and older adults |
| Activity 2-1 | Increase the number of free/reduced admission opportunities for seniors | Fall 2020 | Already existing programs, | -There is no centralized way to communicate such | Area businesses and program sponsors | -Number of free/reduced opportunities offered | Number of businesses/ | -Opportunities added with a centralized way to communicate the |
opportunities to seniors
-Transportation to sites is a problem for some
oups offering them
opportunities to seniors

Who is responsible for maintaining and updating information: Steering Committee and Communications Team

Frequency of meetings: To coincide with Steering Committee
Community Support, Health Services and Communication: Seniors want more information about what is going on in Skowhegan, and health/in-home services

Selected survey findings

- 36% completely agreed that “It is easy for me to get good quality health services in Skowhegan”; 13% completely disagreed with this statement.
- 36% of respondents report that they have fallen in the past year, and 41% say they are concerned about falling.
- 52% say that they engage in some form of physical exercise (such as walking, yoga, biking or strength training) several times a week; 13% report that they rarely or never do this.
- 37% indicate that a disability/chronic illness keeps them from being as active as they want to be.
- 16% of the sample says that it is a problem for them to pay for their medications; 28% say that it is sometimes a problem, and 59% say it is not a problem.
- Most (96%) indicate that they get their food at a supermarket; other reported food sources are the farmer’s market (26%), their garden (24%), a convenience store (13%), a food pantry (13%), local farms (12%), a church (8%), family/friends (5%), or meals on wheels (3%). Three percent volunteered that they sometimes do not have enough food.
- 82% of the sample reports that they use the Internet several times a week. One person says he/she never uses it, and 8% report they have no Internet access.
- 88% communicate with others via phone, 66% by Facebook, and 57% through email.
- When asked which resources they would use if they, a family member, or a friend needed information about services for older people, they most often cited the Internet (73%), Redington-Fairview General Hospital (57%), family or friends (51%), a medical provider (39%), Spectrum Generations (33%), Somerset Public Health (25%), and the phonebook or a newspaper (16% each).

Respondents were also asked to rate how important each of a list of possible community support/health/communication-related services are to older people in Skowhegan. Those services which more than half the sample said were “very important” (column 2 in the table) are listed below. For each service, the last column gives the percentage of respondents who said the service already exists in the town; respondents feel that crucial services are not generally available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Already Exists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caregiver support services (including respite)</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to find information about financial help</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to find information about programs and services that will help me age safely and comfortably in my home</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A variety of recreational, wellness, and fitness opportunities for older folks</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A central place to get community information</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trusted assistance with bill paying, filling-out forms, etc.</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-home help: meal preparation and light housekeeping</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy access to quality urgent and routine healthcare</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to find information about social, recreational, and volunteer opportunities in Skowhegan</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment of current strengths
Skowhegan has a financially solid hospital; the Somerset County Senior Strong committee fosters communication and problem-solving among seniors and local providers; we have a number of health and human services programs (for example, Hospice Volunteers, community meals offered at the Federated and Catholic churches, Savvy Caregiver classes, Bridges adult day care program, Senior Spectrum’s day program, Redington-Fairview/Somerset Public Health offerings such as those on weight loss and diabetes, walking programs, Adult Education classes, thrift shops, meals on wheels, and the Tech Spot program that pairs high school students with elders for technology instruction); the 211 information and referral phone line; the adaptive tool kit for everyday living which offers tools for loan at Cooperative Extension; cardiac rehabilitation services that go beyond what is paid for by insurance; and a school district willing to share resources with the community.

Possible immediate/short-term activities to address this domain
Develop a home repair/maintenance “Handy Man” program or time bank (the latter could include time donated by local businesses willing to help seniors); offer a Tool Table at the public library; help seniors and their families/caregivers to understand the safety net of available services (including health services, Medicare, and Social Security); begin a wood/firewood bank using wood obtained when trees are taken down to help seniors heat their homes; provide more help to seniors setting up technology; expand help for those with substance abuse issues or need for mental health services; mobilize youth to help seniors by taking advantage of student community service requirements or local nonprofits like the Boy Scouts; expand volunteer assistance to seniors with things like lawn care and snow removal.

Possible long-term activities to address this domain
Think creatively about how to better coordinate health care services at the community level; explore further use of technology and artificial intelligence (e.g., use of Skype to keep in touch with family and friends, more equipment to monitor folks in their homes, voice-activated equipment); increase food pantry access and work to destigmatize use of those services; develop better/expanded means to communicate with seniors and other residents (using multiple methods like mailings, a newsletter, the local TV cable access channel out of Madison, inserts with tax bills, email blasts, social media/texting, newspaper copy, bulletin boards at places where seniors gather like laundromats or the community center, the school district website, or the sign in front of the municipal building--be careful of using the internet or phone calls, since many seniors view these as scams); increase access to and awareness of indoor winter activities; develop a system to inform volunteers about residents needing help, and provide a database to organizations that specifies the abilities and interests of volunteers.

Goal: To develop opportunities for meaningful community connections which are inclusive across socio-economics

Collaborating organization(s) and partners: Skowhegan and Madison municipalities, MSAD 54 and 59, RFGH/SPH and other health care agencies, businesses, service organizations, churches, Spectrum Generations, Somerset Economic Development, Skowhegan Area Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Skowhegan, United Way of Mid Maine, Digital Equity Center, Wesserunsett Arts Council, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>By whom</th>
<th>By when</th>
<th>Resources and support available/needed</th>
<th>Potential barriers or resistance</th>
<th>Partnerships</th>
<th>Metrics</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<td>What needs to be done?</td>
<td>Who will be responsible for getting it done?</td>
<td>By what date will the action be done?</td>
<td>Resources available</td>
<td>Resources needed (financial, human, political, etc.)</td>
<td>What individuals and organizations might resist? How?</td>
<td>What individuals and organizations should be informed about/involved with these tasks?</td>
<td>What indicators have been identified to measure progress?</td>
<td>What was the outcome of the activity? This will help you with your next plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Objective #1: By June 2020 create a multimedia source for coordinating and communicating local health and volunteer services.

Activity 1-1 Secure funding and hire a communication coordinator | Towns of Skowhegan and Madison | January 2020 | Match funds from Somerset Public Health, and towns; | Grant funding, a communication coordinator; | Lack of staffing, no time for additional | Skowhegan and Madison municipalities, SAD 54 and | Grants received, match funding | Program funding secured, and |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 1-2</th>
<th>Create Programming for available health services</th>
<th>Somerset Community Television (Channel 11) Hooskow radio</th>
<th>June 2020</th>
<th>SCTV Studio, Equipment, Personnel Hooskow Radio</th>
<th>Funding for additional services, social media posting boosts</th>
<th>Consistent Program Development</th>
<th>SCTV, SPH, Madison Health Center, RFGH</th>
<th># of programs on local cable access, local radio and social media</th>
<th>Increased awareness of services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1-3</td>
<td>Coordinate the communication used by organizations to notify older adults about existing programs</td>
<td>Town of Skowhegan web site (TBD grow from conversation with the partners)</td>
<td>Call potential partners together October 2019 Agreement on shared path, December 2019 Basic structure in place June 2020</td>
<td>Group representation Meeting space Financial resources (communication tools)</td>
<td>Group representation Meeting space Financial resources (communication tools)</td>
<td>Reticence about sharing information, sites not being updated regularly, Organizational norms around sharing volunteers Vetting, legal aspects</td>
<td>Bright spots Potential Users/Lived experience United Way Cable TV Radio Somerset Reporter</td>
<td>Engage 51% of partners by June 2020 (potential users) Observe sharing of resources</td>
<td>Working group meeting the objective Coordination of resources occurring Increased participation at any of the bright spots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1-4</td>
<td>Deliver digital literacy classes for citizens of all ages</td>
<td>Digital Equity Center, SAD 54 and 59</td>
<td>Identify digital needs August 2019 Deliver classes beginning fall of 2019</td>
<td>Digital Equity Center staff and equipment in partnership with local towns and schools</td>
<td>Staff and citizens to take the classes</td>
<td>Transportation, lack of technology devices and service (broad band)</td>
<td>Skowhegan and Madison municipalities , SAD 54 and 59, RFGH/SPH and other health care agencies, businesses, service organizations, churches, Spectrum Generations, Somerset Economic Development, Skowhegan Area Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Skowhegan, United Way of Mid Maine, Wesserunsett Arts Council etc. Madison and Skowhegan residents</td>
<td>A digital literate population with adequate access to technology # of classes held, # of people participating, # of added resources for adults to access technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objective # 2: By June 2020 enhance access to program information for older adults through technology

| Activity 2-1 | Catalogue what is available | Learn what other communities have done | Increase Awareness for older adults to the resources | Steering Committee and Program Coordinator | *Catalogue March 2020* | *Other communities June 2020* | *Awareness Ongoing as available* | Already existing web sites, and programs needing coordination | Unity Foundation KVCC | Mid-Maine United Way SAD 54 Adult Ed. And Town of Skowhegan | Human resources Perceived need | Methodist church Spectrum Generations | Senior Strong Bridges Clubs Masons, Grange, etc. | Gathered a catalogue of resources | Increased access to the resources | # of people utilizing the resource increases by 10% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Activity 2-2 | Organize and coordinate available classes and trainings across agencies/organizations to meet needs of aging population | Program Coordinator and steering committee | Use community communication network to | Town, SAD 54 Adult Education, Spectrum Generations, University of Maine Senior college, Mid-Maine United Way | Program coordinator, Adult Ed. Director, organizational funding/ training | Aging population not utilizing the resource despite calling for it to be available | Town, SAD 54 Adult Education, Spectrum Generations, University of Maine Senior college, Mid-Maine United Way | # of trainings/courses offered | # of people utilizing the resource increases by 10% |

Who is responsible for maintaining and updating information: Communication Coordinator, Communication work group, Digital Technology Center, Skowhegan and Madison AARP Age Friendly Steering Committee

Frequency of meetings: Beginning monthly then ongoing as needed
Selected survey findings

Respondents were asked to rate how important each of a list of possible civic participation/employment-related services are to older people in Skowhegan. Those services which more than half the sample said were “very important” (column 2 in the table) are listed below. For each service, the last column gives the percentage of respondents who said the service already exists in the town; respondents feel that crucial services are not generally available.

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<td>Flexible part- and full-time jobs that older folk can do</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to learn new technology (phone, internet)</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job training for people who want to learn new skills</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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Assessment of current strengths

The current Tech Spot program offered by Adult Education matches students with older residents to educate the latter on technology; there are opportunities/programs that help seniors participate in the work force as volunteers or paid employees (for example, Fedcap and Associates for Training and Development (A4TD)).

Possible immediate/short-term activities to address this domain

Expand/build on the current Tech Spot program.

Possible long-term activities to address this domain

Expand Adult Education’s current skills/tech training programming for young people under 30 to area seniors, positioning them to fill fields where there are projected to be workforce shortages in future; expand Adult Education’s current programming for people aged 18-30 with physical/mental impairments to seniors with similar issues.

Goal: To assist Skowhegan residents (of all income levels) with opportunities for civic participation and employment so they can age in place in their own home

Collaborating organization(s) and partners: Town of Skowhegan, RSAD 54 Adult and Community Education, Career Center, hospital, Somerset Economic Development, Fedcap, library/ Margaret Chase Smith Library, churches, Corrections (has education programming), local Channel 11 and Hooskow radio, Main Street Skowhegan, Skowhegan Area Chamber of Commerce

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<td>What indicators have been identified to measure progress?</td>
<td>What was the outcome of the activity? This will help you with your next plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Objective 1: By January 2021 improve marketable skills of older residents to increase their employment/ income generating opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 1-1</th>
<th>Investigate ways to expand existing skills/tech training to serve older residents</th>
<th>RSAD 54 Adult and Community Education</th>
<th>Investigate by Spring 2020</th>
<th>Existing Adult and Community Education programs/ curriculum</th>
<th>Senior college network</th>
<th>To be determined</th>
<th>Lack of transportation, weather conditions, lack of internet</th>
<th>Town of Skowhegan, RSAD 54 Adult and Community Education, Career Center, hospital, Somerset Economic Development, Fed cap, library/ Margaret Chase Smith Library, churches, Corrections (has education programming), local Channel 11 and Hooskow radio, KVCC, Main Street Skowhegan, Skowhegan Area Chamber of Commerce</th>
<th>-Number of seniors enrolled in such training - Improvement s in skills, measured by exams and client/ instructor feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1-2</td>
<td>Expand the Tech Spot program to provide additional support to seniors on technology</td>
<td>RSAD 54 Adult and Community Education</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Existing Tech Spot program and youth volunteers who offer help</td>
<td>-Additional youth to help seniors -Additional seniors to be tutored -Expanded publicity materials to recruit youth and seniors</td>
<td>-Lack of transportation for seniors and students offering help</td>
<td>-Number of seniors served -Seniors’ and youth educators’ evaluations of program’s effectiveness</td>
<td>Programs offered and evaluated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1-3</td>
<td>Investigate potential benefits of expanding current educational programs targeting youth with physical/mental disabilities to serve seniors with similar issues</td>
<td>RSAD 54 Adult and Community Education</td>
<td>January 2021</td>
<td>-Need to investigate if these problems affect a significant number of local seniors</td>
<td>Report on community needs for physical /mental health disabilities support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Objective 2: By January 2021 expand the number of social/community involvement opportunities for area seniors, to combat social isolation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 2-1</th>
<th>Increase the number of volunteers that regularly reach out to seniors (e.g., through check-ins)</th>
<th>Emergency management, Community organizations</th>
<th>Ongoing</th>
<th>-Number of volunteers making contacts -Number of seniors reached</th>
<th>Coordinated community volunteer contact list</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2-2</td>
<td>Reserve spots on local Boards where seniors’ experiences/perspective is valuable (e.g., health providers)</td>
<td>Local businesses and organizations</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>-Number of organizations designating Board spots for seniors -Number of seniors serving on Boards -Board and senior evaluations of senior representative effectiveness/ impact</td>
<td>Increased senior voice on local boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2-3</td>
<td>Increase programming where seniors gather (e.g., programs on nutrition, Social Security, help with taxes)</td>
<td>Library, SPH, RFGH, Cooperative Extension, Spectrum Generations, Ongoing Agency programs, town and library programs</td>
<td>-A centralized way to communicate such opportunities to seniors -Transportation to the sites</td>
<td>-Communication gaps, lack of transportation, weather, lack of internet, volunteers for agencies wanting to do these programs in our area</td>
<td>Library, Longmeadow and Springhouse Gardens Apartments, Community Center Mug up sites</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Who is responsible for maintaining and updating information**: The Tech Spot, Skowhegan AARP Age Friendly Community Steering Committee

**Frequency of meetings**: In partnership with steering committee meetings (before or after main meeting)

**In Closing**

For more information on the senior survey and current activities of the Skowhegan Age-Friendly Committee, see the Town of Skowhegan Web site and click on Town Government then click on Economic development and look for the Age Friendly Community link - [https://www.skowhegan.org/132/Economic-Community-Development](https://www.skowhegan.org/132/Economic-Community-Development)

To volunteer and help the activities for seniors, contact Jeff Hewett or Dena Rich at 474-6905.

Report Designed with assistance from Somerset Public Health and Ken Town, Evaluation Consultant.