Thank you for your application to the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities. Your application has been successfully submitted and we will be in touch with you in due time.

Application form for the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities

1) City/Community details

1) Name of city or community *
County of Sonoma

2) Region or state
California

3) Country *
United States of America

4) Your city or community's population size *
499801

5) Percentage of residents above the age of 60 *
.24

6) Are you applying through one of the Network’s Affiliated Programmes? *

I am not a member of any of these affiliated programmes

2) Commitment towards becoming an age-friendly city or community

1) Letter of commitment from the Mayor *
Sonoma County BOS Chair Letter of Support.pdf

2) Mayor's name and title *
Efren Carrillo, Chair, County of Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

3) Address of the Mayor's office *
575 Administration Dr., Rm. 100A
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

3) Designation of contact person for the Global Network
Please appoint a contact person in your local administration for all correspondence and collaboration with the WHO and other Global Network members.

1) Title *
Director, Sonoma County Human Services Department Adult and Aging Services Division

2) Name *
Diane Kaljian

3) Position *
Chair, Aging Together Sonoma County Leadership Team

4) Role in city or community’s age-friendly initiative *
In addition to her role as the Director of the Sonoma County Human Services’ Department’s Adult and Aging Services Division and the Director of the Sonoma County Area Agency on Aging, Diane Kaljian serves on the Aging Together Sonoma County Leadership Committee. Aging Together is an initiative that connects all sectors of the community to improve the health and quality of life for people across their lifespan as the community ages together. Aging Together is applying to the WHO’s Age Friendly City and Community Network on behalf of the County of Sonoma, having been granted approval to do so from the Sonoma County’s Board of Supervisors. Ms. Kaljian and other members of Aging Together’s Leadership team will direct work on the County’s five-year membership and the planning and implementation of the membership requirements. This team also includes a County Supervisor, the Assistant Director of the Sonoma County Human Services Department, the Director of Sonoma County’s Public Health Services, and the executive directors of two nonprofit organizations serving seniors. This initiative was developed through successful participation in a grant from the Centers for Disease Control’s National Leadership Academy for the Public’s Health.

5) E-mail address *
dkaljian@schsdo.org

6) Telephone number (including international dialling code) *
1-001-707-565-5950

4) Description of your age-friendly activities to date

1) Please provide a brief summary (250-300 words) of your city or community’s policies, programmes and services targeted at older people and how you are planning to make your community more age-friendly. If your application is successful, this summary will be published on the Network’s website www.agefriendlyworld.org. *

The Adult and Aging Services Division of the Sonoma County Human Services Department consolidates the Area Agency on Aging (AAA), Adult Protective Services, In-Home Support Services (IHSS), Linkages, the Multipurpose Senior Services Program, the Public Administrator/Public Guardian/Public Conservator, IHSS Public Authority, and the Veterans Service Office to better serve the community. The goal of the division is to assist older adults, people with disabilities, veterans, and their families to maximize self-sufficient, safety, health and independence. With the exception of some of the AAA-funded services, the Adult and Aging Services Division’s programs serve seniors who need help to overcome barriers to remaining independent. Some of the AAA-supported programs that aim to help seniors prevent issues that would keep them from being independent include senior center services, the Matter of Balance fall-prevention program and My Care, My Plan: Speak Up Sonoma County, an advance care planning community initiative.

Established in 2014, The Aging Together Sonoma County initiative takes an
"upstream" approach by working to connect existing assets and resources throughout the community to help people of all ages thrive across their lifespan. The initiative is working to address the needs of the County’s senior population, and to garner greater community wide support in addressing such needs as community connectedness, transportation, varied housing options, healthy living, lifelong learning, employment and financial security, and health and community-based social services.

Supported by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, the Human Services Department and the Department of Health Services provide the backbone support for the initiative. In April 2016, the Board further confirmed its support of by granting approval for Aging Together to apply to WHO’s Age-Friendly City and Community Network on behalf of the County. The Board also allocated funds for a coordinator position to organize work on the Age Friendly Community effort.

2) Please choose a picture (skyline or logo) to be published on the profile page of your city or community on the Network’s website *

[Image: county_seal_1800x1800HiRes.png]

3) If you have already conducted an age-friendly baseline assessment of your city or community, please upload it.

4) If you have already developed a strategy or action plan to make your city or community more age-friendly, please upload it

5) If you have a dedicated web page on your age-friendly activities, please include it here. If not, indicate your city or community website

5) Engagement of older people

1) How are you engaging and involving older people in the process of becoming a more age-friendly city or community?

The County of Sonoma’s Area Agency on Aging (AAA) engages older adults through monthly Advisory Committee meeting, administration of a four-year community needs assessment, publication of a four-year Area Plan and an annual Senior Resources Guide, as well as production of an annual Senior Art Show, participation in Senior Day at the county fair, and support of a community initiative around advance care planning, My Care, My Plan: Speak Up Sonoma County, among other regular activities and community initiatives.

The Aging Together Sonoma County initiative facilitated groups in October and November 2014 to understand the top priorities of older adults and the key challenges to healthy aging in the community. More than 200 individuals participated, sharing their vision for an ideal community that would promote healthy aging. Priorities included healthy living, social connectedness, community-based health and social services, transportation, housing options, employment and financial security, and lifelong learning. Among the key challenges these focus groups identified included affordable housing, transportation, the cost of living, financial insecurity, social and geographical isolation, negative attitudes toward aging and living longer, and planning for old age.

Additionally, within the past 12 months, Aging Together hosted four community education events to engage older adults and the community based-health and human services organizations that serve them. In May 2015, more than 200 community members attended Aging Together’s kickoff event that featured bestselling author Roz Chast on caring for aging parents and included breakout sessions on healthy aging and intergenerational storytelling. In December 2015, more than 80 people attended an event titled “Healthy Brain, Healthy Aging: Translating Research to Reality” featuring local experts. In May 2016, more than 300 people attended two Aging Together events that shared information on the
common lifestyle and diet habits of people in the world’s “Blue Zones” – five areas around the world where people live longer, healthier lives.

Volunteers recruited at all of these events will be crucial to helping Age-Friendly Sonoma County conduct its evaluation, develop and implement an action plan, and conduct measurements and report on its results.

6) Cross-sectoral collaboration

1) What mechanisms have you/are you planning to put in place to facilitate collaborative planning and implementation between different departments of the local administration and across sectors?

As a member of the Network, the County – facilitated by Aging Together -- will work across County departments and across sectors to develop, improve and implement age-friendly policies that can be affected on a countywide level. In addition, Aging Together will initiate, organize and lead a countywide effort to engage and provide guidance to local cities in applying to the Age-Friendly Network so they can affect change at the city level. Directed by Aging Together’s Leadership Committee, the Age Friendly Coordinator will take the lead in regularly convening a group of leaders and volunteers from around the county who are working to make their local communities age friendly.

Some mechanisms have already been established. For example, the Human Services Department (HSD) and the Department of Health Services (DHS) have been successful as the backbone to Aging Together, which itself is a cross-sector initiative. Both of these departments possess extensive experience collaborating with community based organizations, businesses and community leaders to bring services to seniors of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

In 2014, cross-sector leaders from around the country participated in the National Leadership Academy for the Public’s Health (NLAPH). The Sonoma County Healthy Aging Collaborative, now Aging Together Sonoma County, was one of 29 community health projects in the United States selected to participate. The team included the DHS Public Health Division Director, HSD’s Assistant Director, HSD’s Adult and Aging Division Director, the Redwood Community Health Coalition Chief Medical Officer, the Council on Aging President and CEO, and the Third District Sonoma County Supervisor. Organizational partnerships synthesized key findings in Sonoma County aging research and regarding its senior population. The Aging Together Leadership Committee created an action plan to guide the planning, implementation and the launch of the initiative. Current goals include: expand awareness of and access to available services and supports for seniors, their families and caregivers; enhance the safety, mental and physical health, and wellbeing of seniors of all ages, emphasizing healthy aging throughout the lifespan; strengthen the community’s capacity to assess, plan for, and respond to the increasing needs of Sonoma County’s senior population; involve and engage seniors as a valuable resource in the community.

Furthermore, the Board of Supervisors’ support of an Age-Friendly Sonoma County will help to increase awareness of this effort and encourage greater cross-department and cross-sector involvement.

7) Participation in the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities

1) How do you hope to contribute to the Global Network?

The County of Sonoma will contribute to the Global Network by sharing our experience and lessons learned as a mid-sized northern California county with a senior population exceeding 24%. Sonoma County has one of the largest percentages of over 60 year old residents in the state. Sonoma County is diverse, and seeks to overcome challenges of both urban and rural seniors, including people with disabilities, Latinos and LGBT older adults. Through an established and growing local partnerships and community networks, we will
provide technical assistance to support the county’s cities and smaller communities to learn more about inclusivity and accessibility through participation in the Global Network.

The goal is for Sonoma County to become a model for the creation of diverse, healthy, active age-friendly communities by building on the work we have accomplished. Sharing the county’s community needs assessment, strategic plan, and methods for accomplishing age-friendly goals will help shape other Global Network participants’ plans and practices. Aging Together Sonoma County will contribute to discussions about positively impacting such issues as social isolation, access to transportation options, housing affordability, access to caregiving support, socio-economic challenges, cultural and language barriers, and senior health issues, such as depression and dementia. These issues require attention, planning, and innovative solutions that are more easily found in discussion with a global community.

2) What motivated your city or community to become a member of the Global Network?

The concern for meeting the diverse needs and improving the lives of a growing number of aging adults motivated Aging Together to pursue membership on behalf of the County of Sonoma in the Global Network. According to the 2014 American Community Survey, residents age 60 and better make up 24% of Sonoma County’s population. Within 10 years the senior population increased from 17% in 2005 to 24% in 2014, totaling 118,951 residents age 60 and older in our county. Estimates indicate that by 2030, 28% of the county’s population will be over 60 years old.

To ensure the quality of life of this growing part of the community, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors considers it imperative to become an age-friendly community.

Obtaining membership and promoting age-friendly community participation is the first step in a larger framework for action with the implementation of Aging Together, the countywide initiative to promote active, healthy aging across generations.

The Board of Supervisors and the Aging Together Leadership Committee intend to provide the 50 and above population with the tools and knowledge for a positive aging experience.

The shared goal is to become a national model for connecting residents throughout their lifespan using community education, policy initiatives, and comprehensive services.

Collectively we plan to address issues and improve seniors’ quality of life through an interwoven system of government services and programs, nonprofit partnerships, and community volunteer activities. Aging Together will facilitate community involvement that brings all ages together to support seniors’ mental, physical, and economic health. The conversation and culture of aging in Sonoma County will be inspired by a world-wide movement of empowered older adults involved in the Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.