



State Membership Application

To join the **AARP Network of Age-Friendly States** and the **World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities**

- . If you have questions while completing this form, please email livable@aarp.org.
- . If you need additional space for answering the questions you may add an additional sheet of paper.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE: August 30, 2018

Section 1: STATE DETAILS

NAME OF THE STATE: Colorado.

POPULATION SIZE: 5.7 million.

PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS ABOVE THE AGE OF 60: 20 percent.

NAME AND TITLE OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL SIGNING THE OFFICIAL COMMITMENT:

John Hickenlooper, Governor of Colorado.

OFFICE ADDRESS OF THE SIGNER: 136 State Capitol Building, Denver, CO, 80203.

Section 2: STATE CONTACT FOR THE AARP NETWORK OF AGE-FRIENDLY STATES

(The State contact is the staff member who is primarily responsible for carrying out the state-level work).

[Redacted contact information]

Please describe the named person’s role and department in the state’s age-friendly initiative:

Wade Buchanan is the Senior Advisor on Aging in the office of Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper. This is a new position in state government and is designed to help the Governor’s Office and state agencies plan and coordinate a wide range of programs and issues affecting aging and older Coloradans. This includes setting consistent statewide policy priorities, coordinating the age-related work of state agencies and workgroups, engaging external stakeholders as well as federal and local partners, and helping launch new initiatives and build new capacity. Creating this position was the top recommendation of the Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging (SAPGA), a statewide panel created by the Colorado General Assembly and appointed by the Governor in 2015 to develop a state plan on aging through 2030.

Wade Buchanan has over 30 years of experience in state government, public policy and nonprofit leadership. This includes 15 years as founding President and CEO of one of Colorado’s premier

public policy research and advocacy organizations and over 10 years in various positions in the administration of former-Governor Roy Romer (including policy director, state agency director and department interim executive director).

Section 3: STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES, ENGAGEMENTS and COLLABORATIONS

1. Please provide a brief summary of policies, programs, funding and services that are targeted toward older people and how the state plans to become more age-friendly.

Colorado spends over \$2 billion annually (7% of our total budget, 9% of our non-K12 budget) on a wide range of programs spread over 7 departments to address aging and serve older Coloradans. These include institutional and community-based services through Medicaid; nutrition, transportation, respite, and other services through Area Agencies on Aging; financial assistance through an old-age pension, property tax relief and other supports; protections against financial fraud and abuse; and more. Each program addresses an important need and is administered by a skilled and dedicated workforce.

Taken together, however, these programs and services do not reflect any clear strategy or set of priorities. Instead, they developed over decades to address a variety of specific challenges. And virtually every one was designed for a time when people 65 and older were less than 10 percent of our population – a time that will never come again. Today, 15 percent of our population is 65 and older. Thirty years from now, more than 20 percentage (or one in five Coloradans) will be 65 and older.

This demographic shift is the happy result of an unprecedented increase in life expectancy brought about by historic advances in medical science, public health and other factors in the 20th Century. It is a dramatic and permanent change in the structure of our society. Our job is to embrace this change and to make sure that longer lives are also better lives.

In 2015, our Legislature created and Gov. Hickenlooper appointed the [Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging](#) (hereafter “planning group”). [House Bill 15-1033](#) defines this group as “a multi-disciplinary private and public sector stakeholders' group” whose job is “to develop a comprehensive strategic action plan on aging in Colorado through the year 2030.” It is charged with providing “comprehensive data on and specific recommendations regarding private and public options for addressing this demographic shift,” with the expressed intent that these recommendations “will lead to the implementation of programs, services, projects, policies, and procedures . . . in both the public and private sectors.” The [first iteration](#) of this plan was submitted in November, 2016. Two additional iterations of the plan are due in November of 2018 and November of 2020.

The planning group’s first recommendation was that the Governor “create a permanent, high-level office or position in the executive branch to be accountable for and lead the state government’s work on aging issues.” In response, the Governor’s Office created the Senior Advisor on Aging (hereafter “senior advisor”).

In keeping with the planning group's recommendations, and under the direction of the senior advisor, we are focusing on three big areas – **communities, families and the workplace**. Our goals are to create a state where:

- Coloradans have genuine, community-based options for housing, mobility, civic engagement, volunteering, socializing, recreation and more as they age. This is consistent with the planning group's [recommendations](#) 4 and 9.
- Families can save for retirement, are supported in their efforts to be effective and loving caregivers, are protected from fraud and abuse, and can plan and communicate clearly about the choices that lie ahead. This is consistent with the planning group's [recommendations](#) 3, 6, 7 and 8.
- Employers can find skilled workers for industries serving older Coloradans, and workers can get education and training, find good-paying jobs and build rewarding careers in those industries. This is consistent with the planning group's [recommendation](#) 5.
- Older Coloradans can remain in the workforce, are valued by employers and colleagues, and can start new businesses and engage in entrepreneurial pursuits for as long as they wish. This is also consistent with the planning group's [recommendation](#) 5.

We are also **building connections and fostering collaboration** among the many Coloradans already working on these issues. That means creating networks, improving communication and sharing information with all who can benefit. It also means breaking down silos and facilitating collaboration to make government as effective as possible. This is a central task of both the planning group and the senior advisor, and is consistent with the planning group's [recommendations](#) 1 and 2.

These activities constitute Colorado's first-ever coordinated, comprehensive long-term strategy for aging. But it is critical to understand that this cannot be done by state government alone. In fact, in Colorado local control is paramount and the state often plays a supporting role to local solutions. The good news is that there is hardly a challenge concerning aging and older Coloradans that isn't already being addressed effectively by someone, somewhere in our state. Underlying everything we do is a desire to identify, lift up and multiply the impact of these solutions. **So this new strategy is as much about building a movement in our state as it is about any specific policies. And this application is mostly about building that movement through the *Lifelong Colorado* initiative, which is outlined in detail in response to question 4 below.**

2. How will the state engage and involve older people in the process of becoming more age-friendly?

Our strategy is bottom-up and inclusive, in keeping with the best traditions of our state. It is designed to build on the strengths and insights of the many older Coloradans and others already addressing the challenges of an older society.

Lifelong Colorado is based on the idea that the most effective and sustainable solutions come from the community. The "Boomer Bond" assessment and planning process pioneered by the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) and the diverse strategies deployed by the eight

Colorado communities that already belong to AARP’s age-friendly network all rely on citizen engagement and community collaboration as the essential ingredients of success.

One good example is the Partnership for Age-Friendly Communities in Larimer County in northern Colorado, which is composed primarily of older adults in leadership and volunteer positions. Their work is spearheaded by older adult volunteers utilizing the self-directed volunteer model, in collaboration with entities such as Colorado State University, the local Area Agency on Aging, AARP, local government and service agencies that provide expertise and support. This is one of our leading age-friendly communities precisely because of the involvement of older people.

In Larimer County and elsewhere, we have found that the most successful and sustainable age-friendly processes occur where dedicated local champions and community-based aging commissions are directly involved. In most cases, the local area agency on aging is actively engaged and supportive, as are members of their advisory committees. In fact, our 16 AAAs provide a statewide network of programs and activists upon which we hope to build much of our work.

We also will benefit greatly from our partnership with and the active involvement of AARP Colorado – both from its leadership staff and elected officers (who are actively engaged in this work) and its nearly 685,000 statewide members (12% of our total state population).

In addition to our AAAs and a strong state AARP chapter, there are a large number of citizen-led organizations we know we can rely on to be part of this effort. These range from statewide organizations such as the Colorado Senior Lobby and the Colorado Gerontological Society to local initiatives such as A Little Help (a member of the Village to Village Network) and the Western Slope Community Alliance headquartered in Grand Junction. In fact, our challenge is not to find enough people to engage in the process – our challenge is to learn from and build effective networks among the very large number of Coloradans already engaged in these issues. Again, this is a core purpose and goal of our *Lifelong Colorado* initiative.

3. Briefly describe the mechanisms the state has or is planning to put in place to facilitate collaborative planning and implementation between different agencies and departments

As mentioned in our answer to question 3.1 above, breaking down silos, building networks and aligning the work of the many actors in aging policy is central to our strategy. Three of the nine recommendations of the Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging ([recommendations 1, 2 and 9](#)) are related to this goal – as is the creation of the planning group itself.

This work is well underway. The legislation creating the planning group in 2015 expressly listed four cabinet officials or their designees as members of the group (representing the departments of Human Services, Health Care Policy and Finance, Public Health and Environment, and Transportation). The structure within the planning group reinforced this strategy, establishing cross-agency, state-local and public-private subcommittees whose work resulted in the broad recommendations in the 2016 report. In 2018, the planning group has continued this strategy by focusing its work on two broad areas – transportation and workforce.

In 2018, the Senior Advisor on Aging position was intentionally placed in the Governor's Office to give it the visibility and authority necessary to work with the leadership of the various state programs on aging and to influence the direction of their work. The senior advisor has convened or co-convened several multi-agency collaboratives – one to develop and implement the **Lifelong Colorado** initiative, one to plan for a major statewide summit on aging for 2019, and one to help coordinate among programs addressing financial fraud (a joint effort with the Attorney General's Office). He has also convened a leadership group, consisting of high-level staff from the departments of Health Care Policy and Finance, Public Health and Environment, Human Services, and Local Affairs, to help inform the state's overall strategy.

Individual departments are also taking important steps to enhance and support collaboration within state government and between the state and local communities. The Department of Local Affairs is seeking to enhance its capacity to provide technical assistance and support to local communities as they develop and implement age-friendly plans. The Department of Health Care Policy and Finance, which runs the Medicaid program, has created a new high-level position (Older Adult Policy Advisor) to help the department find the most efficient and effective ways to provide services to older Coloradans while maximizing the opportunities for them to remain in their communities of choice for as long as possible. And the Colorado Workforce Development Council in the Department of Labor and Employment will soon consider a proposal from the Senior Advisor on Aging for systemic changes that would make aging issues and older workers a higher priority for its work.

Finally, with the assistance of the Governor's budget office and staff in various state agencies, the Senior Advisor on Aging has compiled a comprehensive accounting of the dozens of state programs and services related to aging and older Coloradans, along with the budgets (state general and cash funds as well as federal funds) for each. This is the first step in a comprehensive assessment of the state's existing approach to aging issues, and it will be a key factor in our efforts to make the state government's work on aging as strategic, efficient and effective as possible.

4. Briefly describe the mechanisms the state has or is planning to put in place to facilitate engagement with communities to identify unique and disparate needs throughout the state.

We believe the best definition of an age-friendly state is one with a whole bunch of age-friendly communities. After all, Coloradans don't just live in Colorado – they live in 272 diverse cities and towns, and countless unincorporated communities, spread through 64 counties and two tribal reservations of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and Southern Ute Indian Tribe. These range from our country's 19th largest metropolitan area to some of its most remote farming and ranching communities, from thriving ski resorts to traditional mining communities and towns that originated as part of Spanish land grants. And ethnically and culturally, Coloradans are as diverse as the communities in which they live.

So it should go without saying that a one-size-fits-all, top-down approach to anything is almost never the right answer in Colorado – certainly not with the unique challenges faced by our communities as they age. Happily, answers to these challenges are emerging in cities and towns throughout Colorado. An increasing number of counties and municipalities have joined the AARP age-friendly network, with citizen-led efforts like Innovations in Aging, a grassroots coalition of civic organizations in Colorado Springs. The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) has

developed a comprehensive assessment process and planning tool ([Boomer Bond](#))* that to date has helped 17 of its member cities and counties develop and begin to implement age-friendly community plans. The Better Business Bureau in Colorado Springs has an age-friendly business certification program (currently featuring 125 members), while the Center for the Built Environment at Colorado State University (CSU) is working on a lifelong housing certification program.

CSU has also joined other colleges and universities (including the University of Colorado Boulder, the University of Colorado Colorado Springs, the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, the University of Denver and Regis University) to form the Colorado Collaboration for Aging Research and Education (CO Care), an initiative of public and private colleges and universities that are working on a wide range of aging issues.

These are just a handful of the innovative efforts underway in Colorado, and our goal is to encourage and support communities throughout the state as they develop and implement their own age-friendly strategies like these. We want to make Colorado the “age-friendliest state” – a state with a whole bunch of age-friendly communities, neighborhoods, streets, businesses, places of worship, organizations, parks, recreation facilities and more.

Elsewhere in this application we have discussed the essential roles played by our Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging, the Governor’s Senior Advisor on Aging, our strong network of Area Agencies on Aging, and the many private and non-profit actors at the state and local level. To all of this we are now adding an initiative we call ***Lifelong Colorado***. It will build on existing local efforts (and promising efforts in other states), harvest and share their lessons, provide technical support and expertise, and, where necessary, add some capacity and resources to help local communities get the job done. ***Lifelong Colorado*** will provide a statewide umbrella of resources for communities, identify and encourage best-practices, empower and facilitate local and regional efforts, and coordinate common public information strategies.

The Governor’s Office and the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, in collaboration with AARP Colorado, the Denver Regional Council of Governments, Colorado Counties, Inc., the Colorado Municipal League, and leaders of age-friendly initiatives in Larimer County and Colorado Springs, have developed ***Lifelong Colorado***, with the specific goal of adding 20 new age-friendly communities in 2019, and 100 by 2023.

In launching ***Lifelong Colorado***, Governor Hickenlooper has:

- Designated his Senior Advisor on Aging as the lead person responsible for implementing this strategy;
- Established an advisory committee for the project consisting of representatives from several state departments as well as AARP, DRCOG, CCI, CML and others;
- Designated Lt. Gov. Donna Lynne (D) and Colorado Springs Mayor (and former Colorado Attorney General) John Suthers (R) as honorary co-chairs of ***Lifelong Colorado*** to represent and help promote the initiative statewide;

* Please note that this is a temporary link offered solely for purposes of this application. Because the Boomer Bond process involves extensive interactions and is not designed to be a one-size-fits-all tool, participating communities access this document through DRCOG staff rather than off the shelf from their web site.

- Directed the initiative’s leadership to reach out to and include the broadest possible range of stakeholders in the process, including businesses, homebuilders, community-based organizations, faith communities, and more.

As mentioned in our answer to question 3.3 above, the Division of Local Government in the Department of Local Affairs has developed a plan to provide additional technical and other support to communities engaged in ***Lifelong Colorado*** and age-friendly strategies. If funded, this plan will take effect at the beginning of the next fiscal year, July 1, 2019.

In addition, a subcommittee consisting of AARP Colorado, the Denver Regional Council of Governments, the Department of Local Affairs, and leadership from Larimer County and Colorado Springs will collaborate to:

- Identify lessons learned from existing efforts and develop initial options and tools that can be shared with other communities;
- Convene existing age-friendly and Boomer Bond communities and other interested parties in November, 2018, to build a ***Lifelong Communities Network*** in Colorado and identify additional lessons and opportunities;
- Create a process for continually updating the tool kit and other resources for communities to use, including potential regional versions.

Finally, the Governor has directed his senior advisor to develop a plan to make ***Lifelong Colorado*** sustainable over the long-term, including:

- Raising broad financial and other support for local, regional and state efforts;
- Building public awareness;
- Developing regional teams and strategies;
- Encouraging age friendly businesses and employers in Colorado, and exploring opportunities for similar programs for other sectors;
- Ensuring broad public engagement so that ***Lifelong Colorado*** consistently reflects the state’s geographic diversity (frontier, rural, resort, suburban and urban communities) as well as the unique attributes and needs of its diverse communities (based on faith, culture, ethnicity, heritage, socio-economic status, sexual orientation and more);

In addition to all the work on ***Lifelong Colorado*** outlined above, we also are actively planning a statewide aging summit for late spring, 2019, along with potential regional summits. We intend for these to be broadly inclusive events, and we intend for them to become recurring components of our work on aging in the future.

Section 4: NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

Your answers to the following questions will help us complete your membership in the global age-friendly network and better enable us to understand how to support the network.

1. How do you hope to contribute to the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities/States and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

The five-year goal for ***Lifelong Colorado*** is to add 100 more Colorado communities to our network, which we intend also to qualify for AARP's age-friendly network. These communities are bound to discover new and innovative approaches to a wide range of challenges, which we will enthusiastically share with the broader age-friendly network. They are also bound to make mistakes, which should be equally valuable to share. These are the kinds of lessons we hope to learn from our national and international colleagues, and we are excited to be joining a network where learning from and supporting one another is a priority.

In addition, we believe our state's approach may have some unique characteristics that might be instructive for others. Along with our focus on bottom-up, community based strategies, these include the active involvement of and collaboration among state agencies, our plans to engage regional organizations and build regional teams, the increasing number of Colorado foundations and other state funders interested in this work, and the large number of collaborations among state and local as well as public, non-profit and private organizations.

2. What motivated your State to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities/States and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

Because of all the baby boomers who, for obvious reasons, moved here over the years, Colorado is now both one of the youngest states and one of the most rapidly aging states in the nation. This dynamic makes the challenge of the larger demographic shift particularly acute for us, especially at the local level.

Being able to age in one's community of choice is a universal aspiration, and creating the conditions where more people are able to do so is perhaps the most important aging strategy. It enhances quality of life, strengthens families and communities, and saves us all money.

We started this process in 2015 with the creation of the Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging, and we've made good progress since then. But we know we have a long way to go. Joining the network of other communities in the country and around the world that are engaged in this same endeavor is a logical and important part of the process for us. We look forward to learning from and contributing to the network.

As Governor Hickenlooper wrote in his cover letter to this application, "Previous generations have given us the extraordinary gift of longer lives. Our job is to make sure those longer lives are also better lives, and that families, communities and our economy are enhanced by them. We happily embrace this challenge, and joining AARP's age-friendly network is one way we hope to meet it."

3. Please provide a digital (JPG, PNG or PDF) file or link of a logo or other image that represents your state.

We are developing a logo specific to ***Lifelong Colorado*** and will share it with you when it is finalized. We expect to be able to do so by the middle of September.