



## Membership Application

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

- If you have questions while completing this form, please email [livable@aarps.org](mailto:livable@aarps.org).
- If you need additional space for answering the questions you may add an additional sheet of paper.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE: 2/14/2018

### Section 1: COMMUNITY DETAILS

**NAME OF THE COMMUNITY:** Carbon County

**STATE:** Montana

**POPULATION SIZE:** 10,340\*

**PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS ABOVE THE AGE OF 60:** 50% over the age of 50\*

**NAME AND TITLE OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL SIGNING THE OFFICIAL COMMITMENT:** Board of Carbon County Commissioners: Doug Tucker, Scott Blain, Bill Bullock.

**OFFICE ADDRESS OF THE SIGNER:** Post Office Box 887, Red Lodge, MT 59068

\*Data from the 2016 ACS 5-Year Population Estimate ([factfinder.census.gov](http://factfinder.census.gov))

### Section 2: COMMUNITY CONTACT FOR THE AARP NETWORK OF AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

The community contact is the local staff member or volunteer who is primarily responsible for carrying out the community-level work — it is not the responsible AARP staff member.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

**Please describe the named person's role in the city or community's age-friendly initiative:**

The Healthy Communities Coordinator is responsible for the design, implementation, and coordination of the Foundation's efforts regarding the development of a community coordinated approach to health. Through locally expressed need and results of Community Health Needs Assessments, the coordinator prioritizes programming, applies for and supervises AmeriCorps VISTAs who devote a year of service to their assigned areas. George Man is a VISTA dedicated to Age-Friendly initiatives. He is building relationships with seniors county wide to receive input in order to prioritize programming. George receives guidance from his engaged steering committee, all of whom are volunteers.

### Section 3: COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, ENGAGEMENTS and COLLABORATIONS

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

Despite being rural, Carbon County is home to several organizations that are focused on serving older adults. An Adult Protective Services specialist serves Carbon County and works to keep vulnerable seniors safe. There are four clinics, one of which partners with our local paramedicine program—the Community Care Team—to increase medical care access by conducting home visits and providing transportation to medical appointments.

In addition to medical services, there are also assisted living and long-term care facilities which provide housing and care for those who cannot remain in their homes. For those who are able to live in their own homes, there are six senior centers around the county that provide low-cost meals and a place to gather for social activities. Many of the senior centers also benefit from active volunteers that cook and serve meals, deliver meals to those unable to attend, and clean the space used.

The local Active Transportation Board promotes safe and accessible non-motorized travel. They have been responsible for adding benches along Broadway and making wayfinding improvements. These benches encourage seniors to walk by providing rest areas, and wayfinding improvements help travelers easily find popular points of interest. Active Transportation is currently working to install curb extensions which will improve safety for pedestrians. Seniors will particularly appreciate the additional visibility when checking for oncoming vehicles.

Beartooth Recreational Trails Association, another local organization that promotes non-motorized travel, works to link trails in/around Red Lodge and operates the Red Lodge Nordic Center. The varying difficulty of trails make outdoor activities suitable for all ages, and residents and travelers alike, hiking or skiing depending on the season, take advantage of these trails all year round. In addition, the Nordic Center offers steep discounts on season passes for seniors.

The Senior Ark Grant Fund is another valuable community program that assists seniors. The fund provides financial assistance to low-income seniors with episodic, and oftentimes emergency, needs. Since its inception, the fund has provided over \$10,000 to older adults in Carbon County to help with projects ranging from bathroom repairs to broken water heater replacements to car repairs. The fund also financed the construction of an accessible deck to allow a resident with a physical disability to safely enter their home.

The community also has Navigators, volunteers trained to assist individuals and families with aid program applications. Navigators also guide clients in finding community resources. This service is completely free.

The Red Lodge Area Community Foundation facilitates the Age-Friendly Steering Committee, a group of volunteers, which formed after a community assessment and subsequent community dialogue showed the community's desire for a more age-friendly county. The committee's mission is to build an age-friendly Carbon County through assessment, engagement, and collaboration.

To become more age-friendly, we plan to engage more seniors in community dialogues, address concerns raised by seniors through our Age-Friendly Carbon County survey, and continue to make visits to senior centers around the county. We are currently working to address transportation concerns in the county. Even with amazing services available, if people cannot get to them or receive them, the services do not amount to much. Many seniors have expressed concern about getting to medical appointments or their pharmacy. With the recent Office of Public Assistance closure, transportation is even more critical for people of all ages.

We are partnering with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) in addressing these needs. Our Regional Planner from MDT has agreed to make a visit to Red Lodge to learn more about our needs, and he has offered his assistance with request for proposals and finding vendors to create a transit development plan for the county.

## 2) How will the community engage and involve older people in the process of becoming a more age-friendly?

From the outset of our age-friendly initiative, we have engaged and involved older people in the process. In 2016, the Foundation launched its PEAK (Providing Easily Accessible Care) Initiative, which identified maintaining the independence of our aging residents as one of three focal issues that are challenging our community. Then, in February of 2017, an Age Friendly Community Panel Discussion was organized. Panel members included professionals working in age-related fields (medical, homecare/hospice, Adult Protective Services, family caregivers, and more) and discussed population aging trends: challenges we are facing, resources in the community, and features of age-friendly communities.

One way we engage seniors is inviting them to join the age-friendly steering committee. Our committee includes interested seniors from the community along with health and other professionals who interact with the older population. Meetings are open to the public and many interested residents are regular attendees. The committee is led by an AmeriCorps VISTA, George, whose purpose is to engage the committee and community members to prioritize initiatives through surveys, assessments, and dialogue.

Another way we engage seniors is actively going out and speaking with them. George recently completed a community survey entitled "Age Friendly Carbon County" based on the Eight Domains of Livability framework. George visited each senior center, joining the seniors for lunch, explaining his survey, and asking for their input. Surveys were also available at a local library, clinics, and churches. Furthermore, an online format was introduced through social media.

Outreach efforts were successful and the initial goal of 100 completed surveys was overwhelmingly surpassed. George received 156 on-time responses and a few more after the survey close date. The top concern and opportunity for improvement was transportation. Consequently, the steering committee decided to primarily focus on transportation in the county. Due to notable vocal concerns about "communication and information", improving communication countywide through newsletters and a newspaper column is a secondary focus we are working on.

After closing the survey, George revisited each senior center to share the results and gather specific feedback on how they envision transportation meeting their needs. Seeking input from outlying communities in the county was an intentional choice because a major principle of the committee has been to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach and ensure the specific needs of each community are being met. Through every step of the process, the group has always welcomed, and even solicited, input from the public.

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

From the beginning, collaboration and partnerships have been on our minds. Our steering committee includes individuals representing our Area Agency on Aging, local homecare/hospice groups, county public health, fire/EMS, our Community Care Team, Adult Protective Services, and the Alzheimer's Association. Others on the committee are also involved with our local Active Transportation Board, Beartooth Recreational Trails Association, senior centers, and long-term care facilities.

Another mechanism to promote collaborative planning and implementation is our regular updates to county officials on progress made. We also share our work with the County Board of Health. These meetings allow us to receive feedback from the county and occasionally, their help as well. Aside from the county and existing contacts through the committee, we also reach out to local businesses and organizations.

Snow Troopers is an example of a local program that benefits from community partnerships. This volunteer snow shoveling program pairs a high school student with a senior, and after snow falls, the student will help shovel the walk for the senior. For this program, we collaborated with several local groups to get the project rolling. The Active Transportation Board reviewed and revised volunteer policies and guidelines. We also presented the program at the local high school and the guidance counselor helped recruit volunteers. After learning about the program, a local hardware store generously offered free shovels to each student volunteer. We also worked with local churches and a senior center to recruit interested seniors.

No matter the project, the Age-Friendly Steering Committee always seeks involve community members and local organizations. For example, in our recent efforts to address transportation needs, we have invited local law enforcement, local governments, and public schools to the table. We are also in contact with the Montana Department of Transportation to receive help from their transit development experts. We believe that engaging more stakeholders benefits the future of a program with diversity of opinion, new insights, and sustainability. Meanwhile, partnering with existing organizations reduces duplication of services and allows us to efficiently use existing resources.

#### 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.

#### 4) How do you hope to contribute to the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

Carbon County is a small rural county of around 10,000 and the majority of communities have fewer than 500 residents. Half of the population is 50 or older, much higher than state and national levels. Many communities have their own local programs to help youth succeed and this high level of engagement in a rural area offers a unique opportunity to advance the age-friendly initiative.

Age-friendliness, though commonly considered in an urban setting, is critical to healthy living and well-being in all communities, whether urban or rural. As age-friendly initiatives are developed, we hope to contribute by sharing our successes and insights with both the AARP and WHO Networks of Age-Friendly Communities. Carbon County's strong community engagement and collaborative efforts to improve livability in our area can serve as an example of livability in a rural context. Our goal is to be a model for other rural communities and encourage age-friendly movements in rural America.

#### 5) What motivated your community to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

As the Age-Friendly committee learned more of community concerns and the aging demographics of the county, it became imperative to ensure all can age well in the place they choose. The AARP Network has already provided an excellent framework through the Eight Domains of Livability, allowing us to more clearly identify how the county is doing well and where we can improve. As community needs are prioritized and policies are developed, the resources, support, and community examples available through the Network will be invaluable.

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

The image resolution should be at least 72 dpi. As an example of an image, here's ours >



Our representative logos are attached in the email.