



Age-Friendly

Action Plan

Overview

Once enrolled in the AARP network, a community has two years to complete a community assessment and develop a community action plan. The plan must be based on needs within the community that fall within the eight domains the World Health Organization has identified as influencing the health and quality of life of older adults.

Age-friendly planning aims for a five-year process of continuous improvement. The first two years are spent engaging the community, establishing a team to guide work in the community and completing the assessment. Once the action plan is adopted, implementation and evaluation are carried out during years three to five. By the conclusion of the initial five-year period, the community should have made meaningful progress toward the goals laid out in the action plan and be able to revise the plan as needed. Then the next five-year planning process begins.

The Age-Friendly Cycle of Continuous Improvement



Key Steps in the Planning Phase

- 1 Establish** mechanisms for involving older residents in all stages of the process (e.g., create an advisory citizens committee)
- 2 Conduct** a comprehensive and inclusive baseline assessment of the age-friendliness of the community
- 3 Develop** a three-year community wide action plan based on assessment findings
- 4 Identify** indicators to monitor progress of the plan

Creating an action plan is vital in ensuring that an age-friendly community initiative will make the community a better place for residents of all ages, abilities, racial and ethnic identifications and socioeconomic levels. This action plan will guide your day-to-day work.

Before Beginning

Prior to beginning work on the action plan, the leadership team for any community enrolled in the Network of Age-Friendly States & Communities (NAFSC) program must:

- 1 Establish** a way to involve a cross section of the community, including but not limited to older residents. In many cases, the method chosen is to develop an advisory committee that oversees the age-friendly work and reports to the local government.
- 2 Complete** an assessment that includes a description of community assets, demographic information, a survey and listening session or focus group so that the leadership team is informed about what residents want and need to thrive as they age.

Tips for Preparing an Effective Plan

While previous experience with action planning is an asset, the most important resource can be the experience of the leadership team in the community and the connections team members have previously established. Other steps that will aid your efforts:

- **Develop talking points to help engage stakeholders.**
When the leadership team collaborates on the development of talking points, members will be more effective in explaining the work they are doing to people in the community.
- **Involve as many stakeholders as you can.**
Stakeholders can be residents, local businesses, community-based organizations, departments in local government or other community leaders who may be affected by or have an effect upon the work you are doing. Some will be interested in your full plan. Others will respond to one or two elements. Stakeholders who are interested in adding an age-friendly component to all aspects of community and economic development are useful for creating a broad plan; stakeholders whose interest is focused on one or two domains are also important because they can help you create a plan with depth in those areas. But any opportunity you find to broaden the base of support can prove beneficial, sometimes in unexpected ways. Think outside the age-friendly box when you are creating a list of stakeholders. Include intergenerational voices, the interfaith community, cultural institutions, and others that share your interest in making the community a better place to live for all people.

The goal of age friendly community work is for people of all ages to:



Participate in community activities



Be treated with respect



Have access to recreational opportunities and health services and enjoy the best health possible



Be active, vital contributors to the economic, civic and social life of the community



Receive appropriate support if they can no longer look after themselves

Tips for Preparing an Effective Plan (continued)

- **Involve stakeholders early and often.** Implementation of many changes, such as improving access to transit or increasing the number of recreational programs available in the community, may require more than one municipal department as well as service providers and community organizations. Involving such stakeholders in developing the action plan will build their commitment and ensure that action-plan items are feasible.
- **Engage municipalities.** Municipal involvement increases the likelihood that elements of your action plan will be integrated into key municipal plans, such as housing strategies, transportation and transit master plans, urban design guidelines and street designs.
- **Develop a presentation.** Local municipal officials may need to submit action plans for approval by the municipality. Tips to increase the likelihood that your plan will be accepted include the following:
 - Make sure your plan is in line with existing municipal plans. Schedule a time to share and discuss your plan with elected and appointed officials whose work overlaps with your plan.
 - When you are sharing your plan with the municipality or other stakeholders, focus on the benefits for their department of incorporating age-friendly components in their work.
- **Adjust your messaging as needed.** Tailor the information you are providing to a particular audience based on its particular focus and role in the community-planning process. For example, a presentation before a local recreation department should focus on the improvement of parks, nature preserves and sports activities that residents of all ages can use or participate in.

