Age-Friendly Communities in Canada:

Community Implementation Guide

Public Health Agency of Canada   Agence de la santé publique du Canada

MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY

Centre on Aging Nova Scotia

*To promote and protect the health of Canadians through
leadership, partnership, innovation and action in public health.*
—Public Health Agency of Canada

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Acknowledgements

This document is the result of contributions by many who are interested in advancing the age-friendly initiative in Canada.

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Introduction

As Canada's population ages, it is especially important to support older Canadians in the places where they live. Making communities age-friendly holds promise as an effective way to help seniors remain healthy, active and independent, and contribute to their families and communities (World Health Organization, 2007).

The World Health Organization (WHO) launched the *Global Age-Friendly Cities Project* in 2000. Its goal was to promote the development of accessible and inclusive communities that support active aging. WHO defines active aging as the "process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age" (*Active Ageing: A Policy Framework,* WHO, 2002).

The WHO *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* outlines the essential features of an age-friendly city, grouping them according to eight topic areas—or domains. This international project was informed by older citizens of 33 cities and 22 countries across the globe. Seniors representing four Canadian cities participated in it through the work of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and partners in British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec and Nova Scotia.

Eight Age-Friendly City Topic Areas from the WHO *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide*

1. Outdoor spaces and buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Social participation
5. Respect and social inclusion
6. Civic participation and employment
7. Communication and information
8. Community support and health services

Over 560 communities in Canada have committed to becoming age-friendly (data from 2011). They are making changes to policies, services and structures related to the physical and social environment so that they better support and enable older people to "age actively." Several Canadian provinces have also put structures in place to support communities in their efforts to become more age-friendly.

PHAC is promoting the implementation of the Age-Friendly Communities (AFC) model throughout Canada by working with provinces and territories, engaging partners, sharing experiences and resources with individuals, community agencies, and other groups interested in becoming more age-friendly. This *Age-Friendly Communities in Canada: Community Implementation Guide* is one of the resources developed by PHAC to assist communities to start up, implement and evaluate their age-friendly initiative. It is easy to use and contains lots of practical information and ideas that can help any community become more age-friendly.

Who Can Use This Guide?

Many individuals and groups are interested in making communities more age-friendly, including:
- seniors
- business owners
- city/town planners
- community groups
- mayors and other municipal leaders
- recreation coordinators

This Guide has been designed for use by anyone who wants to put their ideas and vision for a more age-friendly community into action. These actions can focus on one or many different sectors in the community—such as health and social services, parks and recreation, policing services and businesses—to incorporate age-friendly approaches into design, policy and services.

What Does This Guide Cover?

The Guide shows you how to:
- assess the age-friendliness of your community;
- get people involved;
- set goals;
- create a plan;
- carry out the plan;
- assess whether you have accomplished the goals in your plan;
- share the results with others.

This Guide is organized into four sections. Section 1 presents practical ideas on assessing your community and setting up processes to make your community more age-friendly. Section 2 shows how to share your successes and what you have learned with others. Section 3 contains a conclusion, and in Section 4 you will find a list of useful Sources and Further Reading to supplement the information in this Guide.

A separate *Toolbox* has also been assembled, which contains practical ideas, templates and checklists that will help you at all stages along the road to becoming an age-friendly community.

The *Toolbox*

The Public Health Agency of Canada has also developed a complementary *Toolbox*, which contains practical tools and resources to help your community become more age-friendly. These tools are superb examples from across Canada of work plans, time lines, checklists, potential funders and guidelines to help you implement and assess your progress in developing your age-friendly community.

This *Toolbox* is intended for use by seniors, business owners, city/town planners, community groups, mayors and other municipal leaders, recreation coordinators and other concerned citizens who are interested in developing or updating strategies for age-friendly communities. In order to ensure a systematic application of best communication practices that deliver age-friendly messages consistently and effectively, the *Toolbox* provides:
- materials to guide the creation and implementation of your community's age-friendly campaign;
- guidance on communicating the stages of your age-friendly campaign to stakeholders and the broader community;
- samples, templates, checklists, a media release and URLs for age-friendly Web sites.

Throughout the text, you will see references to the *Toolbox*. Each tool in the *Toolbox* has been numbered for easy identification.

Section 1: Creating Your Age-Friendly Community

The experience of Canadian communities that have been making positive changes for a number of years has informed the development of five critical milestones on the way to becoming age-friendly. This approach recognizes that communities have different needs and capacities in relation to the eight domains of an age-friendly community.

Note: The following AFC milestones were numbered only for the Guide's organizational purposes and easy reference, and are not meant to suggest order of achievement.

The AFC milestones are:
1. Establishing an advisory committee that includes the active engagement of older adults;
2. Securing a local municipal council resolution to actively support, promote and work toward becoming age-friendly;
3. Establishing a robust and concrete plan of action that responds to the needs identified by older adults in the community;
4. Demonstrating commitment to action by publicly posting the action plan;
5. Committing to measuring activities, reviewing action plan outcomes and reporting on them publicly.

1.1 Establishing an Age-Friendly Advisory Committee

The first step in building an age-friendly community is to engage key individuals and organizations. A community-wide coalition or advisory committee is more likely to get results than one person or group trying to do all the work.

The process of getting community buy-in and building a team involves the following steps:

1.1.1 Identify key stakeholders and partners

Begin by identifying key stakeholders—those who have a direct interest and/or are most likely to be affected by the age-friendly process. (See *Toolbox* – Tool 1 for a list of potential stakeholders.) It is crucial to include older residents as they have a primary stake in the outcomes of the age-friendly process. Guiding this process are the basic principles of participation and inclusion, so it is important to include people from different socio-economic groups, representatives from various cultural/ethnic groups, First Nations communities, gay and lesbian groups, people with solid knowledge of the community, and those who can support the process by providing voluntary time, space for meetings and activities, funds, and other resources.

Many organizations in your community may have been working to enhance the lives of older people, without the age-friendly label. Try to identify and involve these organizations to partner with you. They can help the advisory committee:

- find out what (if any) projects that can be considered age-friendly initiatives are already in progress to avoid duplication of effort;
- partner with other people who already have a solid knowledge of the community, as well as expertise that can enhance the age-friendly process.

To build a list of local groups and organizations that reflects the various sectors in your community, contact the local public library, chamber of commerce, and municipal planners and leaders.

For example, you will want to include[1]:
- the general public and health/service recipients, including their caregivers;
- front-line staff who work directly with the general public, clients or customers;
- community or organizational leaders, policy and decision makers (e.g. municipal officials);
- other groups or organizations that plan and advocate for healthy, sustainable and accessible communities;
- public health professionals who work in related areas such as injury and falls prevention, physical activity, healthy communities, or health and the human-made environment;
- both private and not-for-profit service providers in health, transportation, housing or other community services;
- planners—municipal, not-for-profit, and private;
- education providers—community colleges, university research centres.

1.1.2 Gain commitment

Is your community ready and willing to undertake a transformation to becoming more age-friendly? If so, it is important to ensure that you have sufficient organizational resources and commitment to support the process.

One way to gain commitment from stakeholders and partners is through a community-wide event such as a town hall meeting or first kick-off community meeting. Make sure you involve older residents in this process. It is helpful to gain initial commitments from:
- a lead agency or community group to sponsor the process;
- agencies or organizations that can provide support and resources;
- key political leaders, such as the mayor, municipal councillor, local MP and MPP, who can provide support.

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[1] University of Waterloo, Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Program, "Age Friendly Communities: Tools for Building Strong Communities—Getting Started," http://afc.uwaterloo.ca/getting_started.html

Meet with representatives from the local groups and organizations who are the most likely to champion the age-friendly initiative. Provide them with information on the age-friendly model and its goals by referring to the Web link: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/publications/public/healthy-sante/comm-coll/index-eng.php. Where possible, include a local government representative in the early phases of your age-friendly initiative, since a goal as a committee will be to introduce and pass a resolution.

1.1.3 Develop an advisory committee

From the groups identified above, select individuals and organizations to form the advisory committee. Serving on an advisory committee formalizes their commitment and demonstrates this to the broader community. Once you have formed this committee, you have reached an important milestone.

Following is a list of questions to help you choose people for the advisory committee:

- What skills, information and resources will be needed?
- What services, facilities and expertise already exist in your community?
- What services and expertise can other groups offer?
- What members of the community could help get the age-friendly message across or raise the profile of the cause?

(See *Toolbox* – Tools 2 and 3 for more resources on building an advisory committee.)

Develop a terms of reference for the advisory committee

A Terms of Reference for the committee is helpful to clarify the roles and responsibilities of its members. The committee might hold orientation meetings and one-on-one discussions with key people, informing them of the age-friendly goals and vision, and gaining their support and commitment. Commitments from agencies and other groups should include letters that specify their intentions and the nature of the support (see *Toolbox* – Tool 4 for a sample letter).

It is also a good idea for the committee to appoint a project coordinator. This person's primary goal is to keep everyone focused and motivated, and to keep the process on track. This could be anyone known to have excellent leadership skills—for example, the head of a local seniors' organization, the town recreation coordinator, an employee of a local community agency, or a local business leader.

1.2 Get a Council Resolution Passed

Another milestone is to formalize your community's commitment to becoming more age-friendly. This commitment can be done in several ways, the most basic being a resolution that is passed at the municipal level. A council resolution (see *Toolbox* – Tool 5) will provide a course of action for the municipality. The direction from the

resolution will open up opportunities to incorporate age-friendly actions now and into future community development. It will give direction to municipal staff as they develop annual work plans, and will be taken into account in official community planning, strategic planning and budget planning processes.

1.2.1 Launch the age-friendly initiative in your community

Once the resolution has been passed, it is a good time to launch the age-friendly initiative in your community. A great way to do this is to organize a general community-wide event. A well-planned and creative event will help build awareness of the initiative, build excitement about the age-friendly vision, and garner additional support from a broad range of stakeholders.

At the launch, introduce the idea of an age-friendly community assessment. If your committee wishes, it could use the Age-Friendly Cities/Rural and Remote Areas Checklists (see *Toolbox* – Tool 6) at the launch to gain feedback from participants about the age-friendliness of your community.

1.3 Develop an Action Plan for Your Age-Friendly Community

An action plan is a document that states the goals, objectives and identifies activities or actions. It is usually established for a minimum five-year time frame and helps guide change and progress. Assessing your community's strengths and weaknesses around the recommended age-friendly features as a first step in developing your action plan will enable you to decide what changes you want to make in your community, and how.

1.3.1 Assessing your community

To begin this milestone, you need to see what your community looks like (e.g. demographics, services and resources), how age-friendly it is, and how it can be improved over time. A comprehensive assessment will also show you what your community is already doing well, including how current programs, services and structures support an age-friendly community. For example, what aspects of your community are age-friendly and why? What are its strengths? What are the features that make it an inviting place for older adults?

An assessment can also point out what aspects of your community are not age-friendly and why. What are the weaknesses and how might they be improved? The weaknesses can provide the basis for discussions about what needs to be improved. They can also help you develop a baseline for measuring progress and for helping you set priorities for action and change.

It is important to set a deadline for organizing and assessing the information. You can do the assessment yourself or you might consider hiring a researcher or someone with

experience in conducting community assessments and writing reports. If you choose to do it yourself, below are some general guidelines about community assessment.

Collecting data/information for your community assessment

To obtain a picture of your community and its characteristics, consult the Community Profile for your municipality, available on the Statistics Canada Web site (see *Toolbox – Tool 7*). Basic information from the latest census is available free of charge. More detailed tabulations may require payment. This information will provide a scan of your community by gender, age, household composition, ethnic background, education levels and household income. Also gather information on the health of your older population. If all of this information is not publicly available online, Statistics Canada can provide customized information about your community.

You can use a variety of methods to obtain baseline information about whether your community is age-friendly:
- interviews (e.g. elected officials and other key individuals in the community);
- focus groups;
- surveys (online and paper).

Interviews
Interviews are a useful way to gather information about peoples' beliefs, knowledge, values, attitudes, behaviours and intentions to act. "Key informant" interviews can be used with specific stakeholders, such as service providers, town planners or leaders of seniors' groups. They may be conducted face-to-face or by telephone. Make your questions open-ended and give the person who is being interviewed plenty of opportunity to share thoughts and opinions. Avoid asking questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no.

Focus groups
Focus groups are a great way to hear from specific groups, especially vulnerable populations of seniors (e.g. isolated seniors, immigrants), those living in poverty and caregivers. Ensuring that all members and sectors of the community have a voice in the process is consistent with the key principle of inclusion.

You could have someone in the community who has good facilitation skills to conduct your focus groups. You could also hire a person to run all your community forums, including the focus groups and roundtables (see *Other methods*), to ensure consistency. This is where a partnership with a not-for-profit organization or a university research centre is helpful. However, if resources do not allow this, you can also conduct your own focus groups. (For information on how to organize and conduct a focus group, see *Toolbox* – Tool 8 and Tool 9.)

Surveys
Surveys are yet another way to gather information. Surveys can be distributed in many places: local stores, post offices, churches, community halls, seniors centres, and so on. Focus groups can help you identify the most relevant questions to include in a survey.

Another survey method is to develop a one-page assessment sheet and invite community residents to submit their suggestions and ideas on how to make their community more age-friendly. (For an example of a community-wide survey that other communities have used—which can be posted online or distributed otherwise if you give credit to the source—see *Toolbox* – Tool 10.)

Other methods
There are other more informal ways you can gather information by using the Age-Friendly Checklists (see *Toolbox* – Tool 6).

Municipal officials could ask their agencies to conduct an assessment of their services related to age-friendly facilities. Roundtable discussions with experts in key sectors, such as housing development, business, civic activities, transportation, municipal planning and design, social services, and health care can also provide useful information.

To meet the needs of those who are unable to attend forums, consider creating a Web site and invite community members to respond to the checklist online, or to e-mail their suggestions or a completed feedback form to council, or a designated agency. Include a mailing address and a phone number for those who wish to respond by mail or phone.

1.3.2 Organizing your information

Next, determine the key messages you have received from the information gathered about your area's strengths and weaknesses based on the eight domains of an age-friendly community (refer to the age-friendly city topic areas, drawn from the WHO *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* and listed in the introductory chapter of this Guide).

Look for themes and ideas that are common across all the various groups. For instance, do service providers, caregivers and older adults suggest that many of the services in your community are not accessible? Or that there are not enough older adults represented on key decision-making boards and councils in your community? Look for agreement on the strengths of your community. Are there any opportunities or initiatives to build on?

1.3.3 Sharing your information

What you have learned needs to be shared with the community. One good way to do this is to write a report of your findings to the key stakeholders (e.g. those who participated in the assessment, local seniors' groups, the chamber of commerce, local health authority). A report is an important part of the process because it provides a baseline of the community from which change may be assessed (See *Toolbox* – Tool 11). One-page summaries of your report can be published by your local newspaper and in local councillors' newsletters. You could also post the assessment results on different Web sites. In fact, many communities across Canada are now using the Internet to distribute their findings.

1.3.4 Setting goals and objectives for your action plan

The process of setting goals and objectives can be challenging. Limited resources and time, competing needs/agendas in your community, public opinion, and other factors all play a role. However, establishing goals and objectives, and setting priorities is very important to help your community bring about change. Identify areas that need the most attention, and consider what you want to see happen or change. This is how you will craft your goal statements for your action plan. For example, the assessment may tell you that older citizens do not often participate in social, recreational, intellectual and civic activities. Barriers identified might include transportation difficulties or little interest in the activities. The action plan can be part of a broader strategic plan for your community or your age-friendly actions can be incorporated into existing processes and priorities.

You may want to word your goal statement and objectives as follows:

Goal 1—To increase the participation of older people in community events and activities.

    Objective 1.1 Increase the number of organizations and agencies that incorporate an age-friendly lens in their program planning.

    Objective 1.2 Provide meaningful social and recreational opportunities for older people.

    Objective 1.3 Try to establish two positions on municipal council for older people.

    Objective 1.4 Establish two positions on your local community health board for older people.

    Objective 1.5 Establish new or enhance existing transportation services.

Your action plan may have one goal, or several. This will depend on the results of your assessment and which of the eight AFC domains are relevant to your community.

Objectives should be **SMART**: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, and **T**imely. Some will involve a range of stakeholders and require more specific actions or activities to implement them. In the example above, the second objective will require some sort of survey to understand what opportunities older people might consider meaningful. Some of the objectives identified may have policy or budgetary considerations. Others will require a new way of thinking about the program or activity already being provided. The idea is that if these objectives are met, then the goal of increasing participation of older people will be met.

1.3.5 Setting priorities for your action plan

Each of the goals identified in the action plan needs to be prioritized. Priority planning involves identifying goals that need immediate attention. Can you build upon an initiative already underway? What things are you most likely to accomplish given the resources available in your community (e.g. expertise, volunteers, other community assets), and

funds?

Here are some more tips for establishing priorities:

- Determine what the community and key partners see as important issues.

- Establish priorities and strategies together.

- Ensure everyone understands and accepts the process you have used for recommending and adopting final priorities (e.g. the community assessment, a review of local resources).

- Align priorities, objectives and strategies with other related initiatives in your area (e.g. health care, recreation and community service initiatives, municipal business plan).

1.4 Posting Your Age-Friendly Community Action Plan

After the advisory committee has the key goals and objectives established and prioritized, the action plan needs to be made public and widely distributed. The plan should reflect the community's needs—therefore, implementation should not be left solely to the advisory committee. Creating change on a community-wide level can be a slow process. It helps to link up with others who are involved in the age-friendly process so that you can draw upon others' experience and wisdom.

1.4.1 Implementing your action plan

At this stage, it is helpful to develop a **logic model** that summarizes the overall action plan, its expected effects, the strategies/activities of the plan, etc. A logic model is a visual way of presenting how you believe your plan (or program of change) will work. (See *Toolbox* – Tool 12 for a sample logic model.) This model is a guideline for your advisory committee, showing how you expect it to work, what activities are needed and in what order, and how your desired goals, or outcomes, are to be achieved. The committee has its broad mandate lined up with the action plan and logic model. Project planning is a key step in implementing your action plan. A **project plan** helps you to achieve the goals and objectives identified in your action plan. It can also help you save money and time, and avoid unnecessary problems.

Project Planning

Following are some guidelines for project planning, from start-up to wrap-up. In addition, see the *Toolbox* for checklists, sample documents, diagrams, tips and strategies, and other helpful resources to help you make your specific projects successful.

Project plans answer the following four questions:

1. What will this team do?
2. How will we do it?
3. When will it be done and by whom?
4. How will we evaluate whether or not it was successful?

Steps involved in project planning:

1. Establish the purpose and objectives of the project.
2. Identify what steps/activities are required. Do some have to be finished before others can begin? Attach a time frame to the steps.
3. Identify what resources are required (e.g. people, space, equipment) and what are the sources (e.g. volunteers, in-kind donations, grants).
4. Identify and overcome barriers.
5. Decide how you will manage the project, including ground rules and team member roles (e.g. who will be doing what, when and how?).
6. Set a start date and a target date for completion. Identify any key milestones along the way.
7. Determine how you will measure the success of your project.

It helps to make a diagram of your project plan, too, so you can see how things are progressing.

A sample project template and a sample work plan, which can help with your day-to-day tasks, are included in the *Toolbox*. A checklist of helpful questions to ask yourself as you are putting together your project proposal for funding and a list of potential funding sources has also been included. (See *Toolbox* – Tools 13–16.)

The implementation phase is the most time consuming and challenging to monitor. Communities may lose momentum if they feel less connected to the larger cause. An important part of the advisory committee's responsibility is to monitor the action plan to see how the goals are being advanced.

Sharing experiences is also important, especially success stories (see Section 2). Releasing progress reports on monitoring and evaluation (see subsection 1.4) will help the various players and community actors remain engaged and committed.

1.5 Measuring Activities and Reporting Publicly on the Action Plan

The final milestone to becoming an age-friendly community is evaluation. Evaluation is strongly linked and integrated with the implementation phase. It is often the part of an organization's change process that receives the least attention because of limited understanding about what it is, why it is important, and how to do it.

It is important for communities to engage in *some* evaluation activities at each of the milestones. By planning these activities early in the implementation process, you will be better prepared to: 1) complete an application process for age-friendly community recognition, 2) apply for community development grants, and 3) provide information to link activities with successful outcomes.

1.5.1 Milestone evaluation questions and supporting documentation

For each milestone, you will find some evaluation questions and some possible supporting documentation suggestions that you could attach when answering each question. Responding to the milestone evaluation questions and adding supporting documentation may help your community to proceed more smoothly through the milestone process.

Milestone: 1. Establishing an advisory committee that includes the active engagement of older adults

Milestone questions: Does your advisory committee represent a broad cross section of older adults in the community? What community groups do they represent?

How many older adults are represented on the advisory committee?

Are the advisory committee meetings being held in ways that respect the views and abilities of its older members?

Examples of supporting documentation:
- names of community groups represented on the committee and the reasons why these people were included;
- a listing of the number of older adults on the advisory committee;
- a description of the roles that older adults on the committee have played or an outline of roles from the committee's Terms of Reference;
- measures taken to support participation of older adults.

Milestone question: How did you engage stakeholders?

Examples of supporting documentation:
- a list of events and communications used to engage community groups;
- number of community meetings held and number of people in attendance;

- total contributions from stakeholders (e.g. financial, volunteer, services, meeting space);
- number of completed sample agency commitment letters (see *Toolbox* – Tool 4).

Milestone question: How has the advisory committee been structured and how has its advice been used?

Examples of supporting documentation:
- Terms of Reference, showing:
    - objectives of the advisory committee;
    - reporting authority of the committee;
    - definition of members' roles;
    - resources provided to the advisory committee to perform its work;
- evidence of the committee's influence on decisions made (e.g. from minutes of meetings);
- recommendations made by the committee and how they were used.

Milestone: 2. Securing a local municipal council resolution to actively support, promote and work toward becoming age-friendly

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Milestone question: Has the local government formally supported age-friendly initiatives?

Examples supporting documentation:
- a signed resolution by municipal officials;
- a municipal plan describing the commitment for age-friendly community action;
- media coverage of municipal commitments (e.g. media releases, newspaper articles, radio interviews with elected officials).

Milestone: 3. Establishing a robust and concrete plan of action that responds to the needs identified by older adults in the community

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The information that you gather during this milestone will not only contribute to your plan, but could also be used in the future to measure whether your community is moving toward age-friendly outcomes. Now is the time to develop measures (e.g. interview guides, surveys) and to record the information you gather so that it can be updated as your initiative continues.

Milestone question: Has the community's current age-friendliness been assessed?

Examples of supporting documentation:
- interview guides, surveys, photographs, town hall meeting agendas and minutes;

- number of interviews, focus groups, surveys, meetings conducted;
- details on participants in the assessment process and their characteristics (e.g. age, gender, neighbourhood or community affiliation, occupation);
- positive and negative media coverage related to age-friendliness;

Milestone questions: Have priorities for action been identified from the assessment?

Have these priorities been communicated to community stakeholders?

Examples of supporting documentation:
- key themes generated from the assessment;
- summary of assessment findings;
- media coverage of assessment findings (e.g. newspaper articles, radio interviews).

Milestone question: Does your community have a specific and measurable age-friendly action plan?

Examples of supporting documentation:
- action plan that includes clear action priorities that address some or all of the issues identified in the age-friendly assessment;
- goal statements for each action priority, with specific objectives and a work plan to achieve the objectives (activities, resources, time frames and partners).

Milestone: 4. Demonstrating commitment to action by publicly posting the action plan

Milestone question: Has the community age-friendly action plan been posted publicly?

Examples of supporting documentation:
- distribution plan;
- posting of the action plan on community Web site, and/or print copies;
- media releases or media coverage related to the action plan.

Milestone questions: Have funding sources been identified?

Have funds to support implementation been secured?

Examples of supporting documentation:
- number of applications submitted to funding bodies;

- signed agreements from funding sources;
- total funds raised for implementation of your age-friendly community project.

Milestone: 5. Committing to measuring activities, reviewing action plan outcomes and reporting on them publicly

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Milestone questions: Has the local government/community made a commitment to measuring and reporting?

Is the community engaged in measuring and reporting on activities and outcomes?

Examples of supporting documentation:
- statement from the community/local government that commits to measuring and reporting on age-friendly activities and outcomes;
- evidence of information collection methods;
- outcomes of age-friendly actions documented in municipal performance reports;
- evidence of communication of results (e.g. print and online forms, Web portal, town hall meetings).

Section 2: Sharing Lessons Learned—Communicating Your Age-Friendly Success Stories

A successful community initiative needs a good communications plan. You'll want to spread the news so people know about the progress you have made to become more age-friendly. You can also share your successes with other communities so they can benefit from your experience.

A good communications plan has three essential elements:

- What's your message?
- Who needs to hear your message (the target audience)?
- How do you deliver the message to the target audience?

2.1 What's Your Message?

Good communication involves making one or two simple points. Useful messages include the journalist's 5 Ws: Who, What, Why, When and Where.

Whatever medium you use to communicate, highlight the importance of the success of your initiative along with the 5Ws. Explain why your activities are successful and include the benefits to the community and those involved.

2.2 Who Needs to Hear Your Message?

People who might use age-friendly services and facilities will especially want to know of the changes you have made. The people and groups who have participated in the planning process will also want to be kept in the loop.

2.3 How Do You Deliver the Message?

There are many ways to spread your message—from writing articles for your local newspaper, to holding an event, to using social media.

Every community has a variety of media that you may be able to tap into, such as:
- local TV and radio stations;
- community newspapers;
- community newsletters;
- municipal councillor newsletters;
- community centre bulletin boards.

For example, you may be able to contact a local radio or TV station about an interview or give a short talk at a community meeting. Written notices can also be effective as community newspapers and councillor newsletters are always looking for community stories.

Here are some of the most popular ways to access these media. More details and examples are included in the *Toolbox.*

2.3.1 Articles

Community newspapers are often looking for material about interesting developments in the local community. A well-written article is a useful way for you to get your message across to a broad readership. (See *Toolbox* – Tool 18 for some ideas about writing articles.)

2.3.2 Media releases

A media release is simply a written statement to the media. A media release announces a range of age-friendly news items: scheduled events, awards, success stories, new projects and initiatives, etc. (See *Toolbox* – Tool 19 for an example of a media release.)

2.3.3 Public service announcement

A public service announcement (PSA) is usually broadcast over radio or TV, in a short spot of 10 to 60 seconds. PSAs are useful if you just want a pre-event plug. Many local newspapers and radio/TV stations have community calendars that publish or broadcast PSAs. (See *Toolbox* – Tool 20 for an example of a PSA.)

2.3.4 Newsletters

A well-designed newsletter highlighting age-friendly initiatives, success stories and valuable information can keep your community up-to-date on the progress of your action plan and projects. Make sure you have the resources and stories to publish on an ongoing basis. A newsletter that ceases publication after just a couple of issues may give the wrong impression about whether or not the project is moving ahead. (See *Toolbox* – Tool 21 for tips on publishing a newsletter.)

2.3.5 Brochures, pamphlets, flyers and posters

Brochures, pamphlets, flyers and posters are great tools to reach large numbers of people. Production can range from a home office job to slick, full-colour pieces that are professionally printed. It all depends on your budget, your community, and your needs. Remember to include a clear message, captivating images and full contact information. Also get permission to use an image if it is not something in the public domain.

2.3.6 Events

Hosting an event is another good way to tell the community about your age-friendly initiatives. Events provide opportunities to spotlight successful strategies and activities. Try to collaborate with one of the lead businesses or service providers involved in your age-friendly initiative.

You can publicize your event by sending out a media release, PSA or through advertising. (See *Toolbox* – Tool 22 for an example advertisement.)

2.3.7 Creating online content using social media

Powerful tools now exist that let anyone create Web sites and share content online. There are blog-authoring tools such as Wordpress and content-sharing sites such as iTunes (for sharing podcasts), Youtube (for videos) and Flickr (for photos). Easy-to-use programs for audio and video production (either free or for little cost) let you create and distribute a video, audio podcast, blog, or other online content.

Other free resources can help you learn more about using social media tools like these. For example, Common Craft is a series of simple and engaging videos that explain these tools clearly and in plain language (www.commoncraft.com). If you do not want to create online content yourself, look around for a volunteer or student who can help.

2.3.8 Connecting with bloggers and podcasters

There are likely others online who are creating content related to what you do. Use tools such as Google Blog Search (http://blogsearch.google.com) and the iTunes store to identify people who are thinking and talking about the issues you're involved in. When you find people who might want to know about your age-friendly activities, approach them by e-mail. Show that you have listened to or read what they do and explain why you thought they might be interested in what you're doing. Offer pictures, audio, or video if they are available and make it easy for them to write about your organization. Be open and accessible. Don't ask to read their material before it's posted, just as you wouldn't ask reporters to give you their stories to review.

2.4 Reviewing Your Communications Plan

As with any part of your initiative, your communications plan should be evaluated. You can do a review on a regular basis, like once a year, or after a big event. The effectiveness of your communications can be measured by media coverage, counting the number of responses to e-mails or requests for copies of your newsletter. This information lets you see what is working and if your communication plan needs to be updated.

Section 3: Conclusion

This Guide has presented a step-by-step approach to help you and your stakeholders make your community a more age-friendly place. The milestone process used throughout this Guide is based on the experience of other communities. However, the process is flexible enough that you can easily adapt it to meet the unique needs of your community.

Accompanying this Guide is an easy-to-use *Toolbox*, where you will find many practical tools to reach the milestones.

By using this Guide, and the *Toolbox,* you will be on your way to joining the more than 560 communities in Canada that have committed to becoming more age-friendly.

Section 4: Sources and Further Reading

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