

Quick Start Guide to Partnering on Healthy Aging

A Guide for Public Health Agencies





Introduction

Healthy aging is a lifelong process of maintaining and improving health and well-being. Remaining healthy later in life means that older adults can engage meaningfully with their loved ones and in their communities. By 2040, almost a quarter of people living in the United States (U.S.) will be age 65 or older. Given the growing population of older adults in the U.S., there is an opportunity to develop initiatives to promote healthy aging and create a future that supports people as they age.

Healthy aging requires taking steps to promote health and prevent disease across the lifespan. Public health agencies often develop programs and initiatives to prevent disease and promote healthy behaviors among older adults, such as healthy eating, engaging in physical activity, and staying up to date on health screenings and immunizations. Given this role, there is an opportunity for public

health agencies to establish a coordinated strategy to support older adults, in partnership with other local agencies that already provide services and supports to older adults, such as State Units on Aging or Area Agencies on Aging. These agencies all share a common goal – to help older adults live healthy, happy lives – and can leverage their collective strengths and experiences to achieve that goal.

This Guide includes strategies that state health departments can use to effectively partner with the State Units on Aging and other organizations that support older adult health and wellness. These healthy aging collaborations help health departments to **increase their reach, enhance their effectiveness**, and **improve efficiency** by limiting redundancy in services, sharing data and resources, and aligning goals.



Strategies for Public Health Departments

The six strategies described in this section can help agencies refine and expand upon current healthy aging work by engaging with the State Unit on Aging. To support these efforts, this section also includes examples of successful approaches used by state health departments. All partnerships look different, so it is important to keep in mind that these strategies can be adapted to meet your agency's needs. The Appendix includes key steps and additional resources to start action toward these strategies.





Identify Shared Priorities to Determine Areas for Collaboration

Each State Unit on Aging publishes a State Plan on Aging that outlines its goals and objectives to meet the needs of older adults. Exploring where the goals outlined in these plans overlap with your State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) or State Health Assessment (SHA) can be a helpful starting point in reaching out to the State Unit on Aging and having conversations on shared focus areas.

For example, a recent [analysis](#) of Georgia's SHIP and State Plan on Aging identified shared priorities for older adults. Common areas of overlap between the two plans included Alzheimer's and related dementias, nutrition, chronic disease prevention and management, behavioral and substance misuse, and injury prevention (e.g., falls prevention).





Invite Partners to Participate in Advisory Groups

Inviting staff from the State Unit on Aging, Area Agencies on Aging, and other organizations working with older adults to participate in advisory boards, coalitions, and other groups can help expand your knowledge and understanding of older adult health and well-being in your state. Staff from these organizations can play an important role in collaborating with the department of health on initiatives that are topic-specific, such as a group focused on Alzheimer's disease or falls prevention, or could be broadly covering healthy aging activities. Staff from other agencies and organizations may share new information, provide insights on improving services, or help to identify gaps in health department programs.

Considering the [social determinants of health](#) can be helpful when identifying partners to collaborate with. Including representatives from sectors like housing and transportation, as well as sub-groups within the Department of Health that address mental health, substance use, and services for people with disabilities can help address all the needs of older adults.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

The [Washington State Dementia Action Collaborative \(DAC\)](#) is a group of public and private partners working together to address Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. The coalition has members from several state agencies including the Department of Health, Department of Social and Health Services, and Health Care Authority, along with representation from the Alzheimer's Association, aging advocates, health care professionals, long-term care providers, researchers, and people living with dementia.





Use Data to Drive Action

Use data to help ensure your agency's healthy aging activities are responsive to the needs of older adults living in your community. Sharing health department data with the State Unit on Aging and other partners can help them in decision-making, program planning, and aligning priorities. Data can also help initiate partnerships by highlighting areas of need and opportunities to collaborate in your state, including any disparities in outcomes for different subpopulations.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

When the Mississippi State Department of Health developed [Healthy Aging County Profiles](#) and the [Mississippi Older Adult Data Dashboard](#), staff cross-walked the Department of Health data with the state aging and rural health plans to identify data missing from the plans. Department of Health staff then reached out to partners at the State Unit on Aging and Office of Rural Health to share their own data as well as identify gaps in the health profiles.

Identifying where there are gaps in your data – for a particular population group or a specific health topic – can highlight opportunities to solicit input from your partners. State Units on Aging may have access to different data sets or may provide a new lens through which to look at the data to understand what is happening in your state.





Develop Shared Plans and Goals

Developing a shared plan for your healthy aging efforts and partnerships with the State Unit on Aging can serve as a guide to drive progress. This could be topic-specific, such as a healthy brain initiative road map, or more cross-cutting, such as a [multisector plan for aging](#). These plans can be revisited and refined as priorities evolve.

Having a plan in place that identifies shared goals, roles, and responsibilities for each partner can increase alignment and create a culture of ongoing communication and collaboration around a shared goal. Plans also help build trust and accountability and can serve as a guide for new staff.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

California's [Master Plan for Aging](#) affirms the priority of the health and well-being of older Californians and people with disabilities. It is a “blueprint” for state government, local government, the private sector, and philanthropy to prepare the state for the coming demographic changes and continue California’s leadership in aging, disability, and equity.

The Master Plan for Aging outlines five bold goals and twenty-three strategies to build a California for All Ages by 2030. It also includes a Data Dashboard on Aging to measure progress and a Local Playbook to drive partnerships to help meet goals collaboratively. The plan is not only for today’s older adults, but a blueprint for aging across the lifespan.





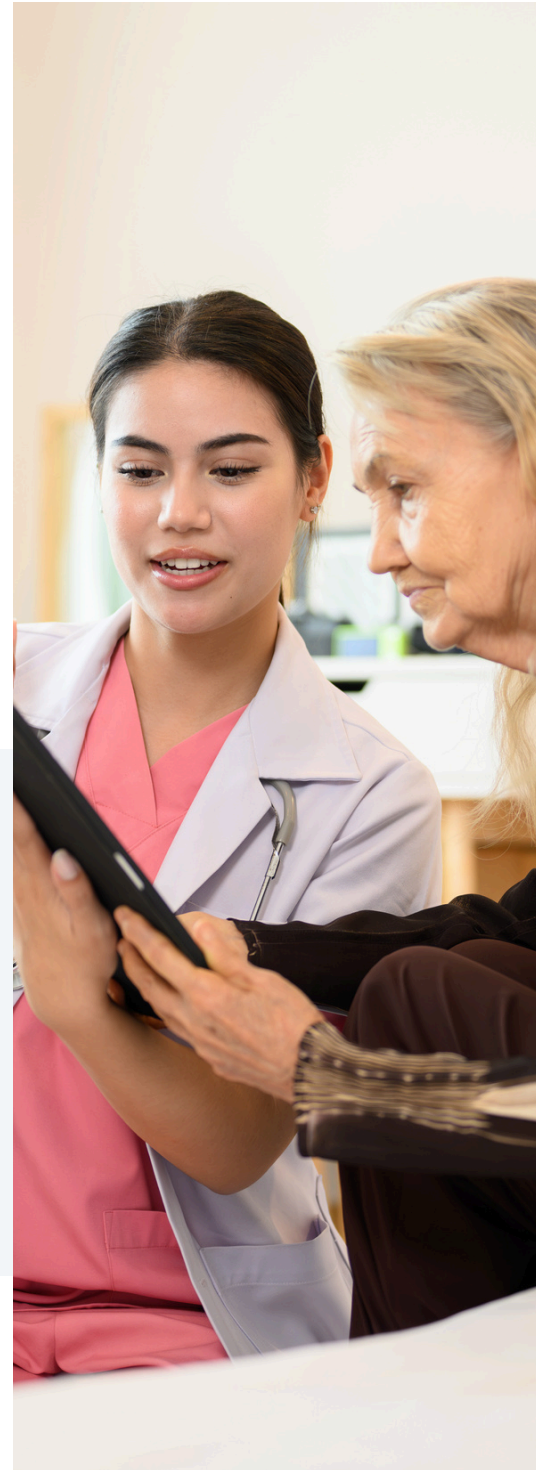
Implement Healthy Aging Programs with Partners

Partnering with organizations that work with older adults can increase the reach of healthy aging programs. For example, **Area Agencies on Aging** are state-designated organizations that work with older adults at the regional or local level. An Area Agency on Aging may be a public or private non-profit organization, but all offer services and programs with the goal of supporting older adults to live independently at home and in their communities. Other potential implementation partners include senior centers, the YMCA, local Meals on Wheels programs, faith-based institutions, and local and state-based non-profits.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

The Tennessee Department of Health partners with the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga School of Nursing in “[engAGING Communities Tennessee](#)” to support faith institutions in supporting older adults and caregivers in Tennessee by providing education on key healthy aging topics and tools for initiative implementation.





Leverage Partnerships to Explore Funding Opportunities

Funding is essential to sustaining healthy aging programs and initiatives. Leveraging diverse funding sources can help you sustain and expand your healthy aging work. Letters of support from partners, including the State Unit on Aging, can strengthen your applications for funding from various sources, including federal agencies and foundations. Often, funders require collaboration between health departments and State Units on Aging.

It is important to explore what funding streams are available. In many cases, there are funding opportunities for public health agencies that can complement the funding and activities of the State Unit on Aging.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Staff at the Minnesota Department of Human Services successfully connected with [state-based foundations that support older adult health and well-being](#). State human services department staff presented their work to interested foundations and highlighted areas of need for funding. Through these efforts, the Minnesota Department of Human Services established ongoing financial partnerships with several foundations.





Conclusion

Healthy aging is a national priority, and the health and well-being of older adults has implications for society as a whole. Partnerships between State Units on Aging and health departments can lead to policies and programs that actively serve and support older adults and their health and well-being. The strategies in this Guide offer health departments ways to engage with the State Unit on Aging and other organizations working with older adults. However, this Guide is intended to serve as a starting point. Continued work is needed to build sustainable partnerships to advance healthy aging in your state.



Appendix A. Take Action Summary Checklist

The following steps can help state health departments begin or continue work toward each of the strategies for expanding work on healthy aging through engaging the State Unit on Aging and other key aging partners.



Identify Shared Priorities to Determine Areas for Collaboration

- Find your state's plan for aging
- Identify key goals, topic areas, objectives, metrics, or key activities
- Compare to your State Health Improvement plan or other key plans



Invite Partners to Participate in Advisory Groups

- Make a list of potential partners doing work with older adults
- Find points of contact within the partner organizations
- Hold a preliminary call to discuss shared goals and priorities
- Set up regular meetings with partners



Use Data to Drive Action

- Explore data your department has access to
- Share insights from your data with your aging partners to answer questions and fill gaps in knowledge
- Explore whether partners' data can help inform your data needs
- Share data with the public to spread awareness on key issues around aging
- Use data to track progress on key outcomes over time



Appendix A. Take Action Summary Checklist Continued



Develop Shared Plans and Goals

- Identify common goals across partners
- Draft plans to meet shared goals
- Create sub-groups to develop goals and plans on key topics of interest
- Seek feedback and input from the public on plans



Implement Healthy Aging Programs with Partners

- Identify issues of interest to partner on
- Work together on existing programs or start new initiatives
- Take inspiration from other states doing work on this issue
- Be clear about roles and responsibilities
- Continue to re-visit and update programming over time



Leverage Partnerships to Explore Funding Opportunities

- Identify potential funding sources
- Develop your funding application with support from aging partners
- Collect letters of support from partners, including state unit on aging, to include in the application



Appendix B. Healthy Aging Resources

The following resources provide additional information about aligning public health with healthy aging goals, funding for healthy aging activities, and data to track healthy aging at the state and national levels.

Healthy Aging Planning Resources

1. [ODPHP Healthy Aging Resources](#). This webpage provides Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion resources on healthy aging, including Healthy People 2030 objectives, federal healthy aging campaigns, and healthy aging events.
2. [How the 10 Essential Public Health Services Align with the AFPHS 6Cs Framework for Supporting Healthy Aging](#). This Issue Brief from Trust for America's Health outlines how the ten essential public health services align with the Age Friendly Public Health System's 6C's Framework for Supporting Healthy Aging, and how the two frameworks can be viewed and used in context with each other to expand the role of public health in healthy aging.
3. [Multisector Plan for Aging Learning Collaborative](#). This learning collaborative, led by the Center for Health Care Strategies, supports states advance their Multisector Plans for Aging (MPAs). The collaborative provides a peer-to-peer exchange, access to aging experts, and technical assistance on the process of developing an MPA.
4. [Multisector Plans for Aging - Important Roles and Opportunities for Funders](#). Grantmakers in Aging, an association of funders working to support aging efforts, developed this brief that outlines the key aspects of MPAs and how funders can support and advance the work laid out in these plans.

Funding Opportunities

1. [Administration for Community Living Grants](#). The Administration for Community Living (ACL) awards grants to state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and small businesses to provide services and supports for older adults and people with disabilities.

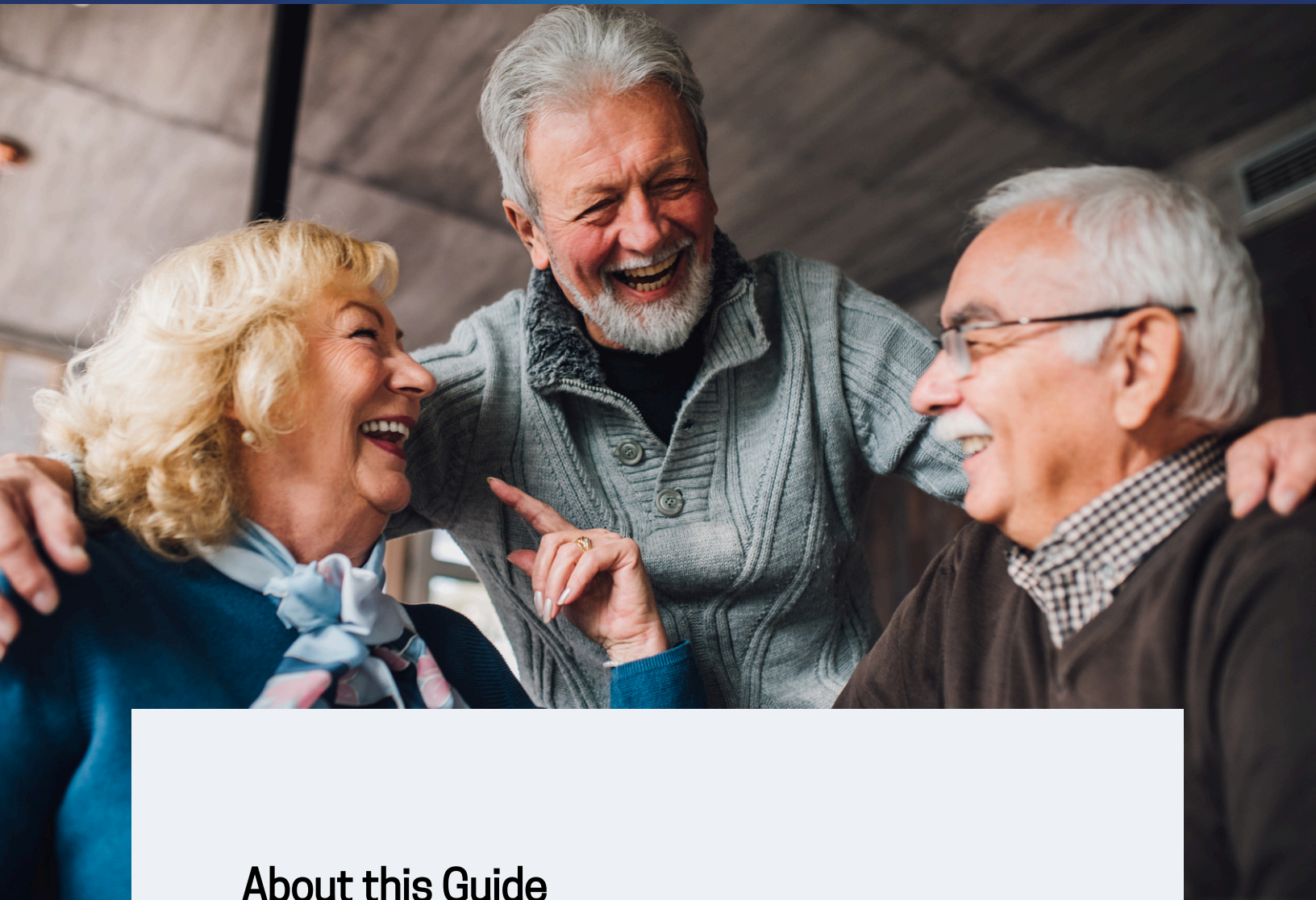


2. [John A. Hartford Foundation Grants](#). The John A. Hartford Foundation awards grants to support national and state initiatives aimed at creating age-friendly health systems, supporting family caregivers, and improving serious illness and end-of-life care.
3. [CDC Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging National Initiatives](#). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provide funding to state, local, and tribal groups to address Alzheimer's Disease and other related dementias. These initiatives include the National Healthy Brain Initiative, as well as the Building Our largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure Act funding.
4. [Grantmakers in Aging](#). Grantmakers in Aging is a global membership organization focused on aging and philanthropy. Their goal is to mobilize money and ideas to strengthen policies, programs, and resources for all of us as we age.
5. [Retirement Research Foundation](#). The Retirement Research Foundation provides philanthropic funding to organizations, with a particular focus on caregiving, economic security in later life, housing, and social and intergenerational connectedness.
6. [The SCAN Foundation](#). The SCAN Foundation provides funding for initiatives to improve care, services, and daily living experiences for older adults and families, with a particular focus on marginalized older adults and their networks of support.

Data Sources

1. [Healthy People 2030 Aging Data Brief](#). This short guide provides an overview of eight key Healthy People 2030 objectives that are critical to healthy aging, focusing on the social determinants of health (SDOH) and healthy behaviors. Additionally, the brief provides a short list of additional resources to support taking action to improve the health and well-being of older adults.
2. [Indicators of Healthy Aging: A Guide to Explore Healthy Aging Data through Community Health Improvement](#). This guide provides a comprehensive set of indicators and measures to address healthy aging, intended to be used in the Community Health Improvement (CHI) process. The indicators are organized into three groups: 1) Health behaviors and Health Outcomes, 2) Social Determinants of Health, and 3) Systems of Power, Privilege, and Oppression.





About this Guide

The HHS Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP) developed this Guide based on interviews with officials at nine state health departments. Staff at each state health department described their goals for healthy aging, existing partnerships, and barriers and facilitators to partnering effectively with other agencies.

