

Age-Friendly Ecosystem Collaboration Workshop

PART 3: THE WORKSHOP



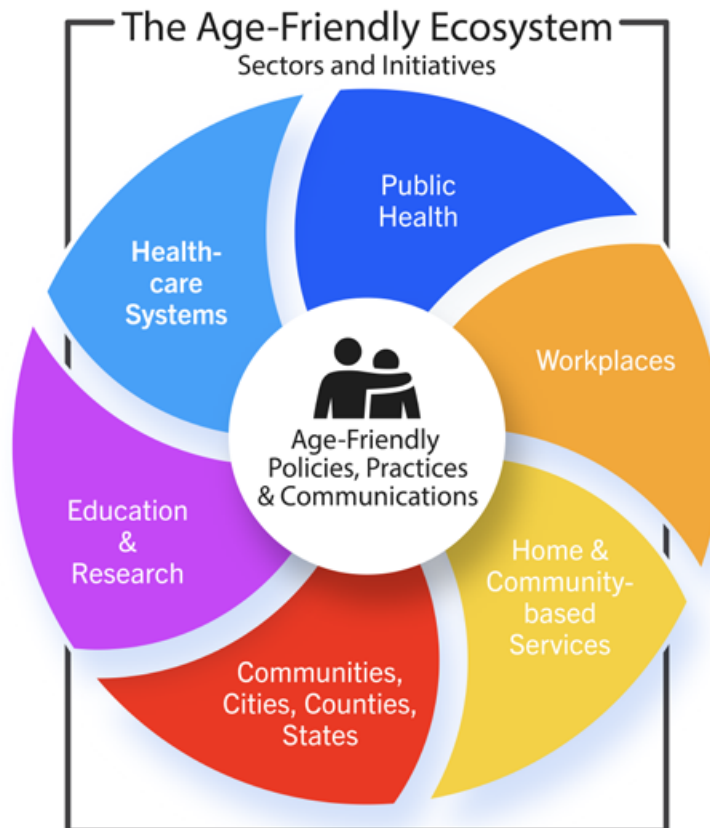
Age-Friendly Ecosystem Collaboration Workshop Guide

This Facilitator's Guide is designed to provide clear, practical instructions for convening community partners and leading your city/town, state or region toward a more connected, age-friendly future.



Part 3: The Workshop

- A** Building Trust
- B** Identify the Collaborative Aim
- C** Partner Mapping
- D** Prioritize Ideas for the Collaborative Aim
- E** Call to Action
- F** Post Event Report





The Workshop

A Building Trust

An introductory ice breaker activity can be designed to empower attendees, foster relationship building, and celebrate the experience and accumulated professional expertise and wisdom in the room. This exercise can set a tone of collegiality, curiosity and respect that carries throughout your time together. There are many icebreaker activities to choose from. The most important thing to remember is that the design of your ice breaker has the potential to foster the development of new relationships and collaborative thinking.

- Ask attendees to partner with someone at their table and spend five minutes answering three questions about each other:
 1. What is your name, what organization do you represent?
 2. What sector do you represent, or what is your role in the AFE?
 3. What is your unique contribution to the AFE work?
- Give each team one minute to report back to the full group, sharing something unique or surprising about their partner that others may not know.

B Identify a Collaborative Aim

A core component of the Collaboration Workshop is to identify a specific initiative (or initiatives) that you and your partners will plan together to address the identified area of focus.

- Based on the number of participants in the workshop, you may need to divide attendees into groups of 6-8 people. Each group should include a diverse representation of the ecosystem to encourage an exchange of perspectives and expertise. Each group should be given a large poster printout and complete the poster together over the course of about one hour.

- The **collaborative aim** will be determined through a guided brainstorming process using a [Workshop Brainstorm Worksheet](#) to facilitate discussion. Each group should work toward the shared goal, but they may select different collaborative aims. It will be up to the facilitator to bring the groups back together to settle on one or potentially more common collaborative aims. Use these prompts to stimulate ideas on the collaborative aim:
 - ▶ What priorities or goals in the state's MPA might we leverage?

SUGGESTION!

If the shared goal is improving social engagement, some ideas for a collaborative aim are: work together to increase the number of older adults who engage in at least one social activity per week; support safe and inclusive public spaces; support multigenerational programs; enhance communication channels that reach more older adults; and expand engagement opportunities and the transportation needed to get there.

- ▶ What do older adults in our community need?
- ▶ What are the gaps in existing supports in the community?
- ▶ Are there other state or community plans that could be leveraged for success?
- Record the **shared goal or issue area**
- Next consider the **necessary conditions** that are needed to foster collaboration. What needs to be in place to ensure success? Are systemic changes needed to create conditions for successful collaboration? Examples include the need for a community coalition, policy levers, and accessible funding mechanisms



The Workshop

- Examine which **partners** are needed to successfully address the shared goal. What value does each partner bring to the collaboration? Be specific.
- Identify existing **sector inputs** by considering first the breadth of the Age-Friendly Ecosystem in your jurisdiction and identify the strengths and activities within each sector that you've checked. For example, they may include funding, data collection, policy impacts, and volunteer pools. Consider who is best poised to lead the collaboration and whether co-leadership may be an effective option.
- Next, ask about the **challenges** to effective collaboration. What barriers might limit success and what is needed to remove them? Here are some examples for discussion:
 - ▶ Building collaborative impact and cross sector alliances is “not my job” and there is little time left to dedicate to cross sector organization.
 - ▶ Municipal leaders wear many hats and despite best intentions, are often overworked, underpaid, and not given the tools they need to manage projects with outside groups.
 - ▶ Nonprofits are often competing for the same pool of funding.
 - ▶ Funders need/want to support grantees who have expertise in a specific area that matches foundation priorities, which may not include collaborations.
 - ▶ Many leaders see the need and want to do the work, but funding for implementation is often out of reach, making the investment in collaborative planning a low risk/reward endeavor.



- Brainstorm strategies that your team may use to dismantle silos and overcome barriers. For example:
 - ▶ Review assessment requirements for organizations participating in the collaboration and look for opportunities to align those assessments.
 - ▶ Develop a shared communications plan to coordinate messaging and outreach. What would this entail?
 - ▶ Develop a shared community calendar that showcases events, gatherings, etc., across partners.
- At the end of the hour, groups should provide a brief report out to the combined Workshop participant group. Stimulate further discussion with these prompts:
 - ▶ Was it difficult to come to consensus?
 - ▶ What were the easiest and more challenging parts of this assignment?
 - ▶ What areas of transition did your group surface, where collaborative endeavors might fall apart?
 - ▶ Which sector did your group choose to lead the initiative and why? What strengths and capacities did you identify as being necessary in a backbone entity?



The Workshop

C Partner Mapping

Developing partnerships for a collaborative effort is a key step for advancing an age-friendly ecosystem. Start by posing the question: in our quest to make life better for older adults by (shared goal or issue area), do we have a network of partners who are uniquely suited to advancing our goals, and do we know what partner holes we need to fill?

Engaging in a partner mapping exercise can help practitioners and age-friendly champions understand the unique strengths, shared goals, potential challenges, and opportunities for interaction that are essential for success. Mapping a partner network not only allows the recording of existing partners and the values and expertise they bring, but also identifying additional partners needed to ensure a successful collaboration. This is also the time to consider disengaging from a non-helpful or draining partnership.

Your project is likely to have a greater chance of success if you develop partnerships across sectors that can influence your work. Thus, partner mapping is particularly useful if you don't have the time or opportunity to develop relationships with people or organizations outside your sector. Being intentional about analyzing your partner map to identify new, essential partners may be the key to your project's success.

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

- **Watch the clock and control your agenda. Flexibility balanced with time management will result in an effective workshop.**
- **Use a “parking lot” to save good ideas that may lack relevance to the focused area.**
- **Ensure all voices are being heard, including from partners of all sizes and capacities. Watch for power imbalances and ensure no one is overlooked.**

- Use the **Partner Mapping worksheet** to identify partners and their strengths.
 - ▶ What organizations do you engage with on a regular basis?
 - ▶ What organizations are in your coalitions?
 - ▶ Who are the groups you can rely on?
 - ▶ What are their contributions and strengths?
- Reflect and discuss (in small groups or the larger one) the partner mapping activity.
 - ▶ Describe your network: what do you see?
 - ▶ What surprises you?
 - ▶ What sector is missing?
 - ▶ What resources are available and which ones are needed?

D Prioritize Ideas for the Collaborative Aim

After the groups complete the brainstorming and mapping activities, all participants gather as a full group to review and discuss each idea for feasibility, urgency, and potential impact. Use the following criteria to guide prioritization:

- High priority: the aim or idea provides an immediate opportunity with strong alignment across sectors.
- Medium priority: the aim or idea is an important initiative that may require additional coordination or resources.
- Low priority: the aim or idea is valuable, but implementation may be too complex and require additional exploration.



The Workshop

E Call to Action

If possible, conclude your workshop with a call to action and a plea for attendees not to lose momentum. Ask participants to continue to consider the following as they return to their daily work and challenges:

- What is the change we want to see after having spent the last day exploring these vital issues?
- What will progress look like? How do we measure it? How do we think about it?
- Should we be creatively disruptive, radically collaborative?
- Why do we do this? How do we do this?
- What are the things that we feel like we can do as soon as we get home, back to our states, back to our communities, back to our offices and networks?

F Post Event Report

- Plan to document workshop findings (the collaborative aims and next steps identified during the workshop) in a written report that can be shared with stakeholders. See the sample workshop report in the list of resources.
- Within two weeks, distribute a summary report and convene a short virtual meeting to confirm priorities and identify potential working groups.

Suggested timeline for continued engagement:

- 30 days: Share compiled outputs and confirm lead partners.
- 60 days: Check-in to assess progress and resource needs.
- 120 days: Host follow-up meeting to celebrate progress and renew commitments.