

Age-Friendly Ecosystem 101

What is the Age-Friendly Ecosystem?

The Age-Friendly Ecosystem consists of individuals and organizations representing a wide range of sectors including, but not limited to, health care, public health, community leadership, academia, home and community-based services, the business community, and faith centers. Each brings their own unique expertise, networks, perspectives, and influence. But they are united by a shared passion for improving quality of life and health for older adults.

Age-Friendly Ecosystems can be large or small in scale – they can operate hyper-locally, at the city or town level, across a county, state or region, and even nationally. No matter the size or scope, an Age-Friendly Ecosystem in action brings together diverse entities from across sectors to tackle complex issues facing older adults through collective action.

Today, we face a real challenge: how do we align and coordinate efforts to improve health and quality of life for older adults in the face of shrinking budgets and limited staff? The answer begins with building genuine understanding across sectors. When we take the time to understand each other’s work and each sector’s strengths, we lay the groundwork for trust. And trust is the foundation for partnerships that can deliver better outcomes for older adults. As leaders become more aware of one another’s work, the likelihood of meaningful partnerships and the harmonization and synthesis of diverse workstreams increases exponentially.

Each of the sectors represented by the age-friendly ecosystem model has much to contribute to support the health and well-being of older adults and caregivers. However, greater alignment among these sectors is necessary for policy and program efficiency, reducing silos, and maximizing limited resources. Overcoming the barriers to alignment will require increasing knowledge among each sector and

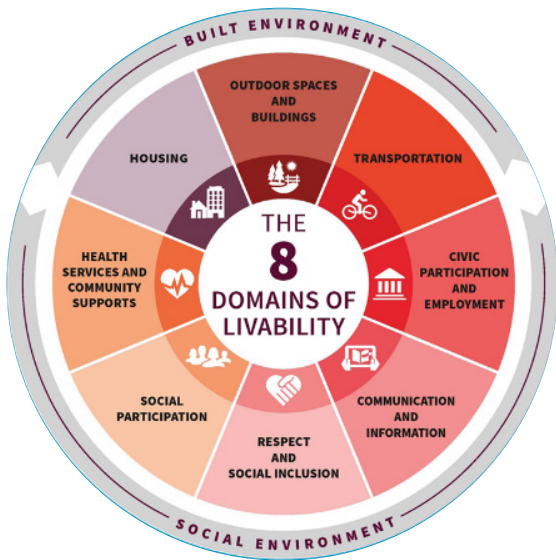
working intentionally to identify and bridge gaps in care from hospital to community to home. The public health sector has demonstrated ability and expertise in multi-sector approaches to population health issues and can provide leadership in healthy aging to better align the sectors that serve older adults and their caregivers.

What are the sectors of an Age-Friendly Ecosystem?

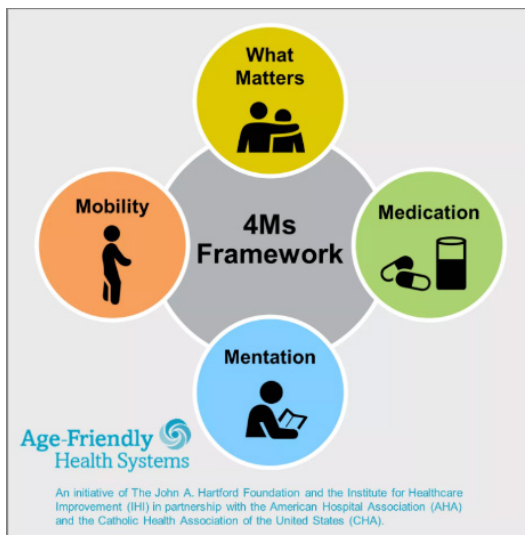
Age-Friendly Public Health Systems, led by Trust for America’s Health, aims to elevate healthy aging as a core function of public health departments and organizations. The Age-Friendly Public Health System’s 6Cs Framework offers an outline for adoption and implementation of healthy aging policies and practices, from “creating and leading change”, to “connecting and convening” multiple partners, to “communicating” important public health information, to “collecting, analyzing and translating” data on older adult health. Health departments at all levels can serve as the convener and connector among all relevant age-friendly initiatives.



AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, led by AARP, focuses on making communities and states more livable for people of all ages. The eight domains of livability that comprise the Age-Friendly Communities model are well-aligned to many social determinants of health models and thus, provide multiple areas of potential collaboration. The program encourages a cycle of improvement involving older adults in assessing needs, planning actions, and sharing outcomes.



Age-Friendly Health Systems, led by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, aims to ensure that care for older adults is “age-friendly”: grounded in evidence-based practices (known as the 4Ms: What Matters, Medication, Mentation, Mobility); causing no harm; and addressing what matters most to the older individual and their caregivers.



Age-Friendly University Global Network, administered by Arizona State University, is an association of higher education institutions committed to promoting positive and healthy aging and enhancing the lives of older members of the global community through innovative educational programs, research agendas, curriculum development, online education, health and wellness activities, arts and culture programs and civic engagement opportunities. The Age-Friendly University Global Network is committed to creating an age-friendly and age-inclusive world and advancing the unique contributions institutions of higher education can make in a globally aging world.

Aging Services Network

USAg is the national association representing and supporting the network of Area Agencies on Aging and all the programs and services they provide. The network helps older adults and people with disabilities throughout the United States live with optimal health, well-being, independence, and dignity in their homes and communities through nutrition support, social engagement, transportation, health promotion, caregiver support, elder rights, and care transitions. The aging services sector is a crucial community partner dedicated to ensuring all older people receive the services and have access to programs that will help them thrive.

Employers and Workplaces

The Age-Friendly Workplace initiative has gained significant traction in recent years as organizations adapt to shifting demographic trends and increasingly acknowledge the business and social importance of fostering inclusive and welcoming environments for employees across all age groups. Older adults are a large and growing part of the U.S. workforce. In fact, the share of workers ages 55 and older has nearly doubled over the past two decades, rising from about 1 in 8 workers in 1998 to nearly 1 in 4 today. And that trend isn’t slowing down — projections suggest that by 2028, one in four American workers will be 55 or older. That shift is prompting more organizations to consider whether workplaces are truly welcoming and supportive for workers of all ages. While there is currently no anchor organization representing Age-

Friendly Workplaces, AARP does have an xxx. If you or your organization would like to explore hosting, please contact the AFPHS team at afphs@tfah.org.”