

Centre on Aging



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

INTERNATIONAL INVITED SYMPOSIUM

SUSTAINING AGE-FRIENDLY RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES AND PLACES: CREATING PARTNERSHIPS AND BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Key Points from the International Invited Symposium on Age-Friendly Rural and Remote
Communities and Places | Winnipeg MB Canada | October 15–17, 2012

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Background

The following are key points from the International Invited Symposium on ways of cultivating a “community of practice”. Symposium delegates discussed:

- What are the key practical problems/barriers in sharing our collective learning, and fostering dialogue and interaction (i.e., building a community of practice)?
- How can we address and break down these barriers?
- Are there particular resources, tools or activities that we could undertake to foster, grow and nurture a community of practice?

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What is a community of practice?

A community of practice can take multiple forms

- It is a dynamic, focused, interdependent group.
- It has a defined membership.
- It has a shared agenda.
- It produces knowledge to share with the larger community.

Challenges in building an age-friendly rural and remote community of practice include:

Defining the agenda

- Developing a shared understanding of the problem and defining the scope and agenda of the community of practice.
- Aligning interests; who is in and who is not in the community of practice.
- Determining the scale of the community of practice.

Leadership

- Identifying a core group of leaders with a funded administration and coordination to keep the entity together.
- Understanding how a community of practice will help empower and transform communities.

Sharing of knowledge

- Knowing how people can best contribute.
- Finding models and examples of what is going on already to share.
- Determining how to make the agenda accessible to all members of the community of practice.
- Language; translating age-friendly into other languages and making it understood.
- Difficulties in coming together face to face; geographical issues.
- Lacking technology (e.g. internet) in rural and remote areas.



Time and resources

- The time investment involved.
- Making a community of practice a priority.
- Lack of funding and resources to develop and sustain a community of practice.

Addressing the challenges in building an age-friendly rural and remote community of practice

To address the challenges and remove the barriers to building a community of practice, we need to:

- Use older adults and community champions as a resource; include them in the community of practice.
- Create a shared, understandable language around age-friendly, keeping the dialogue simple but not simplistic.
- Define the scope as the community of practice evolves; start with something doable.
- Find out who has expertise where and allow everyone to contribute.
- Establish a core group of leaders with administrative support, including for example political leaders, public service, trade unions, older people, non-governmental organizations, academics, and business leaders.
- Engage communities to set aside existing resources.
- Share and promote resources, information and technology.
 - Have a congress of research in the area.
 - Use existing meetings for face to face, for example World Health Organizations and International Federation on Ageing meetings.
 - Ensure that there are monthly communications to find out what communities are doing.
 - Create a repository of information (for example, website).
 - Have volunteers synthesize information, compile frequently asked questions, and provide feedback to communities.
 - Interact with one another and have an ongoing dialogue.



Resources that can be used to foster an age-friendly rural and remote community of practice

Resources that can be used to foster a community of practice include:

- The University of Manitoba's Centre on Aging
- The Public Health Agency of Canada Age-Friendly Communities Reference Group
- Existing information from age-friendly communities around the world
- The internet
- Fireside chats/webinars—can be done by phone

Snapshot: In order to build an age-friendly rural and remote community of practice, we must

- Include older adults and champions
 - Create a shared, understandable language
 - Establish a core group of committed leaders
 - Share and promote resources, information and technology
 - Interact with one another and have ongoing dialogue
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(Above) Members of the Public Health Agency of Canada Age-Friendly Communities Reference Group that attended the symposium.



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