

Centre on Aging



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

INTERNATIONAL INVITED SYMPOSIUM

IMPORTANT TOPICS AND CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS IN AGE-FRIENDLY RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

Key Points from the International Invited Symposium on Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities and Places | Winnipeg MB Canada | October 15–17, 2012
Theme report written by Sheri Bell and Verena Menec

Background

The following are key points from the International Invited Symposium on Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities and Places on six specific topic areas. Symposium delegates broke into small groups and for each topic area discussed

- Why is the topic important to address?
- What are key challenges that are unique to a rural/remote setting?
- How might the challenges be overcome?

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Older adults: providing age-friendly leadership

Why is older adult leadership an important topic to address?

- Older adults know what areas need to be addressed in order to improve their lives. We should not be speaking for them.

Key challenges unique in a rural/remote setting

- Geography and distance.
- Mobilization and having goals.

How might the challenges be overcome?

- We need a situational issue that is important enough to them for them to take action.

Intergenerational collaboration

Why is intergenerational collaboration an important topic to address?

- When generations connect, they start to understand one another, there is acceptance and it reduces issues such as elder abuse.
- Younger people need to realize that they are the future older people.
- It breaks down stereotypes.
- Older adults have much to teach us.

Key challenges unique in a rural/remote setting

- Competition for resources.
- Getting university students to come back to the community.

How might the challenges be overcome?

- Through deliberation and planning.
- We need to develop programs to get older adults and children together, for example have reading programs.



Generating new knowledge

Why is generating new knowledge an important topic to address?

- We need the evidence to inform decisions and policy makers so as to improve the lives of older adults.
- The evidence gets buy-in into the topic of age-friendly.

Key challenges unique in a rural/remote setting

- Getting to the community. Rural and remote communities are far away.
- It is difficult to get a sample in these communities because there are fewer people.
- The key people in these communities wear several hats and so you have the same person who is in several positions or roles.
- It takes time to make changes. Changing the built environment takes time.

How might the challenges be overcome?

- Invest time and money.
- Develop long term relationships.
- Engage seniors.

Social isolation: reaching the hard to reach

Why is social isolation an important topic to address?

- Social isolation is associated with poor health outcomes.

Key challenges unique in a rural/remote setting

- You need face to face contact with people in communities. You need people on the ground and systemically. This can be a huge challenge for many countries.



How might the challenges be overcome?

- Examine technological and local outreach that has occurred in different areas to see if they can be adapted.
- Use points of contact for isolated individuals like grocery stores, pharmacies and police services.

Extreme weather from +40 to -40: Older adults remaining engaged and safe

Why is extreme weather an important topic to address?

- It becomes important when there is sudden vulnerability. For instance:
 - What if the extreme temperature is not the norm?
 - What if we have sudden heat waves?
 - How do we deal with issues that people are not used to?

Key challenges unique in a rural/remote setting

- Failure to take extreme temperatures seriously.
- Lack of knowledge of what to do during extreme weather events.
- Lack of knowledge of who may be vulnerable in a community.

How might the challenges be overcome?

- An early response program that identifies potentially vulnerable persons.
- A community plan to deal with extreme weather situations.



Community of practice: Making it work

Why is a community of practice an important topic to address?

- There is a wealth of experience from different countries and a community of practice allows us to share those experiences.

Key challenges unique in a rural/remote setting

- Someone or some organization needs to take leadership in creating a community of practice.
- Lack of new resources or financial resources.

How might the challenges be overcome?

- Set realistic goals to achieve.
- Continuous reporting and one point of contact to a group of leaders who we can report back.

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UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

338 Isbister Building

Winnipeg MB Canada R3T 2N2

Phone: 204.474.8754 | Fax: 204.474.7576 | Email: coaman@ad.umanitoba.ca

<http://umanitoba.ca/centres/aging>

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