

INTERNATIONAL INVITED SYMPOSIUM

# AGE-FRIENDLY RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES AND PLACES: PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

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, Sheila Novek, and Verena Menec

## Background

The following are key points from the International Invited Symposium on Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities and Places regarding priorities for action. Symposium delegates discussed priorities for action at the global level and in knowledge development and sharing.

## Doable and important priorities

When trying to determine age-friendly rural and remote priorities for action, it is important to keep in mind that an issue may be extremely important, but may not be doable. We need to focus on priorities that are both doable and important.

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## Priorities for age-friendly rural and remote communities

### Engage older adults

- Use newsletters, direct calling, and find older adults where they gather in order to engage them in age-friendly.
- Mobilize older adults as leaders by promoting situational issues that are important enough to them for them to take action.

### Combat ageism

- Advertise the fact that we are all aging; personalize aging.
- Teach the younger generation to value the experience of older adults.
- Celebrate achievements of older adults.

### Foster intergenerational collaboration

- Develop programs to get older adults and children together.
- Find ways for the generations to get to know each other better.

### Address health care and emergency services

- Support health care delivery in rural and remote communities.
- Develop an early emergency response program that identifies potentially vulnerable persons.
- Develop plans to deal with extreme weather situations.
- Redirect health priorities to issues of aging. For example in Latin America the main focus is on mother and child health even though populations are aging rapidly.

### Combat social isolation

- 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.



## Provide funding and resources

- Increase budgets for age-friendly.
- Provide resources for local communities and initiatives.

## Priorities for knowledge development and sharing

### Provide leadership

- Create a leadership group to promote age-friendly rural and remote communities.
- Develop a central coordinating body (for example to take the lead on developing a website/portal of information).
- Identify and support local champions.

### Develop communities of practice

- Develop communities of practice that address different needs (for example, global and community).
- Build on existing networks and expand and grow what we already have.

### Enhance communication

- Develop a universal, succinct way to describe what age-friendly is (in 25 words or less).
- Develop promotional material on why communities should be made more age-friendly with a rationale for different audiences. For example quick guides on:
  - Why communities should be age-friendly.
  - The value of age-friendly for funders, businesses, communities and political bodies.
  - Why governments and organizations should support it.
  - Why we need to collaborate internationally.
- Translate age-friendly principles, promotional materials and guides into different languages and different cultural contexts. For example, develop materials using pictures or designs to communicate the concept of age-friendly.
- Use social media.
- Share global stories, toolkits and best practices about age-friendly.



## Create a common website/portal

- Have an agency take the lead in maintaining and sending out information.
- Create a searchable data base/repository that contains:
  - An inventory of age-friendly tools;
  - An annotated description of best practices;
  - A description of services/programs at local, regional, national and international levels;
  - Community assessments ;
  - Development and implementation strategies (action plans);
  - Declarations and milestones;
  - Literature related to age-friendly and aging;
  - A list of expertise (who has expertise in what areas of the field and who is willing to do what); and
  - A matrix with intervention categories so communities can log their work to find others who are doing similar interventions.
- Make the *Canadian Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide* available globally by posting it on the portal, marketing it, reviewing it to ensure applicability to developing countries, and translating it; include suggestions and a checklist for actions in the report.

## Conduct research and program evaluation

- Determine what communities are doing and how they are becoming age-friendly, including:
  - What has been done?
  - What implementation strategies are being used?
  - How long is it taking?
  - What resources are needed?
  - We have a lot of tools, but what impact have they had?
  - How do the tools get created and how are they used?
- Develop performance measures.
- Share research on what has been implemented.

## Procure funding

- Provide funding for more research. This will increase interest in age-friendly by researchers and students.
- Have dedicated funds for communities of practice.



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### Snapshot: priorities for action

- Engage older adults
  - Combat ageism
  - Intergenerational collaboration
  - Address health care needs
  - Combat social isolation
  - Provide leadership
  - Develop communities of practice
  - Communicate age-friendly
  - Create a common website
  - Research and program evaluation
  - Procure funding
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Centre on Aging



UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA

338 Isbister Building

Winnipeg MB Canada R3T 2N2

Phone: 204.474.8754 | Fax: 204.474.7576 | Email: [coaman@ad.umanitoba.ca](mailto:coaman@ad.umanitoba.ca)

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

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