

# Participation



# Community Consultations

In 2008, the Manitoba government launched the Age-Friendly Initiative, formally inviting communities throughout Manitoba to join the Initiative and work toward becoming more age-friendly.

Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative communities are provided with an opportunity to participate in a community consultation as a way of identifying priorities. The consultations are made possible through a partnership between the Manitoba Seniors & Healthy Aging Secretariat and the University of Manitoba's Centre on Aging, as part of the Age-Friendly Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) project. During the community consultations, which are facilitated by CURA staff, people are invited to discuss their views on how age-friendly their community is and what areas need improvement. Prior to the group discussion, a survey is distributed to get individual views on how age-friendly the community is.

By the end of March 2011, the Age-Friendly CURA team conducted consultations in 46 communities. Forty-nine (49) communities completed an age-friendly survey for a total of 1274 surveys. Summarized here are the collective group discussions and survey responses related to participation. Participation includes social participation/recreation (e.g., intergenerational activities), community/work force participation (e.g., volunteering), respect and social inclusion, and youth programs.

## Group Discussion Summary

During the community consultation, participants engage in a facilitated group discussion to identify priorities needed to make their community more age-friendly. By highlighting what is working well in the community and what needs improvement, the CURA team prepares a report for each community reflecting the discussion. The completed report is shared with the community's Age-Friendly Committee.

The CURA team combined and summarized priorities and potential actions from all the community consultation reports (until March 2011). Out of the 46 communities, 32 mentioned priorities related to activities and volunteering; 31 identified intergenerational-related priorities; and 11 noted priorities related to youth. What follows is a summary of the most commonly identified participation-related themes that emerged from the discussions.

Community consultation reports can be found on the Age-Friendly Manitoba website: <http://www.agefriendlymanitoba.ca>

# Common Themes

## Availability

- Develop a “meeting place” (e.g., drop-in centre, senior centre) for seniors to participate in activities (recreational, social, educational); socialize; and to find information and resources.
- Expand existing programming for seniors including exercise/fitness programs and social activities.
- Offer computer services and training.
- Develop more intergenerational activities both inside and outside the school system.
- Create opportunities for students of all ages (elementary school, middle school, high school) and seniors to interact (e.g., school children visit senior residences and seniors visit classrooms).
- Encourage the generations to teach and learn from each other and identify common interests among younger and older people.
- Offer family-oriented community events for all ages (e.g., family dances).
- Create youth drop-in centres, spaces, and activities.

## Access

- Better promote and inform people of community activities.
- Change spacing of equipment (e.g., computers) or physical environment so that activities are more accessible.
- Ensure transportation is available to activities.

## General

- Promote volunteer activities.
- Attempt to recruit new volunteers of all ages, especially youth (ask in-person).
- Recognize the contributions of volunteers (e.g., special event, newsletter).
- Seek leaders to implement and coordinate community activity programs (e.g., Senior Resource Coordinator, Volunteer Coordinator, Recreation Director).
- Liaise with the school about offering volunteer credits for high school students that volunteer with seniors.
- Connect generations through volunteering.

# Participation Survey Summary

The following section summarizes responses from the 49 communities to the participation-related questions of the survey:

## **Social Participation/Recreation:**

- Approximately two-thirds of those that completed the survey felt that their community has enough pleasant places for walking.
- Nearly one-half of respondents indicated that local parks or walking trails are accessible and easy for seniors to use; however, one-half also felt that there are not enough resting areas with benches along paths or trails.
- While around one-half of respondents felt that there are enough recreation programs specifically for seniors, such as card games, slightly over 40% felt that there are not enough exercise classes for seniors or lifelong learning programs specifically for seniors.
- Less than one-fifth felt that their community has enough programs that bring seniors and children together, such as school reading programs.
- Approximately one-half of those that completed the survey indicated that recreational activities are generally affordable for seniors.
- Less than one-quarter of respondents agreed that isolated seniors are contacted, visited, or taken to activities.

## **Community/Work Force Participation:**

- Approximately 60% of respondents agreed that there are enough volunteer opportunities for seniors in their community; however, only 42% felt that there is enough official recognition for seniors who volunteer.
- Approximately 40% indicated that there are not enough job opportunities for seniors in their community, and one-third of respondents felt that the job opportunities do not accommodate the needs of seniors.

## **Respect and Social Inclusion:**

- Over 90% of those that completed the survey agreed that seniors are generally treated with respect.
- Slightly over one-fifth of respondents indicated that seniors serve in an advisory role to government; and approximately one-third agreed that community consultations and planning processes specifically include seniors and seniors' needs.

# Participation Survey Summary

	Percent Responding (%)		
	Yes	No	Don't Know
<b>Social Participation/Recreation</b>			
My community has enough pleasant places for walking.	66.0	28.4	5.6
Local parks or walking trails are accessible and easy to use for seniors (e.g., paths with even surfaces).	48.6	35.3	16.2
There are enough resting areas with benches along paths or trails.	31.3	50.7	18.0
There are enough exercise classes specifically for seniors in my community.	30.5	40.4	29.1
There are enough recreation programs specifically for seniors in my community (e.g., card games, arts, crafts).	51.2	27.0	21.8
There are enough lifelong learning programs specifically for seniors (e.g., learning new things such as the use of computers).	22.9	44.6	32.5
There are enough programs in my community that bring seniors and children together (e.g., school reading programs).	19.2	45.5	35.3
Recreational activities, such as exercise and other recreational programs, are generally affordable for seniors.	51.4	13.4	35.2
Isolated seniors are contacted, visited or taken to activities in my community.	23.0	27.5	49.5
<b>Community/Work Force Participation</b>			
There are enough volunteer opportunities for seniors in my community.	59.9	15.9	24.2
There is enough official recognition for seniors who volunteer (e.g., appreciation banquet).	42.5	31.9	25.6
There are enough paid job opportunities for seniors in my community.	12.8	40.9	46.3
The job opportunities in my neighbourhood accommodate the needs of seniors (e.g., part-time work is available).	20.5	33.7	45.7
<b>Respect &amp; Social Inclusion</b>			
Seniors in my community are generally treated with respect.	91.4	2.6	6.0
Seniors serve in an advisory role to municipal government in my community (e.g., there is a seniors' council).	21.5	38.4	40.2
Community consultations in my community specifically include seniors.	32.8	21.7	45.6
Planning processes specifically consider the needs of seniors (e.g., planning for housing or transportation).	34.6	22.4	43.0



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