

Age-Friendly Cochrane



Action Plan 2025-2029



Age-Friendly Cochrane Action Plan

2025-2029

Prepared for the Cochrane Age-Friendly Cochrane Steering Committee by Intelligent Futures, 2024-2025.

The Cochrane Age-Friendly Action Plan is a result of extensive community collaboration and funding from the Calgary Foundation.

Photos © Adobe Stock, Unsplash, and Town of Cochrane

101 RancheHouse Road
Cochrane, AB T4C 2K8

Land Acknowledgment

We recognize and acknowledge that, for time immemorial, long before the European settlers arrived, thousands of Indigenous people lived full, rich and imaginative lives on and near the very lands upon which we are situated. They had hopes and dreams, loved their children, protected and served their communities, prayed to their Creator, and held deep knowledge about and respect for the natural world upon which they depended for their livelihood.

We recognize and acknowledge that when European settlers came to these lands, they were welcomed and supported to establish themselves. Eventually, a treaty was signed, which we now know as Treaty 7, between the Crown and the people known as the Iyethka peoples of the Chiniki, Bearspaw and Goodstoney Bands; the Tsuut'ina; the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) peoples of Siksika, Piikani and Kainai Bands.

This land is also home to the Métis that reside within Rocky View Métis District of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government within the Métis Nation of Alberta.

We gratefully acknowledge that where we live and work is within Treaty 7 lands, that is also home to Inuit people and other Indigenous peoples now calling this their home. We are grateful for the many contributions Indigenous people of these lands have made and continue to make to the wellbeing and prosperity of the community and the country.



Contents

Executive Summary 1

1.0
Introduction 3

- 1.1 Context and Rationale 6
 - 1.2 Structure 10
 - 1.3 Plan Development Process 11
-

2.0
Direction 13

- 2.1 Vision 13
 - 2.2 Focus Areas 13
 - 2.3 Goals 14
 - 2.4 Actions 15
-

3.0
Implementation 44

- 3.1 Preamble 44
 - 3.2 Principles 44
 - 3.3 Roles 45
 - 3.4 Approach 46
 - 3.5 Capacity Assessment 48
-

4.0
Conclusion 50

- 4.1 References 50

2025 - 2029 Core Actions Quick Reference

A1 17
Create toolkits to promote age-friendly design in outdoor spaces and housing

A2 21
Advocate for expanded public transportation and foster alternative transport partnerships

A3 24
Develop a comprehensive age-friendly communication strategy

A4 28
Partner with community groups to support lifelong learning and maintain skill development in older adults

A5 31
Increase accessible and inclusive meeting places for older adults

A6 34
Develop new and strengthen existing partnerships to enhance community health services

A7 38
Increase connectivity with available healthcare resources through education and system navigation

A8 41
Create a safe and inclusive environment for older adults

Executive Summary

The **Age-Friendly Cochrane Action Plan** aims to position Cochrane as an inclusive, supportive, and vibrant community where residents of all ages, particularly older adults, can thrive. Developed through collaborative efforts between the Town of Cochrane (Family & Community Support Services [FCSS]) and community partners, with funding from the Calgary Foundation, the plan responds to the region's growing older adult population.

In alignment with the Alberta Age-Friendly Recognition Program and the World Health Organization's **Age-Friendly Cities Framework**, the **Action Plan** ensures Cochrane adapts to the needs of older adults, fostering long-term well-being, participation, and social inclusion. This initiative not only addresses the challenges of aging but also creates opportunities for enhanced community resilience, economic growth, and social cohesion.

Extensive public engagement, including surveys, workshops, and focus groups, provided insight into the challenges and opportunities for aging in Cochrane. The Age-Friendly Steering Committee guided the plan's development into eight actions, ensuring alignment with the needs and aspirations of residents.

The plan will be implemented over five-year intervals, beginning in 2025. This adaptive framework emphasizes collaboration between municipal authorities, non-profits, and private partners. A comprehensive review of outcomes will be conducted in 2030 to help inform future actions.

Vision

In Cochrane, everyone can enjoy a high quality of life, feel connected to where they live, and age with dignity and independence.

Focus Areas and Goals

The Action Plan is anchored by three focus areas and supporting goals.

1. Built Environment: Establish Cochrane as an example community for age-friendly living, where the physical environment is designed to support the independence, safety, and enjoyment of older adults.

Cochrane will be celebrated for its:

- » Range of affordable and accessible housing options
- » Universally accessible public spaces, and
- » Community infrastructure that facilitates efficient connectivity

2. Social Environment: Establish Cochrane as a model of social inclusion and intentional co-creation of age-friendly solutions, where older adults are respected and valued community members.

Cochrane will be celebrated for its:

- » Diverse and accessible opportunities for community participation
- » Social support network and community resources, and
- » Civic and economic opportunities for older adults

3. Personal Health and Well-Being:

Establish Cochrane as a beacon for personal well-being for older adults.

Cochrane will be celebrated for its:

- » Unmatched access to comprehensive healthcare
- » Opportunities for health promotion
- » Resilient personal support systems, and
- » Inclusive communication and outreach

Core Actions for 2025-2029

The following actions for 2025 - 2029 comprise the Age-Friendly Cochrane Action Plan:

1. Create toolkits to promote age-friendly design in outdoor spaces and housing
2. Advocate for expanded public transportation and foster alternative transport partnerships
3. Develop a comprehensive age-friendly communication strategy
4. Partner with community groups to support lifelong learning and maintain skill development in older adults
5. Increase accessible and inclusive meeting places for older adults
6. Develop new and strengthen existing partnerships to enhance community health services
7. Increase connectivity with available healthcare resources through education and system navigation
8. Create a safe and inclusive environment for older adults

1.0

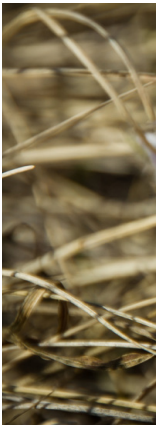
Introduction

As one of Canada’s fastest-growing municipalities, Cochrane is experiencing significant population growth among its older adult cohort. To ensure that municipal policy, community services, and built and social infrastructure aligns with the needs of this growing cohort – and ultimately, all residents, regardless of age – the Town of Cochrane (Cochrane Family and Community Support Services [FCSS]) has worked closely with the broader community to develop Cochrane’s first-ever **Age-Friendly Action Plan**.

This plan is a milestone towards the official recognition of Cochrane as an age-friendly community. It is reflective of years of work by the Age-Friendly Steering Committee, municipal staff, partner organizations, Cochrane Town Council, and the community of Cochrane at large. This ongoing work is performed in alignment with the provincial government’s Alberta Age-Friendly Recognition Program, which provides support to municipalities to proactively respond to the continued growth of the older adult population in their communities. To be recognized under the terms of this program, the community of Cochrane – with leadership from the Town of Cochrane and Cochrane Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) – has completed four important steps. These are:

1. Establishment of an Age-Friendly Steering Committee. In 2022, the Cochrane Age-Friendly Steering Committee was established to provide direction to this important work. Professionals and community members were selected to join the committee, with professional and volunteer backgrounds in alignment with the domains of action popularized by the World Health Organization’s **Age-Friendly Cities Framework** (see Section 1.1). The Age-Friendly Steering Committee is the primary owner of the **Action Plan**.

Membership of the committee includes representatives from Seniors on the Bow, Cochrane and Area Chamber of Commerce, Cochrane Society for Housing Options, Primary Care Network, Recovery Alberta (Addictions and Mental Health), Bethany Cochrane, Town of Cochrane (Family and Community Support Services, Parks and Active Living), and older adult community members.





2. Resolution passed by Cochrane Town Council. In fall 2022, representatives from the Age-Friendly Steering Committee delivered a presentation to Cochrane Town Council. In response, Council provided an official letter of commitment to support the initiative and allocated budgets in 2023 and 2024 to advance the Age-Friendly initiative.

3. Assessment of age-friendly community design. With funding from the Calgary Foundation, the Age-Friendly Steering Committee led an extensive public engagement program through 2023 and 2024 to understand the barriers to age-friendliness across the domains of action in Cochrane. This process comprised survey administration, user experience interviews, and tailored interest holder focus groups and workshops. Outcomes from this assessment are explored further under **Section 1.3** of the document.

4. Development and implementation of the Age-Friendly Action Plan. This step is the culmination of the preceding years of collective effort delivered by a broad cross-section of community members working towards a more equitable age-friendly community. With development complete, the focus now shifts to implementation of the plan.

In the following section, we will explore the motivating context and rationale for the support and development of an age-friendly community in Cochrane. This will be followed by a discussion of the overall structure of the plan and the planning process that led to the development of the **Action Plan**, with specific reference to the substantial public engagement feedback which shaped the overall plan direction.



1.1 Context and Rationale

What is an age-friendly community?

According to the World Health Organization's (WHO) **Age-Friendly Cities Framework**, an age-friendly community is one that promotes healthy and active aging by optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security among older adults.¹

Age-friendly communities are designed to be inclusive and accessible to people of all ages, particularly older adults, by fostering environments that support their well-being, independence, and quality of life. This follows the concept of the "curb-cut effect", where addressing a disadvantage or exclusion experienced by one group of people in society supports an environment where all people are able to participate and contribute to their full potential.² There are eight key and interdependent domains of action defined within the **Age-Friendly Cities Framework**. These are each defined below.



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings: The public and private spaces that define the physical environment of a community, and so with it, impact the mobility, independence and quality-of-life of older adults as they experience daily life. This domain of action attends to a number of different considerations, including public areas being clean, safe and accessible, and parks, sidewalks, and buildings being designed with age-friendly features such as ramps, benches, appropriate lighting, and accessible toilets.



Transportation: The ways in which transportation routes are laid out in a community, and the means by which older adults remain mobile and active. This domain of action focuses on the provision of a variety of affordable and accessible transportation options to ensure older adults can move around easily and safely utilizing public transit or senior-specific ride programs. A secondary focus of this domain of action is the design of road infrastructure and parking facilities with older adults in mind.



Housing: The provision of appropriately designed and affordable housing stock proximate to community and social services needed by older adults to live full and healthy lives. This domain of action focuses on the provision of housing options that are affordable, safe, and designed to meet the needs of older adults, including modifications to support aging-in-place.

1. World Health Organization (WHO), "The WHO Age-Friendly Cities Framework."

2. National Cancer Institute (US) – Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics, "The Curb-Cut Effect."



Social Participation: The participation in community-based leisure, social, cultural, and spiritual activities to ensure older adults remain integrated within their community. This domain of action focuses on opportunities for social engagement that are readily available to prevent isolation and promote community involvement through events, recreational activities, and programs that cater to all ages and interests.



Respect and Social Inclusion: The development of broad-based practices and perspectives that support the formation of an inclusive society that encourages older adults to participate in the social, civic, and economic life of their community. This domain of action builds a community context where older adults are treated with respect and are included in community activities, decision-making processes, and social networks, reducing feelings of isolation and discrimination.



Civic Participation and Employment: The provision of employment and participatory possibilities for older adults to draw upon and maintain a lifetime of experience, knowledge, and skill towards the betterment of their community. This domain of action supports the creation of opportunities for older adults to engage in volunteer work, paid employment, and community decision-making processes.



Communication and Information: The delivery of effective, tailored, and timely communications to older adults. This domain of action ensures information is communicated effectively through various channels, ensuring that older adults can access news, events, and services in formats that are understandable and accessible.



Community Support and Health Services: Health and social services are accessible, affordable, and responsive to the needs of older adults, including in-home support, preventative care, and emergency services. This domain of action ensures that older adults are able to draw upon appropriate services to maintain quality-of-life, respond to acute health events, and mitigate chronic issues.

By addressing these interdependent domains of action, an age-friendly community creates an environment where older adults can lead active, engaged, and healthy lives while remaining integrated and valued members of their community.



Why make Cochrane an age-friendly community?

Across all age groups, Cochrane is experiencing significant population growth. From 2016 to 2021, the town grew by 24.5% from 25,853 residents to 32,199.³ The prior census period of 2011 to 2016 witnessed even more expansive growth, as the town grew by 45.1% from 17,433 residents.⁴ With this influx of overall population, the cohort of adults aged 65 years and older has risen from 10.1% in 2011 to 16.2% in 2021.⁵

When broadening the scope of review to consider the surrounding Rocky View County – whose residents access services from regional hubs including Cochrane – we observe similar demographic trends, with an increase in the cohort of adults aged 65 years and older from 10.7% in 2011 to 17.9% in 2021.⁶ We note that not all definitions of older adults begin at 65, such that individuals in their 50s may begin to access services we classically define as being for older adults. From the data, we can interpret that Cochrane's population is aging.

Beyond the quantitative data is the qualitative fact that, in keeping with the WHO's **Age-Friendly Cities Framework**, older adults have contributed much in their lifetimes to society and in turn, deserve the opportunity to spend their later years with their well-being, independence, and quality-of-life supported by the same society.

3. Statistics Canada, "Census Profile – 2021 Census of Population, Cochrane."

4. Statistics Canada, "Census Profile – 2016 Census of Population, Cochrane."

5. Statistics Canada, "Focus on Geography Series, 2011 Census, Cochrane."

6. Statistics Canada; Statistics Canada, "Census Profile – 2021 Census of Population, Cochrane."

Positioning Cochrane as an age-friendly community offers several advantages. These include but are not limited to:

- » Reducing the need to access health-care services by supporting older adults in the maintenance of their physical, mental, and social well-being
- » Enhancing social inclusion and participation in an effort to reduce social isolation and loneliness, which serve as significant risk factors for poor health outcomes
- » Accessing the economic benefits of being an age-friendly community, where businesses can thrive by supporting the needs of older adults, retaining experienced older workers, and accessing new prospective tourism opportunities among this cohort
- » Responding to current and preparing for future demographic changes by adapting infrastructure, services, and policies to mitigate future challenges associated with an aging population
- » Creating a safer and more accessible environment, where the infrastructure for older adults, such as wheelchair-accessible ramps, well-maintained sidewalks, and appreciable signage, is helpful for other groups such as people with disabilities, parents with strollers, and young children
- » Fostering intergenerational connections by encouraging interaction, learning, and understanding between different generations to increase community cohesion
- » Promoting age-friendly community development aligns with broad values of human rights, equality, and dignity and ensures that older adults are recognized as full participants in society with a right to a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment
- » Increasing overall community resilience by attending to the needs of often-vulnerable populations and, in doing so, preparing for potential public health crises or climate change-related extreme weather events, and
- » Improving overall quality of life, as an age-friendly community is ultimately an optimal community for all.

1.2 Structure

The **Age-Friendly Cochrane Action Plan** is a guiding document to support age-friendly community design, programming, and service delivery, in five-year intervals. The **Action Plan** includes direction for action in areas of communication and information, skill development and socialization, and partnership and service delivery. This is in alignment with the overarching Domains of Action, with the ultimate aim of making Cochrane a community of choice for older adults.

The **Action Plan** will coordinate municipal, non-profit, and community-driven action to realize a long-term vision and supportive goals that together create an age-friendly community. This strategic direction is made possible through a planning framework comprising:

- » A detailed approach to plan implementation that prioritizes coordination within the Age-Friendly Steering Committee and its working groups, collaboration with FCSS, the Town of Cochrane, community-based seniors-serving organizations and other supporting partners within Cochrane
- » An iterative reporting and engagement structure that allows the **Action Plan** to adapt to changing conditions over time
- » An exploration of the various roles that the Age-Friendly Steering Committee may play in achieving the vision of Cochrane as an age-friendly community
- » Eight key actions within the first five-year interval (beginning in 2025) to build a foundation for future action planning efforts and long-term progress towards age-friendly community formation.

The actions included in this **Action Plan** are intended to span a five-year interval from 2025 to 2029, with a review of progress and update to the plan expected in 2030. These future progress reviews and updates will not require the same level of effort as the foundational work – being the creation of the Steering Committee, ongoing public engagement, preliminary partnership formation and networking, and the creation of this **Action Plan** – as these items will remain in place. For more information on implementation, consult **Section 3.0**.

1.3 Plan Development Process

An important question for any major strategic planning effort rests in why certain actions were prioritized while others were not. The strategic direction for the **Age-Friendly Action Plan** was informed by the diverse subject matter expertise that exists among members of the Age-Friendly Steering Committee, observed trends and priorities within the town's demography, constraints and opportunities present in community-based collaboration efforts, and an extensive public engagement process.

Phase 1: Engagement

The first phase of the planning process occurred from June 2023 to May 2024. It focused on engaging members of the Cochrane community to gain an understanding of their lived experience, and the opportunities and challenges associated with aging in Cochrane.

The public engagement process comprised four methods to encourage participation and collect feedback. These were:

- » **A community survey:** The survey comprised both closed and open-ended questions respecting the age-friendly domains of action. From June 6 to August 15, 2023, the survey received 353 responses.
- » **A series of in-person and virtual workshops:** Participants were invited to discuss the opportunities, barriers, and global trends that characterize age-friendly community design, accessibility, and healthy approaches to aging. Across March 2024, five workshops were held with 61 participants in attendance.

- » **A set of three targeted focus groups:** Three targeted focus groups were each held for youth, rural residents in West Rocky View County, and service providers in the Cochrane region. These sessions explored the specific conditions and challenges associated with growing up in Cochrane, accessing age-friendly services as a visitor to Cochrane as a service hub, and delivering care and supporting older adults in Cochrane. The youth focus group drew seven participants, the rural resident focus group drew 11, and the service provider focus group drew 30.
- » **User experience interviews:** Seven older adults were invited to participate in one-hour long interviews with the aim to understand their lived experiences and in turn, support a deeper and more contextually appropriate understanding of age-friendly community design in Cochrane.

In addition to the feedback methods listed above, a project webpage on the Town's "Let's Talk Cochrane" public engagement page shared project details, promoted engagement sessions, provided a feedback mechanism, and displayed periodic updates as the engagement process progressed. Between June 2023 and April 2024, the website received 688 unique visitors.

The full What We Heard Report, summarizing the engagement program and its outcomes, is found on the Town of Cochrane's [Age-Friendly Initiative](#) webpage.



Phase 2: Development

The second phase of the process explored observed tensions that followed from the engagement process and established an emergent policy direction to develop a draft **Age-Friendly Action Plan** for review. This phase ran from May to September 2024 and resulted in an action plan that spans the domains of action and responds to observed needs identified by engagement participants and the Age-Friendly Steering Committee.

As part of this process, the project team facilitated an intensive three-day “Strategy Sprint” in June 2024. Within the sprint process, the Age-Friendly Steering Committee co-created the draft direction for the plan. Sprint participants provided feedback and modifications to the developing plan vision, focus areas, goals, and identified new opportunities for action. The direction emerging from the sprint was then shared with key interest holders drawn from the Town of Cochrane and the local community-based seniors serving sector for further review and refinement before being revised during a drafting period in fall 2024.



2.0

Direction

2.1 Vision

The Age-Friendly Cochrane Action Plan is guided by a long-term vision that will serve the community of Cochrane. The vision establishes a long-term ambition to be achieved following successive implementations of plan actions.

In Cochrane, everyone can enjoy a high quality of life, feel connected to where they live, and age with dignity and independence.

2.2 Focus Areas

The Age-Friendly Action Plan's vision is made tangible by three key focus areas. These areas are interconnected and informed by the Domains of Community Life (WHO, Age-Friendly Cities Framework). The focus areas are:

1. **Built Environment:** The tangible and structural built elements of a community that influence the daily lives of its residents.
2. **Social Environment:** The social fabric and underlying relationships, networks, and interactions that define community and support the well-being and inclusion of its residents.
3. **Personal Health and Well-Being:** The health, security, and overall quality-of-life that a community offers its residents.

2.3 Goals

A goal is defined as an ideal state for the focus areas defined above. Each goal interprets the high-level vision through each focus area to determine this ideal and specific state.

Built Environment

Goal: Establish Cochrane as an example community for age-friendly living, where the physical environment is designed to support the independence, safety, and enjoyment of older adults.

Cochrane will be celebrated for its:

- » Range of affordable and accessible housing options
- » Universally accessible public spaces, and
- » Community infrastructure that facilitates efficient connectivity

Together, these characteristics will enrich the quality-of-life of older adults.

Social Environment

Goal: Establish Cochrane as a model of social inclusion and intentional co-creation of age-friendly solutions, where older adults are respected and valued community members.

Cochrane will be celebrated for its:

- » Diverse and accessible opportunities for community participation
- » Social support network and community resources, and
- » Civic and economic opportunities for older adults

Together, these characteristics will foster a community defined by intergenerational collaboration.

Personal Health and Well-Being

Goal: Establish Cochrane as a beacon for personal well-being for older adults.

Cochrane will be celebrated for its:

- » Unmatched access to comprehensive healthcare
- » Opportunities for health promotion
- » Resilient personal support systems, and
- » Inclusive communication and outreach.

Together, these characteristics will position Cochrane as a model where older adults live with independence, dignity, and a deep-rooted connection to their community.

2.4 Actions

2.4.1 Summary

The following actions comprise the **Age-Friendly Cochrane Action Plan**:

1. Create toolkits to promote age-friendly design in outdoor spaces and housing.
2. Advocate for expanded public transportation and foster alternative transport partnerships.
3. Develop a comprehensive age-friendly communication strategy.
4. Partner with community groups to support lifelong learning and maintain skill development in older adults.
5. Increase accessible and inclusive meeting places for older adults.
6. Develop new and strengthen existing partnerships to enhance community health services.
7. Increase connectivity with available healthcare resources through education and system navigation.
8. Create a safe and inclusive environment for older adults.

Detailed descriptions of each of these actions are provided in this section.

2.4.2 Action Structure

Each of the actions identified in **Section 2.4.1** includes the following supporting information:

- » **Title:** The identified title of the action
- » **Domain alignment:** The action's connection to one or more of the domains of action
- » **Goal alignment:** The action's connection to one or more of the **Action Plan's** goals
- » **Description:** An explanation of the action to be taken
- » **Rationale:** The reason for the action's inclusion in the **Age-Friendly Action Plan**
- » **Key steps:** The major steps necessary to realize the action
- » **Steering committee role(s):** The type of role the overseeing steering committee would play in delivering the action (for more information, consult **Section 3.3**)
- » **Steering committee lead:** The working group within the Steering Committee to assume leadership of action delivery, with relevant supporting partners listed
- » **Potential partner organizations:** Key interest holders in the community who can help realize the action
- » **Anticipated timeframe:** The timeframe in which the implementation of the action is expected
- » **Links to other actions:** The connections to other actions within the **Age-Friendly Action Plan**, where available

2.4.3 Action Phasing

A phased approach to plan implementation has been created. This reflects discussions with the Age-Friendly Steering Committee and an understanding for how the results of one action may explicitly inform the development of another. The anticipated action phasing is positioned across the first five-year interval (2025-2029) of plan implementation.

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
A1 Create toolkits to promote age-friendly design in outdoor spaces and housing	[Orange bar]				
A2 Advocate for expanded public transportation and foster alternative transport partnerships	[Orange bar]				
A3 Develop a comprehensive age-friendly communication strategy	[Orange bar]				
A4 Partner with community groups to support lifelong learning and maintaining skill development in older adults	[Orange bar]				
A5 Increase accessible and inclusive meeting places for older adults	[Orange bar]				
A6 Develop new and strengthen existing partnerships to enhance community health services				[Orange bar]	
A7 Increase connectivity with available healthcare resources through education and system navigation				[Orange bar]	
A8 Create a safe and inclusive environment for older adults	[Orange bar]				

 denotes actions being delivered in conjunction



Create toolkits to promote age-friendly design in outdoor spaces and housing

Domain alignment:

- » Communication and Information
- » Housing
- » Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Goal alignment:

- » Built Environment

Description:

In this action, the built environment working group of the Age-Friendly Steering Committee responsible will lead research into key indicators for accessible design and available granting mechanisms in the age-friendly domains of action respecting outdoor spaces, buildings, and housing. At a strategic level, this action will support the future planning, development of new and retrofitting of existing indoor and outdoor spaces and buildings for age-friendly and accessible design. The resulting research materials will be shared with municipal planning and development staff, private developers, businesses, and the general public as the basis for advocacy on age-friendly design across the aligned domains of action.

A number of toolkits will be created, providing practical resources, guidelines, and examples to help improve outdoor space and building accessibility. They will also help private businesses, community organizations, and local authorities better understand and implement age-friendly practices in and around their facilities. The aim is to use the toolkits as a catalyst for broader community dialogue and action, encouraging collaborative efforts to make the built environment more inclusive and supportive of older adults.

Toolkits will include:

- » **Guidelines for accessibility:** Clear, actionable recommendations on how to design or modify outdoor spaces and buildings to be more accessible for older adults.
- » **Templates and review checklists:** Easy-to-use templates and checklists for assessing and improving accessibility.
- » **Case studies and examples:** Real-world examples and case studies from other age-friendly communities to demonstrate successful practices and inspire local initiatives.



- » **Resources for social connection spaces:** Guidance on creating and maintaining publicly-accessible spaces that encourage social interaction, including considerations for seating, lighting, acoustics, and accessibility.
- » **Tools for encouraging participation:** Information to help private businesses understand the benefits of enhancing accessibility such as attracting a wider customer base, improving customer satisfaction, complying with local accessibility standards and incentives for improvements.

Rationale:

By increasing awareness of the needs of older adults through an age-friendly lens, the community can proactively adapt its built environment. Accessible design in public spaces and housing is critical to enabling older adults to age in place comfortably and safely. Research and communication efforts will help embed these considerations into local planning processes, ensuring

that the community remains inclusive and supportive of older adults. This initiative also aligns with the principles of universal design, benefiting people of all ages and abilities.

Developing best practice toolkits supports the goal of creating a more age-friendly built environment by providing community interest holders (i.e. local government, local businesses, service providers) with the necessary tools and resources to advocate and take action. It encourages the adoption of accessible design principles and fosters an inclusive approach to community development. Toolkits will empower the Town of Cochrane, local businesses, service providers, and community members to understand and implement age-friendly practices, ultimately leading to a more supportive, engaging, and accessible environment for older adults. Additionally, by fostering dialogue and collaboration, toolkits will promote a shared commitment to age-friendly principles and continuous improvement over time.

Key Steps:

- 1. Define toolkit objectives and content scope:** Establish the goals, target audience, and key components of each toolkit. Determine the scope of topics to be covered, including outdoor space and building accessibility, barrier-free design, social spaces, and engagement strategies.
- 2. Research existing toolkits and best practices:** Review similar toolkits, code design and standards, and resources from age-friendly communities and organizations worldwide to identify best practices, effective strategies, and gaps that these toolkits can address.
- 3. Engage stakeholders in content development:** Collaborate with key stakeholders, including older adults, parks and active living, community organizations, urban planners, architects, and local businesses, to gather input on the toolkits content and ensure it meets the needs of various community members.
- 4. Develop toolkits content and design:** Create content that is clear, concise, and user-friendly. Include guidelines, checklists, templates, case studies, potential funding opportunities, and resources that are easily accessible and actionable. Design the toolkit in multiple formats (digital, print) to maximize reach.
- 5. Launch the toolkits and promote their use:** Launch the toolkits through a dedicated campaign involving community events and partnerships with local media. Provide training sessions for interest holders on how to use the toolkits effectively.
- 6. Monitor and evaluate the impact:** Collect feedback from users and make periodic updates to ensure they remain relevant and effective.
- 7. Encourage ongoing dialogue and collaboration:** Use the toolkit as a foundation to promote continuous dialogue between community members, private businesses, and local government on how to make the community more age-friendly.
- 8. Advocate for policy and planning integration:** Work with Town administration to integrate age-friendly/accessible design standards into planning guidelines, public space development policies, and development projects. Advocate in the local business community to promote age-friendly design elements in private commercial buildings and operations.

Details

Steering committee role(s):

- » **Leader/Owner:** The Steering Committee directly owns actions and embodies the aims of the Action Plan through its own processes.
- » **Supporter:** The Steering Committee assists and builds capacity for other organizations towards the aims of the Action Plan.

Steering committee lead:

- » Built Environment
- » Cochrane Society for Housing Options (CSHO)
- » Town of Cochrane (Parks and Active Living)

Potential partner organizations:

- » Local business community
- » Older adults
- » Senior residences
- » Service clubs
- » Sport and Recreation Interagency
- » Town of Cochrane (Parks, Social Development)

Anticipated timeframe:

- » 2025 - 2026, delivered in conjunction with Action 3

Links to other actions:

- » **A2.** Advocate for expanded public transportation and foster alternative transport partnerships.
- » **A3.** Develop a comprehensive age-friendly communication strategy.
- » **A5.** Increase accessible and inclusive meeting places for older adults.

Advocate for expanded public transportation and foster alternative transport partnerships

Domain alignment:

- » Respect and Social Inclusion
- » Transportation

Goal alignment:

- » Built Environment
- » Personal Health & Well-Being

Description:

This action focuses on improving transportation options for older adults in Cochrane by advocating for accessible, affordable, and adaptable services. This action will prompt a review of research and best practices to understand the barriers older adults face when using various transportation services. Through advocacy and collaboration, the Steering Committee and partners will work with public and community-supported transportation providers to enhance and expand services that meet the unique needs of older adults.

Advocacy efforts will include engaging with transit providers, exploring partnerships with private organizations, and educating stakeholders on the transportation challenges faced by older adults. This initiative aims to create a transportation system that offers flexibility, support, and accessibility, ensuring that older adults can travel independently and safely within the community.

Rationale:

Access to reliable and accessible transportation is essential for older adults to maintain independence, social participation, and well-being. Many traditional transportation options, such as buses and taxis, do not meet the specific needs of older adults who may require assistance before, during, or after travel. By advocating for increased transportation options that address these challenges, we aim to create a more inclusive, Age-Friendly community.

By working directly with transit providers and exploring new partnerships, we aim to improve the overall experience of transportation services in Cochrane. Offering a variety of flexible and supportive transportation options will help older adults remain in their homes and continue participating in community life, even as their ability to drive diminishes. Increasing awareness of the “age-friendliness” of transportation services will empower older adults with choices that meet their individual needs.

Key Steps:

1. **Review current public and alternate transportation provisions:** Define the objectives and scope of the review, focusing on the accessibility, affordability, and adaptability of transportation services for older adults. Conduct a comprehensive analysis of existing transportation services and infrastructure in Cochrane. Identify key gaps, barriers, promising practices, and opportunities for enhancement.
2. **Collaboration with the Town of Cochrane:** Establish the framework for ongoing collaboration with the Town of Cochrane and transit providers, focusing on integrating Age-Friendly principles into local transportation systems. Organize regular discussions with stakeholders, including Cochrane On-Demand Local Transit (COLT) and Rocky View Bus services, to address transportation needs and enhance services for older adults. Ensure the Age-Friendly Steering Committee is actively involved in master planning and transportation initiatives, advocating for older adults' needs in these processes.
3. **Develop partnership opportunities:** Define the goals and potential partners for expanding transportation options, including private transportation services, local businesses, and community organizations. Explore partnerships with taxi companies, ride-sharing services, and senior residences to develop senior-friendly transportation programs (e.g., discounted fares, senior-specific ride services). Identify funding sources and government programs that support senior transportation initiatives, and secure resources to implement new solutions. Collaborate with transportation planning and accessibility experts to integrate innovative, age-friendly transportation solutions into the existing infrastructure.



Details

Steering committee role(s):

- » **Advocate:** The Steering Committee advocates for increased funding and resources to realize the aims of the **Action Plan**, and shares stories that inclusively builds momentum.
- » **Broker:** The Steering Committee acts as a facilitator to bring together organizations and individuals to achieve collective impact on the aims of the **Action Plan**.

Steering committee lead:

- » Built Environment
- » Town of Cochrane (Social Development, Transit)

Potential partner organizations:

- » Bus Services
- » Caregivers
- » Older Adults
- » Private Transportation Services
- » Senior Residences
- » Social Organizations
- » Town of Cochrane (FCSS)

Anticipated timeframe:

- » 2025-2029

Links to other actions:

- » **A1.** Create toolkits to promote age-friendly design in outdoor spaces and housing.
- » **A3.** Develop a comprehensive age-friendly communication strategy.
- » **A6.** Develop new and strengthen existing partnerships to enhance community health services.



Develop a comprehensive age-friendly communication strategy

Domain alignment:

- » Communication and Information
- » Respect and Social Inclusion
- » Social Participation

Goal alignment:

- » Social Environment

Description:

In this action, the social environment working group of the Age-Friendly Steering Committee will develop a comprehensive communication strategy that ensures older adults have timely, accurate, and accessible information about community services, events, mental and physical health resources, and social opportunities.

The communication strategy will use a range of methods and channels tailored to the diverse needs and preferences of older adults, such as printed materials, online platforms, community radio, and face-to-face communication. It will also encourage feedback and active participation from older adults to ensure that communication remains relevant and effective over time. The strategy will promote awareness of available resources and foster greater social engagement, helping to reduce isolation and improve overall well-being.

Communication could include comprehensive information relevant to older adults, such as:

- » Local services and resources (e.g., healthcare, support groups, recreation)
- » Upcoming community events and activities
- » Transportation options and schedules
- » Emergency alerts and preparedness information
- » Educational resources on age-friendly design and community development

The communication strategy should include:

- » **A multi-channel approach:** Using various communication channels to reach older adults, including printed newsletters, community boards, posters in publicly-accessible buildings, adverts in local newspapers, social media, websites, community radio, community events and public announcements.
- » **A focus on clear and accessible information:** Ensuring that all communications are in plain language, with large fonts, high-contrast text, and accessible formats (e.g., audio recordings, braille) to accommodate different abilities. Several standards exist to this effect (i.e. communications strategies from Ontario provincial ministries and municipal governments, in compliance with the **Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2001**) and can immediately inform development of this sub-item.
- » **A dedicated online age-friendly information hub:** Creation of a centralized, easy-to-navigate digital hub for related age-friendly information.
- » **Community ambassadors:** Training community volunteers or delegating to amenable service providers and municipal communicators to act as ambassadors who can share information, assist older adults in navigating digital platforms, and facilitate communication between the community and local authorities.
- » **Feedback mechanisms:** Establishing channels for older adults to provide feedback on their communication needs and preferences to continually improve the strategy.

Rationale:

A comprehensive age-friendly communication strategy is essential to ensure older adults remain informed, engaged, and connected within their community. Many older adults face barriers to accessing information due to visual or hearing impairments, limited digital literacy, or lack of access to technology. By adopting a multi-channel approach that considers these diverse needs, the community can foster greater social participation, reduce isolation, and improve access to essential services. This strategy supports inclusivity and empowers older adults to actively participate in community life, enhancing their sense of belonging and overall well-being.



Key Steps:

1. **Develop the communication strategy framework:** Define the objectives, target audience, key messages, and preferred channels for communication. Ensure the framework includes both digital and non-digital methods to reach a wide range of older adults.
2. **Create a best-practice framework:** Develop a checklist that outlines best practices for communicating with older adults through both print and online formats.
3. **Create age-friendly communication materials:** Develop printed materials (i.e. newsletters, posters, brochures) and digital content (i.e. websites, social media posts) that use clear, plain language and accessible formats. Include large fonts, high-contrast text, and easy navigation to accommodate various needs.
4. **Establish a virtual age-friendly information hub:** Create a centralized resource that compiles information on local services, events, health resources, transportation, and emergency alerts relevant to older adults.
5. **Recruit and train community ambassadors:** Identify community volunteers or amenable service providers and municipal communicators who can help disseminate information, assist older adults with digital tools, and act as points of contact for feedback and queries.
6. **Launch and promote the communication strategy:** Roll out the strategy through a public campaign led by the Town of Cochrane, including community events, partnerships with local media, and distribution of printed materials. Promote new communication channels and resources to ensure widespread awareness.
7. **Monitor, evaluate, and adjust:** Implement regular feedback mechanisms (e.g., surveys, focus groups) to gather input from older adults and other stakeholders on the effectiveness of the communication strategy. Adjust the strategy as needed to address emerging needs and preferences.

Details

Steering committee role(s):

- » **Leader/Owner:** The Steering Committee directly owns actions and embodies the aims of the **Action Plan** through its own processes.
- » **Advocate:** The Steering Committee advocates for increased funding and resources to realize the aims of the **Action Plan**, and shares stories that inclusively builds momentum.

Steering committee lead:

- » Social Environment
- » Town of Cochrane (FCSS)

Potential partner organizations:

- » Business community
- » Health providers
- » Local media and marketing initiatives
- » Senior-serving organizations
- » Social organizations
- » Town of Cochrane (Communications, Parks and Active Living)

Anticipated timeframe:

- » 2025 - 2026, delivered in conjunction with Action 1

Links to other actions:

- » Supports all other actions through promotion and generation of awareness.



Partner with community groups to support lifelong learning and maintain skill development in older adults

Domain alignment:

- » Civic Participation and Employment
- » Communication and Information
- » Social Participation
- » Respect and Social Inclusion

Goal alignment:

- » Social Environment

Description:

In this action, the social environment working group of the Age-Friendly Steering Committee will lead partnership development and sustainability with local community partners, businesses, and institutions to create and maintain opportunities for older adults to develop and share skills.

By fostering mentorship opportunities, knowledge-sharing across cultures, and educational programs led by older adults, the initiative will promote social inclusion and respect for the education, experience and wisdom that older adults bring to the community. It will also offer technical skill training and education to enhance volunteer, employment, and entrepreneur opportunities for older adults. The initiative will encourage lifelong learning, build intergenerational connections, and create pathways for older adults to engage in meaningful civic and economic activities, contributing to their overall well-being and community vitality.

Rationale:

Supporting and maintaining skill development in older adults is crucial for fostering a socially inclusive community where every member feels valued and respected. This initiative combats ageism by challenging negative stereotypes associated with older adults by recognizing and leveraging their breadth of education, talent, and available time to actively contribute to community life.

By facilitating skill-building, mentorship, and knowledge-sharing, the community can draw upon the vast experience and expertise of older adults, promoting intergenerational understanding and collaboration. The initiative empowers older adults to engage in meaningful civic and economic activities, enhancing their well-being and ensuring that their contributions are acknowledged and celebrated.

Key steps:

1. **Identify and engage key community partners:** Collaborate with community partners, interested local businesses, and economic development-focused organizations to support skill development initiatives among older adults.
2. **Conduct a needs assessment:** Survey older adults to identify their interests, skill gaps, and preferred learning methods. Assess community resources, potential trainers, mentors, and talents of older adults, and venues for skill development programs.
3. **Develop a skill development program framework:** Design a framework that includes various components such as mentorship opportunities, technical skill training, knowledge-sharing sessions, and support for mature entrepreneurs. Ensure the program is accessible, diverse, and tailored to the interests and needs of older adults.
4. **Facilitate skill-building and knowledge-sharing workshops:** Organize workshops, seminars, and training sessions on a variety of topics led by older adults and community experts. Include both in-person and online options to maximize reach and accessibility.
5. **Establish a mentorship and peer learning network:** Create a mentorship program where older adults can mentor younger individuals or peers in their areas of expertise. Develop peer learning circles to facilitate ongoing skill exchange and community building.
6. **Provide technical skills training:** Offer targeted training sessions on essential technical skills, such as computer literacy, social media, graphic design, bookkeeping, and grant writing, to enhance volunteer and employment opportunities.
7. **Support mature entrepreneurs:** Develop tailored programs for older adults interested in starting or expanding a business. Partner with local economic development agencies to provide resources, guidance, and networking opportunities.
8. **Promote skill development opportunities:** Utilize various communication channels to promote programs and recruit participants.
9. **Monitor, evaluate, and adjust programs:** Collect feedback from participants and partners to assess the effectiveness of the programs. Make adjustments as needed to ensure the programs remain relevant and impactful.
10. **Celebrate and share success stories:** Highlight the achievements of older adults who have benefited from the skill development programs through communication channels. Use success stories to inspire further participation and promote a culture of lifelong learning.

Details

Steering committee role(s):

- » **Broker:** The Steering Committee acts as a facilitator to bring together organizations and individuals to achieve collective impact on the aims of the **Action Plan**.
- » **Supporter:** The Steering Committee assists and builds capacity for other organizations towards the aims of the **Action Plan**.

Steering committee lead:

- » Social Environment
- » Town of Cochrane (FCSS)

Potential partner organizations:

- » Business community
- » Learning institutions
- » Seniors Advisory Committee
- » Senior-serving organizations
- » Social Interagency
- » Social organizations
- » Town of Cochrane (Parks and Active Living)

Anticipated timeframe:

- » 2025 - 2029, delivered in conjunction with Action 5

Links to other actions:

- » **A3.** Develop a comprehensive age-friendly communication strategy.

Increase accessible and inclusive meeting places for older adults

Domain alignment:

- » Civic Participation and Employment
- » Communication and Information
- » Social Participation

Goal alignment:

- » Social Environment

Description:

In this action, the social environment working group will support partnership development to ensure a sufficient number of accessible and inclusive meeting places exist for older adults. These places are essential for fostering social connections, reducing isolation, and supporting the mental and physical health of older adults. These spaces need to be safe, welcoming, and accessible to accommodate the diverse needs, perspectives, and orientations of older adults.

By promoting, creating and enhancing accessible meeting places, the initiative aims to provide older adults with a variety of options for social participation, education, recreation, and civic engagement. Examples include community halls, libraries, outdoor public spaces, and multi-use facilities that can host events, classes, workshops, and social gatherings.

Rationale:

Social inclusion is vital to the health and well-being of older adults, yet many face barriers to accessing social spaces due to physical inaccessibility, lack of transportation, or inadequate accommodations. Increasing the number of accessible and inclusive meeting places will help ensure that older adults have opportunities to participate in community life, connect with others, and engage in meaningful activities. By partnering with various stakeholders, this action promotes a collaborative approach to community development that aligns with the needs and preferences of older adults.

Key steps:

1. **Identify potential interest holders and partners:** Engage with municipal departments, local non-profit organizations, community groups, and private businesses to identify potential partners interested in creating or adapting spaces for older adults.
2. **Map existing and potential spaces:** Develop an inventory of current public and private spaces. Evaluate these spaces for accessibility, safety, inclusivity, and potential for adaptation to meet the needs of older adults.
3. **Awareness campaign:** Promote awareness, utilizing multiple communication channels, of accessible spaces amongst service providers and community members.
4. **Monitor, evaluate, and adapt initiatives:** Collect feedback from older adults and partners to evaluate the use, accessibility, and inclusivity of the spaces. Make ongoing adjustments to improve safety, comfort, and engagement.



Details

Steering committee role(s):

- » **Broker:** The Steering Committee acts as a facilitator to bring together organizations and individuals to achieve collective impact on the aims of the **Action Plan**.
- » **Supporter:** The Steering Committee assists and builds capacity for other organizations towards the aims of the **Action Plan**.
- » **Advocate:** The Steering Committee advocates for increased funding and resources to realize the aims of the **Action Plan**, and shares stories that inclusively builds momentum.

Steering committee lead:

- » Social Environment
- » Town of Cochrane (FCSS)

Potential partner organizations:

- » Business community
- » Faith communities
- » Public community spaces
- » Senior-serving organizations
- » Social organizations
- » Town of Cochrane (Parks and Active Living)

Anticipated timeframe:

- » 2025 - 2026, delivered in conjunction with Action 4

Links to other actions:

- » **A1.** Create toolkits to promote age-friendly design in outdoor spaces and housing.
- » **A3.** Develop a comprehensive age-friendly communication strategy.



Develop new and strengthen existing partnerships to enhance community health services

Domain alignment:

- » Community Support and Health Services

Goal alignment:

- » Personal Health and Well-Being

Description:

In this action, the personal health and well-being working group of the Age-Friendly Steering Committee will foster collaboration with local community partners, local businesses, and healthcare-based service providers to ensure that older adults have access to a broad range of health services and related supports.

The action will include advocacy efforts to restore essential public health programs for Cochrane residents such as **Better Choices, Better Health; Recovery College**, and other wellness initiatives that promote healthy aging, self-management of chronic conditions, mental health support, and recovery. By advocating for the reinstatement of these programs, older adults will benefit from education, peer support, and practical strategies to improve their overall health and well-being.

Additionally, the action will explore partnerships with key specialty services in Calgary, such as geriatric care, physiotherapy, audiology, mental health services, and other similarly specialized medical providers, to establish new “visiting site” opportunities within Cochrane. This will allow older adults to access specialized care locally, reducing the need for travel within the region and improving continuity of care.

To further support integrated community health services, the action will also involve the creation of dedicated healthcare spaces within senior residences and/or community centers. These spaces will serve as hubs where older adults can conveniently access multiple health services, such as routine health checks, wellness consultations, rehabilitation services, and preventive care. These hubs will be designed to be inclusive, accessible, and welcoming to older adults, promoting a holistic approach to health and well-being.

Rationale:

Developing and strengthening partnerships to enhance community health services is vital to addressing the complex health needs of older adults. By restoring key public health programs and bringing specialized services closer to home, this action will improve access to care, reduce health disparities, and promote equity in health service access. Offering convenient healthcare options within the community will help older adults maintain their independence, manage chronic conditions effectively, and proactively access preventive care, ultimately leading to better health outcomes and improved quality of life.

Furthermore, establishing healthcare spaces within senior residences and community centers promotes a patient-centered approach, ensuring older adults receive comprehensive care in environments that are familiar, comfortable, and easy to navigate. Strengthening these partnerships will also foster a sense of community collaboration, improve resource-sharing, and create a more supportive health network that enhances personal health and well-being for older adults.



Key steps:

1. **Map and assess current partnerships and gaps in services:** Review existing partnerships, available services, and identify gaps in community health services for older adults. Consult with health professionals to understand the specific health requirements of the older population in Cochrane.
2. **Engage potential partners and stakeholders:** Conduct outreach to local health providers, community organizations, businesses, senior residences, and specialty services in Calgary to discuss partnership opportunities and explore collaboration on delivering services.
3. **Advocate to restore health programs:** Advocate to public health agencies and local organizations to reinstate programs such as Better Choices, Better Health and Recovery College.
4. **Develop visiting specialist programs:** Partner with specialist health services in Calgary to create a rotating schedule of “visiting specialists” who can provide care in Cochrane on designated days. Negotiate agreements with service providers and secure suitable venues for these services.
5. **Create integrated healthcare spaces:** Identify senior residences or community centers where dedicated healthcare spaces can be developed. Collaborate with facility managers, healthcare providers, and community planners to design and equip these spaces.
6. **Promote and market health services:** Raise awareness about new and existing health services using multiple channels to reach older adults and their families.
7. **Monitor, evaluate, and adapt services:** Collect feedback from older adults, service providers, and other community partners to evaluate the effectiveness and accessibility of the health services provided. Use this feedback to continuously refine and improve services to better meet the needs of older adults.
8. **Expand and sustain partnerships:** Work with partners to identify additional service opportunities and advocate for increased funding to build capacity and expand the range of health services offered in the community.

Details

Steering committee role(s):

- » **Supporter:** The Steering Committee assists and builds capacity for other organizations towards the aims of the Action Plan.
- » **Advocate:** The Steering Committee advocates for increased funding and resources to realize the aims of the Action Plan, and shares stories that inclusively builds momentum.

Steering committee lead:

- » Personal Health and Wellbeing
- » Recovery Alberta (Addiction and Mental Health)

Potential partner organizations:

- » Cochrane Community Health Centre
- » Older adult residences
- » Pharmacists
- » Physiotherapists
- » Primary Care Network

Anticipated timeframe:

- » 2028 - 2029, delivered in conjunction with Action 7

Links to other actions:

- » **A2.** Advocate for expanded public transportation and foster alternative transport partnerships.
- » **A3.** Develop a comprehensive age-friendly communication strategy.
- » **A7.** Increase connectivity with available healthcare resources through education and system navigation.
- » **A8.** Create a safe and inclusive environment for older adults.



Increase connectivity with available healthcare resources through education and system navigation

Domain alignment:

- » Communication and Information
- » Community Support and Health Services

Goal alignment:

- » Personal Health and Well-Being

Description:

In this action, the personal health and well-being working group of the Age-Friendly Steering Committee will take steps to increase engagement with available healthcare resources through education- and navigation-based approaches.

Where education is concerned, the communication strategy (developed in **Action 3**) will be leveraged. This portion of the action will ensure that information about healthcare services, preventive care, and health management is effectively communicated through multiple channels such as social media, newsletters, and local events.

Meanwhile, system navigation will be strengthened by advocating for the introduction of a social prescribing model in Cochrane. This model relies on link workers: non-clinical professionals employed by community-based, seniors-serving organizations. Link workers guide older adults, helping them proactively access and utilize appropriate community resources. They work in partnership with clients to set and achieve personalized health and well-being goals, providing a supportive, wrap-around approach that complements medical care. This should be supported by grants and educational resources available through the **Healthy Aging Alberta** initiative.

Advocacy efforts will be directed towards securing grant funding from Healthy Aging Alberta to employ link workers and promote a social prescribing model that aligns healthcare system navigation with existing community-based support available in Cochrane.

Rationale:

Older adults often face barriers when navigating the healthcare system, including a lack of awareness of available services, difficulty understanding complex medical information, and challenges in accessing non-medical support. By increasing engagement with healthcare resources through education and effective system navigation, this action will empower older adults to better manage their health and well-being. The introduction of link workers and a social prescribing model will enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of healthcare and community support services, ensuring a more integrated and patient-centered approach to care.

Key steps:

- 1. Leverage existing communication strategies:** Use the comprehensive age-friendly communication strategy (Action #4) as the basis to reach older adults, caregivers, and community members, ensuring they are informed about healthcare resources and how to navigate them.
- 2. Advocate for funding and support:** Engage with the Healthy Aging Alberta initiative to apply for link worker grants and educational resources. Develop proposals and advocacy materials to support the case for a social prescribing model in Cochrane.
- 3. Establish a social prescribing model:** Collaborate with local seniors-serving organizations to employ link workers who will assist older adults in navigating healthcare and community resources, providing wrap-around support.
- 4. Monitor and evaluate the initiative:** Track engagement levels and system access instances among older adults to assess the effectiveness of educational outreach and system navigation support. Use feedback to refine the approach.

Details

Steering committee role(s):

- » **Supporter:** The Steering Committee assists and builds capacity for other organizations towards the aims of the Action Plan.
- » **Advocate:** The Steering Committee advocates for increased funding and resources to realize the aims of the Action Plan, and shares stories that inclusively builds momentum.

Steering committee lead:

- » Personal Health and Wellbeing
- » Recovery Alberta, Addiction and Mental Health

Potential partner organizations:

- » Alberta Health Services, Home Care
- » Cochrane Community Health Centre
- » Healthy Aging Alberta
- » Town of Cochrane (FCSS)
- » Primary Care Network

Anticipated timeframe:

- » 2029, delivered in conjunction with Action 6

Links to other actions:

- » **A3.** Develop a comprehensive age-friendly communication strategy.
- » **A6.** Develop new and strengthen existing partnerships to enhance community health services.
- » **A8.** Create a safe and inclusive environment for older adults.



Create a safe and inclusive environment for older adults

Domain alignment:

- » Communication and Information
- » Community Support and Health Services
- » Respect and Social Inclusion

Goal alignment:

- » Social Environment
- » Personal Health and Well-Being

Description:

This action led by the social working group of the Age-Friendly Steering Committee seeks to create a safe, inclusive environment for older adults by addressing elder abuse, including financial scams. By fostering partnerships with local law enforcement, community organizations, health services, and advocacy groups, the community will offer education, resources, and tools to keep older adults informed, engaged, and protected.

The focus will be on ongoing participation in local initiatives, such as fraud awareness campaigns, training workshops, and accessible communication efforts, ensuring that all older adults, including those who are vulnerable, stay safe and informed.

This action item will enhance the safety, inclusion, and well-being of older adults in the community, while fostering a culture of respect and shared responsibility.

Rationale:

Elder abuse, including scams and financial exploitation, is a growing concern in many communities, with older adults often targeted due to factors such as isolation, cognitive decline, or lack of digital literacy. To address this issue, establishing community partnerships and participating in local initiatives is essential. These efforts help keep older adults informed about potential risks, foster respect and social inclusion, and provide the tools necessary to prevent abuse and exploitation. Through a collaborative approach, we will work to raise awareness and ensure that older adults feel respected, safe, and supported within their communities.



Key steps:

1. **Develop and strengthen partnerships:** Collaborate with local RCMP, senior-focused and community organizations, financial institutions, healthcare providers, and legal services to share resources and expertise.
2. **Develop a comprehensive prevention plan:** Develop regular fraud prevention seminars, easy-to-read brochures and digital content on scam prevention, and information on reporting elder abuse and seeking help.
3. **Deliver bystander training:** Provide *It's Not Right! (Neighbours, Friends, and Families for Older Adults)* training, aimed at changing social norms of bystanders on abuse, recognizing signs of elder abuse, and responding appropriately.
4. **Build digital literacy skills:** Offer programs to help older adults develop digital literacy and avoid online scams.
5. **Raise awareness of support services:** Ensure older adults and their families can access local services for victims of elder abuse.
6. **Establish a committee:** Create a group to review ongoing trends in elder abuse and scams, ensuring the **Action Plan** evolves in response to emerging threats.
7. **Engage in awareness campaigns:** Participate in local and national campaigns, such as **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD)**, and encourage community-wide involvement.
8. **Monitor and evaluate:** Track reported cases of scams and abuse, survey community members on their sense of safety, and adjust the strategy based on findings to ensure program effectiveness.

Details

Steering committee role(s):

- » **Supporter:** The Steering Committee assists and builds capacity for other organizations towards the aims of the **Action Plan**.
- » **Advocate:** The Steering Committee advocates for increased funding and resources to realize the aims of the **Action Plan**, and shares stories that inclusively builds momentum.

Steering committee lead:

- » Social Environment
- » Big Hill Haven

Potential partner organizations:

- » Cochrane Older Adult Case Consultation Table
- » Faith communities
- » Financial institutions
- » Protective Services
- » Primary Care Network – Calgary Foothills (CFPCN)
- » Seniors Advisory Committee
- » Social agencies
- » Town of Cochrane (FCSS, Protective Services)
- » WEAAD Committee

Anticipated timeframe:

- » 2025-2027

Links to other actions:

- » **A3.** Develop a comprehensive age-friendly communication strategy.
- » **A6.** Develop new and strengthen existing partnerships to enhance community health services.
- » **A7.** Increase connectivity with available healthcare resources through education and system navigation.

3.0

Implementation

3.1 Preamble

This section provides a framework to implement the **Age-Friendly Action Plan** for the first 2025–2029 implementation period. The framework comprises three parts: animating principles, key roles to be assumed by the Steering Committee, and the underlying adaptive management approach that translates strategy into action.

The key implementation roles clarify the function and capacity of the Steering Committee within each action and inform collaboration with external partners who will support plan implementation.

3.2 Principles

The **Age-Friendly Action Plan** is designed with the four primary implementation principles of clarity, focus, inclusivity, and priority, with each described below.

- » **Clarity** provides a clear understanding of the direction of the plan, and progression towards the vision. Momentum is encouraged by providing a defined and accessible workflow, where both the Steering Committee and external interest holders can provide appropriate support and resourcing through the clear understanding of how work towards an Age-Friendly Cochrane can support the work of individual interest-holders.
- » **Focus** emphasizes competing priorities apart from the **Action Plan** and the need to scale ambition appropriately to emphasize quality of results over quantity of action. This principle supports implementation by including only the most impactful actions in scope that can build foundational momentum and provide a continual line-of-sight to future progress.
- » **Inclusivity** is premised on both the opportunity and need for continued collaboration and partnership formation to realize the aims of the **Action Plan**. Understanding that aging is experienced differently subject to gender, race, health, and economic mobility, there is a need to continually reflect these considerations in implementation through collaboration, partnerships and ongoing community engagement.
- » **Priority** is the logical sequencing of the plan's actions to reflect priorities while respecting available resources that can be dedicated towards plan implementation. By understanding how each action contributes to each other and to other initiatives being delivered in Cochrane, the **Action Plan** can be best positioned to realize progress towards overall vision and goals.

3.3 Roles

For the **Age-Friendly Action Plan** to be successfully implemented, the scope of work for both the Steering Committee and prospective external partners must be properly understood, with clearly defined roles.

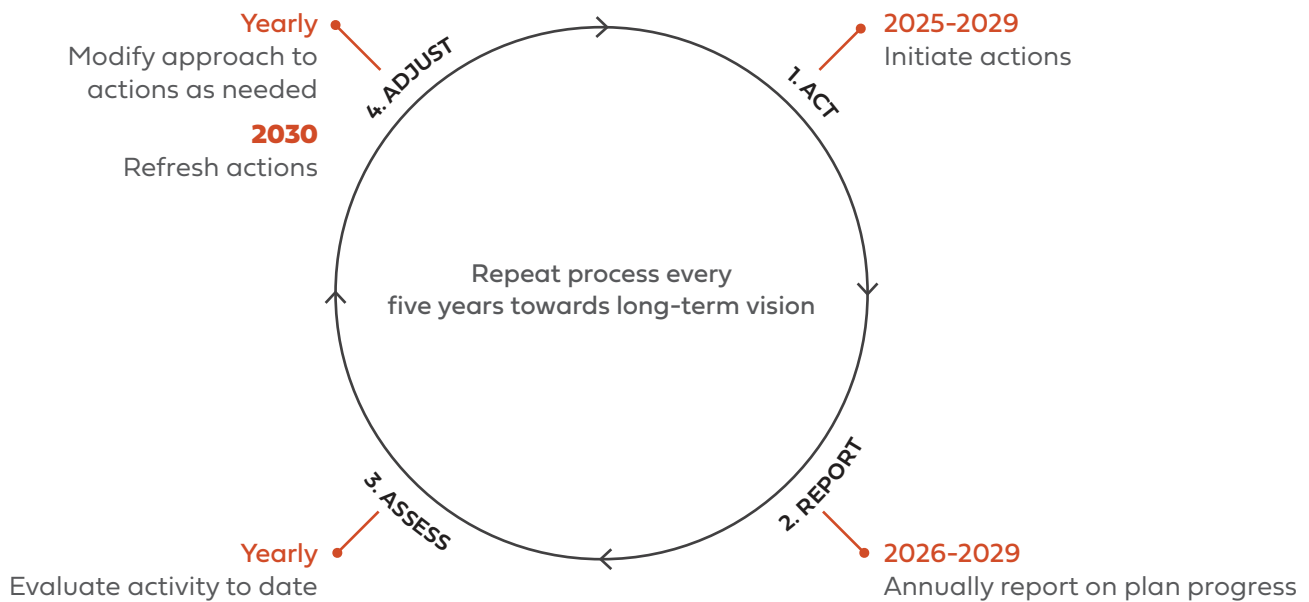
In this respect, we follow the example set by the City of Red Deer’s “**Social Policy Framework**” (2015) in clarifying the potential roles that support action delivery in complex multi-interest-holder institutional and social contexts towards a common goal. Echoing the complexity of age-friendly community design, the SPF notes that “social well-being and quality of life are the result of complex systems, relationships, and interactions, and are not the sole responsibility of local government.”⁷

Under this role-driven model, a role is defined as a general function that a party may fulfill to help achieve the overarching goals and supporting actions of the **Action Plan**. The Steering Committee may act in one or multiple roles at a given time and can coordinate roles with partnering organizations or community actors for increased effect.

The roles are:

- » **Leader/Owner:** The Steering Committee directly owns actions and embodies the aims of the **Action Plan** through its own processes
- » **Broker:** The Steering Committee acts as a facilitator to bring together organizations and individuals to achieve collective impact on the aims of the **Action Plan**
- » **Supporter:** The Steering Committee assists and builds capacity for other organizations towards the aims of the **Action Plan**
- » **Advocate:** The Steering Committee advocates for increased funding and resources to realize the aims of the **Action Plan**, and shares stories that inclusively builds momentum.

7. City of Red Deer, “*Social Policy Framework*,” 11.



3.4 Approach

The Age-Friendly Steering Committee will follow a four-phase adaptive management approach, in which the principles and roles discussed previously are integrated to realize the aims of the **Age-Friendly Action Plan**. The plan’s timeframe – a long-term vision animated by five-year intervals of action and review – will support learning, iteration, and progress while ensuring the **Action Plan** remains relevant to emerging opportunities and unanticipated challenges.

The adaptive management approach comprises four phases: **Act**, **Report**, **Assess**, and **Adjust**. These phases are defined in brief below:

- » **Act:** The actions form the foundation of the **Action Plan**. It is through implementation of these first eight actions that the Steering Committee and community partners will build and maintain momentum and proactively learn and adjust to realize progress towards the vision.
- » **Report:** The Steering Committee will provide yearly progress summaries to support accountability and transparency in the implementation process and to highlight good work being done in the community as an additional means to build momentum. The progress summaries are not meant to be exhaustive, understanding the scale of the work and the capacity of the Steering Committee; if there is a choice between acting or reporting, the former should be prioritized.
- » **Assess:** Through the five-year implementation period, attention should be placed on the state of the work – the successes, challenges, resources, and adherence to anticipated timelines – to ensure progress towards the vision remains on track.

- » **Adjust:** An effective Action Plan is one that can respond to both anticipated and unexpected obstacles. The Age-Friendly Action Plan will ensure continued alignment with the context of age-friendly community formation in Cochrane through annual (report-driven) and five-year milestone (plan update) adjustment mechanisms.

As part of the Report phase, on an annual basis, the Steering Committee will review, and if necessary, modify delivery of the plan's actions to address the lessons learned from ongoing implementation of the Action Plan. Interim modifications may include identifying and implementing new approaches to delivering an existing action, new opportunities for collaboration with external partners, and the application of newly available resources.

To ensure continued relevance, the Age-Friendly Action Plan should be updated on a five-year basis. The update process will support reflection on the initial plan implementation period for 2025-2029, with reference to lessons learned and any observed changes in the context for age-friendly community design in Cochrane.

The focus on input in action implementation – with respect to advocacy, communication, partnership, participation – will help raise new potential action ideas into update processes. As a consequence, the aim is not to conduct an entirely new planning process to update the plan going forward.



3.5 Capacity Assessment

The Age-Friendly Action Plan is accompanied by a tool to assess the capacity of a prospective partner organization to support delivery of an individual action listed under Section 2.4. Nine different categories for capacity planning are listed and are to be rated on a low-to-high scale of one to five. Scoring thresholds included in the tool are used to interpret results and identify specific areas for development, ensuring each organization can effectively contribute to making Cochrane an age-friendly community. Each category is briefly described below.

- » **Leadership and governance:** Effective leadership and governance are essential for successful action implementation. This category assesses the strength and commitment of organizational leadership and decision-makers, ensuring they are aligned with the direction of this action.
- » **Mission alignment:** The alignment between the initiative and the organization's mission ensures that resources and efforts remain focused on core values and goals. This category assesses how well the proposed action fits within the organization's overarching mission. A strong alignment motivates commitment and boosts organizational support for the initiative.
- » **Financial resources:** Financial stability directly impacts an organization's ability to implement and sustain strategic initiatives over time. This category evaluates the organization's budgetary capacity, funding sources, and financial resilience to support the proposed action. Sufficient financial resources allow for smoother execution and adaptation to challenges that may arise.
- » **Staff and volunteer skills:** Skilled personnel are the backbone of any initiative, providing the knowledge and labour needed to achieve strategic goals. This category measures the availability of qualified staff and volunteers, as well as any necessary training or development. Organizations with well-prepared teams can more effectively carry out the actions outlined in the Age-Friendly Action Plan.
- » **Existing partnerships:** Collaboration with external organizations can amplify impact and provide complementary resources or expertise. This category assesses the organization's current partnerships and their alignment with the action. Strong partnerships enhance resource-sharing, innovation, and broader community engagement.



- » **Systems and infrastructure:** Having robust operational systems and infrastructure is critical for efficient and effective implementation. This category evaluates the technological, communication, and logistical systems within the organization. Reliable infrastructure enables smooth project management, tracking, and reporting, which are essential for maintaining momentum.
 - » **Readiness for change:** Openness to change and innovation is crucial when adapting to new challenges or in implementing new actions. This category measures the organization's adaptability and willingness to evolve its practices to align with the strategic goals. High readiness for change signifies a proactive, resilient approach to potential shifts in direction.
 - » **Interest holder involvement:** Engaging community interest holders creates a foundation of support, insight, and shared purpose. This category assesses the organization's level of interest holder engagement and the quality of their relationships with community members. Active interest holder involvement strengthens the relevance and responsiveness of the action.
 - » **Longevity and impact planning:** Sustainable impact requires long-term planning and a focus on continuity. This category evaluates whether the organization has strategies in place to maintain and measure the impact of the initiative over time. Organizations with clear sustainability and impact plans are more likely to achieve enduring results.
- The assessment tool should be used to identify suitable partnerships for each action in the preceding quarter to the beginning of that action's implementation period.
- For example, were an action identified to take place in 2026, identification and assessment of prospective partnerships for that action should be conducted in the last quarter of 2025. Monitoring of continued partnership capacity and interest can be conducted during Phase 3 ("Assess") of the adaptive management approach identified in **Section 3.4**.

4.0

Conclusion

Through the **Age-Friendly Cochrane Action Plan**, the Age-Friendly Steering Committee, the Town of Cochrane, and other interest holders will work to position Cochrane as an age-friendly community of choice for older adults.

The implementation framework in **Section 3.0** will support adaptation and progress towards the long-term vision through the implementation of actions, the introduction of new initiatives, and ongoing advocacy and outreach in support of age-friendly communities.

The Age-Friendly Steering Committee will revisit the **Age-Friendly Action Plan** to celebrate resulting successes and review new opportunities at the conclusion of this first five-year planning period in 2029-2030.

4.1 References

National Cancer Institute (US) – Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics. “The Curb-Cut Effect,” 2021. <https://dceg.cancer.gov/about/diversity-inclusion/inclusivity-minute/2021/curb-cut-effect>.

City of Red Deer. “Social Policy Framework,” 2015. <https://www.reddeer.ca/city-government/plans-and-projects/ongoing-plans-and-projects/social-policy-framework/>.

Statistics Canada. “Census Profile – 2016 Census of Population, Cochrane,” 2016.

—. “Census Profile – 2021 Census of Population, Cochrane,” 2021.

—. “Focus on Geography Series, 2011 Census, Cochrane,” 2011.

World Health Organization (WHO). “The WHO Age-Friendly Cities Framework,” n.d. <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/age-friendly-cities-framework/>.

