

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR AGING SERVICES

Strengthening providers and the network in the St. Louis region for the opportunities and challenges ahead

October 2025

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This project was a collective effort that could not have happened without the contributions of many people who are committed to an aging-friendly region in the St. Louis area. Special thanks to:

Design Team

The Design Team was a core part of this effort. They came together regularly between June and October 2025 to guide and shape these recommendations with their wisdom and experience.

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- **Nicole Brueggeman**, St. Louis City Senior Fund
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Providers and Other Participants

Over 90 individuals from over 60 organizations participated in this process, attending one or more events or conversations, including: Open House Convenings in July and August, a convening specifically for funders, individual and small group interviews about the details of ideas.

Consultants

This project was guided by Public Design Bureau, Liz Kramer and Annemarie Spitz.

Funders

This project was supported by St. Louis City Senior Fund and Marillac Mission Fund.

A CALL FOR STRENGTHENED INFRASTRUCTURE

RE-ENVISIONING THE NETWORK THAT PROVIDES SERVICES TO OLDER ADULTS

For decades, the systems that support older adults and their families in the St. Louis area have been under increasing pressure.

We can think about these systems in St. Louis city and county as a **network** — the continuum of services that support people as they age, including **community resources** (such as education programs, income assistance, and senior centers), **support services** (such as transportation, nutrition, and mental health), and **long-term care services** (such as case management, in-home services, and nursing homes). This network is strongest when providers are able to create a robust tapestry of support for older adults and their families.

Resources for organizations have been shrinking, most recently as a result of federal and state funding cuts, as well as policy shifts. In an August 2025 St. Louis area provider survey, 73% of respondents anticipate some level of change to their organizational budget in the next year due to federal funding changes alone; 41% reported already experiencing an impact. While these cuts may be recent, the reality is that funding for service delivery has been historically low for many years. Providers have consistently weathered budget shortfalls amid rising demand for services, increased costs, and workforce shortages.

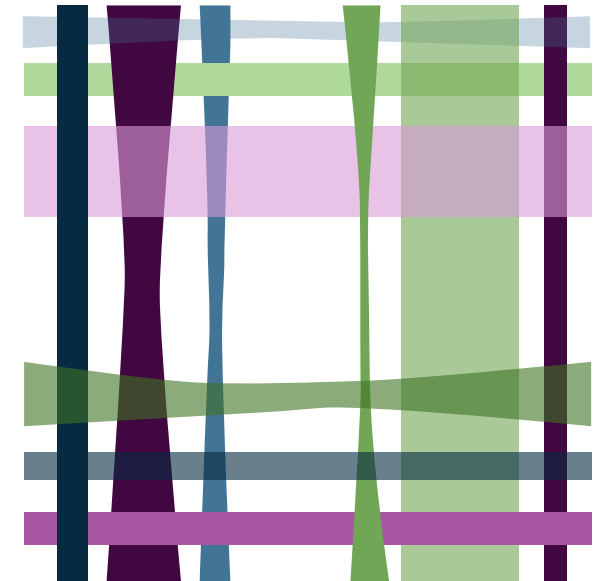
As funding has stagnated, there's been a steady growth in the aging population each year. St. Louis county and St. Louis city are home to 1,272,624 people including 245,955 people over 65 (19%). There is a significantly higher share of residents over the age of 65 compared to just 10 years ago; by 2030, one in five residents will be over 65. This is a sign of progress: people are living longer, healthier lives. Yet for some, the need for support increases or changes as they age.

Service providers across the network have responded to stagnant funding in a variety of ways including creatively developing new approaches to service, pursuing funding, creating wait lists for services, reducing breadth of services in order to serve more people, relying more on volunteers, or in some cases, closing down. The network as it is has gaps and weakened threads. Without adaptation across the network and in the way services are delivered, gaps will continue to widen and too many older adults will be without the support needed to remain active, connected, and secure.

This document advances recommendations to foster, strengthen, and sustain the infrastructure for service delivery to older adults across the St. Louis region.

These **opportunities for shared infrastructure to strengthen the network** build on the network's greatest assets—collaboration, resilience, and trust—and invites more people, organizations, and institutions to see themselves as part of the support systems for older adults and their families.

These recommendations came from a robust co-design process, spearheaded by the St. Louis City Senior Fund and Marillac Mission Fund and guided by over 90 advocates, direct service providers, funders, and board members from more than 60 different organizations. Throughout the process, people reflected together on the strengths and lessons learned from many years of creativity and shared purpose. They contributed their ideas, provided feedback, and helped shape this vision for a more resilient aging services system.



***A woven network:** The aging services network consists of many different providers that support people as they age. Over time, stagnant funding and increased need has frayed the strength of the network, leaving gaps. These gaps could increase due to federal and state policy and funding cuts.*

Through the co-design process, we heard how aging services providers have repeatedly risen to the occasion. From the COVID-19 pandemic to the May 2025 tornado, providers and community leaders have mobilized with extraordinary commitment. These experiences demonstrated both the strength of the network and the imperative to move beyond reactive crisis response toward proactive preparation.

At the heart of this effort is a foundational belief: by facing challenges together, the aging services delivery network can discover new ways to thrive.

WE ENVISION...

An aging-friendly region, where older adults and their families are able to access the services and supports they need from a robust and dynamic aging services network, made up of many diverse, trusted, and local service providers.

To live this vision, even during this time of reduced external resources, we need:

Shared infrastructure for the aging services network that allows providers to continue to do the work of service delivery, more efficiently, more resiliently, and with more support from the network.

With this support, providers can continue to lead with their expertise – exploring creative ways to meet individual and community needs, and choosing paths for their organizations that best fit their strengths and the new contexts.

We envision... Funders who support aging services are able to coordinate with each other to quickly understand and meet needs.

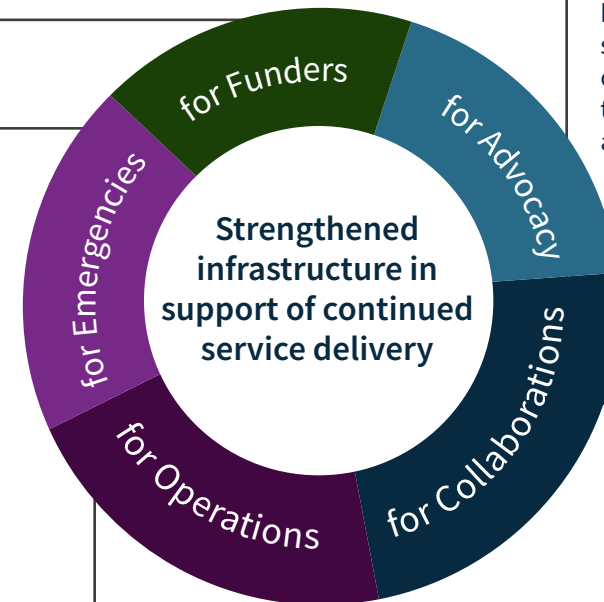
Right now, we can take a small step by committing to meeting regularly, sharing information, needs, and best practices.

We envision... Organizations, funders, policy makers, and individuals across the St. Louis region understand the importance of, and contribute to creating, an aging-friendly community.

Right now, we can take a small step by engaging a communications strategist to develop a regional campaign, and by developing talking points addressing federal and state funding cuts.

We envision... A robust infrastructure for coordinating providers and other stakeholders to ensure that older adults and their families are supported during community crises.

Right now, we can take a small step by beginning planning and coordination, learning from tornado response and recovery efforts to identify the current gaps in the response landscape for older adults.



We envision... Aging services providers have sustainable operations that support their mission and ensure ongoing services are available to older adults and their families.

Right now, we can take a small step by hosting learning sessions about different revenue models, funding planning grants, and sharing a request for information about key operational management challenges.

We envision... Aging services providers can assess, cultivate, and create a wide range of beneficial collaborations to support their work.

Right now, we can take a small step by sharing a call for interest and information, hosting a learning series about many types of collaborations, and creating a reference library of best practices and lessons learned.

CONTEXT

- Stagnant funding and policy changes
- Risks to a diverse provider network
- An aging population with varied needs and experiences

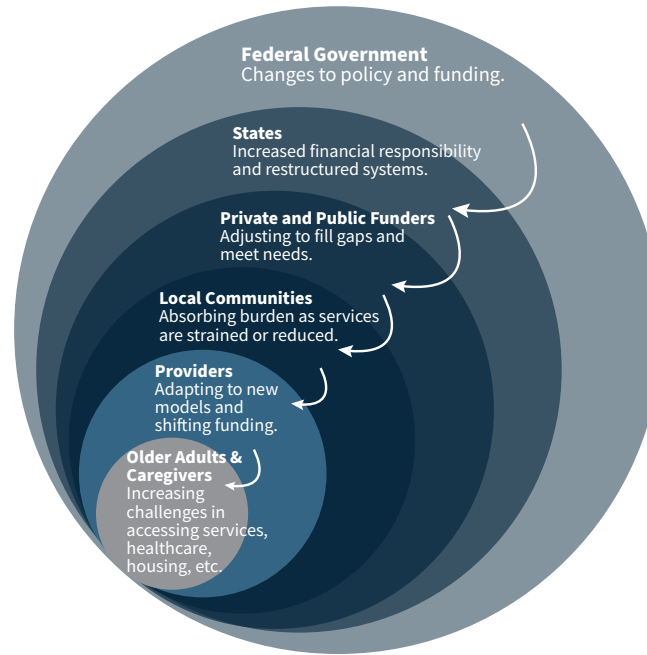
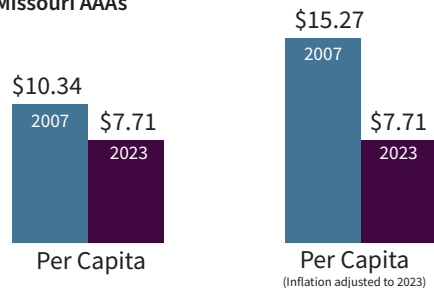
CONTEXT: STAGNANT FUNDING AND POLICY CHANGES

For decades, resources available from federal and state sources for older adults have been stagnant. In addition, recent federal and state funding cuts and policy shifts are reducing the tools and resources available to meet current and growing needs of older adults and their families.

Doing more with less

Over years, funding has not kept pace with the needs nor the costs. See the chart below for an example of how funding per capita has decreased for the Missouri Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). These changes at the state and federal level, in the context of a growing population of older adults, leads to a cascading set of pressures. From the federal level, the impact flows down, ultimately impacting older adults and their caregivers. This has contributed to provider strain: community-based organizations are doing more with less, while managing workforce shortages, rising costs, and limited reserves.

Investment Per Missourian 60+ of general revenue funding for Missouri AAAs



Current and emerging constraints

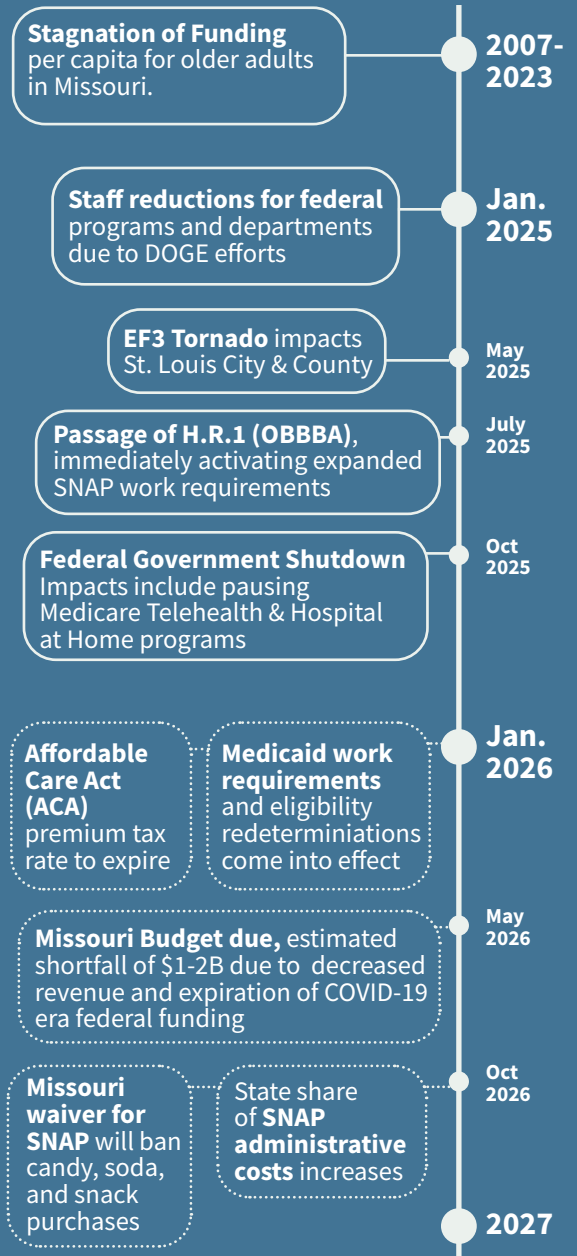
Currently, funding at the federal level is decreasing, and Missouri will have a \$1-2B budget deficit. These changes and their impacts are complex and still emerging, and will be implemented over several years – making it difficult to clearly anticipate all of the results right now. Yet overall, these changes continue to have the same downward pressure on older adults, their families, and local providers.

Public and private funders

Funders who provide grants or reimbursements for aging services have been a critical part of convening, supporting, and sustaining providers who serve older adults and their families. While there are both public and private resources dedicated to older adults and their needs, philanthropic giving for older adults is relatively small, with foundation funding that is specific to older adults making up only 1% annually in 2022. For more about public funding sources, see page 8.

Federal and State level changes

This timeline highlights some of the confirmed and anticipated changes that will impact services for older adults in the years ahead.



CONTEXT: AN AGING POPULATION WITH VARIED NEEDS AND EXPERIENCES

The needs of older adults across St. Louis city and county are varied — and increasing. The network has an opportunity and responsibility to ensure delivery systems keep pace so everyone can thrive as we age.

Older adults have very different experiences of aging, based on their financial resources, community resources, and location. Income distribution demonstrates that increased pressure on even a small number of older adults could increase the number of people in need of support to meet their basic needs.

ELDER Economic Index

Minimum annual income for basic needs for a single person

	County	City
Good Health - Rents	\$26,004	\$25,680
Good Health - With Mortgage	\$36,300	\$32,928
Good Health - No Mortgage	\$24,492	\$22,524
Poor Health - Rents	\$28,164	\$27,840
Poor Health - With Mortgage	\$38,460	\$35,088
Poor Health - No Mortgage	\$26,652	\$24,684

An aging population

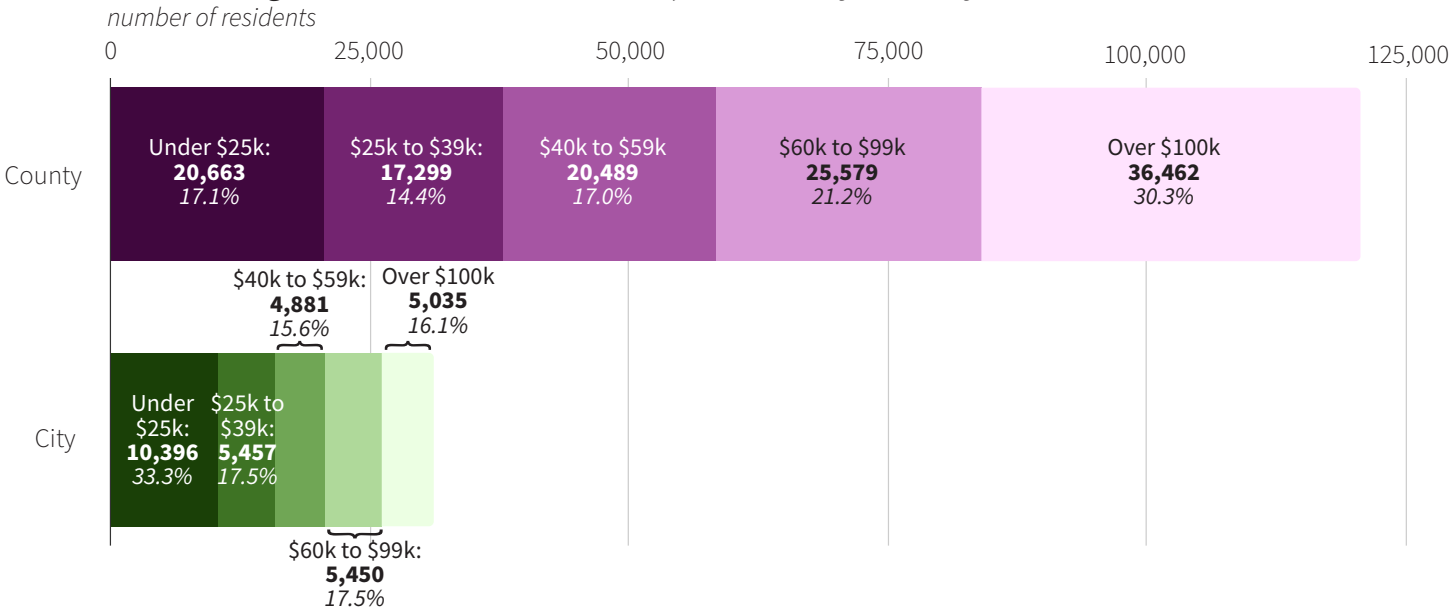
St. Louis county and St. Louis city together are home to 1,272,624 people including 245,955 people over 65 (19%). While total population across these areas has decreased in the past ten years, there is a significantly higher share of residents over the age of 65 compared to just 10 years ago. By 2030, one in five residents will be over 65.

With a wide range of needs

The experiences of older adults in the region are varied. Impacted by economic security, access to family and community support, geography, race, health, and more, no two older adults will have the same constellation of needs.

Right now, providers are rightly and appropriately positioned to support older adults who are particularly vulnerable, perhaps because they have few financial resources, or because they need additional support beyond what their family or friends can provide.

Householders aged 65+: Annual income in 2023, St. Louis City & County



CONTEXT: AN AGING POPULATION WITH VARIED NEEDS AND EXPERIENCES

Increased pressures on older adults

As the delivery systems experience pressure, there may be more older adults who need support. Increases to out-of-pocket costs and other policy changes could tip some older adults towards requiring more services. See examples of how these changes might impact older adults to the right.

A robust network to support varied needs

Some providers are already turning away people or putting them on long wait lists. If more older adults need services, this could quickly overwhelm current providers — especially if they are addressing the need alone, without the network.

Many older adult services are highly specialized. To meet the wide range of needs and experiences of older adults, the network of aging services providers needs to be robust, well-connected, and sustainable in the long-term.

6,091

householders 65+ living in owner-occupied housing in the city and the county do not have access to a vehicle

14,134

householders 65+ who rent in the city and the county do not have access to a vehicle

Changes to SNAP requirements may mean that more people lose their food benefits — requiring them to utilize other services to prevent hunger.

21,224

people over 60 in the region receive support through SNAP

1,863

number of older adults that the city and county AAAs anticipate serving with transportation in 2025

Older adults who rely on family members or friends for rides may lose access to transportation as people face new pressures and competing priorities.

43%

of city households who receive HUD assistance have a householder 62+

36%

of county households who receive HUD assistance have a householder 62+

Changes to housing supports and programs may lead to more individuals needing case management and financial assistance to ensure they remain housed.

Older adults may face increasing costs for health insurance coverage before they are eligible for Medicare, impacting their ability to access timely care or meet other basic needs.

22,775

adults ages 55-64 in the city and the county face increased costs to their ACA insurance plans if tax credits end

\$880 to over \$14,000

range of potential annual increase in cost for ACA premiums if credits end for a single adult

2 in 25

seniors in Missouri rely on Medicaid and may be at risk of losing coverage

A CALL FOR STRENGTHENED INFRASTRUCTURE

A choice of response

If we do nothing to face this context and proactively respond, we will soon be facing a larger crisis, particularly as federal changes phase in over the next two years and the state budget crisis deepens.

While funders across the region remain committed, public and philanthropic funding cannot keep pace to replace the federal and state cuts at scale.

Stagnant funding and increasing need will further fray the strands of the network. Some providers may not be able to sustain their work. Others may need to scale-back or reduce their services to meet constraints. Overall, the network will have less ability to meet our region's needs.

Instead of being resigned to this future, the aging services network is called to action. These services are too critical not to work proactively to protect them. Together we can take action, and find strength in working toward change.

Now is the time to deepen our commitment to each other and work proactively to strengthen the aging services network so it can continue to ensure older adults have access to the services they need in our communities.

This document outlines opportunities for infrastructure to strengthen the network, developed from the collective ideas of providers, funders, and advocates.

This process has highlighted the strengths of the aging services network, including providers' rich diversity, deep expertise, and steadfast commitment to service for older adults and their families. It has also exposed a gap: **shared infrastructure to support the operational wellbeing of the overall network.** There's a strategic imperative to invest in this infrastructure.

The sections of this document outline a vision for shared infrastructure to support the work of providers across the aging services network. Each recommended component is described in some detail, but with enough flexibility to invite new potential partners and champions into the creation and implementation process. Suggested short-term next steps are included as well—not as a check list but as a call to participate in the re-imagining of the network's infrastructure to meet the opportunities and challenges ahead.

We hope that you see many places where you could plug in as a participant, a supporter, and/or a leader. No one can do this alone, and we look forward to achieving the work ahead—together.

Our Shared Commitment

As the aging services network responds to this moment, it's clear that no single idea or actor can solve these challenges alone.

Working together, we can proactively build a system that is resilient by embracing these principles:

Radical acceptance:

We will face today's realities honestly and constructively.

Urgent optimism:

We will recognize challenges and act with determination to create solutions.

Momentum building:

We will take coordinated steps that aggregate into large-scale progress.

Future-focused learning:

We will anticipate change, test new ideas, and scale what works.

Coalition convening:

We will collaborate with those who are ready, while continually inviting others to join in.

Commitment to service:

We will maintain our focus on providing high-quality, impactful services for older adults and their families, so people can age with dignity in St. Louis city and county.

CO-DESIGN PROCESS

An iterative process, guided by a Design Team with diverse positions within the aging services network

CO-DESIGN: A COLLABORATIVE, ACTION-ORIENTED PROCESS

These recommendations were developed through a collaborative process that actively invited providers, funders, and stakeholders in the aging services network to use their expertise and experience to make shared decisions about what should happen next.

PARTICIPANTS FROM ACROSS THE NETWORK

Design Team to guide, inform, and recommend

A core part of this process was the Design Team. This group came together regularly between June and October 2025 to understand opportunities, generate and assess ideas, create prototypes, and refine recommendations. They provided their expertise as people with experience in various organizations and parts of the aging services network.



Design Team members (Christine Hustedde not pictured).



Open House Convening participants, July 2025.

With support from the facilitation team, the Design Team carefully assessed input from providers, funders, and other stakeholders. Their in-depth discussions sought to identify recommendations that would strengthen the network, have a high-quality impact on older adults, and would be applicable to the diverse organizations and conditions across St. Louis city and county.

Involvement of providers, funders, and other stakeholders

Beyond the Design Team, there were opportunities for many other voices to contribute, sharing experiences of the network, ideas, and feedback. Three Open House Convenings were hosted in July and August, bringing 80 different individuals from over 50 different organizations together. Two additional gatherings were held for specific audiences: funders in September and executive directors and board members in October.



Design Team members reviewing ideas, September 2025.

In addition to the convenings, more than 20 individuals (including members of the Design Team) participated in interviews to give more detailed feedback on recommendations.

CO-DESIGN: A COLLABORATIVE, ACTION-ORIENTED PROCESS

PROJECT PHASES

An iterative sprint responding to current context

This project was designed as a sprint, leading quickly to recommendations. The timing of the project — starting in June and ending in October — was designed to respond to the current and emerging challenges and impact of federal and state funding changes on regional service delivery for those 60+.

The co-design effort was specifically designed to be iterative, with each step and phase building on and learning from the previous phase. The process began with understanding the opportunities and priorities in the aging services network, including exploring the strengths of the network.

Beginning with opportunities

Early on, both Design Team members and participants in open sessions shared more about how they thought about the network. These conversations helped to shape early opportunities. The Design Team then prioritized the opportunities, identifying a smaller set that could advance the network during these challenges.



Open House Convening participants, July 2025.

Generating and refining ideas

An initial set of 16 opportunities (framed as questions) were used as prompts to bring in ideas — new and old. Participants in an Open House Convening and members of the Design Team generated over 100 ideas, ranging in size, scale, and feasibility. The Design Team then assessed and prioritized a smaller set of ideas to develop into more robust concepts that could move forward into deeper discussion. The Design Team provided substantial input, raising questions about how these ideas could be most impactful.

Ultimately, eight ideas were developed into prototypes—tangible drafts of an idea. Providers and stakeholders gave feedback at an Open House Convening, as well as through interviews and a funder-specific convening. The Design Team assessed all this feedback, and shaped refinements and prioritization of the ideas.

Developing actionable recommendations and pilots

In the final phase of this effort, the Design Team and the facilitation team developed this document, capturing the recommendations in detail to provide a roadmap for those who will take on this important work in the months and years ahead. The Design Team identified opportunities to pilot the recommendations that would support scaled-down, temporary, and/or lower-risk versions of the recommendations to help build momentum.

Of all of the ideas considered during this process, the Design Team recommends 7 immediate-term components because each piece represents an important need within the aging services network.



Design Team members in discussion, August 2025.

Following this process, it is up to funders, providers, and other stakeholders to move these recommendations forward into meaningful change.



Open House Convening participants, August 2025.

PROPOSED COMPONENTS

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FUNDERS

Regional Funder Coordination & Targeted Leadership

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ADVOCACY

Awareness Campaign Focused on the St. Louis Region

Expanded Advocacy to Lawmakers

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR OPERATIONS

Revenue Diversification Support

Short-Term, Intensive Operations Support

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR COLLABORATION

Collaboration Cultivation Assistance

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR EMERGENCIES

Emergency Response Teams Infrastructure for Older Adults

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FUNDERS

RECOMMENDATION

Regional Funder Coordination & Targeted Leadership

REGIONAL FUNDER COORDINATION & TARGETED LEADERSHIP



Funders who support the aging service network strengthen their connections and collaborations through ongoing gatherings and coordination of funding.

WHAT DOES THIS INCLUDE?

Ongoing informal funder gatherings

Regular, in-person gatherings of funders help foster and sustain working relationships across funding organizations. The goal of these gatherings is maintenance of relationships and sharing information across the group. Funders share information and coordinate as needed, and use their connections to introduce and welcome new funders of aging services into the network by apprising them of current work and needs. Over time, the connections and relationships grow.

As appropriate, short-term cycles of coordination and leadership around a targeted challenge

A single funder can propose convening a table around a specific issue that aligns with the shared priorities of multiple other funders. Participants might be existing funders in aging services, as well as new potential funders within or outside of the region. The convening funder brings existing research, policy analysis, or other supports to pre-set the table about the issue. The group publicly commits to work toward one or more tangible, specific actions, within a set time frame (not more than 5 years). These actions might include joint RFPs, clear braiding of funding, or other mechanisms. This group will seek to cultivate new funding sources or revenue models to sustain the action long-term.

Coordination in times of crisis

Building on the relationships between funders, funders coordinate as needed to respond to emergent crisis situations faced by grantees. As needed, funders work together to determine how to respond to these crises in potent and sustainable ways.

Policy analysis and communication

A funder leads sharing materials about the impacts of policy change on providers, such as coordinating speakers, sharing resources, or hosting discussions. These efforts seek to align policy and advocacy-related activities, and help bridge gaps between policy decisions and providers, so providers have the information they need to act. Providers have opportunities to share what they need to know, and the funder leading this policy analysis work is responsive to the questions and concerns of providers.

REGIONAL FUNDER COORDINATION & TARGETED LEADERSHIP

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Funders currently in the aging services network (and beyond) sometimes work in coordination with each other, sharing information and collaborating on funding alignment. However, there's opportunity for funders to be more aligned and synchronized, supporting a more nimble response to the needs within the network, and allowing for collective learning across funders.

WHAT SHOULD THIS FEEL LIKE?

Funders should feel like they are deepening their understanding of and connection to other funders working in the aging services space. Providers should feel like funders are strengthening their coordination and collaboration, and that funders are committed to their partnerships with providers to do the urgent work in the region.

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

Success in this effort would be seen through:

- Funders work together to amplify an issue that is impacting provider services and/or the older adult population
- Funders step up to facilitate and convene other funders as well as providers
- Expanded connections and coordination between funders
- Greater feeling amongst providers that funders are coordinated in their response to needs in the network

WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED?

Partners for success include:

Missouri Based Funders/Funder Groups

- Aging Ahead
- Affordable Housing Commission, City of St. Louis
- Aging in Equity (MMF)
- Charless Foundation
- Deaconess Foundation
- Incarnate Word Foundation
- Lutheran Foundation of St. Louis
- Marillac Mission Fund
- Missouri Foundation for Health
- Philanthropy Missouri
- St. Louis Area Agency on Aging
- St. Louis City Senior Fund
- St. Louis Community Foundation

Out-of-State/National Funder Groups

- AARP Foundation
- Grantmakers in Aging (GIA)
- John A. Hartford Foundation
- Next50
- RRF Foundation for Aging

EXAMPLES TO LEARN FROM

Senior Support Team

Through pooled funding for a Senior Support Team, funders aligned with the St. Louis City Senior Fund to support critical needs related to the May 16, 2025 tornado. The funds this group brought to the table were some of the first dollars available before local, state, and federal resources reached the ground. This money was available because funders united and quickly made funds accessible, following a plan quickly framed by the Senior Fund. The plan was distributed to local funders, who quickly and generously participated. The Senior Fund acted as the intermediary. This example relied on funders having ongoing relationships with each other.

REGIONAL FUNDER COORDINATION & TARGETED LEADERSHIP

WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDED FIRST STEPS?

Sooner

Host a series of informal funder gatherings

On a quarterly basis, host informal gatherings for funders in the aging services network, building on past funder convenings with slightly more formalization. Make explicit and targeted invitations to other funders who do not currently fund in aging services, but who work in adjacent areas. Invite one or two organizations to give brief presentations about their work to help ground and connect to the work of providers. Share best practice resources such as Grantmakers in Aging's Better with Age: A Guide to Funding in a Longevity Society.

Rolling opportunity for questions about federal, state, or local policy changes

Create a place (such as an open survey, an email inbox, or a phone number) for providers and agencies to ask questions about how to navigate the policy changes that are impacting their work. Questions could be very specific, focused on a specific policy, or broader, asking for the implications of a full set of policy changes and how to navigate them.

Host presentations or other trainings for providers and funders to understand policy changes

As relevant, work with groups like the Missouri Council on Aging, Missouri Budget Project, Cover Missouri, and AARP to host learning opportunities for both providers and funders to learn more about emerging policy changes and how they will impact their work. Select sessions and presenters that respond to the needs and questions identified by providers.

Later

Convening a funder table in response to organizational interest

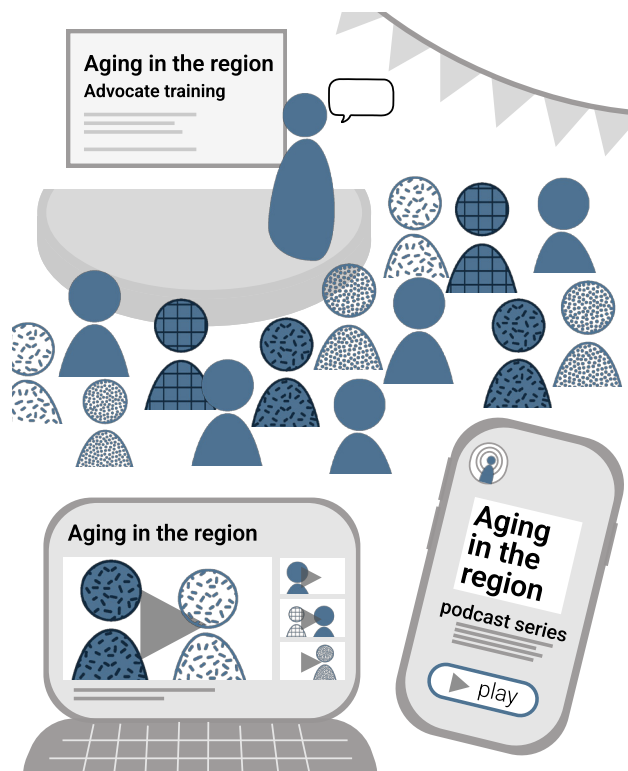
For select opportunities, convene funders to respond to the interests of aging service providers. For example, if a number of aging service providers express interest in developing new revenue models, convene a group of funders to discuss and strategically support the development of those models.

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ADVOCACY

RECOMMENDATIONS

Awareness Campaign Focused on the St. Louis Region
Expanded Advocacy to Lawmakers

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN FOCUSED ON THE ST. LOUIS REGION



A campaign that invites organizations, funders, policy makers, and individuals across the St. Louis region to understand the importance of creating an aging-friendly community and to contribute within their own spheres of influence to make St. Louis a good place to be an older adult.

WHAT DOES THIS INCLUDE?

This regional awareness campaign should be designed to reach people in St. Louis city and county broadly — across age, income, and geography. This might take on particular issues, such as housing, home and community-based services, economic security, or food, or might more broadly look at the experiences of older adults and their families.

Clear talking points aligned with Reframing Aging principles

This clear set of messages and talking points that can be widely used by older adult service providers, funders, and advocates to invite new partners into the conversation is developed and widely deployed. These talking points use the principles from Reframing Aging, while also emphasizing the universal experience and impact of aging on individuals and families in our region. The messages also have a call to action that invite people to make decisions that consider aging in the roles they hold—from their community to across the region — and to learn more about the resources available.

Accessible and on-message collateral material including stories and data that can be widely distributed

The messages and talking points are supported by collateral in a variety of formats that highlight the stories and data about older adults in the St. Louis region. This material is available for a range of people and organizations to use to reach specific partners and audiences. The material might include reports, social media posts, PSAs, podcasts, short videos, or other formats. This material could be compiled into an accessible toolkit, with a variety of messaging tools to reach different audiences.

A series of ongoing events or programs that help build a coalition around aging in the region

To reach a broad range of people, there is an ongoing series of events to help raise awareness and invite new people into the conversation about aging. These events might include informational webinars, panel discussions, speakers, film screenings, and other creative formats.

Timeline aligned with the St. Louis County Seniors Count campaign

The regional awareness campaign should be aligned with the effort to pass a senior levy in St. Louis County. The Seniors Count campaign will develop and implement their education campaign starting in October 2025 and continuing through August 2026.

Organized advocates to champion the needs of older adults

A cohort of older adults and advocates, including family members and providers, are trained to lobby for the needs and issues of older adults. These individuals regularly go to decision-making bodies in the St. Louis region and speak for the needs of older adults — whether in formal settings like public testimony or in more informal contexts. This group would include existing advocates, giving them additional tools to share their messages.

Coordinated public dissemination pieces

To help bring attention to the campaign and its work, a coordinated series of op-eds, articles, and other strategic public dissemination should help inform the public and officials about the efforts to create an aging-friendly St. Louis.

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN FOCUSED ON THE ST. LOUIS REGION

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Currently, the experiences of aging and the needs and contributions of older adults and their families are often forgotten or ignored by individuals and organizations. From region-wide planning efforts to individual decisions in community institutions to funding from public and private sources, there are many potential partners that could be building support for older adults into their everyday work, while also recognizing the impact that aging may have on them, their families, and their neighbors.

The Missouri Master Plan on Aging draft calls for elevated awareness in a variety of different ways, including making sure Missourians are aware of what resources are available to them, such as in the cross-cutting theme **Communicating and Public Awareness**: “Many Missourians are unaware of existing support available to them. Organized outreach, plain language materials, and culturally responsive communication are needed across all domains.” In addition, the Master Plan recommends supporting workforce recruitment and retention, including through the action item “Rebrand aging and caregiving fields through public media workforce recruitment campaigns which highlight the benefits of caregiving careers and the various training options available.”

WHAT SHOULD THIS FEEL LIKE?

This campaign should help all people, of every age, feel like they are part of creating an aging-friendly region. The campaign should make it clear that everyone has a role to play, and invite people in to find the way they can contribute and participate.

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

Success in this effort would be seen through:

- Engagement with campaign materials
- Expanded awareness and referencing to the specific needs and strengths of older adults in ongoing work in the region
- Cross-sector engagement
- Small “p” policy implementation to advance aging and family-centered caregiving roles across institutions at a variety of scales

WHO COULD BE INVOLVED?

Potential partners for success include:

- City of St. Louis
- St. Louis County
- Area Agencies on Aging
- Missouri Council on Aging
- St. Louis County Seniors Count campaign team
- Existing storytelling efforts, including podcasts led by VOYCE and Aging Ahead
- Missouri Senior Report at the University of Missouri
- Gateway Business Health Coalition
- Greater St. Louis, Inc.
- Ameren
- Spire
- Hospital systems
- Harvey A. Friedman Center for Aging, WashU
- Family Center for Healthy Aging, SLU

EXAMPLES TO LEARN FROM *Early Childhood Research and Effort*

Since 2014, a variety of efforts across the St. Louis region have focused on the challenges with early childhood education, including limited availability, high costs, high turnover, and heavily biased and unbalanced infrastructure across the region. Calls from efforts like For the Sake of All (2014) and the Ferguson Commission report (2015) pointed to early childhood as an area that needed attention, and a series of in-depth efforts, including The First Step to Equity (2018) and the Playbook: Reimagined and Redesigned Early Childhood Education (2020) pointed towards key recommendations. Throughout, public awareness through events, report releases, social media shared by partnered organizations, and organized advocates helped raise awareness across the region. In 2021, a steering committee was founded to help coordinate the system.

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN FOCUSED ON THE ST. LOUIS REGION

WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDED FIRST STEPS?

Sooner

Engage a communications strategist to develop a regional campaign

Following the launch of the St. Louis County Seniors Count campaign for a county senior levy, engage a communication strategist to develop an ongoing, region-wide campaign that coordinates with and builds on the existing process. This strategist is charged with developing messaging and platforms for the region-wide campaign.

Platforms should include social media, awareness materials, events, and more traditional media channels, and should help the campaign connect with other funders, hospitals and healthcare systems, and municipal governments and decision-making bodies. The regional campaign should strategically integrate existing efforts, like the podcasts hosted by VOYCE (We're at the Age) and by Aging Ahead (Always Aging Ahead).

Create a series of data-driven reports that inform the need

To support an awareness strategy, develop a concise report or series of reports that demonstrate the need in the region. These reports may be focused on specific areas of high need as a result of federal and state changes, such as economic security, housing, utilities, or community-based services. This might include highlighting research and efforts already underway at local institutions. Robust data and storytelling could offer value to providers in understanding the changing context, while also providing a grounding to inform the development of a regional campaign.

EXPANDED ADVOCACY TO LAWMAKERS



Tools and support for providers and individuals in the St. Louis region to connect their experiences, needs, and desires to the motivations of federal, state, and local lawmakers, influencing policy.

WHAT DOES THIS INCLUDE?

Messaging and material that is specific to the attention and interest of lawmakers

Lawmakers, particularly at the state level, are often moved by specific constituent stories, while also emphasizing the importance of using public resources efficiently and effectively. With limited attention, short, digestible material is critical to reach them and their staff.

Messaging in this campaign should build on the regional education campaign, highlighting the universality of aging and using Reframing Aging principles. In addition, this campaign should also highlight the economic value of strategies that keep older adults in their homes through community-based services (as opposed to moving older adults to expensive care facilities), and how social services support can save money by keeping people out of emergency conditions. Stories should highlight the experiences of both older adults and their families. This may include reports that illustrate the economic value of home and community-based services, demonstrating the cost-saving impact of providers in the region.

Flexible to address a variety of policy changes

These messages and materials should be flexible, given that the policy threats and opportunities are likely to continue to rapidly change. From supporting funding for social services to maintaining property taxes to keeping benefits navigation offices open, advocates need messages that can help address the most pressing challenge.

Tools that can be utilized by a variety of advocacy groups

The tools and messages created should be usable by a range of advocacy groups, from individual constituents to providers to Silver Haired Legislature members. For some potential advocates, additional training and support may be necessary to give them confidence to participate in advocacy, such as the training that Missouri Council on Aging (MCoA) has led.

Advocate consortium of regional groups that are trained and ready to engage

Building on existing efforts, regularly convene providers, advocates, and older adults to align on advocacy efforts at the local, state, and federal level. Participants in these groups should be trained to effectively advocate. Meetings bring participants up to speed on pressing policy issues so they can effectively bring their stories and talking points to lawmakers.

EXPANDED ADVOCACY TO LAWMAKERS

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Much of the advocacy for issues impacting older adults is statewide, and there are opportunities to better connect local providers, older adults, and their families from St. Louis city and county into advocacy to federal, state, and local lawmakers. This effort is meant to be specific to the priority needs of St. Louis city and county, while complementing other statewide and national efforts to reach lawmakers.

WHAT SHOULD THIS FEEL LIKE?

This campaign and effort should feel accessible to providers and individuals who want to reach their lawmakers. The messages should be easy to share and sufficiently vetted to reach lawmakers who may not understand the full system.

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

Success in this effort would be seen through:

- Increased participation in advocacy to lawmakers by individuals and providers

WHO COULD BE INVOLVED?

Potential partners for success include:

- Missouri Council on Aging (MCoA)
- Missouri Association of Area Agencies on Aging
- Missouri Budget Project
- Missouri Foundation for Health
- Empower Missouri
- Silver Haired Legislature
- Health Literacy Missouri
- St. Louis Aging and Behavioral Health Council
- Breakthrough Coalition
- AARP, including statewide initiatives
- City of St. Louis
- St. Louis County

EXAMPLES TO LEARN FROM *Learning Circles (the Praxis Project)*

Praxis Learning Circles bring grassroots organizations together from across the country to share expertise, build relationships, encourage community-building, discuss tools and experiences, and engage in capacity building opportunities to strengthen community organizing. Learning Circles have a specific topic, selected and guided by the needs and priorities of grassroots, base-building organizations. There is in-depth programming for participants that includes facilitated workshops, lectures, discussions, and applications of skills.

EXPANDED ADVOCACY TO LAWMAKERS

WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDED FIRST STEPS?

Sooner

Develop talking points addressing state issues for the 2026 session

Aligned with ongoing work, create a concise set of talking points that address proposed changes in the 2026 legislative session, including proposed eliminations of property taxes and cuts to social services. Distribute the talking points widely to providers and older adults.

Learning circle for providers to build advocacy skills and power

Convene a small group of providers from the St. Louis region to help them develop as organizers and advocates. Through meetings, trainings, and shared wisdom, help providers gain confidence, understand approaches and talking points for advocacy, and reach decision makers in Missouri to advocate for aging services.

Later

Update and create evergreen printed material that shares information about the needs of older adults in the St. Louis region

Building on the efforts of the county levy campaign and the regional awareness push, update and/or create printed material that is targeted at lawmakers to help them understand the key needs in the St. Louis region. These materials might be focused on one or more specific issue areas, particularly things that might be impacted by changes in the Missouri budget.

Expand and strengthen existing advocacy consortium efforts

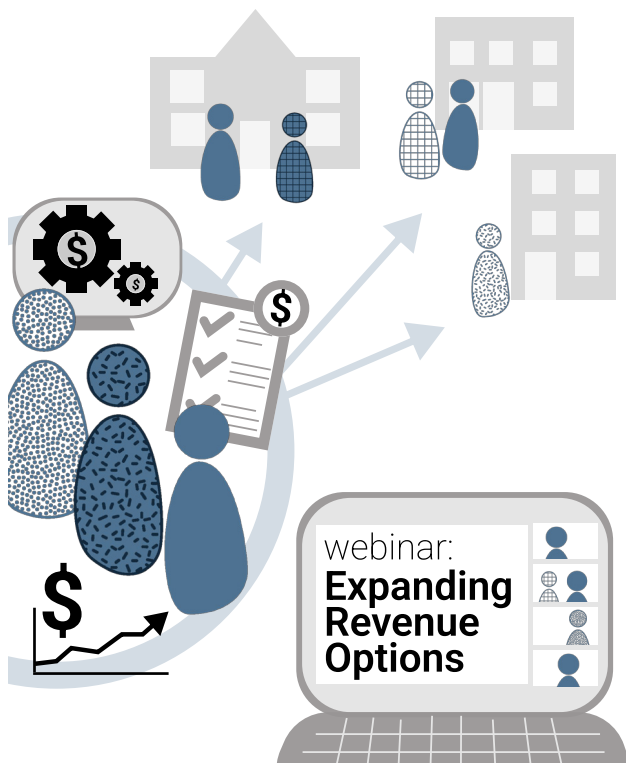
Build on the existing advocacy efforts to convene providers, advocates, and older adults to work in a coordinated way towards advocacy.

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR OPERATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Revenue Diversification Support
Short-Term, Intensive Operations Support

REVENUE DIVERSIFICATION SUPPORT



For organizations that want to diversify their streams of revenue, a set of trainings and resources help them to assess, develop, and sustain an approach to new revenue.

WHAT DOES THIS INCLUDE?

On-going education and training about a full suite of revenue source options

Trainings and education series help organizations understand the opportunities for different revenue streams, including billing to healthcare systems or payers, developing social enterprises, sliding scale payments, or other structures.

A team of experts who work with organizations to design new revenue systems

This team would help educate organizations (including their boards) about options and then strategically select, build, and operationalize fee-for-service and/or sliding-scale payments for some of their services to help supplement organizational revenue.

Part of this process would include assessing what capacity the organization has available, what services could generate revenue, and trade-offs of different payment options. As relevant, organizations may also explore opportunities to shift their service delivery model to serve more people or to have sustained impact with their available capacity. This may include expanding the population they work with to include people who aren't the current target of services, such as providing preventative services or reaching individuals who may not typically access services through a nonprofit.

Designing revenue systems would also involve carefully considering the organization's mission and culture to ensure that any new structures still advance the mission. New revenue streams would be designed to scale over time, iteratively testing different approaches and models while building an organization's capacity to manage it long-term.

Vetted tools and technology

Organizations would have access to resources that help with payment, accounting, and compliance, including training, vetted technology tools, and even trained individuals. These resources might be available short-term until an organization has capacity to manage internally, or longer-term to enable focus on a core mission.

One promising new revenue stream: Community Care Hubs

Several organizations are currently pursuing a structure to increase revenue from healthcare systems, where a nonprofit organization provides the centralized administrative and operational infrastructure between healthcare payors, providers, and community-based organizations that provide social services. This model, known nationally as a Community Care Hub, assigns the role of intermediary to a service delivery organization, who then contracts with healthcare payors and organizations that provide services.

This model utilizes the whole-person health goals that healthcare payors and providers support, including value-based care models where payment incentivizes outcomes. This means that healthcare organizations are seeking services that are high quality and meet other, non-healthcare needs, such as nutrition, mental health supports, care coordination, transportation services, and housing supports.

The complexity of managing a contract and payment from a healthcare organization is more than many community-based organizations can manage, so the Community Care Hub model provides the strategic planning, contracting, referral, payment operations, information systems, data collection, and reporting needed to successfully execute these relationships.

REVENUE DIVERSIFICATION SUPPORT

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Currently, more than half of the organizations who responded to a 2025 St. Louis area providers survey report that 35% or less of their budget comes from fee-for-service or reimbursement. Further, over 70% of organizations state that they have less than 5 months of operating cash reserves. When organizations are highly dependent on grant funding (whether from private funders or from government sources), there is more risk when funding is uncertain. This set of tools, resources, and programs is meant to help support organizations to develop new delivery models that diversify funding streams utilizing the strengths and assets of an organization, offering more stability and resilience to funding changes over time to the whole aging services network.

WHAT SHOULD THIS FEEL LIKE?

Using any new infrastructure requires time and attention from staff, so building new revenue streams or changing service delivery models requires that people are able to focus on the changing structure. Funding to help ensure staff attention is critical to success.

Within nonprofits, there can sometimes be cultural resistance to having payment options, as there's a desire for clients to be able to access services, no matter their ability to pay or the source of the payment. These supports need to be carefully designed to help ensure that new revenue structures do not create barriers or stigma for the people who need services, and mitigate bias that may come with differing payment structures.

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

Success in this effort would be seen through:

- Organizations who participate are able to successfully tap into new revenue streams and sustain service delivery
- Clients who are not part of the groups that traditionally rely on the safety net are able to receive services from trusted local partners

WHO COULD BE INVOLVED?

Potential partners for success include:

- Healthcare intermediary organizations, such as St. Louis Integrated Health Network
- Local funders, including the AAAs and private funders
- Aging service providers that have successfully changed their models
- Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
- Hospital systems
- MO HealthNet

EXAMPLES TO LEARN FROM

Social Enterprise Accelerator Cohort

Propel Nonprofits, 2022

This cohort program for Minnesota nonprofits helped support organizations that had recently launched or were on the brink of launching new social enterprise initiatives. Participants were able to network with peers and coaches in a cohort setting to refine the business plan and implementation of their project. The program included six sessions with expert business consulting and technical assistance and a planning and implementation grant to support staff time for piloting, equipment, or other services.

Mid-America Community Support Network

Mid-America Regional Council

MARC (the AAA for the Kansas City, MO region) is launching an initial hub, or backbone organization for coordination services. This organization, known as the Community Support Network (CSN), will provide system assessment, referral, technical assistance, billing & reimbursement, and performance standards, serving as the bridge between social service providers and payors and community agencies providing services.

REVENUE DIVERSIFICATION SUPPORT

WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDED FIRST STEPS?

Sooner

Educational opportunity for organizations

Host learning opportunities for organizations to learn from peers that have pursued different models for revenue generation and/or participation in Community Care Hubs. For example, a panel discussion with organizational leaders who will candidly share the challenges and processes for expanding revenue generation can help others imagine how their organization might engage. The panel should include representation from organizations of different sizes, and should highlight different models, including private pay, sliding scale, Community Care Hubs, suggested donation, or other options. A workshop focused on best practices, with practical tools and assessments for organizations to understand their own readiness and next steps, would also support building capacity across service providers.

Call for information and interest

Open a request for information to hear from organizations that are considering or in early stages of developing their own revenue generation models. This request is meant to understand where there might be cohorts of organizations that could be supported in their development. This call may be merged with other calls for information. The call should ask for sufficient detail to understand the models that organizations are interested in, what their barriers are to developing a new model, and who from their team could participate in further development.

Learning cohort and planning support for Community Care Hubs

Provide organizations with planning grants and cohort support to involve them in emerging Community Care Hub development. These organizations may be recruited within one sector, such as mental health or food, or could be from a wider variety of domains. Organizations would participate in a learning cohort to understand best practices while beginning to plan for their organization's involvement in a Care Hub. Planning would involve coaching and collaboration with a specific intermediary organization, helping to build trust and connections.

Later

Targeted grants for planning and piloting delivery of services through a Community Care Hub model

Provide grants to organizations to develop and pilot providing services through a Community Care Hub model. The organizations, who work within a specific domain area, would be funded to both plan for providing services in this model and for actually providing the services, with the service funding passing through a Community Care Hub intermediary. The grants would be tied to a value-based care payment model, where services are provided and paid for based on the results — including quality, equity, and cost of care. This effort is meant to demonstrate success to other payors while also building the needed infrastructure to operationalize a Community Care Hub.

Cohort program for revenue generation models

Depending on the feedback from the Call for Information and Interest, open one or two funded cohort programs to support organizations in planning and launching new revenue models. This could involve one cohort with organizations pursuing a variety of models (such as private pay, fee-for-service, social enterprise, or others), or could include two cohorts with different foci, or other characteristics.

The cohort program should include funding for staff planning time, technical assistance from other organizations who have succeeded at this work in the past, and opportunities for cohort members to learn from each other.

SHORT-TERM, INTENSIVE OPERATIONS SUPPORT



Trusted, confidential, and highly targeted resources for organizations to help them identify and resolve inefficiencies in back-office operations.

WHAT DOES THIS INCLUDE?

Assessment of a specific, targeted problem

Organizations are able to access support from a confidential and trusted coach or mentor who can help them sort through a specific operational problem. Examples might include how to build cash reserves, how to create budget scenarios, or how to involve board members in financial oversight.

Limited on-going support with systems

After an organization works to improve the efficiencies in their back-office work, they can then access ongoing support to ensure their systems keep working for a transition period. This might include six months of follow-up calls to talk through problems that arise, or a series of short site visits to review the improvements in-process.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

The specialization of some older adult services organizations can lead to organizations that are most focused on providing services, without having the capacity and attention to pay to their operations. Yet, with coaching, support, and systems development, many organizations can successfully manage their back-office tasks. This is particularly the case for things like understanding and making budgets, and creating scenarios of potential financial outcomes.

WHAT SHOULD THIS FEEL LIKE?

Organizations who have chosen to participate in this should feel like they are empowered to manage their own operations, and that they have the support, tools, and resources to do so.

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

Success in this effort would be seen through:

- Participating organizations report less time and attention dedicated to managing back-office operations
- Participating organizations are able to maintain their own operations long-term

EXAMPLES TO LEARN FROM *Nonprofit Founders Bootcamp*

Community Capital Fund of Kansas City

The Nonprofit Founders Bootcamp focuses on nonprofits with less than \$50,000 in revenue. NPFB is a cohort-based, 1.5-day experience that blends group learning with personalized guidance. Each participant receives dedicated 1:1 mentor time with experienced nonprofit and community leaders who understand the challenges of starting small. The program emphasizes practical and actionable takeaways—templates, checklists, and proven strategies participants can use immediately. To honor their time and commitment, each founder also receives a \$500 stipend upon completion, underscoring the value of their leadership and lived experience.

SHORT-TERM, INTENSIVE OPERATIONS SUPPORT

WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDED FIRST STEPS?

Sooner

Call for information and interest

Open a request for information to hear from organizations that are challenged by their operations management. This request is meant to understand what organizations might benefit from a structure like this, and what considerations and criteria are important to design a system that works for them. This could be combined with other calls.

Later

Support a small number of organizations with their needs

Based on the feedback received from organizations, offer support for a specific set of operational needs for a limited time (such as six months) for a small group of organizations. If relevant, identify a specific tool or resource that would benefit multiple organizations. This support could be structured in several ways, such as a cohort-based series of trainings or workshops, or small, responsive grants. Whatever resources are available, ensure there is sufficient information for organizations to know how to utilize them.

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR COLLABORATION

RECOMMENDATION

Collaboration Cultivation Assistance

COLLABORATION CULTIVATION ASSISTANCE



A set of resources for service providers and their boards to assess, cultivate, and create a wide range of beneficial collaborations, including more formal and structured strategic alliances.

WHAT DOES THIS INCLUDE?

This program is designed to help organizations in the aging services network work together in a wide range of ways, from sharing information to strategic alliances like fiscal sponsorship, agreements, and mergers. The components of the program should be designed and deployed to support organizations to engage in a format that feels appropriate for them.

Ongoing opportunities to connect with other organizations

Providers are able to meet each other and learn about their work through opportunities to connect and network, building organic relationships and connections that can turn into collaborations. These opportunities build on existing convenings, including those facilitated by the Breakthrough Coalition and other groups.

Best practice resources and tools for collaboration

Trusted and thorough tools and resources highlight best practices for collaboration broadly, as well as specific types of collaboration. Specific assessment tools help boards and leadership assess an organization's readiness for different types of collaboration including strategic alliances, while building awareness and capacity for pursuing one or more possibilities.

Educational opportunities for leadership and boards

Opportunities like a learning series helps share best practices and experiences from the leaders of other organizations, helping to make the process, challenges, and opportunities clear. These learning experiences help organizations see what opportunities are available to them to pursue a variety of structured collaborations, and what might be a fit for their structure, mission, and culture.

Confidential coaching, mentorship, and consulting

Neutral, expert coaches, mentors, and/or consultants are available for leaders and boards to access when they want to think about more complex forms of partnership, such as strategic alliances. These individuals are selected because of their expertise (e.g., legal, negotiation), and help support organizations to understand the potential options and paths forward. If an organization selects one of these more complex paths, additional support from these or other experts can support forming that collaboration.

COLLABORATION CULTIVATION ASSISTANCE

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

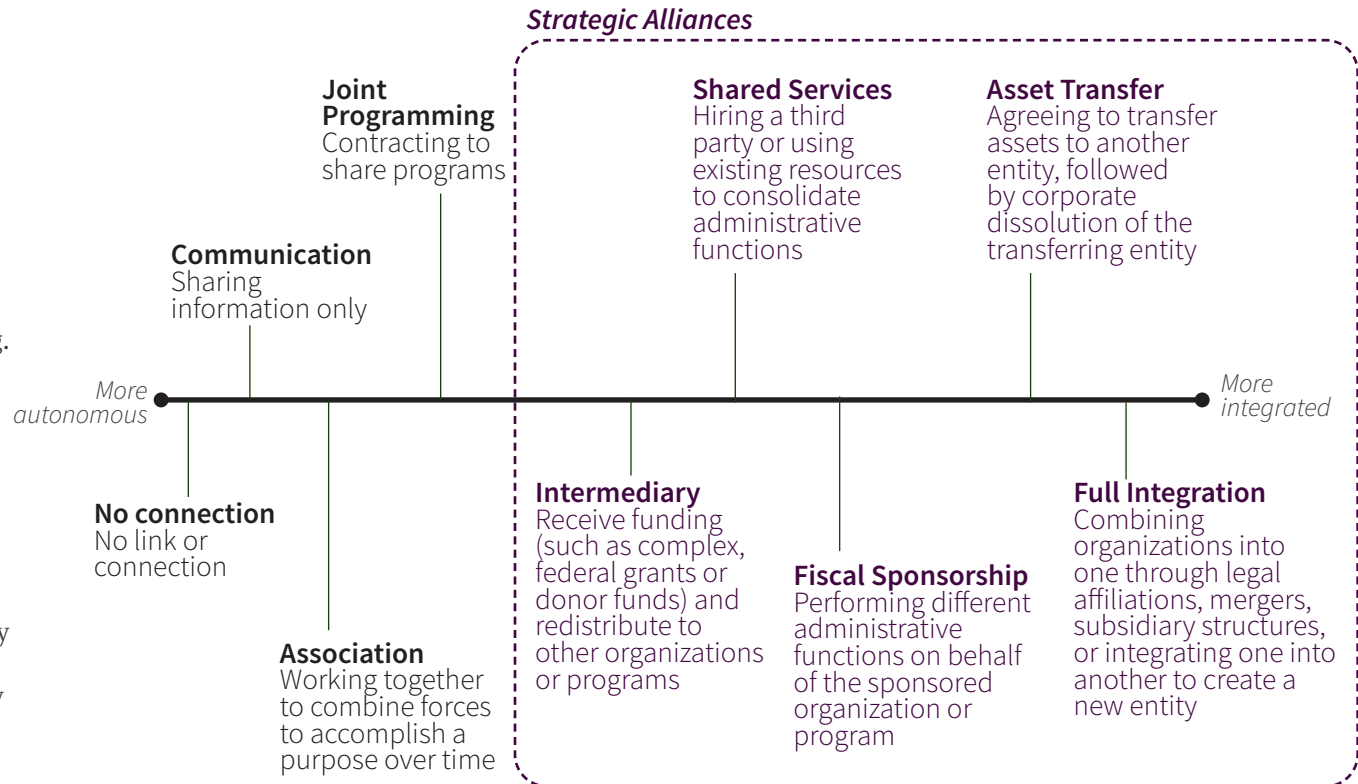
For some organizations, collaborations can be a method for maintaining and strengthening their operations and meeting their mission.

Collaborations exist along a spectrum, from organizations acting more autonomously to organizations that are more integrated (all the way up to full integration). Many providers are already pursuing opportunities for collaboration on the more autonomous end of the spectrum, and there remain many opportunities to strengthen communication, association, and joint programming. Pursuing more formal strategic alliances can make sense for some organizations, particularly when it would support clients to have access to the services they need, provide multi-disciplinary services, or increase efficiency for organizations.

Many older adult services are highly specialized, so these collaborations can help ensure that older adults are able to get the service they need when they need it. Across the spectrum, new collaborations can support the development of new service delivery methods, structured to have a positive impact on client outcomes as well as capacity across the network.

The Missouri Master Plan on Aging draft emphasizes that Missourians need clearer, more coordinated pathways to access support. Often, this requires coordination between organizations that provide services, which can come from collaboration.

TYPES OF COLLABORATIONS



Sources:
[Partnerships and Collaboration](#) - Spectrum of Collaboration, Bridgespan. 2015.
[The Partnership Matrix](#). La Piana Consulting. 2016.

COLLABORATION CULTIVATION ASSISTANCE

WHAT SHOULD THIS FEEL LIKE?

Pursuing collaborations, and especially strategic alliances, is very sensitive and requires trust on both sides. This set of programs should feel like organizations are supported to assess their own needs, make strategic decisions for themselves, and move towards relationships that align with their mission and plans, without pressure from funders or others outside the organization.

The development of potential relationships for collaboration should feel organic, with time for familiarity and trust to build.

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

When organizations choose to work together:

- Collaborations across the spectrum have a positive impact on client services and on the resilience of the organizations involved
- Collaborations across the spectrum are evaluated and evolve over time to improve outcomes

WHO COULD BE INVOLVED?

Potential partners for success include:

- Local nonprofit consulting firms
- Funders that support older adult service providers
- Breakthrough Coalition

EXAMPLES TO LEARN FROM

Austin Together

Austin Together enables sustained collaborations that strengthen the nonprofit community to create better outcomes for Central Texans. Sustained collaborations mean nonprofits that strategically and formally partner with other organizations for the long-term can align services, strengthen their infrastructure and scale their missions, even in the face of reduced funding and increasing demand.

Part of Austin Together's services include an Advisory Council of experienced community leaders that support making connections and can talk confidentially with organizations about sustained collaborations.

Movement Building Fiscal Sponsorship - The Praxis Project

The Praxis Project is focused on building capacity and power in communities of color that are authentically engaged in changing the systems, structures, policies, practices, and environments that underlie inequity. In their fiscal sponsorship program, they enable community power building organizers and organizations to focus on and prioritize their resources into addressing pressing priorities on health, justice, and racial equity. Fiscal sponsorship includes operational infrastructure, strategic support, and rigorous compliance with the rules for charitable organizations.

COLLABORATION CULTIVATION ASSISTANCE

WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDED FIRST STEPS?

Sooner

Call for Information and Interest

Open a request for information to hear from organizations that are considering or want to learn about collaborations of various types to enhance or support their work. This request should explore what knowledge, skills, or resources are needed. This call may be combined with other calls for information.

Learning series about collaborations across the spectrum

Host several learning opportunities for organizations to learn from peers that have pursued different models of collaboration, including those types that are less well known such as fiscal sponsorship or full integration. These learning opportunities could include panel discussions with organizational leaders who are willing to candidly share their experiences, or could be more general about best practices from experts in the nonprofit field. This learning series may overlap with educational opportunities about revenue generation.

Compiled resources that share best practices and lessons learned

In coordination with learning series, compile best practices about collaborations that can serve as a reference library for organizations who are considering pursuing some type of collaboration.

Later

Rolling transition grant to support organizations with strategic alliances

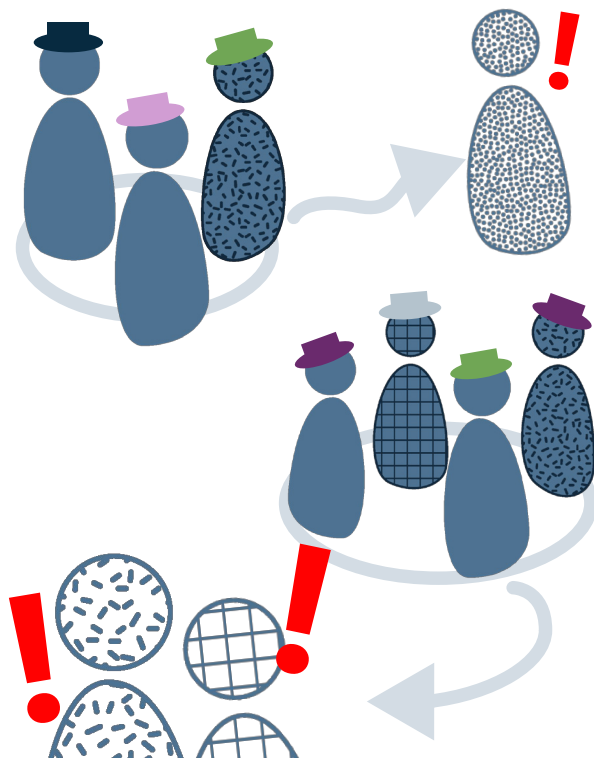
For organizations that want to explore or pursue strategic alliances, open a funding opportunity that allows them to seek confidential coaching and mentorship support through the process, as well as legal resources required to pursue their intended strategic alliance. Make it clear in this funding call that it is optional and available if organizations choose to pursue it.

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR EMERGENCIES

RECOMMENDATION

Emergency Response Teams Infrastructure for Older Adults

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS INFRASTRUCTURE FOR OLDER ADULTS



Robust infrastructure that supports nimble and responsive coordination of providers, first responders, local government, and others to support older adults and their families.

WHAT DOES THIS INCLUDE?

This infrastructure supports a system that allows experts to rapidly deploy in a coordinated way to reach and support older adults in the region.

Clear relationship to other emergency response structures

Most emergency situations impact people beyond older adults and their families. Coordination with and strengthening of the infrastructure for emergency response for all residents is critical. Infrastructure that is specific to older adults must coordinate with the existing systems for all residents, like emergency management, Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD), and other disaster-relief organizations. While the roles of these organizations may vary depending on the type and scale of a crisis, each is important in a successful response.

A regional system specifically focused on older adults must be clearly defined in relation to other response processes. This definition should include what role providers focused on older adults play (such as addressing the most complex cases, or offering trusted support over a longer timeframe) and primary services to be delivered. For example, Area Agencies on Aging have a Continuity of Operations Plan that outlines essential services and who is responsible. Similar plans on a regional level would be beneficial.

Ongoing coordination and planning

The staff dedicated to maintaining this infrastructure (who are often a part of organizations who do not focus solely on disaster relief) are charged with maintaining the partnership and involvement of organizations who support emergencies and crises. Representatives from these groups are regularly convened to plan for potential crises, ensuring that the resources and tools needed are available and that it is clear when they should deploy. This planning includes how the organizations will coordinate and what data systems they'll use.

Advanced funding and memorandums of understanding, with flexibility

The organizations involved set up a funding structure and MOUs in advance, so they are ready to go at first need. For example, St. Louis Area Agency on Aging includes a clause in their contracts that providers need to be prepared to participate in the emergency response network when called upon. Even with these structures, the teams are nimble and can add new members and participants based on context (such as geography, population, or services needed).

Consistent training opportunities

Regular training is available about how to work with older adults and families for organizations who regularly serve older adults, as well as other responders with less older adult related experience so they can more effectively interact with older adults in emergency situations. Training might address things like how to work with people with memory loss or differing needs related to limited mobility.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS INFRASTRUCTURE FOR OLDER ADULTS

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Recent crises have happened at a variety of scales, including the devastation of the May 16th tornado, the challenges of relocating residents from the sudden closures of Northview Village Nursing Home and Heritage House apartments, and recent flooding events, all of which have impacted older adults and their families. In each instance, emergency responders, service providers focused on older adults, and people in the community have sprung into action. Yet, having the skills and capacity to quickly activate a multi-disciplinary team that can work in coordination with other emergency efforts requires planning, infrastructure, and funding. The need for this infrastructure goes beyond a sole focus on older adults, extending to all residents of the St. Louis region. While beyond the scope of this effort, it's critical that the infrastructure for responding to emergencies continues to be robust, coordinated, and able to meet the needs of all.

WHAT SHOULD THIS FEEL LIKE?

Emergency response teams for older adults should be planned for but with the built-in flexibility to nimbly respond to a specific situation. This should feel like there are clear ways for organizations to plug in—including organizations that are not already connected to agencies responsible for emergency response—while not overburdening organizations with emergency needs that strain their capacity past the breaking point.

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

Success in this effort would be seen through:

- Continued rapid activation of organizations that are able to address the needs of older adults and their families
- A regional system (including coordinated training, processes for engagement, and data sharing procedures) for meeting the needs of specific populations such as older adults that can be activated during emergency response events, as seen through:
 - Additional people trained and ready to work specifically with older adults and more partners available to call on in times of crisis
 - MOUs and funding agreements in place
 - Rapid deployment of funding resources during emergency response events

WHO COULD BE INVOLVED?

Potential partners for success include:

- Area Agencies on Aging
- Organizations with experience serving older adults
- Regional funders
- Regional Response Team
- Emergency Management at the local and state level
- First responders
- St. Louis MHB and emergency behavioral response teams
- Community Organizations Active in Disaster
- Community health workers
- Local government

EXAMPLES TO LEARN FROM

Senior Support for the May 16 Tornado

In response to the May 16th tornado, agencies and providers in St. Louis immediately came together to respond to support older adults. The St. Louis Area Agency on Aging (SLAAA), as part of the Emergency Operations Center for the City of St. Louis, activated their provider network in response to the emergency to conduct senior apartment building assessments, carry out individual wellness checks, deliver meals, and respond to other immediate needs beginning the evening of the tornado.

Less than two weeks later, funding contributed by the St. Louis City Senior Fund activated the formation of a pooled fund that additional funders contributed to ensuring there was immediate funding available to support direct assistance needs and continued staffing support specifically for older adults. Established partnerships and ability to quickly deploy people, resources, and dedicated funding ensured many older adults and their families were connected to assistance. These efforts are ongoing as of this report.

San Bernardino County Adult Protective Services (APS) Strike Team

The APS Strike Team consists of five specialized APS workers to respond to mass level eviction or displacement of seniors, 60 or older, and disabled adults. The program aims to address the complexity and time sensitivity of assisting multiple clients at once experiencing an unexpected event putting them at risk of homelessness. Collaborations with various local agencies enhance immediate placement.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS INFRASTRUCTURE FOR OLDER ADULTS

WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDED FIRST STEPS?

Sooner

Continued coordinated regional action to address long-term needs from the May 16th tornado

Many older adults have continued basic needs stemming from the May 16th tornado, especially housing given that so many people are still without safe, permanent housing. It is critical that there are dedicated staff and partners continuing to work to address current needs and get people into safe and affordable housing quickly. In addition, recovery from the tornado will take several years. Community development efforts that will be happening post-tornado are opportunities for innovation and ensuring neighborhoods support people of all ages. Coordinated advocacy centered around older adults will be important for long-term recovery efforts.

Later

Planning and coordination

Working in close collaboration with the organizations involved in recent crisis response efforts for older adults, pursue regional convenings to more fully understand the limitations and gaps in the current emergency response landscape for older adults. This should build on existing recommendations, such as those from the Heritage House report, as well as assessment of the process of response to and resources for the May 16th tornado. From this, identify the needs and opportunities across the network, how the providers that focus on older adults interface with others that respond to crises, and opportunities to enhance and expand future responses.

Best practices trainings for those who may respond in a crisis

As time allows, develop a St. Louis-specific training for organizations that may be interacting with older adults in times of crises. Highlight not only the specific considerations of older adults (such as memory issues, mobility challenges, and other concerns), but also highlight the providers that work with older adults and can help support long-term emergency response that is dignified and sustainable. Consider coordinating regional trainings with other networks seeking to increase local volunteers with specializations who are ready to engage in community emergency response (e.g., behavioral health, community nursing, legal services).

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Geographic Hubs at Public Locations for Critical Services
Resource Directory and Database
Backend Integration of Client Data Systems

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The concepts in this section all support older adults and their families being able to access the services and resources they need, when and where they need them. As described in the Missouri Master Plan on Aging, navigating services is a critical issue for older adults and their families, and “Missourians need clearer, more coordinated pathways to access support.” There’s a clear need for older adults and their families to have more help locating services.

As interest grows from additional partners or new resources become available, funders and providers of older adult services in the St. Louis region should pursue these ideas.

GEOGRAPHIC HUBS AT PUBLIC LOCATIONS FOR CRITICAL SERVICES

Access to critical services would be available at locations that older adults and their families are regularly visiting, like libraries, YMCAs, grocery stores, churches, and senior centers. These hubs have staff that are well-versed in interacting with older adults, and are able to help people connect to programs and resources. Staff at all sites should know what is accessible across the network.

These hubs might focus on a specific common need, like benefits navigation or housing, and may have other on-site services like food distribution. Specifically for senior centers, there are opportunities to welcome a variety of residents with engaging programming, building on models like LifeWise STL’s Senior Resiliency Fund program and STL Village.

A first step could involve convening agencies that have geographic hubs with programming, inviting them to explore expansion and enhancement that meets the current moment.

RESOURCE DIRECTORY AND DATABASE

This resource database would build on ongoing and upcoming work happening across the region and the state. The database is kept up-to-date with the available resources, and serves as a tool for providers and case managers.

The database can also be shared in a print version so clients are able to find resources that are relevant to their needs. This print version is distributed by trusted providers to older adults and family members, and helps supplement information and assistance call lines, as well as case managers. This builds on the success of past efforts like the St. Louis Times Senior Resource Guide that have been resources for older adults, helping support intensive case management by pointing older adults and their families to other resources available to them in the region.

There are many structures for cultivating resource directories that are sustainable. Ongoing work, led by the UMSL Community Innovation & Action Center (CIAC), will explore a “resource data utility” model statewide, building on datasets from 211 and UniteUs — already used by some aging services providers in the region for navigation.

A first step could involve working with CIAC and other partners to understand opportunities for how aging-specific resources could be cultivated within a resource data utility model. Alternatively, a first step could involve creating a simple and consistent resource directory focused on a specific set of resources that would benefit people supporting navigation through information and assistance call lines or other resource linkage services.

BACKEND INTEGRATION OF CLIENT DATA SYSTEMS

This effort would focus on connecting data systems on the backend to support streamlining of client data across providers for assessment and coordination.

Currently, aging service providers use a number of different client information systems, including Salesforce, Apricot, AgingIS, and others. Changing those systems is challenging, due to requirements from funders and existing workflows.

Aligning the backend of these systems can help support clients’ experiences, particularly around paperwork and intake. This also supports improved data collection and analysis, better illustrating the needs and challenges of older adults. Streamlining also allows for greater coordination between providers. This must be done with care to address concerns about privacy and access.

The Missouri Master Plan on Aging draft calls for adopting and integrating technological solutions to streamline older adults’ experience accessing (and providers’ efforts communicating) health and wellness initiatives, which could be supported by better data integration.

This idea aligns with other ongoing work led by CIAC to help connect data systems that are able to be easily integrated, as well as efforts to make existing systems useful and meaningful for the providers tasked with using them.

As a first step, strategic involvement of aging service providers in ongoing efforts could help ensure the data needs of these providers is incorporated into the design of systems, enabling future technology and development.

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