



# **A Planning Guide to Develop a Council on Aging**

# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Background</b> .....	<b>5</b>
About Councils on Aging .....	5
OACA Planning Guide Framework.....	5
About the Ontario Association of Councils on Aging .....	6
<b>Key Terms</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>9</b>
Chapter One: Getting Started .....	9
Chapter Two: Getting Organized.....	9
Chapter Three: Forming Governance.....	10
Chapter Four: Securing Revenue.....	10
Chapter Five: Maintaining the Organization .....	11
Chapter Six: Ensuring the Organization’s Effectiveness.....	11
Appendix .....	11
<b>Chapter One: Getting Started</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Form a Steering Committee .....	12
Initial Goals and Vision .....	12
Needs Assessment.....	13
Formal Needs Assessment .....	13
Informal Needs Assessment.....	14
Conclusion .....	14
<b>Chapter Two: Getting Organized</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Strategic Planning.....	15
Develop an Action Plan .....	15
Develop Mission, Vision, and Values .....	16
Appoint Interim Board .....	17
Member Recruitment.....	17
Recruit Individuals and Groups .....	17
Develop Relationships with Community Organizations.....	18
Organizational Development .....	18
Backbone Organization .....	18
Not-for-profit Incorporation .....	19
Charitable Status .....	19
Conclusion .....	20
<b>Chapter Three: Forming Governance</b> .....	<b>21</b>
Board of Directors .....	22
Bylaws.....	23

Terms of Reference for Board and Committees .....	24
Budget & Financial Reporting Structure / Audit .....	24
Manuals .....	25
Conclusion .....	25
<b>Chapter Four: Securing Revenue .....</b>	<b>26</b>
Core / Base Funding Opportunities .....	27
Grants & One-Time Funding Opportunities .....	27
Corporate Revenue .....	29
Participant Revenue .....	29
Community Revenue .....	30
Conclusion .....	31
<b>Chapter Five: Maintaining the Organization .....</b>	<b>32</b>
Sustainable Leadership .....	32
Organizational Alignment.....	33
Maintaining Stakeholder Relationships .....	33
Conclusion .....	33
<b>Chapter Six: Ensuring the Organization’s Effectiveness .....</b>	<b>34</b>
Evaluation.....	34
Monitoring Projects through Process Evaluation .....	34
Conclusion .....	35
<b>Appendix - Summaries of the Various Councils on Aging in Ontario .....</b>	<b>36</b>
Burlington Age-Friendly Council.....	36
Cambridge Council on Aging .....	37
Grand River Council on Aging- Brantford-Brant.....	38
Council on Aging Grey Bruce (COAGB).....	40
Hamilton Council on Aging (HCoA) .....	41
Frontenac-Kingston Council on Aging .....	42
Age-Friendly Niagara Council (AFNC).....	43
The Council on Aging of Ottawa.....	44
Age-Friendly Peterborough.....	46
Toronto Council on Aging (TCA).....	47
Council on Aging, Windsor-Essex County.....	48

# Acknowledgments

This “Planning Guide to Develop a Council on Aging” is a publication of the Ontario Association of Councils on Aging (OACA). It was produced with input from OACA Board members and others associated with the OACA.

## **Contributors Included:**

Sarah Bercier	(Council on Aging of Ottawa)
David Bradley	(Council on Aging Grey Bruce)
Jayne Culbert	(Age-Friendly Peterborough)
Margaret Denton	(Hamilton Council on Aging)
Deana Johnson	(Council on Aging, Windsor-Essex County)
Sharon Livingstone	(Cambridge Council on Aging)
Lucy Marco	(Grand River Council on Aging)
John Mirski	(Frontenac-Kingston Council on Aging)
Heather A. Thompson	(Burlington Age-Friendly Council)
Dominic Ventresca	(Age-Friendly Niagara Council)
Lilian Wells	(Toronto Council on Aging)
Pat Spadafora	(Kaleidoscope Consulting)

Isha Dadhwal conducted the research and produced the initial drafts of the Planning Guide in her capacity as a master’s degree candidate in the Master of Applied Gerontology Program at Brock University, in St. Catharines, Ontario.

This Planning Guide was developed using the informed experiences of leaders of Councils of Aging (COA) or equivalent entities throughout Ontario and their suggested sources of information. Their expertise, stories, strategies, and tips contributed to the leading practices included in this Planning Guide that will assist others to develop Councils on Aging in their respective communities.

A special thank you to all the contributors, to those who reviewed various drafts of this Planning Guide, and to Sarah Bercier and Dominic Ventresca who produced the final draft.

# Background

## About Councils on Aging

You have likely come across this Planning Guide because you are interested in exploring and/or forming a Council on Aging (COA) or equivalent entity in your community. You may have already worked in your community to make it age-friendly and would now like to formalize your organization, or you may be starting from scratch and deciding what kind of organization would best suit your community's needs.

After reviewing the literature and current COAs in Canada, a definition was created by OACA that we feel best defines a COA:

*“An organization that promotes age-friendly community principles through actions such as education, advocacy, inclusion, and engagement.”*

A COA is composed of individuals who have an interest in the overall well-being of older adults in their community. COAs often function using task forces or committees that are responsible for planning projects and providing education, advocacy, inclusion, and engagement in relation to a specific issue (e.g., transportation, housing, aging at home) and obtaining funding (such as grants) to make these initiatives possible.

COAs act as a community-based voice for older adults.

## OACA Planning Guide Framework

This “Planning Guide to Develop a Council on Aging” was produced in a user-friendly format with plain language. It includes ideas and guidance that can be applied to each unique community, depending on the respective status of Council on Aging/Age-Friendly developments. This Guide is not a prescription for creating a COA; instead, it recognizes that there are a variety of ways to develop and maintain a successful COA.

Wherever you are, in contemplating or forming a COA or similar entity, this Guide will offer important information that will help you understand the needs of older adults in your community and shape your COA to fit your community's overall needs. This Guide includes advice and experiences from expert individuals who have spent years developing COAs in Ontario. This Guide also includes leading practices from organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Government of Ontario, and peer-reviewed research papers to provide you with the best information on issues related to Councils on Aging.

The OACA's work is framed by the [WHO's eight domains for age-friendly communities](#). These eight domains are interconnected with the goals of COAs throughout Ontario. These domains include:

- [Community support and health services](#)
- [Transportation](#)
- [Housing](#)
- [Social participation](#)
- [Outdoor spaces and buildings](#)
- [Respect and social inclusion](#)
- [Civic participation and employment](#)
- [Communication and information](#)

COAs can collaborate with municipal governments and community partners to spread awareness, educate, and advocate for these domains to create healthy and inclusive communities.

Another very helpful publication from the Government of Ontario "[Creating a More Inclusive Ontario: Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide for Municipalities and Community Organizations](#)" offers potential steps and advice on how to become an age-friendly community. Since COAs promote the age-friendly mandate, "[Creating a More Inclusive Ontario](#)" offered helpful inspiration for this Planning Guide.

## About the Ontario Association of Councils on Aging

The Ontario Association of Councils on Aging (OACA) is an incorporated organization formed by leaders of the various COAs throughout Ontario. The OACA is in its developmental stages, and its purpose is anticipated to change over time as needs dictate. The organization provides an opportunity for representatives to share best practices with one another and contribute to advocacy efforts on key issues affecting older adults. The OACA grew out of an informal organization, formerly known as the Councils on Aging Network of Ontario (CANO).

**OACA Vision:** An Age-Friendly Ontario.

**OACA Mission:** Provide leadership, provincially, to enhance quality of life as people age, with a focus on the interests, strengths, and needs of older adults.

The OACA acts as a voice for people of all ages through education and leadership. The OACA believes in social justice, transparency, integrity, evidence-based information, responsiveness, collaboration, and effectiveness. The OACA is a member of the Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility Seniors Liaison Committee. This is an advisory committee to the ministry, identifying issues and concerns of older adults and providing input and feedback related to government policies and services.

The leaders who make up the Board of Directors and other important members of OACA have spent many years developing their respective COAs/age-friendly communities. The links to the web pages of their COAs are below:

[Burlington Age-Friendly Council](#)

[Cambridge Council on Aging](#)

[Grand River Council on Aging](#)

[Council on Aging, Grey Bruce](#)

[Hamilton Council on Aging](#)

[Frontenac-Kingston Council on Aging](#)

[Age-Friendly Niagara Council](#)

[The Council on Aging of Ottawa / Le conseil sur le vieillissement d'Ottawa](#)

[Age-Friendly Peterborough](#)

[Toronto Council on Aging](#)

[Council on Aging, Windsor-Essex](#)

Please refer to the appendix to view a short summary of these COAs.

Whichever way you choose to develop a COA, we hope this document offers insightful and valuable information that guides you through the process. We encourage you to reach out and collaborate with the various established COAs in Ontario, as it is important to learn from one another, seek feedback, share insights on best practices, and continue towards an Age-Friendly Ontario. Additionally, if you have any further questions, please reach out to the [OACA](#) for further support.

# Key Terms

We want this Guide to be easily understood by its readers. Below are a few key terms that will help readers make the most of this Guide:

**Bylaws** – Rules that are established by the respective COA to regulate itself. Bylaws are developed by the governing body (e.g., Board of Directors) to ensure the organization is following procedures and is organized, controlled and ethically sound.

**Evaluation** – This is the process of critically examining the COA and its effectiveness within the community. There are many forms of evaluation, such as process and outcomes evaluation.

**Focus Groups** – A diverse group of individuals (e.g., older adults in the community) who participate in guided discussions facilitated by a researcher. Information shared is used to inform the researcher about relevant issues in the community and thus, can help address a need for programs, services, and initiatives.

**Incorporated Status** – Incorporation gives an organization legal status, formally recognized by the provincial (or federal) government.

**Key Informants** – Individuals with specialized knowledge or expertise in a specific area. They can provide their insight and help inform your research via key informant interviews.

**Needs Assessment** – A process for determining and addressing the needs of the community. Needs assessments can be formal (e.g., environmental scan) or informal (e.g., discussion with community leaders).

**Stakeholders** – A party who has an interest in the organization and can thus affect, or be

affected by, the organization in some way. A COA might have stakeholders who are funders, community organizations, or government bodies.

**Steering Committee** – A group of individuals that provides guidance on matters such as organizational priorities, operations, future plans, and next steps. This type of committee is task-based and may function during early stages of development or at select times to provide guidance on specific projects.

**Strategic Plan** – Used to communicate the organization's goals, the actions needed to achieve these goals, and other important elements of the COA (e.g., creating a mission, vision, and values).

**Succession Planning** – The act of planning to pass on leadership roles to other members to sustain organizational continuity. (For example, cross-training various members to develop the skills and knowledge needed to take on a different role within the COA.)

**Target Audience** – A group of people that your COA aims to reach with information or to affect in some capacity.

**Terms of Office** – The length of time that individuals agree to commit to the COA in an official capacity.

**Terms of Reference** – Define the purpose and structures of the COA, the Board of Directors, the standing and ad hoc committees, and projects that will be included in the COA.

# Executive Summary

## Chapter One: Getting Started

One of the first steps to developing a COA is to form a leadership group that may informally serve as a steering committee. These individuals share a common desire to impact aging in your community with the goal of forming an organization that studies, plans, and advocates for older adults. They may be older adults, community leaders, other active members of your community, or government officials.

Another fundamental step is to understand your community needs to determine whether there is sufficient interest in developing a COA or similar entity and whether this is the best option for your community. You will learn about ways to conduct a needs assessment. A needs assessment can be informal or formal.

An informal needs assessment can be done initially through conversations between leadership group members and can steer your committee in the right direction toward developing a suitable organization for your community. An informal needs assessment can be effective and relatively inexpensive.

A formal needs assessment typically is conducted by professionals (e.g., community planners, research consultants) who systematically collect information from the community, tabulate results, and prepare a report with identified priorities and next steps. Formal needs assessments can include:

- Surveys
- Focus Groups
- Key Informant Interviews
- Community Workshops and/or Forums

## Chapter Two: Getting Organized

The journey of organizing a COA or equivalent organization is unique to each community. It is not a linear process but goes through phases of development over many years from a fledgling start-up group to a mature structured organization.

Developing a strategic plan is an important part of becoming organized. In this stage, you will develop your mission, vision, and values and create an action plan to help you achieve your goals. In the early stages of organizing, it would be a good idea to appoint an interim Board that could transition to a founding Board and ultimately to an elected Board.

Once you have identified your plan and vision you can begin to recruit members that share the organization's interests and aspirational goals. In this stage, it is important to secure buy-in from various community members and possibly municipal councillors. These community members may take an interest in serving on the leadership group or participating in related activities, possibly leading to becoming Board members.

At the appropriate time along your journey, you will need to investigate various ways you can support and sustain your organization. Sustainability is multi-faceted and needs to be thoughtfully considered.

While getting organized, you may consider the following options:

- Become a partner with a backbone organization to provide organizational support
- Become not-for-profit incorporated organization
- Become a charitable organization

There are various advantages and disadvantages to each possible option which will be highlighted in this chapter.

### Chapter Three: Forming Governance

Chapter Three will build on the foundational decisions made in Chapter Two by focussing on the governance of your COA in order to develop the structure and strategic leadership required to fulfill the plans that drive the organization. The process of developing and formalizing governance structure may happen all at once or slowly over time as structures are needed. Regardless of how formally developed it is, proper governance must be a foundational element of the organization. This will include the establishment or development of the following:

- Board of Directors
- By-Laws (contact other COAs – see appendix)
- Committees and Task Forces
- Terms of Reference (TOR) for Board and Committees
- Budget & Financial Reporting Structure / Audit
- Manuals (Policy, Volunteer, Human Resources)

### Chapter Four: Securing Revenue

Chapter Four will explore various ways you can secure revenue for your operations. Normally, some amount of revenue will be needed to maintain a grassroots organization like a COA. However, you may be able to achieve quite a lot even without financial support depending on the types of activities you choose to engage in. For example, engaging with government representatives on key issues takes only your time. Alternatively, holding educational sessions for large groups will normally require funds to pay for space, speakers, and supplies. If you want to have your own space or hire staff your financial needs obviously

increase exponentially. There are numerous revenue opportunities for any non-profit to explore, including:

- core funding
- grants and other one-time funding opportunities
- corporate revenue (sponsorship and advertising)
- participant revenue (membership, event fees, donations)
- community revenue (fundraisers)

## Chapter Five: Maintaining the Organization

Maintaining the COA is just as important as development. In Chapter Five, maintaining community partnerships and possibly relationships with municipal staff and/or councillors will be explored.

Working to maintain the COA can be started from the very early stages of COA development. Reliable core funding plays a large role in the sustainability of a COA, which can be sustained through maintenance of community partnerships and relationships with government officials.

## Chapter Six: Ensuring the Organization's Effectiveness

Ensuring that the COA is meeting its goals and is making a positive difference in your community is a major step in planning and maintaining the COA. Evaluating the COA and its progress can begin at the start of your strategic planning process.

Once the COA is developed, it is important to monitor task forces and implementation of projects/programs to ensure the common goal is being met and the projects and programs have purpose.

This chapter will discuss process and outcome evaluation, and evaluation strategies that will help you monitor your progress throughout the entire process of developing and maintaining the COA.

## Appendix

This section will highlight the various COAs that exist in Ontario at the time of writing this Planning Guide. These summaries will demonstrate that each COA is unique and allow you to see the different paths that can be taken to create a successful, working COA.

# Chapter One: Getting Started

COA Planning Steps	Key Tasks
<b>Initial Committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Form steering committee</li><li>● Include members from different population groups (e.g., older adults, active community members)</li><li>● Establish initial strategic goals and vision</li></ul>
<b>Needs of Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Conduct a formal or informal needs assessment</li><li>● Needs assessment will inform the vision and goals of the COA</li></ul>

In this chapter, we will focus on early leadership and needs assessments. This involves the initial stages of planning your grassroots organization and strategies that communities have used to begin planning their COA.

## Form a Steering Committee

If you believe there is a need for a COA or equivalent entity in your community, your first step is to join forces with others who believe in this idea or have a similar vision to yours. You can find individuals like this through community involvement. For example, you may have conversations with coworkers, friends, municipal council members, volunteers, older adults, and members of community organizations that lead to the idea of having a COA in your community. It is important to ensure diversity and inclusion in your initial committee. You will want to include individuals from different populations so that your planning is diversely informed and representative of the older adults in your community. This will help to produce the best possible outcomes in your community.

You can then form a steering committee. Once you have recruited members and they have agreed to tackle this project with you, it is important to discuss initial goals, vision, and a needs assessment.

### ***Initial Goals and Vision***

Following conversations with members of your steering committee about your goals for your community, you can begin to address the changes you'd like to achieve. For example, your committee may have noticed ageism, social isolation, or transportation and housing options as important issues for older adults in your community. Thus, the common goal for your committee could be to promote healthy and positive aging by addressing one of the issues that you have prioritized. Understanding your goal can help you create a mandate that outlines how your committee will strive to increase healthy and positive aging in your community. These goals can help your committee envision how you see the future of the impact your COA will make on the community.

## Needs Assessment

Once you have had this initial meeting with your committee members to discuss the purpose and value of a COA or equivalent entity, you can look to the next step of conducting a needs assessment. This can be done formally or informally, depending on the time, resources, and funding that you have. In this section, we will discuss how you can conduct a formal and informal needs assessment.

### ***Formal Needs Assessment***

Formal needs assessments are a great way to validate the need for developing a COA in your community. Most formal needs assessments require funding. Additional funding may subsequently be required to engage a backbone organization, hire staff, support initiatives, fund projects, and further develop your COA. *Note: Please see chapter four for more information on funding opportunities.*

First, you will need to determine the resources required for your needs assessment (e.g., volunteers, time, and money). Consider any time constraints that would prevent you from conducting the assessment. Then you can set a target date for when you want this to be completed. You can also create a budget and allocate money to different areas where you may need it (e.g., If you are renting space to conduct focus groups, how much will that cost? If you are handing out printed surveys, how much will they cost?).

A successful needs assessment has clear objectives. You can ask what exactly you would like to know about the WHO's eight domains and their relationship to your community. For example, you may want to know about older adults' perceived barriers to accessing transportation, housing, nutritious food, health and wellness services, and social gatherings.

You can identify your target audience and a means to collect data. For example, if your goal is to promote older adults' use of outdoor space, you would want to obtain the perspective of older adults living in your community. However, you may also want to understand perspectives from a variety of stakeholders in your community. A survey may be a good method to obtain these perspectives. You may also consider a mix of focus groups and surveys, or combine community forums and key informant interviews, depending on the resources you have.

After you have collected your data, it is important to summarize your findings and find themes within the data. Involving your steering committee in this stage will help ensure that there are many perspectives during data interpretation. This can help you more clearly identify emerging issues and establish initiatives to address them. Addressing these issues through your COA will allow your target audience to feel heard and your COA to be respected. It can help you gain members and support from your community.

Once you have completed the needs assessment, it is important to share this data with the community. You can work on building relationships with important stakeholders, which may contribute to obtaining funding and building awareness of your organization. You can present your results at community events and meetings.

Consider reviewing your initial goals and vision to ensure they align with the priorities of your target audiences. If not, they can be re-assessed.

### ***Informal Needs Assessment***

An informal needs assessment involves conversations with your steering committee members. This can be done very quickly, possibly after a few meetings. It is a great option for COAs that have constraints of funding or time or are already well-informed on the needs of the community. For example, the steering committee may include community leaders or established older adult advocates within your community. These individuals may already be informed about the need for a COA and the prevalent issues that older adults face within the community. Informal needs assessments can be cost-effective.

You may also choose to do informal interviews with key informants. For example, if the goal of your COA is to promote healthy and positive aging, you can reach out to members of other similar community organizations, such as community-based support services, to interview them about their understanding of the prioritized issues. This method does not require funding but is a highly effective way to gain perspectives from knowledgeable individuals.

### **Conclusion**

Regardless of the type of needs assessment you do, it is a crucial step in the development of your COA. The data collected will be used to inform your plan and vision. The goals of the COA are crucial to determining priorities and the role it plays in your community. After you have completed the initial planning steps, it is time to get organized.

# Chapter Two: Getting Organized

COA Organizing Steps	Key Tasks
<b>Develop Strategic Planning Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an action plan to carry out objectives that will help you reach your goals</li> <li>• Develop mission, vision, and values</li> <li>• Appoint interim Board</li> </ul>
<b>Recruit Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit individuals and groups to become members of your COA</li> <li>• Build relationships with community members and municipal councillors</li> </ul>
<b>Consider How Your Organization will Develop and be Supported</b>	<p>Possibilities include: ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with a backbone organization</li> <li>• Become incorporated not-for-profit</li> <li>• Become a charitable organization</li> </ul>

In this phase, you can begin to plan your program’s initiatives, develop your mission, vision, and values, and establish the initial stages of governance by appointing an interim Board. Additionally, you can begin to grow your organization by recruiting individuals to join. You can also contemplate the future possibilities of securing a backbone organization, becoming incorporated, or becoming charitable.

## Strategic Planning

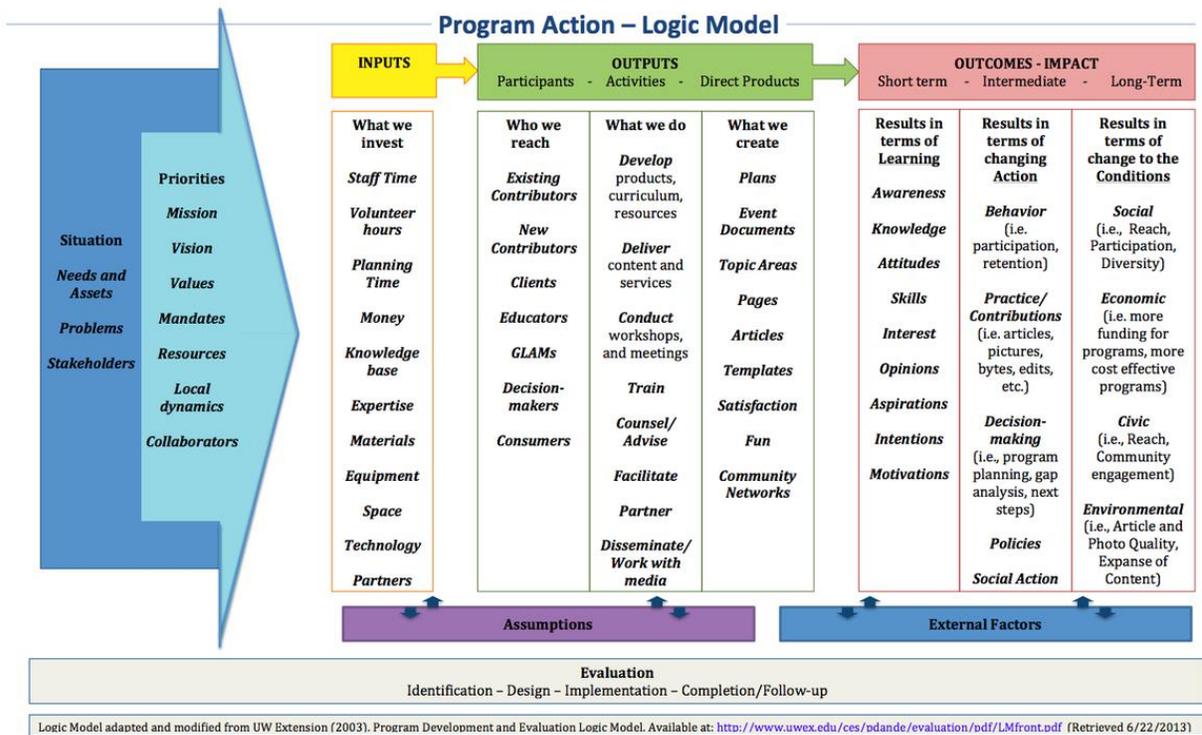
### ***Develop an Action Plan***

In this stage, you will develop an action plan that will help you reach your Council’s goals. The first step to creating an action plan is to list your short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals. You will prioritize these goals and outline corresponding objectives for them. You may research best practices in programs, initiatives, interventions, advocacy efforts, and educational tools that can help you achieve these goals. You may also assess your organization’s resources and partnerships and define next steps.

A good way to present a summary of your plan is through a logic model (see example table below). This could include the following:

- **Goals**                      Short-term, medium-term, and long-term
- **Objectives**              Aligned with goals
- **Inputs**                     Resources invested into your COA
- **Audience**                Exactly who you are aiming to engage and benefit
- **Activities**                Programs and initiatives run by the COA
- **Outputs**                  Quantifiable activities produced by programs/initiatives the COA runs (e.g., increased intergenerational community events)

- **Outcomes** Short-term, medium-term, and long-term  
All outcomes reflect a change that was made by the COA and its action plans (e.g., long-term outcome = overall increase in healthy older adults in the community)



These headings will help you organize your action plan to use it as a reference tool when implementing programs and initiatives. You may also release this document to the public to create awareness about what you are planning to do for the community. Your logic model will help you evaluate your progress later. Please see Chapter Six for more information on evaluation.

### **Develop Mission, Vision, and Values**

After completing the needs assessment and identifying possible actions, you may develop your mission, vision, and values.

Consider defining your vision first. For example, your vision could be “An inclusive, age-friendly city for all community members to live, play and work.”

Next, ask: How will you carry out this vision? This is your mission. Examples of mission statements are:

- Providing education to community members about age-inclusive initiatives
- Increasing social inclusion of older adults in the community
- Advocating for issues pertaining to older adults on a continuous basis

Finally, determine your values. What does your organization believe in and wish to promote?

Examples of values include:

- Respect
- Transparency
- Integrity
- Justice
- Responsiveness
- Collaboration

### ***Appoint Interim Board***

You may want to consider appointing an Interim Board. Eventually, your organization should transition to an elected Board.

*Note: Please see Chapter three for more information about governance.* You may wish to appoint members to make up the Interim Board until your COA becomes more established. This will provide your organization with an initial governing body and structure, enabling you to assign roles to work on your plan, while proceeding towards a founding elected board.

## **Member Recruitment**

### ***Recruit Individuals and Groups***

Once you have an action plan, you may proceed to recruit members that will help you carry out the action plan. In this stage, it is important to receive buy-in from various community members.

To recruit members, consider some of these steps:

- Have a clear message about what you are doing (ie., a good “elevator speech”)
- Promote the identified cause
- Reach out to individuals you already know that you think will be a good fit
- Hold events in your community to inform others of what you are doing
- Meet with community organizations, to encourage them to partner with you
- List the criteria you wish to set for becoming a member of your COA
- Develop a clear set of volunteer opportunities

Once you have a good membership base, you may wish to establish task forces. These task forces will oversee projects, initiatives, and programs that you would like to implement in your community, as per your action plan.

You might want to start with only one or two initiatives and get those solidly off the ground rather than tackling too many at the beginning. This will depend, of course on the number of members and volunteers as well as the level of energy surrounding your initiatives.

## ***Develop Relationships with Community Organizations***

Reach out to your community organizations that are most likely to be aligned with your cause. Be mindful that partnering with you will require their resources as well so consider using *WIIFM* (what's in it for me?) when communicating with organizations. You may wish to identify mutual benefits if they take an interest in your organization. You may wish to strengthen the appeal of your cause by including quantitative and qualitative information, testimonials, and interesting stories.

## **Organizational Development**

Many COAs transition as they grow to a more formal organization that may help them be seen as credible within the community. It may make sense for your organization to consider some of these options in its development:

- Partnering with a backbone organization
- Incorporating as a not-for-profit
- Obtaining a charitable status

This section will review these options and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each.

### ***Backbone Organization***

It may make sense initially for your COA to align with, and collaborate with, an already-established community organization that can provide administrative support and connections to important resources. For example, if the backbone organization has incorporated not-for-profit status, it may serve as your COA's conduit for funding from grant sources that require an established and incorporated organization to submit the application. Table 1 (below) summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of having a backbone organization.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● A simpler way to get your organization off the ground than having to incorporate right from the start.</li><li>● Adds credibility to the early stages of your COA due to its existing status in the community</li><li>● Provides significant support through its established administrative infrastructure</li><li>● Support from experienced backbone staff</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Possibly competing for grants – Some grants only allow one grant per lead organization – meaning sub-organizations may not be able to apply if the backbone organization is also applying</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fulfills the requirement of many grant applications that the organization be incorporated.</li> </ul>	
--	--

### ***Not-for-profit Incorporation***

Incorporation is a significant next step and recognizes your COA as a legal corporation. Table 2 (below) summarizes some of the advantages and disadvantages of incorporation.

<b>Table 2: Advantages and disadvantages of incorporated, not-for-profit status.</b>	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recognized as a legal operating body</li> <li>● Credibility is increased with funders, government, and the public</li> <li>● Many grant applications require the organization to be incorporated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cost</li> <li>● Paperwork</li> <li>● Shared Control - e.g., Administration of the organization is controlled in part by the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA)</li> <li>● Must establish and maintain a more formal corporate structure – requires resources and time that could be used on the organization itself</li> </ul>

For more information about incorporating through non-profit status, please visit: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/start-and-operate-not-profit>

### ***Charitable Status***

You can also apply for charitable status. Table 3 (below) summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of charitable status.

<b>Table 3: Advantages and disadvantages of charitable status.</b>	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Can accept donations and issue tax receipts, so likely increased donations</li> <li>● Exempt from paying income tax</li> <li>● Eligible to receive gifts from other registered charities</li> <li>● Increased credibility</li> <li>● Many goods and services you provide will be exempt from GST/HST</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lengthy and complicated process, requires a lawyer, can take anywhere from 6 months to 1 year or longer to achieve this status</li> <li>● Greater legal responsibility and accountability for all resources including funds, personnel, and property</li> <li>● Additional administrative tasks such as filing an annual Registered Charity Information Return and issuing official donation receipts</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

Getting organized is fundamental in the initial development of a COA, successful implementation of your plans, and ultimately the sustainability for your organization. There is no single correct way to get organized; rather a customized approach to each community should be taken that considers the various processes and options that make the most sense.

# Chapter Three: Forming Governance

COA Governing Steps	Key Tasks
<b>Board of Directors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recruit Board Members</li> <li>● Educate Board Members on the importance of Board responsibilities including foundational, fiduciary, and other additional responsibilities</li> </ul>
<b>Bylaws</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Write bylaws or basic operational guidelines that regulate your organization and align with your organization’s values</li> </ul>
<b>Committees and Task Forces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Determine how broad or specific you wish to get in your focus</li> <li>● Determine one or two areas to focus on</li> </ul>
<b>Terms of Reference</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create a Terms of Reference for each committee and task force to ensure that the purpose and functioning of each committee is clear</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Reporting Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establish both a budget and a reporting structure to fulfill the Board’s fiduciary responsibility</li> </ul>
<b>Necessary Manuals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Policy Manual</li> <li>● Volunteer Manual</li> <li>● Human Resources Manual</li> </ul>

In Chapter Two, the focus was on strategic planning, recruiting members to support this planning, determining what type of organization you might want to be, and considering what level of autonomy or accountability you want to have. Chapter Three will build on these foundational decisions by focussing on governing the COA to form structure and develop strategic leadership in order to fulfill the plans that drive the organization.

The process of developing and formalizing governance structure may happen all at once or slowly over time as structures are needed. Regardless of how formally developed it is, proper governance must be a foundational element of the organization. This will include the establishment or development of the following:

- Board of Directors
- By-Laws (contact other COAs – see appendix)
- Committees and Task Forces
- Terms of Reference (TOR) for Board and Committees
- Budget & Financial Reporting Structure / Audit
- Manuals (Policy, Volunteer, Human Resources)

These more formal structures will:

- uphold integrity
- increase accountability

- avoid detrimental mistakes
- provide strategic leadership
- maintain stability
- promote sustainability

## Board of Directors

Governance is the process of providing strategic leadership. This involves setting direction, making policy and strategy decisions, overseeing and monitoring organizational performance, and ensuring overall accountability. To make this happen, an incorporated non-profit organization must have a governing board. Some boards will hire staff to do much of the work of the organization, usually with significant support from volunteers. Other organizations will be entirely volunteer run. Either way, the board is ultimately accountable for anything that is done in the name of the organization. The following is a significant listing of the three main areas of Board responsibility.

### **Foundational Responsibilities**

1. Determine and articulate the organization's mission, vision, and core values.
2. Recruit and select the organization's chief executive.
3. Support and assess the performance of the organization's chief executive.
4. Ensure that the organization engages in planning for its future.
5. Determine the set of programs that the organization will deliver to implement its strategies and accomplish its goals, and to monitor the performance of these programs to assess their value.
6. Ensure that the organization has financial and other resources adequate to implement its plans.
7. Ensure the effective management and use of the organization's financial and other resources.
8. Enhance the organization's credibility and public image.
9. Ensure organizational integrity and accountability.
10. Assess and develop the board's own effectiveness.

### **Fiduciary Responsibilities**

1. Adopt a set of policies to govern the acquisition and use of financial and other resources;
2. Establish, on a regular basis (usually annual), a budget that allocates financial resources to the programs and activities that will accomplish the organization's mission, vision, goals, and outcomes (preferably in alignment with a strategic plan);
3. Develop and implement an ongoing system for monitoring and holding staff and volunteers accountable for their performance with regard to these policies and budgets;
4. Develop and implement an ongoing system to monitor, assess, and report on the overall financial condition and performance of the organization; and

5. Implement an independent external review process, such as an independent annual audit, to assess the organization's financial condition and health, including the effectiveness of its systems and policies for the protection and appropriate use of financial resources.

### **Additional Responsibilities**

It is common for board members to also serve as:

1. Ambassadors who build relationships and generate good will;
2. Sponsors and representatives who advocate on behalf of the organization;
3. Trusted advisors and consultants who offer guidance and serve as sounding boards for the chief executive and staff; and
4. Resource developers who help the organization secure essential resources.

Non-profit boards typically have specific positions (officers) and work units (committees and task forces) that help the board organize and accomplish its work.

Officer positions are typically the usual President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Some of the common committees include the Executive Committee, Nominating Committee, Fund Development Committee, Finance Committee, Personnel/Volunteer Committee, and Program Committee.

One of the significant challenges of small non-profits is that the leaders can tend to become focussed on the program portion, understandably excited about what they are working to accomplish. This often leads to a situation where the other areas are forgotten, leaving the organization vulnerable, either structurally, financially, or both. Therefore, it is important to consistently have some leaders who are as excited about fund development or policy development as others are about falls prevention or home and community care.

## Bylaws

Your bylaws will typically include the following types of articles:

- Name and Purpose
- Membership
- Meetings (AGM and other)
- Board of Directors
- Officers
- Committees
- Financial Business (including Audit)
- Indemnification
- Amendment procedures
- Dissolution

It is a great idea to get copies of the bylaws of other Councils on Aging to help guide the development of your own. Bylaws are a lot of work, so it is helpful to have a helping hand from other similar organizations.

## Terms of Reference for Board and Committees

Each committee or working group will need to establish a Terms of Reference (TOR) that describes the purpose, scope, and authority of the committee.

The TOR is a written road map for the committee and contains clear and specific information on how the committee is organized, what the committee is trying to achieve, who the members are, and when they meet. A clear and understandable TOR is the first step to a successful committee.

The TOR should be reviewed and approved by the committee regularly and updated as necessary. The TOR together with the committee's work plan should be submitted to the Board for approval. It is a good idea to make this an annual exercise.

The TOR normally includes the following types of information:

- committee name
- type (e.g., standing committee, sub-committee, task force, working group)
- purpose
- scope
- duration
- function/objectives
- membership
- authority
- meeting arrangements
- resources
- budget
- conflict of interest
- deliverables
- accountability and reporting
- review

## Budget & Financial Reporting Structure / Audit

It is very important to create a plan and budget for the organization's use of its financial resources as well as policies to ensure that directives are clear. It is equally important to monitor and oversee the organization's use of its financial resources, to ensure that the organization is sticking with the outlined plan. You will need to complete either a detailed financial report or an audit annually. It is wise to shop around if you are using an auditor as the price for this service can vary greatly.

## Manuals

Finally, there are a few manuals that will be foundational to allowing your COA to be successful in having clear structures in its operations, such as the following:

- **Policy Manual** – This could outline clear policies for advocacy efforts, accessibility, equity-diversity-inclusion, complaints, investments, publication standards, social media, etc.
- **Volunteer Manual** – A volunteer manual could include policies and procedures for staff regarding the recruitment, training, retention, recognition and offboarding of volunteers. It could also include information, processes and procedures for volunteers to follow in the execution of their work.
- **Human Resources (HR) Manual** – If your COA has staff, you will want to get this right. Again, it can be easy as a small organization to be very informal about such things. But it is well worth your while to bring an HR specialist onto you Board for this purpose or even hire an HR firm to create a manual for you. There are a lot of legal matters involved and you will want to be in compliance with current employment standards.

Again, it would be well advised to reach out to other COAs to use their documents as a starting point for your own.

## Conclusion

Healthy governance is central and essential to the leadership of your COA. The Board of Directors are key to the success of the organization they serve. Recruiting knowledgeable and motivated volunteers to serve on the Board of your COA will result in benefits for everyone. Serving as a member of a non-profit organization's board of directors can be a tremendously influential and enjoyable role. Healthy governance will make this far more likely to be the case. The rewards of effective service should be evident for the volunteers, the organization, and the community.

# Chapter Four: Securing Revenue

COA Funding Steps	Key Tasks
<b>Core / Base Funding Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Research core funding opportunities in your area</li> </ul>
<b>Grants &amp; One-Time Funding Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Determine the kinds of projects you would like to do</li> <li>● Become familiar with the common government grant opportunities</li> <li>● Seek out additional grant opportunities - Read every grant opportunity that comes your way to see if you could make one fit with your project</li> </ul>
<b>Corporate Revenue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create Sponsorship and Advertising Opportunities</li> <li>● Ensure that the opportunities are beneficial to both parties</li> <li>● Reach out to stakeholders and corporate entities in your community to pitch your opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Participant Revenue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consider appropriate ways of gaining support from your participants through memberships, events fees and donations</li> <li>● Set up an easy way for people to donate (e.g., online)</li> </ul>
<b>Community Revenue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Plan fundraising events that resonate well within your community</li> <li>● Consider creating or encouraging opportunities for major donors and planned giving</li> </ul>

This chapter will explore various ways you can secure revenue for your operations. Normally, some amount of revenue will be needed to maintain a grassroots organization like a COA. However, you may be able to achieve quite a lot, even without financial support, depending on the types of activities you choose to engage in. For example, engaging with government representatives on key issues takes only your time. Alternatively, holding educational sessions for large groups will normally require funds to pay for space, speakers, and supplies. If you want to have your own space or hire staff, your financial needs obviously increase exponentially. There are numerous revenue opportunities for any non-profit to explore, including:

- core / base funding
- grants and other one-time funding opportunities
- corporate revenue (sponsorship and advertising)
- participant revenue (membership, event fees, donations)
- community revenue (fundraisers)

## Core / Base Funding Opportunities

Core / Base funding is ongoing funding and is normally intended for purposes like salaries, rent, insurance, audit, etc. Very few funding sources allow for this, so this is extremely helpful.

Common sources of core funding are:

**Municipal Government** - Connect with your municipality to find out about core funding opportunities offered within your community.

**Provincial Government** – The province funds Seniors Active Living Centres (SALCs) on an ongoing annual basis. However, an organization must be approved as a SALC before receiving this renewable funding. Opportunities are not currently available to apply as a SALC. The last time the province accepted new applications was around 2017.

**United Way** – Check with the United Way in your region to find out more about the renewable core funding opportunities they may have available. Opportunities vary from one region to another.

## Grants & One-Time Funding Opportunities

In addition to core funding opportunities, there are many project funding opportunities you can apply for. These funding opportunities are normally offered for periods of six months to one year. Certain percentages of this funding can be allocated towards staffing, if needed. Funding is provided for specific activities with budget items attached. Normally, nothing is allowed for admin costs (rent, phone, etc.). Most funding assumes that you already have such things in place. Below are some of the more common grants available for senior-serving organizations. Keep your eyes and ears open for others.

**New Horizons for Seniors Program** – This grant, from the federal government, supports community-based projects that make a difference in the lives of seniors and in their communities. Funding promotes older adults' inclusion, volunteerism, mentorship, and awareness of older adults' financial abuse. They provide capital assistance for new programs that are aimed at older adults, as well. They can offer up to \$25,000 for projects.

**Seniors Community Grant Program** – This grant, from the Ontario government, is available annually and funds anywhere from \$1,000 - \$25,000 for projects that fit certain criteria and priorities each year.

**EnAbling Change Program** – This grant, from the Ontario government, provides funding to educate stakeholders about accessibility, drive cultural awareness about the value and benefits of accessibility, and support regulatory compliance. The program also promotes

opportunities to increase *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* compliance and accessibility in daily living.

[\*\*Inclusive Community Grant\*\*](#) – This grant, from the Ontario government, promotes independent and active living by supporting local projects that will help older residents and people with disabilities participate in community life. Amounts vary annually.

[\*\*Ontario Trillium Foundation\*\*](#) – Funding, from the Ontario government, is available for multiple different types of grants, including funding for infrastructure and community innovation.

[\*\*McConnell Foundation\*\*](#) – This private Canadian foundation contributes to diverse and innovative approaches to address community resilience, reconciliation, and climate change.

[\*\*Innoweave\*\*](#) – Innoweave helps community organizations clarify their outcomes and obtain the support they need to become capable of achieving those outcomes. They do this through a series of coaching streams built around social innovation approaches.

[\*\*Community Foundations\*\*](#) – In over 200 communities across Canada, Community Foundations help guide volunteer efforts and financial support to where it will have the greatest impact. Connect with your local Community Foundation to learn more about the difference they're making and the best way to contribute to make your community a better place.

There are several other private grant opportunities and foundations that provide funding. Check foundations' websites to see if they offer funding for grassroots organizations like yours. Some funding software you can use to search for funding from foundations includes:

- [\*\*Grant Advance\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Foundation Search\*\*](#)

These are well worth the investment of \$1500 or so per year IF you have someone with the time and ability to invest.

## **Grant Writing**

For any of these grant opportunities, you will need to complete a grant application. It is important to note that grant writing is a special skill. You may be fortunate enough to have a member within your COA that is already skilled in writing grants and who you can turn to for this role. If not, there is certainly a lot of information on the internet, you can always ask another COA for advice, and most granting organizations have orientation sessions that will walk you through the application form step by step to help you navigate the process. The following are a few general tips to help get you started:

- Ensure that your organization qualifies for the grant you are applying for. Review the criteria before putting all that work into the application.
- Ensure that the grant you are applying for fits your organization's needs. For example, if you have been focused on community care support services and the grant is for

housing, it is not wise to mold yourself into the requirements of the grant. Find a grant that fits your needs.

- Ensure that you and your committee members have the time and resources to apply for the grant. Applications can be time-consuming. It would be a good idea to create a grant calendar so that you have all important dates outlined to keep you on track.
- Ensure that each proposal you write is unique and specific. A generic proposal will not increase your odds of being successful.
- Ensure that you answer all of the questions that are asked in the grant or that you address all of the requirements. It is easy to miss some of these and you will lose points in the application process if you do not tick all of the boxes.
- Be sure to include the impact your organization has had in your community. Indicate how the initiatives you want to create or expand follow best practices and align with empirical research.
- Ensure that your work plans and your budget align with one another.
- Triple check your work. You can have other members of your committee help you review the application for clarity, missing content, typos, and more.

## Corporate Revenue

### **Sponsorships & Advertising**

Sponsorships and Advertising are a great way to increase revenue to support your organization. This can be a win for everyone, typically providing non-profit organizations with financial support in exchange for the corporation's brand exposure. Research companies in your community that are strongly aligned with your organization and prepare clear sponsorship and advertising opportunities for their consideration. For example, a local YMCA that attracts a lot of older adults may be willing to offer sponsorship if your COA promotes older adults' community engagement and healthy living. Ensure that you can deliver on your promises to them and that you do not compromise your values in the process. Develop a sponsorship and advertising policy to ensure you have clear guidelines. You may also want to develop a corporate prospectus so that all the corporate opportunities for the year are in one place. This makes planning much easier for everyone.

## Participant Revenue

### **Membership Fees**

Some COAs charge membership fees while others do not. It is important to consider the value of a COA membership. What will members get for their fees? Free events? Reduced fees for events? Discounts at local businesses? A sense of belonging? The knowledge that they are contributing to the advancement of seniors issues? Keep in mind that it can be a lot of work to maintain a membership model. On the other hand, it may also be just the source of revenue that you need to manage your program expenses.

## Event Fees

Event fees can be a helpful source of revenue. And they may be necessary to offset the cost of room rental, equipment, and more. Keep in mind, however, that some potential participants may find event fees prohibitive to their participation. You may want to consider creating a policy that will ensure that nobody misses the opportunity to participate due to the event fees.

## Donations

If your organization has charitable status, donations are a great source of revenue. Don't be shy. Let people know what their donations will accomplish. Provide easy opportunities for donations (online, cash, one-time, monthly, when registering for an event, in memoriam, etc.). Encourage donations when you talk about your activities (e.g., "Your donations will go a long way toward ensuring continued great activities such as these"). People can donate their money even if you do not have charitable status, but they will not receive a tax receipt. You will need to keep very careful records either way.

## Community Revenue

### Fundraising

Fundraising events are an excellent way to increase revenue. There are hundreds of ideas you can use to host a fundraising event, such as auctions, walk-a-thons, golf tournaments, and bake sales.

You want to be careful though to choose fundraising events that require minimum effort and produce maximum revenue. One challenge with many fundraisers is that organizations don't factor in the staff or volunteer time required to run the fundraiser. As a result, net profits are often much lower than the more visible gross profits. Having a strong volunteer group is very valuable.

There are non-financial benefits to fundraising events as well which need to be factored into your event planning including:

- gaining exposure and support in your community
- involving and connecting people in your community and having fun
- increasing volunteerism amongst seniors
- increasing a sense of belonging
- meeting new potential sponsors
- recruiting volunteers or members

One easy fundraiser, if you have enough people is the Grand Parade at <https://thegrandparade.org>. The entire event is organized by a third party. You mostly just need to recruit people to walk and ask their friends and family to support them in doing so.

## **Major Donors**

Securing a major donor normally requires both effort and skill. Connections are, of course, extremely helpful in knowing who to approach with such a suggestion. You will likely want to get some advice from a fundraising consultant before approaching a potential major donor.

## **Planned Giving / Legacy Gifting**

Planned Giving or Legacy Gifting are efforts that will normally not see a return for many years to come. The very nature of such gifts requires that someone passes away before you will reap any benefit. Moreover, you will normally not be aware if someone does leave money in their will for the organization. This is something that people generally keep to themselves. Patience and persistence are key.

There is much advice out there on how to do this from organizations such as the Canadian Association of Gift Planners (CAGP). CAGP also started a new initiative in 2020 called Willpower <https://www.willpower.ca/> which educates people on how they can make a significant impact on the causes they care about, and still support those you love through designations in their will.

## **Conclusion**

There are many ways you can generate revenue, and you will likely require several sources, to ensure that your organization has the capacity to continue running your programs and services. Regardless of how you are able to secure funding, a stable source of revenue is vital to the organization's sustainability.

# Chapter Five: Maintaining the Organization

COA Maintenance Steps	Key Tasks
<b>Sustainable Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Ensure your organization has dedicated, trustworthy leaders – including champions</li></ul>
<b>Organizational Alignment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Hold meetings to ensure all task forces are on the same page</li><li>● Ensure any side projects have been approved by the executive committee</li></ul>
<b>Maintaining Stakeholder Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Group your stakeholders</li><li>● Have a communication plan</li></ul>

Now that you have organized your COA, created an action plan, and secured funding, Chapter Five will focus on turning your attention to sustainability. Having core or base funding is key to organizational sustainability.

*Note: please refer to Chapter Four for more information regarding funding and revenue.*

Community awareness and support of your organization also play a major role in organizational sustainability. We will discuss strategies to maintain the sustainability of your COA in this chapter, including leadership, organizational alignment, and maintaining stakeholder relationships. Evaluation is another important aspect of sustainability, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

## Sustainable Leadership

Having secure, long-term leaders makes a huge difference in having a sustainable organization. Long-term leadership promotes principles in education, advocacy, reliability, security, and development. Leaders in the COA can be committed and passionate about their mission, vision, values, and goals, which set the tone of the organization internally and develop a positive reputation externally. Constant change of leadership or lack of leadership can lead the COA to lack direction, and in the worst case, can lead to the collapse of the organization. It is important to have a succession plan in place and appropriate organizational infrastructure (e.g., bylaws) for change in leadership.

*Note: Please refer to Chapter Three for information about organizational infrastructure.*

Additionally, it is important to have strong community champions that advocate and raise awareness for the COA and the programs they offer. Champions motivate community members to participate in events facilitated by the COA and act as a voice for community members. Champions can act as a bridge between the needs of the community, and the organization itself, and can be key to sustaining your COA.

## Organizational Alignment

Another important factor that affects sustainability is organizational alignment. Often, once organizations are developed and establish multiple task forces, the common goal and vision can be lost. It is possible that some members undertake their own projects that they think are relevant, without discussing them with the organization first. This can cause disorder within the organization. It is important that any task forces are all on the same page, and the organization's values, vision, and goals are upheld to maintain order and to achieve the best possible outcomes based on the community's needs.

## Maintaining Stakeholder Relationships

Your COA should have a communication plan in place to maintain relationships with various stakeholders, such as other organizations and municipal government officials. Your stakeholders are those who are interested in the COA's projects or affected by the outcomes of the COA's projects. Stakeholders can be directly involved or have influence over projects. It is important that stakeholders are informed about what the organization is doing; thus, it is important to regularly communicate updates and have frequent contact with stakeholders. Additionally, it is important to ensure that your values continue to align with stakeholder values. For example, if your local Member of Parliament shows interest in your organization, it is important that you exchange relevant information on goals, outcomes, and vision related to older adults' issues, and vice versa.

## Conclusion

You want your COA to have high-quality, effective, long-term programs, services, and initiatives. Long-term, high-quality programs can lead to securing core funding which can further strengthen your organization. A great resource to measure sustainability is the [Program Sustainability Assessment Tool](#). This tool assesses the capacity of the programs, services, and initiatives delivered by your organization and provides a full report on the organization's overall sustainability.

# Chapter Six: Ensuring the Organization's Effectiveness

COA Evaluation Steps	Key Tasks
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Find an evaluation plan that works for your organization<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Consider Process Evaluation</li></ul></li></ul>
Monitoring Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep track of various committee projects from initiation to finish</li></ul>

Chapter Six will focus on the importance of evaluating the progress of the COA to ensure that it is making the desired impact in your community. Evaluation can improve the organization's structure, performance, design, and initiatives. It is also important to document the impact the COA has in your community for funding opportunities and sustainability of the COA. There are various qualitative and quantitative ways to monitor and evaluate, from relatively informal observational methods to more formal empirical methods.

## Evaluation

Evaluation involves reviewing your organization's goals, objectives, and initiatives. You may consider conducting a process evaluation and reflecting on the processes you took to reach your goals and the progress you have made. For example, you can ask, "what process did I take to get to \_\_\_\_ step? Was this the best way to achieve our goals?"

An evaluation can act as a document that you can present to your stakeholders regarding the progress of the COA and its initiatives; thus, you can ask, "What will our stakeholders want to know?"

You may choose to create a strategic plan/evaluation summary using a logic model (refer to the sample logic model in chapter 2). Did the actual outputs meet the projected outputs? Did any unforeseen external factors affect the expected results? Did the COA's initiatives reach its target audience? Were there any barriers? These are all good questions to ask while conducting a process evaluation.

## Monitoring Projects through Process Evaluation

Monitoring the process of the COA's projects, programs, and initiatives should be done as they are implemented. Starting the evaluation process early can be key to catching errors, saving money, improving efficiency, and staying on course to meet projected outputs.

A great resource developed by [Hamilton COA is the Age-Friendly Dashboard](#): Creating an Age-Friendly Dashboard to Monitor and Communicate Progress. This can help you get started on the evaluation process.

## Conclusion

Through evaluation, you monitor the progress of the COA as well as reflect on the work you have completed. It is important to begin the evaluation process as soon as possible on projects and activities, and not wait until completion. Evaluation can also be important for the sustainability of your organization.

# Appendix - Summaries of the Various Councils on Aging in Ontario

This section of the planning guide contains short summaries of COAs in Ontario that were involved in the making of this planning guide. The purpose of this section is to show how the development and structure of each COA is unique. We hope this will re-affirm that there are several paths you can take to develop and maintain a COA. This section was derived from Jayne Culbert's work in 2019 titled *History of Councils on Aging* and subsequently updated in some instances.

## Burlington Age-Friendly Council

### **Website**

[Burlington Age-Friendly Council](#)

### **Established**

2012

### **History**

The Burlington Age-Friendly Council (BAFC) was established in 2012. The Halton Age-Friendly Network was formed in 2016.

### **Mission/Mandate/Vision**

Mission: By engaging the community and advocating for change, we are building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive age-friendly Halton that contributes to optimal aging, improving the quality of life for all.

### **Structure/Governance/Membership**

The Burlington Age-Friendly Council (BAFC) is supported by Community Development Halton, a non-profit backbone organization, that serves communities across Halton Region. Members of the Council include community volunteers and representation from community organizations that serve and support older adults in the City of Burlington. They work collaboratively with community partners and volunteers to enhance the well-being and participation of older adults in community life. In 2016 the Halton Age-Friendly Network was formed, with representation from community members from all four municipalities (Burlington, Oakville, Milton, and Halton Hills).

### **Funding**

The Burlington Age-Friendly Council receives funding mainly through grants and donations.

### **Programs/Projects**

Their purpose and commitment are to encourage and support active and healthy aging through age-friendly initiatives that promote education on issues that are relevant to older adults.

Examples of programs and initiatives that the BAFC is responsible for include:

- Empowering Older Adult Education Series
- Ride a Bus Program
- Senior Connector Program
- Halton HomeShare Program
- Intergenerational Programs

### **Staff**

The Burlington Age-Friendly Council has one staff person employed by Community Development Halton.

## **Cambridge Council on Aging**

### **Website**

[Cambridge Council on Aging](#)

### **Established**

2013

### **History**

The Social Planning Council of Cambridge and north Dumfries began the age friendly work in 2010 and by 2013 we had completed all the work to be designated by WHO as an age friendly city. However, it was not to be, so we formed, after consulting with the Grand River Council on Aging, a Council. However, we decided not to be a non-profit but rather to have a backbone organization and be collaborative.

### **Mission/Mandate/Vision**

Vision: Cambridge as an Age-Friendly Community

The Cambridge Council on Aging is a forum for older adults and community members to mobilize and work together to make Cambridge an age-friendly community. This involves raising awareness and advocating for change by increasing the civic involvement of seniors in the community. The Council on Aging will take on emerging social issues, such as ageism, elder abuse and other issues concerning seniors.

### **Structure/Governance/Membership**

The Cambridge Council on Aging operates as a collaborative with the support of a backbone organization. It is not incorporated and does not have registered charitable status. It is governed by twelve members of the council representing older adults and various sectors

within the community. In 2021 the city applied to be an age friendly community under the WHO. The City of Cambridge is just beginning to renew their older adult strategy and the Cambridge Council on Aging sits at that table.

### **Funding**

The Cambridge Council on Aging receives no operational funding, has no membership fees and does not hold fundraisers. It operates completely with the support of sponsors. A purposeful decision was made to make all events free as Cambridge has a high proportion of older adults in poverty.

### **Programs/Projects**

- Annual events include Creative Aging events in June and Fall Educational Events. This incorporates everything from music and mindfulness, to elder abuse and housing options.
- Workshops on such topics as cohousing, home share, caring for older parents, and transportation options have been offered in collaboration with the Regional Age Friendly Network. There are plans to extend these and add new topics.
- A peer mentor program around social isolation was developed - with grant funding - similar to the befriending program in the UK. This was followed with a conference called "Take the I out of Isolation".
- All events can be found at [www.cambridgecouncilonaging.ca](http://www.cambridgecouncilonaging.ca).

### **Staff**

The Cambridge Council on Aging has no staff.

## **Grand River Council on Aging - Brantford-Brant**

### **Website**

[Grand River Council on Aging](#)

### **Mission/Mandate/Vision**

Our Mission - To Promote the Voice of Elders

Our Vision - To engage Brantford and Brant County, Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation in the process of becoming age-friendly communities.

### **Structure/Governance/Membership**

The Grand River COA is a registered, charitable, non-profit organization that believes in an "age-friendly community" for all ages. It is the only organization within its local area to obtain current data related to daily living suggestions for individuals residing in the community. The communities involved with Grand River COA are the City of Brantford, County of Brant, Six Nations of the Grand River, and the Mississaugas of the First Credit Nation. The Grand River COA does not have memberships.

## **Funding**

The Grand River COA receives funding from various sources, such as from the City of Brantford, County of Brant, donations, fundraising, sponsorships, and grants. The GRCOA has introduced a new annual fundraiser, The Grand Parade, to replace its Annual TACO FEST. Fundraising dollars support the operating costs which include contracting part time administrative assistance to support the volunteers that have carried out the development of the organization and its programs (e.g., age-friendly ambassadors, fundraising, marketing, data collection and entry).

## **Programs/Projects**

The Grand River COA believes in educating the public on the relevant accessibility issues residents face in their various communities, as well as advocating for social inclusion of older adults.

In 2008, they produced a Master Aging Plan with 99 recommendations and followed that up with a 2017 Community Impact Report with 628 suggestions for planning for an Age-Friendly Community.

Examples of programs, initiatives, and events that Grand River COA are responsible for include:

- INFO HUB – 350+ links to local resources compiled by the eight domains of an age-friendly community
- Seniors Discount Directory – for Brantford, Brant County and Six Nations
- Bi-Weekly Community at Home Virtual Workshops
- Bi-Weekly Community at Home Newsletters
- Interactive Web Site
- Interactive Social Media (Facebook)
- Age-Friendly Community Development initiatives – collaboration and consultation
- Age-Friendly Calendar

## **Staff**

The Grand River Council on Aging has no staff.

## Council on Aging Grey Bruce (COAGB)

### **Website**

[Council on Aging, Grey Bruce](#)

### **Established**

2015

### **History**

A Seniors Summit in Owen Sound held in 2014 determined the need for a voice for older adults living in rural areas. Through the Owen Sound Seniors Center (now the Active Lifestyle Seniors Centre Grey Bruce), a successful application for a grant was submitted to the Ministry of Senior's Affairs. After funding was received, a steering committee was formed, townhall type meetings were held in key centres to promote the council and age friendly concepts, residents were invited to apply for membership, and COAGB held their first General Meeting on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

### **Mission/Mandate/Vision**

Our Vision - A community that respects, values and empowers its older adult population.

Our Mission Statement - To be a collective voice supporting the experience of aging through education and leadership providing older adults with the opportunity to participate fully in society.

### **Structure/Governance/Membership**

It is important to note the COAGB is a not-for-profit, volunteer driven, two level organization. Grey Bruce contains 17 unique municipal entities. COAGB works with these 17 municipalities with a goal of establishing a Community/Seniors Advisory Committee (CAC) in each. These CACs in turn send one member to sit on the COAGB to ensure all areas of Grey Bruce are represented on the Council. COAGB's lead organization is the Active Lifestyle Seniors Centre, which offers COAGB support and leadership.

### **Funding**

They receive funding from various grants (e.g., Community Foundation Grey Bruce), donations and fundraisers.

### **Programs/Projects**

The objectives of the 17 municipalities are to encourage municipalities to adopt age-friendly community concepts in their strategic plans, provide education on current community services for rural older adults and to act as a collective voice for older rural residents. COAGB works to systematically create change for older adults in the Grey Bruce Area. They offer:

- Advisory to municipalities on implementing age-friendly concepts within their strategic plan
- Various support for rural-based older adults

### **Staff**

COAGB has no staff

## Hamilton Council on Aging (HCoA)

### **Website**

[Hamilton Council on Aging](#)

### **Established**

2005

### **History**

HCoA is a non-profit, charitable organization that originated in 2005. The need for a council was developed by retired professionals, academics, and community leaders who wished to address the systemic issues that affected older adults in Hamilton. HCoA established an age-friendly movement in 2007 and developed the Hamilton's Plan for an Age-Friendly City.

### **Mission/Mandate/Vision**

Vision - Positive aging is visible in Hamilton.

Mission - We advance positive aging — promoting the health, well-being and social participation of ALL older adults — by influencing attitudes, policies and programs to include their voices.

HCoA acknowledges the biggest issues older adults in their community face, such as transportation, housing, outdoor space, communication, community services and civic engagement.

### **Structure/Governance/Membership**

HCoA has a working board but heavily relies on volunteers to carry out programs and initiatives.

### **Funding**

HCoA receives funding from various sources. Annually, they receive around \$100,000 for operational costs. They have received a plethora of grants from various organizations, including:

- The City of Hamilton
- New Horizons
- United Way Halton & Hamilton
- Community Foundation
- Ontario Sport and Recreation Fund

Additionally, they also have a sponsorship program and a membership program.

### **Programs/Projects**

Some of these programs and initiatives are listed below:

- Age-Friendly Hamilton
- Dementia-Friendly Hamilton
- Positive Aging Workshops
- Let's Get Moving Workshops
- Navigating the Health Care System Workshops

### **Staff**

HCoA has no paid staff.

## Frontenac-Kingston Council on Aging

### **Website**

[Frontenac-Kingston Council on Aging](#)

### **History**

The Frontenac-Kingston COA started as an advocacy group that became a Council on Aging over time. It is a non-profit, charitable organization.

### **Mission/Mandate/Vision**

The organization strives to increase the quality of life for older adults living in the Townships of North, Central, and South Frontenac, the Thousand Islands, the City of Kingston, Leeds, Grenville, Lanark, Quinte, Hastings, and Price Edward Counties.

### **Structure/Governance/Membership**

The Frontenac-Kingston COA Board members come from diverse professional and geographical backgrounds. This allows us to broadly consider community perspectives when working to make the COA a dominant influence for positive aging. The Board of Directors is responsible for providing leadership concerning the direction and future goals of the COA. Their goal is to make Kingston a better place in which to live and to work — for both senior citizens and all the Kingston community. The Board of Directors is appointed annually.

### **Funding**

This organization receives funding from various sources, including grants and fundraising. Sources of funding include:

- Fundraising (annual golf tournament)
- Kingston Community Foundation
- Rotary Club
- Provincial funds
- New Horizons
- Private donations

They also receive support from Queens University with research-based projects.

### **Programs/Projects**

Frontenac-Kingston COA is dedicated to research regarding older adults living in Kingston and surrounding areas. They prepare educational reports and presentations that inform families, businesses, caregivers, and policy makers. Examples of programs and initiatives run by Frontenac-Kingston COA include:

- Mr. Fixit Friend
- Sunshine calls
- Elder Abuse peer support line
- Education days
- Navigator guides

## **Staff**

Frontenac-Kingston COA has no paid staff. Between their board members and volunteers, they divide tasks. For example, many of the board members are responsible for big picture, leadership initiatives. Volunteers are responsible for day-to-day tasks such as answering phones, organizing meetings, and organizing paperwork.

## **Age-Friendly Niagara Council (AFNC)**

### **Website**

[Age-Friendly Niagara Council](#)

### **History**

Like-minded individuals from across Niagara came together in 2009 to discuss the potential for an Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) application to support fostering an Age-Friendly Community (AFC) as promoted by the World Health Organization and by Age-Friendly advisory groups that had developed in Ontario. An oversight body of community volunteers (ultimately becoming the Age-Friendly Niagara Network) was formed. Successive OTF grants enabled the Network to raise awareness about AFC principles in all the 12 local municipalities across Niagara, generate a vision for an age-friendly Niagara and promote local action. An extensive community consultation led to the Niagara Aging Strategy and Action Plan in 2015 which has provided direction for implementation of its many objectives. An Ontario Age-Friendly Community Outreach grant enabled the transition from a Network to a council on aging, with the formation of the Age-Friendly Niagara Council in September 2021. Partnerships have been a critical success factor, one of the most important being with Niagara Connects, which has provided “backbone support” and expertise in community engagement and knowledge mobilization.

### **Vision / Mission / Mandate**

Vision - An age-friendly Niagara – a community for all ages

Mission - Foster a caring community that optimizes quality of life as people age

Mandate - Implement the objectives identified in the *Niagara Aging Strategy and Action Plan*, 2015, with an emphasis on an inclusive and intergenerational approach

### **Structure/Governance/Membership**

- Interim Board of Directors formed in September 2021 by the members of the former Network Leadership Council, with an immediate term goal of forming a Founding Board with members recruited from the community at large in 2022
- Board members are community volunteers who are older adults and others who represent various municipal, non-profit community organizations and businesses with connections across Niagara, such as Brock University and Niagara College and newcomer and LGBTQ communities
- As a community driven, volunteer led body, municipalities are partners insofar as they provide volunteers to serve in various roles and some in-kind support

- Decisions on possible incorporation, possible charitable status etc. will be made by the future Board

### **Funding**

- Exclusively from grants such as OTF, Ontario AFC Outreach and Niagara Community Foundation
- Recent support from the Regional Municipality of Niagara for the purchase of a one-year subscription for limited backbone support from Niagara Connects
- Submission to the Niagara Region is being prepared for longer term base funding to improve sustainability

### **Projects/Achievements**

- Promotion of age-friendly/older adult advisory committees appointed by municipal councils at the 12 local municipalities
- Formation of the Niagara Older Adult Alliance of representatives from the local municipal advisory committees to develop a common voice on select issues
- A comprehensive information portal, Niagara Older Adult Infolink, in partnership with 211
- Development of various vehicles to promote key AF elements such as community education sessions, a virtual COVID-19 issues roundtable, campaign briefs for municipal/ provincial/federal election candidates, an Age-Friendly Niagara flag, a “Let’s Chat” park bench concept to encourage intergenerational interaction, and AF Business Guides in partnership with Chambers of Commerce

### **Staff**

AFNC has no paid staff.

## [The Council on Aging of Ottawa](#)

### **Website**

[The Council on Aging of Ottawa / Le conseil sur le vieillissement d’Ottawa](#)

### **Established**

April 1975 (Incorporated 1991)

### **History**

COA Ottawa began in the early 1970s and is the oldest COA in Ontario. The Social Planning Council and local Senior Citizens Council established a need for a Council that connected older adults with health services. Nearly a decade later, the Council received core funding that allowed for the Council to become more stable and secure. The Council incorporated in 1991 and received charitable status. Ottawa was declared an age-friendly city in 2009 and COA Ottawa led the Age-Friendly Ottawa initiative, partnering with the City’s Older Adult Plan. Older adults lead this organization and have support from staff.

### **Structure/Governance/Membership**

- COA Ottawa has a volunteer Board of 10 members which is comprised of older adults from the community who bring a wide range of experience to their roles.
- COA Ottawa has several committees on issues including health, housing, transportation, francophone affairs, income security, pedestrian safety and walkability, older drivers, and education. Most of these committees have a staff representative of a relevant city department sitting at the table to create better communication and alignment.
- We currently have roughly 130 volunteers leading our education, advocacy and engagement activities.
- The membership of some 400 individuals is roughly 90% older adults and 10% professionals
- A distribution network of roughly 3000 receives the newsletter on a weekly basis.

### **Mission/Mandate/Vision**

Vision: Respected, informed and engaged older adults living in an age-friendly city

Mission: As a bilingual and inclusive Council, we work to advance the wellbeing of Ottawa's older adults.

Motto: Advancing the wellbeing of Ottawa's older adults

### **Funding**

The COA of Ottawa has a budget of roughly \$350,000 annually. Funding comes from:

- Core Funding – municipal and provincial
- Grants – from a variety of sources
- Corporate Revenue – sponsorships & advertising from corporate partners
- Participant Revenue – membership, event fees, donations
- Fundraising

Through this funding, they can hire staff, implement programs, and sustain over 150 volunteers.

### **Programs/Projects**

COA Ottawa is focussed in two main areas:

- education – for the benefit of individual older adults
- advocacy/engagement – for the benefit of the community

COA Ottawa's programs, initiatives, and events include:

- Smart Aging / Vieillir allumé – a series of educational workshops helping older adults navigate the transitions of later life
- Snow Moles – Through this program, participants audit what it is like to walk in Ottawa on a winter day. Information gained from hundreds of audits annually help to direct the city's snow clearing standards and practices.
- CarFit – helping older adults find their best fit for safety and comfort in their vehicles
- 55 Alive – COA Ottawa has the only volunteer in the Ottawa Gatineau area certified to give this program in French

- Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities – Our Age-Friendly Housing Committee recently facilitated the initiation of the first NORC with a Supportive Service Program in Ottawa – the 6<sup>th</sup> in the province.

### **Staff**

COA Ottawa currently has 6 staff and 2 contractors totalling 5.2 FTE

## Age-Friendly Peterborough

### **Website**

[Age-Friendly Peterborough](#)

### **Established**

Late 2000's

### **History**

In the late 2000's, the Peterborough Seniors Planning Table was formed to systematically address issues related to older adults in the Peterborough area. In 2014, the council identified the need to include older adults in the planning process. To maintain sustainability, the council paired with the City of Peterborough and transitioned into AFP. Transitioning allowed the organization to better influence policy and decision-making pertaining to older adults. AFP was accepted into the WHO's Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

### **Mission/Mandate/Vision**

AFP strives to promote opportunity and learning for older adults in Peterborough and to ensure their emotional and physical needs are met. They support healthy and active aging, intergenerational connections, and enhancement of physical, social, and health-related infrastructure.

### **Funding**

AFP receives funding from the City of Peterborough. Some additional funding is provided by United Way for certain projects. They receive sponsorship from Home Instead. This funding is used for staffing, administration, and programs and initiatives.

### **Programs/Projects**

Examples of programs and initiatives include:

- Health and Housing Navigation Study
- Walkability Assessments
- Rural Transportation Project
- Transit Training Program
- Age-Friendly Peterborough Report → TV Program

### **Staff**

Age-Friendly Peterborough has one staff person employed by the City of Peterborough.

## Toronto Council on Aging (TCA)

### **Website**

[Toronto Council on Aging](#)

### **Established**

The Toronto Seniors Council was incorporated in 1999 and officially renamed as “Toronto Council on Aging” in 2012. They achieved charitable status in 2014.

### **Mission/Mandate/Vision**

TCA is dedicated to improving the lives of older adults living in Toronto through education and experience. They strive to be action-oriented, collaborative, respectful and inclusive. TCA promotes positive aging and community involvement for older adults in Toronto. They also promote age-friendly initiatives and education of aging issues throughout the city.

### **Structure/Governance/Membership**

Our 14-member intergenerational working board lifts the voices of older adults, organizes educational events, builds collaborative networks, and much more.

### **Funding**

They are funded by:

- New Horizons for Seniors
- Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Bridgeway Foundation
- Donations
- Membership Fees

They also have various sponsorships throughout the city, such as the Alzheimer’s Society Toronto.

### **Programs/Projects**

Examples of programs and services offered by TCA include:

- Friendly to Seniors
- Living Longer, Aging Smarter
- Senior to Senior: Mentorship to Leadership
- Boomers and Beyond: The Power of Positive Aging
- Bridging the Gap for Seniors Homelessness

### **Staff**

TCA has no paid staff.

## Council on Aging, Windsor-Essex County

### **Website**

[Council on Aging, Windsor-Essex](#)

### **Established**

1980s

### **History**

The COA, Windsor-Essex County started in the 1980s when a group of individuals collaborated to create an older adults networking group. They received project and core funding in the late 1980s and gained incorporated, non-profit charitable status. Unfortunately, their funding was later cut because of a change of government. Nevertheless, COA, Windsor-Essex County thrives as a council to this day.

### **Mission/Mandate/Vision**

COA, Windsor-Essex County believes in advocacy, research and education regarding issues related to older adults. Additionally, they promote coordination and development of services related to older adults in their community.

### **Funding**

While they currently have limited funding, grant funding is sought and received for specific education projects. Additionally, they receive donations.

### **Programs/Projects**

COA, Windsor-Essex aids older adults in their community by providing information and referrals to services, aids in administrative and organizational support for events aimed at older adults, and provides representation for older adults within their community.

Some programs and services provided by COA, Windsor-Essex include:

- Education on issues of aging
- Fall Prevention
- Age-Friendly training
- Community development re: issues of aging

### **Staff**

COA, Windsor-Essex County has no paid staff. They heavily rely on volunteers.

---

### **Special Note:**

As a Council on Aging in the Province of Ontario, it would be wise to familiarize yourselves with the Older Adult Centres' Association of Ontario... <http://www.oacao.org/>. They are a recognized leader in the development of quality services, resources and support for our network of community-based older adult centres.