



# Aging Our Way

Oklahoma's Multisector Plan on Aging

June 2024



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## Glossary

- **Accessory Dwelling Unit:** A second, smaller home built on a parcel usually zoned for a detached house.
- **Activities of Daily Living:** Basic activities related to daily personal care (e.g., eating, bathing, mobility).
- **Adaptive Modifications:** Updates to an existing owner- or renter-occupied home for the residents' accessibility needs.
- **Adult Day Health Services:** Provide the physical, social and emotional needs of older adults and adults with disabilities (e.g., health monitoring and medication administration; socialization, leisure, recreational and educational activities; assistance with personal care; nutritious lunches and snacks; transportation and counseling) but do not provide overnight living accommodations.
- **Adult Family Homes:** Smaller, residential homes where a limited number of residents receive care from paid live-in caregivers, often offering a more personalized and intimate setting compared to larger facilities.
- **Aging Our Way:** The name of Oklahoma's Multisector Plan on Aging.
- **Ambassadors:** Formal volunteers who help Oklahomans learn about, understand and connect to *Aging Our Way*.
- **Aspirations:** The guiding principles for *Aging Our Way*.
- **Assisted Living Communities:** Facilities designed primarily for older adults who are largely independent but may require some help with daily tasks, such as medication management or personal care.
- **Focus Areas:** The 10 priorities of Oklahoma's plan: Availability and Affordability of Services, Programs and Resources; Accountability, Coordination and Fiscal Transparency; Housing; Transportation; Age-Friendly Communities; Culture Change and Education; Wellness; Social Connection; Unpaid Caregivers; and Workforce.
- **Goals:** The objectives that support each focus area in our Plan.
- **Oklahoma Voices:** Oklahomans' perspectives that were gathered through multiple channels of feedback, including listening sessions, surveys and subcommittee meetings.
- **Pathways:** The measurable initiatives that support each goal in *Aging Our Way*.
- **Person-Centered:** Service provision focused on the personal goals and desires of the individual receiving care. Individuals actively participate in their own treatment in close cooperation with their health professionals.
- **Plan Partners:** The private and public organizations and individuals who formally support *Aging Our Way*, and represent multiple sectors like healthcare, transportation and workforce.
- **Remote Supports:** Technology to allow someone off-site to monitor and respond to a person's health, safety and other needs.
- **Supportive Housing:** Provides stable housing for independent living, with an array of built-in services for health, behavioral health, case management and workforce support.

## Introduction

Oklahoma is experiencing a dramatic shift in its aging population. By 2034, Americans 65 and older will outnumber people under 18 for the first time in history (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). This projection is supported by historical trends in Oklahoma. The number of Oklahomans 65 and older has increased 43% between 2000 and 2020. This translates to a rise from 455,950 in 2000 to 653,078 in only 20 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). The growth of Oklahoma's aging population prompts a restructuring and increased coordination of aging support, healthcare, community building, education, cultural conversations around aging and ageism, workforce and socioeconomic development to meet the evolving needs of an older population.

The State of Oklahoma has developed this Multisector Plan on Aging ("Plan"), inviting collaboration and coordination among various Oklahomans, including those who work in state agencies, who represent an assortment of industries and sectors and who are members of Tribal Nations, to guide Oklahoma's response and preparation for these shifts. Oklahoma Human Services is the sponsor of the *Aging Our Way* Plan's development, leveraging the input and direction of an Executive Steering Committee, Advisory Committee and Subcommittees. These leadership committees are composed of experts in their respective fields, as discussed below in **Oklahoma Voices**, and represent multiple government agencies, Tribes and private organizations. *Aging Our Way* provides an initial 10-year framework for the state to proactively address anticipated needs, opportunities and capacity considerations that promote a thriving older adult population.

Our Plan will provide a pathway for Oklahomans to join together to address the challenges and opportunities of an aging population. As with any transition, planning and preparation are key to success.

## A National Movement

As of May 2024, Oklahoma is one of 24 states at varying stages of intent, development and implementation of Multisector Plans on Aging. Of these 24 states, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah and Vermont have fully developed and are implementing [their plans](#). These states are doing important work to address increased demands for aging services and support. The plans address other societal impacts like the workforce, budget pressures and other economic factors, as well as aiding the exchange of knowledge. Oklahoma's Plan must address the unique challenges and opportunities of our state. The development of this Plan began with a thorough analysis of the current state of aging in Oklahoma, including requesting feedback from older adults, advocates, state agency professionals and service providers. The information gathered was used by experts in a variety of fields to identify Oklahoma's path forward.

## Current State of Aging in Oklahoma

The *Aging our Way* Plan provides an opportunity for Oklahoma to address current challenges impacting the health and wellbeing of all Oklahomans. In the United Health Foundation's [America's Health Rankings: Senior Report 2022](#), Oklahoma ranks 46 in the nation for a variety of factors that influence the health of older adults. Factors measured by the report include:

- Social and economic factors
- Physical environment
- Clinical care
- Behaviors
- Health outcomes

According to AARP's [2023 State Scorecard on Long-Term Services and Supports for Older Adults, People with Physical Disabilities, and Family Caregivers](#), Oklahoma ranks 46 in the nation for dimensions that support quality of life. The dimensions included in the AARP report include:

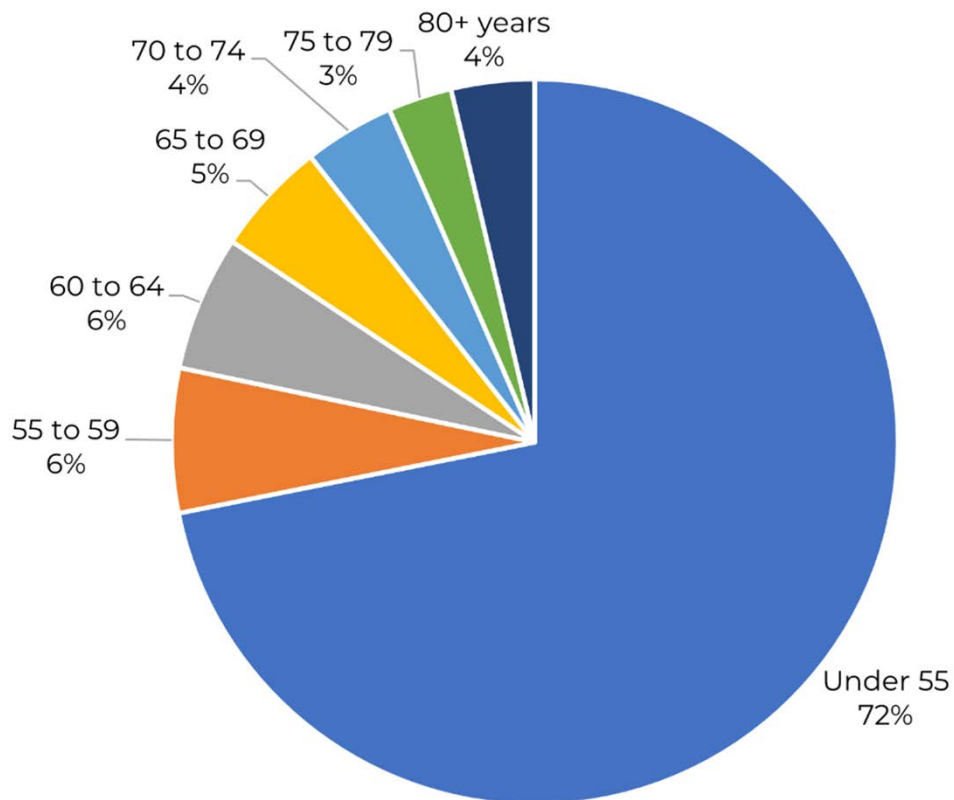
- Affordability and access
- Choice of setting and provider
- Safety and quality
- Support for family caregivers
- Community integration

Beginning in early 2023, Oklahoma Human Services conducted benchmarking research and engaged with Oklahomans across the state to better understand the issues behind these rankings. The results of this research were published in September 2023 as the [Oklahoma Multisector Plan on Aging Current State Report](#) ("Current State Report"). The Current State Report presents information on the status of Oklahoma's aging population and the challenges and opportunities *Aging Our Way* may need to address. It includes the results of 13 listening sessions with more than 200 participants, and a statewide survey conducted between May 2023 and July 2023 with close to 700 respondents. The Current State Report informed our Plan's focus areas and goals. The full report and report summary can be accessed on the [Aging Our Way website](#). Highlights of the report's findings are provided below.

### Current State Report Highlights

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, 22.7% of Oklahoma's residents are age 60 and older (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022), see **Figure 1. Oklahoma Age Distribution by Percentage**. Oklahoma is experiencing growth in the aging population and a decrease in birth rate at the same time. Oklahoma's birthrate has decreased from 69.9% in 2000 to 61.5% in 2021 (Martin et al., 2002, p. 40; Osterman et al., 2023, p. 25). These demographic shifts will have complex, statewide strategic implications.

**Figure 1. Oklahoma Age Distribution by Percentage  
(Data Source: U.S. Census, 2022)**



One emerging theme from stakeholder input was the desire to ensure a healthy, safe environment for older adults. Most stakeholders felt that lack of quality services and resources, especially in rural areas, was the greatest challenge to aging well. Lastly, stakeholders emphasized the importance of addressing economic security in our Plan to assure older adults can meet their needs in the future. These and other themes informed the focus areas of our Plan. Details about listening sessions and their findings are discussed below in **Oklahoma Voices** and the [Current State Report](#).

## Aspirations

Five aspirations steer the development and implementation the Plan. The aspirations describe the future Oklahomans deserve. They communicate the values of the Plan and will continue to serve as guiding principles over the next 10 years as it progresses. The *Aging Our Way* aspirations are:

- **Awareness of Aging:** Oklahomans know that help is available when we have questions about how to grow old and live a happy, fulfilled life.
- **Community:** Oklahomans recognize we are all part of a great state and are invested in our whole community.



- **Empowerment:** Oklahomans have power over our lives and can easily find and use the services we need.
- **Innovation:** Oklahomans explore new ideas to keep improving the system and services to support aging.
- **Results:** Oklahomans see outcomes that are based on individual wants and needs, which are clear, can be tracked and can be acted upon.

## Focus Areas, Goals and Pathways

Through a structured series of strategic decisions, the Committee members identified our Plan’s components including focus areas, goals and pathways. Ten focus areas and 13 goals were identified to ensure the best impact to all generations of Oklahomans. The *Aging Our Way* committees identified two types of pathways that would support the goals during implementation over the next 10 years: project pathways and advocacy pathways. Project pathways are specific initiatives and projects with measurable objectives. Advocacy pathways require broad support from people, organizations or government bodies that must be developed over time. In this document, advocacy pathways are listed in boxes at the end of each focus area section. See **Figure 2. Aging Our Way Focus Areas and Goals.**



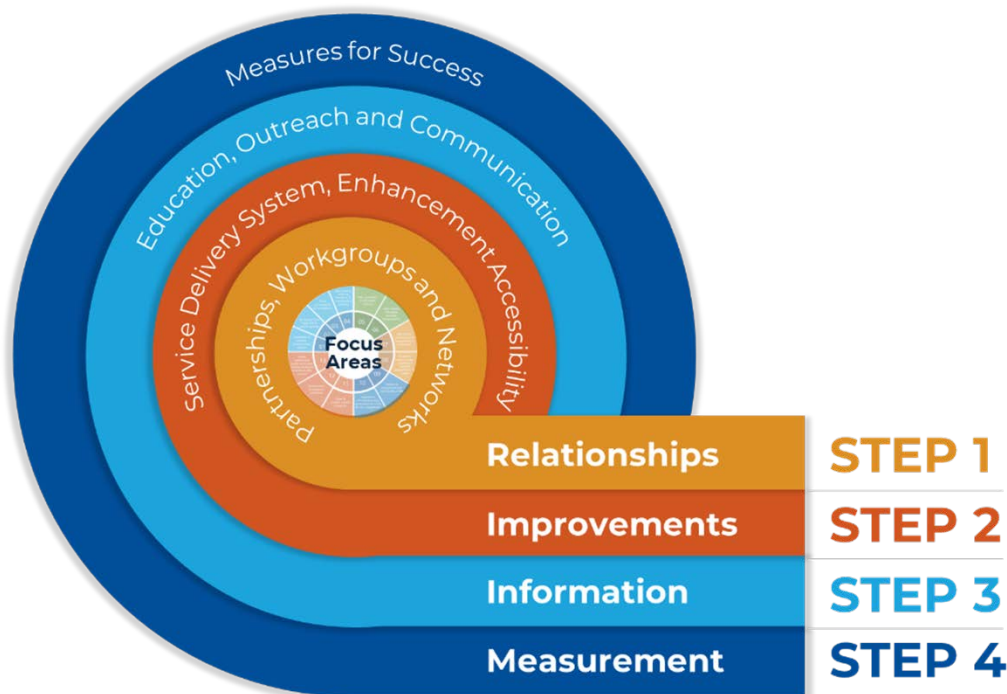
Over the next 10 years, the Executive Steering Committee, Advisory Committee and Plan Partners will execute these pathways. More details about the pathways, timelines and measures can be found in **Appendix A. Implementation Summary**.

During the 10-year implementation period, *Aging Our Way* will follow a four-step implementation approach that applies to all focus areas, goals and pathways, see **Figure 3. Implementation Approach**.

- **Step 1:** We will start with building relationships for *Aging Our Way* through partnerships, workgroups and networks.
- **Step 2:** We will focus on making improvements to service delivery and accessibility.
- **Step 3:** We will distribute information on the progress of the *Aging Our Way* goals and pathways through education, outreach and intentional communication.
- **Step 4:** We will measure the success of the *Aging Our Way* goals and pathways.

Each of these overarching implementation steps involves the actions the Plan Partners will take to implement the *Aging Our Way* pathways. For each pathway, project plans will be developed with their own time scales and measures. These measures are carefully selected data points that we will use to track whether *Aging Our Way* is producing the intended outcomes.

**Figure 3. Implementation Approach**



Using this approach, the Plan seeks to make measurable improvements, not only for individual pathways, but also in the domains and factors measured by the [LTSS Scorecard Report](#) and the [America's Health Rankings: Senior Report 2022](#).



# Oklahoma Voices

## Engaging Oklahomans

To address the complex and varied needs of older Oklahomans, *Aging Our Way* must include the differing, unique voices of Oklahomans. Between January 2023 and April 2024, Oklahoma Human Services sought input from Oklahomans through multiple channels, including the *Aging Our Way* leadership committees, listening sessions and statewide surveys. The agency also spread awareness of *Aging Our Way* through in-person engagements, earned media opportunities and social media promotions. Through earned media opportunities, local and national news publications featured information about how people could share their thoughts and opinions about *Aging Our Way*.

## Leadership Committees

*Aging Our Way's* leadership structure promotes effective decision-making and representation across multiple sectors and industries. Made up of an Executive Steering Committee, an Advisory Committee and Subcommittees, supported by Oklahoma Human Services, this structure forms the foundation of *Aging Our Way* and is critical to its implementation.

The Executive Steering Committee serves as the main decision-making body, composed of leaders from various state agencies. This committee meets quarterly, shaping the strategic vision and guiding the success of *Aging Our Way*. The Advisory Committee represents private sector organizations and nonprofits working in aging services and advocacy. This committee meets monthly, and offers expertise, insights and perspectives to inform *Aging Our Way* strategies and actions. Subcommittees provide subject matter expertise for each of our Plan's 10 focus areas. Members represent state and local agencies, Tribes, institutions of higher education and private and nonprofit organizations. Each subcommittee met five times over a two-week period to develop the pathways for their assigned focus areas. Members of these subcommittees represent more than 50 organizations across Oklahoma, including large and small businesses, universities and colleges, local and state government bodies, Tribal health and social services agencies and aging advocacy organizations. A detailed list of all Leadership Committee members is available in **Appendix B. Plan Partners**.

Additionally, the State Council on Aging and Adult Protective Services, an advisory group to Oklahoma Human Services, offers strategic input as part of the *Aging Our Way* leadership structure. As the project sponsor, Oklahoma Human Services led our Plan's development and will play a critical oversight and coordination role in its implementation, see **Figure 4. Aging Our Way Project Leadership Structure**.

**Figure 4. Aging Our Way Project Leadership Structure**



## Listening Session Highlights

In Spring 2023, Oklahoma Human Services gathered input from communities in Durant, Lawton, McAlester, Oklahoma City, Okmulgee, Tulsa and Woodward via in-person listening sessions, as well as four statewide virtual listening sessions. More information about the 2023 listening sessions can be found in the [Current State Report](#).

In Spring 2024, additional listening sessions were facilitated across Oklahoma City to gain perspectives of older Oklahomans, aging advocates, Black Oklahomans, Oklahomans who are Spanish-speaking and faith-based leaders.

These five sessions were attended by 119 participants. Oklahoma Human Services conducted listening sessions at the following locations:

- Healthy Living Norman
- Oklahoma Aging Advocacy Leadership Academy (OAALA)
- Northeast Wellness Center, with the OKC Black Chamber of Commerce
- Latino Community Development Agency, with La Puerta de Oro
- St. Luke’s Methodist Church

**“Aging centers are great for seniors. Strategic planning to increase the number of seniors who are aware of aging centers will help older Oklahomans access services and programs for them.”**

**- Listening session participant, Norman, 2024**

In these conversations, participants described support they would like to see in their communities, the aging needs specific to their communities, and how Aging Our Way can support faith community leaders and advocates who provide solutions to aging Oklahomans. The participants' feedback helped the Aging Our Way subcommittees develop pathways that consider the perspectives of Oklahomans from a variety of communities and experiences.

## Statewide Surveys

During two survey periods, Oklahoma Human Services used web-based and printed surveys to gather information from individuals and community partners across the state for our Plan's development. Surveys were distributed through the *Aging Our Way* website, social media, aging network partners and at community events.

### 2023 Statewide Survey

Oklahoma Human Services opened the first statewide survey from June to July 2023. The survey, which was available in English on paper and online, included demographic questions and gathered information about the current state of aging in Oklahoma. Details of the 2023 survey methodology and results are in the [Current State Report](#).

### 2024 Focus Area Survey

Oklahoma Human Services opened a second statewide survey from December 2023 to March 2024. The survey, which was available on paper and online in English and Spanish, included questions about demographics and experiences related to our Plan's focus areas. Details of the 2024 survey methodology and results are on the [Aging Our Way website](#).

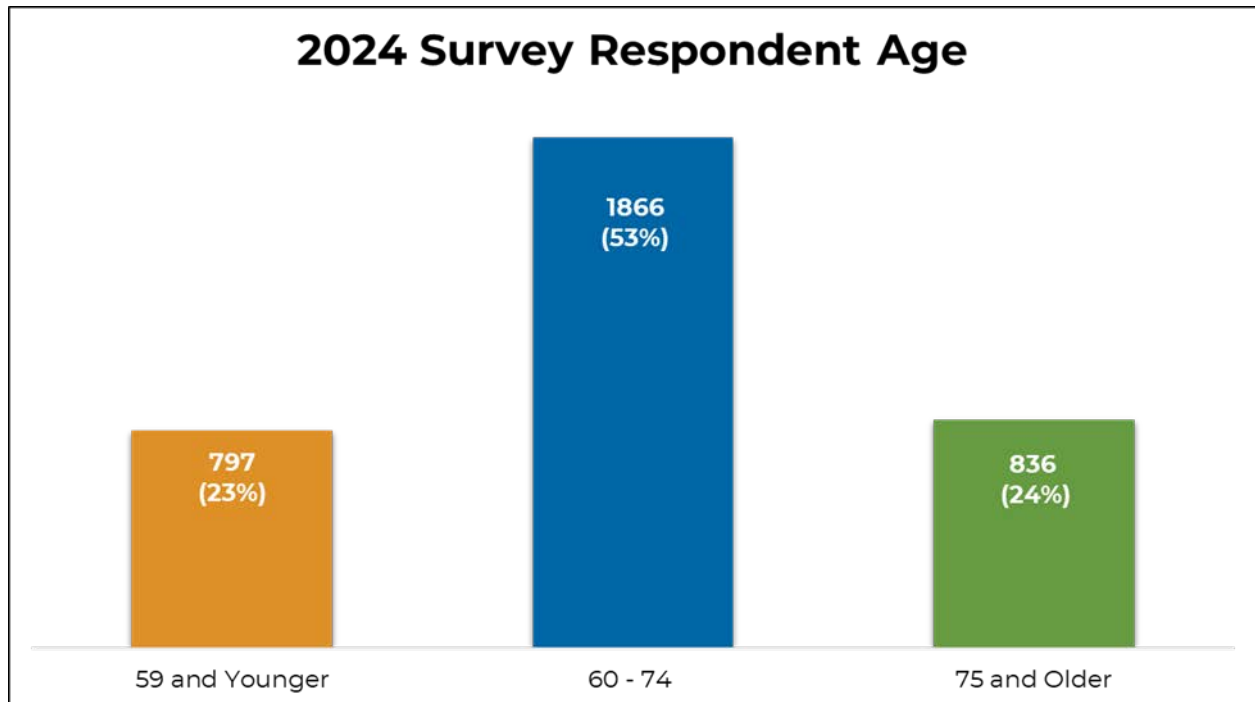
### 2024 Survey Demographics

A broad range of respondents were engaged through the 2024 survey, with older adults age 60 to 74 years old providing more than half of the responses, see **Figure 5. 2024 Survey Respondent Age**.

**“We need caregivers that are compassionate about older adults, and care about older adults. We need the right people in the right job, caregivers need to be compassionate and understand that they are changing someone's life.”**

**- Listening session participant,  
Northeast Wellness Center,  
2024**

**Figure 5. 2024 Survey Respondent Age<sup>1</sup>**



The 2024 survey gathered insights from Oklahomans from a variety of backgrounds. As a 10-year effort, we will continue to reach out to underrepresented communities to ensure all voices are heard and able to guide the *Aging Our Way* work. The following key demographics show who respondents were and where they live and work:

- 83% of respondents were white
- 79% of respondents were female
- 76% of respondents were age 60 and older
- 57% of survey respondents were retired
- 52% of respondents reported an income less than \$50,000
- 48% of respondents live in a rural area
- 40% of respondents work in a rural area
- 29% of respondents live with a disability
- 10% of respondents were members of Tribes

The 2024 survey received more than 3,700 responses. Survey respondents represented all 77 counties in Oklahoma and 25 of Oklahoma's 38 federally recognized Tribes. The 2024 survey feedback was reviewed by the Executive Steering and Advisory Committee members as part of the process of finalizing the goals and pathways.

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<sup>1</sup> Less than 1% of respondents did not specify their age.

## Key Community Engagements

Oklahoma Human Services also engaged with Oklahomans to spread awareness of *Aging Our Way* through presentations and booths at events and offered attendees opportunities to share input on our Plan through paper surveys. These events are listed below:

- Apache Tribe of Oklahoma Health Fair
- Care Providers Oklahoma Conference
- Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Pathways to Community Living Health Fair
- Healthy Living Norman: Coffee, Muffins & Marketing
- Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Tribes
- Kiowa Tribe Health Fair
- OKC Black Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards
- Oklahoma Caregivers Coalition January Meeting
- Oklahoma Indian Council on Aging
- Osage Nation Social Services
- Post 157 American Legion meeting
- Senior Day at the Capitol
- State Council on Aging and Adult Protective Services February and April Meetings
- University of Central Oklahoma Gerontology “How to Become a Gerontologist” presentation
- Villages OKC’s Faith-Based Leaders Meeting
- Villages OKC’s Positive Aging Listen to Your Gut

## Conclusion

In 2023 and 2024, we received input from more than 5,000 individuals, most of whom were older adults,<sup>2</sup> through listening sessions and surveys. Subject matter experts who participated in the Steering and Advisory Committee and Advisory Subcommittees, represented more than 50 organizations. Please see **Appendix B. Plan Partners** for additional details regarding these committee members and organizations. Together, these voices defined what *Aging Our Way* means and provided insights into how to make Oklahoma a great place to grow older for all.

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<sup>2</sup> 64% of respondents to the 2023 Current State survey were age 55 and older. 76% of respondents to the 2024 Focus Areas survey were age 60 and older. This data is not available for listening sessions in 2023 or 2024.





## Availability and Affordability of Services, Programs and Resources

*Availability and affordability mean older adults can access the support needed at a price they can pay. This includes awareness of the services available and easy ways to access them. It also includes the infrastructure needed to deliver the services.*

**Goal 1:** Oklahomans have services, resources and support available when needed.

**Goal 2:** Oklahoma's No Wrong Door system makes it easy for older adults to find and receive the services, resources and support they need, including Person-Centered Options Counseling.

**Challenge:** Various public and private organizations manage and provide services and support, including a wide variety of resources, to older Oklahomans. The Older Americans Act and Medicaid are programs that provide services to older adults. Older Americans Act services are intended to target those in greatest social and economic need, with particular attention to older adults with lower incomes, members of minority communities, those living in rural areas, people with limited English proficiency and older adults at risk of institutional care. Medicaid's federal insurance programs provide healthcare services to low-income people of all ages. Each state designs and manages its own Medicaid program and has autonomy in how they do so.

As of the writing of our Plan, the state does not have a way to make it easy for older Oklahomans, families, caregivers and professionals to know how to access these services. The state also does not have a way to know if the most needed services are available. The goals and pathways for this focus area seek to make it easier for Oklahomans to know about and access services and resources to support them as they age.

## **Goal 1: Oklahomans have services, resources and support available when needed.**

### **Pathway 1.1: Develop an Ambassador program for awareness and education about *Aging Our Way* and the services and support available to Oklahomans.**

Achieving the goals of our Plan will require all of us to work together. The strength of *Aging Our Way* is our commitment to creating a grassroots movement supported by state, local, and Tribal governments. Identifying and developing partnerships with multi-sector organizations and individuals with a variety of perspectives from across the state will allow our Plan to make lasting change. Building awareness of the services and support already available is also a critical component of the pathways that follow.

This pathway creates an *Aging Our Way* Ambassador program made up of volunteers trained to educate their communities and networks about our Plan's objectives, as well as build awareness of available services and support. In addition to spreading information to Oklahomans, they will share important community feedback with Oklahoma Human Services.

This pathway will generate enthusiasm across communities for the important work of *Aging Our Way* and will help create the local support needed to change the lives of older adults across Oklahoma. Additionally, this pathway will help Oklahomans become aware of the resources available to them as they age.

**“[If I had a magic wand, I would] raise awareness of issues affecting seniors and develop actionable goals.”**

**- Listening session participant, Lawton, 2023**

## **Pathway 1.2: Address geographic challenges to improve availability of services.**

Governments usually provide services based on state, county or regional service areas. The boundaries of these service areas do not always allow people to access services close to them. For example, Kelly might live a few miles from a clinic, but Kelly cannot receive services there because it is in another county.

Our Plan will look to identify these situations and develop solutions to help people like Kelly. This pathway will make it possible for older Oklahomans to receive services from the provider that makes the most sense.

**“We need availability of services in all areas.”**

**- Listening session participant, McAlester, 2023**

## **Pathway 1.3: Establish methods to identify and track service gaps and unmet needs for Oklahomans.**

There are many different services and support available for older adults across the state. As the number of older adults increases, we need to better understand which services are most needed. USAging reported that 90% of the older adult population want to age in their own home and communities rather than in institutional settings (USAging, 2019). Home and community-based services are also less expensive and have better outcomes (Caldwell & Machledt, 2022). Meeting the need for home and community-based services, and building awareness of them, will allow many older adults the opportunity to age the way they prefer.

Tracking and understanding the needs and service gaps will take a coordinated effort between provider groups and direct service professionals, such as caregivers and federal and state agencies. This pathway will seek to develop an ongoing methodology to ensure services provided match the needs of older adults.

**“Aging and living impacts us all – let's raise awareness and expectations for an age-informed system of care.”**

**- Listening session participant, Oklahoma City, 2023**

## **Pathway 1.4: Explore and evaluate the potential of artificial intelligence systems and new technology to monitor and evaluate needs, services and available resources.**

New technology can help leaders make informed decisions by using real-time data. This pathway will ensure leaders have the best available tools to understand the needs of older adults and provide the services to meet the identified needs.

Artificial Intelligence and other new technologies have the ability to observe healthcare patterns and service utilization. These technologies can help service providers understand complex patterns related to level of care and volume of resources required. This will allow for a better response to changing needs. This pathway will provide clear, updated information and tools to ensure the needs of older adults are identified and properly supported.

**“I would love to see technology to connect all the services to each other.”**

**- Listening session participant, McAlester, 2023**

## **Pathway 1.5: Identify and implement improvements for eligibility processes for services.**

The application process for government-funded resources such as Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can be complex and difficult to navigate. For example, according to the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, less than half of eligible older Oklahomans are enrolled and receive SNAP benefits (Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, n.d.). To make the process easier, some states use simplified eligibility forms for older adults and people with disabilities.

While some programs have strict eligibility requirements, funding provided through the Older Americans Act must prioritize “low-income older persons, including low-income minority older individuals, older individuals with limited English-speaking ability, and older individuals who live in rural areas,” but does not provide specific eligibility criteria (Administration for Community Living, 2021, p. 18). Due to the complexity of these services and the increasing number of older adults applying for them, approval will likely take longer in the future.

Improvements to eligibility processes can make it easier and faster for people to access the services for which they are eligible. This pathway will seek to make the eligibility processes for different programs simpler and faster allowing more older adults to receive the help they need.

**“If someone over 60 is seeking out a service, we should be able to say ‘YES’.”**

**- Listening session participant, McAlester, 2023**

## **Goal 2: Oklahoma’s No Wrong Door system makes it easy for older adults to find and receive the services, resources and support they need, including Person-Centered Options Counseling.**

### **Pathway 2.1: Create a network of certified No Wrong Door Navigators.**

The Administration for Community Living, the federal agency overseeing many services for older adults across the nation, developed the concept of a [No Wrong Door system](#). A No Wrong Door system is a coordinated system that provides individuals with streamlined access to support and services and helps to eliminate the need to contact multiple programs. A No Wrong Door system puts the person’s needs and wants first and provides a one-stop system for all individuals seeking long term services and support (LTSS) regardless of age, income or ability.

**“Older adults deserve more advocates to help them navigate the system.”**

**- Listening session participant, McAlester, 2023**

Person-Centered Options Counseling is part of a No Wrong Door system. It allows individuals to be involved in making decisions about the options available to them that consider their preferences, values and financial resources. Individuals in need of services or who are planning for the future have access to one-on-one counseling in a variety of settings, including within the home, hospitals, school settings, or other settings based on the individual's needs.

This pathway will empower individuals to make informed decisions, to exercise control over their long-term care needs and to achieve their personal goals and preferences.

### **Pathway 2.2: Create a central website for older Oklahomans and caregivers to access services and support.**

A central website designed for easy navigation can streamline resources and key information for older adults in need of services or support. Since services are often provided by multiple agencies, it can be difficult to know about all the available services. Additionally, navigating multiple websites, processes and forms can be frustrating and time consuming.



*Aging Our Way* looks to address the challenges experienced both in finding services and applying for them. This pathway will make it easier for older Oklahomans and caregivers to find and receive the help they need.

### **Advocacy Pathways**

Advocacy may include outreach to public and private decision-makers in the state, writing articles for media outlets, or speaking at public forums. In addition to project plans, pathways through advocacy will be included in the Plan for this focus area and are listed below.

- Create methods for Oklahomans to directly access direct service professionals.
- Create a tax incentive program to encourage development of services that fit unmet needs.
- Support development of a single-access entry point for Oklahomans to connect with services and support.
- Centralize the eligibility process for services.
- Create a self-service system that empowers Oklahomans to access services.



## Accountability, Coordination and Fiscal Transparency

*Accountability, Coordination and Fiscal Transparency includes modernized processes and systems to support effective and efficient use of resources and service delivery.*

**Goal 3:** Oklahomans receive quality services as a result of fiscal accountability and transparency.

**Goal 4:** Organizations serving older Oklahomans work together to share data, align resources, and coordinate the use of public funding.

**Challenge:** Staffing, cost and quality measurement of government-funded services and support can be difficult to understand, even for experts. It is difficult for taxpayers to know whether government agencies are using funds as intended. Additionally, public, private and non-profit organizations sometimes miss opportunities to use their collective resources as effectively as possible. The goals and pathways for this focus area reinforce collaboration among different organizations that pay for and provide services.

## **Goal 3: Oklahomans receive quality services as a result of fiscal accountability and transparency.**

### **Pathway 3.1: Collaborate with Oklahoma managed care entities to track measures and initiatives that lead to positive outcomes.**

The Oklahoma Medicaid program is called [SoonerSelect](#). Oklahoma recently implemented managed care for many people who use SoonerSelect as their health insurance. Managed care is a way for state Medicaid programs to reduce overall costs and increase quality of care.

The organization funding a service typically monitors and evaluates the quality of the service. The quality of healthcare services provided through managed care is monitored differently than LTSS, which are not part of SoonerSelect. LTSS is for individuals with disabling conditions and chronic illnesses and may be provided in institutions or home and community-based settings. For LTSS programs paid for by Medicaid through fee-for-service, the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services tracks [15 quality measures](#). The measures are grouped into three categories: assessment and care planning, falls risk assessment and rebalancing and utilization of LTSS services (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, n.d.).

Our Plan looks to identify and use performance measures that help all Oklahomans understand which services and initiatives best meet the needs of older adults regardless of who pays for them. By increasing the collaboration between payors, such as managed care entities, Medicaid and other service providers, this Pathway will lead to better services and improve the health of older Oklahomans.

**“We should focus on the change in positive client outcomes.”**

**- Access and Transparency subcommittee member, 2024**

### **Pathway 3.2: Identify and address regulatory barriers that hinder integration and coordination of service delivery.**

Laws and regulations set the rules for how government-funded services and support operate. They also influence how non-profit and private sector organizations conduct business when they deliver services and support. The rules governments put in place with good intentions can sometimes create barriers. New rules may conflict with older rules. They may make it more difficult to conduct business or deliver a needed service.

Communicating the identified barriers that prevent effective service delivery to lawmakers and regulators provides an opportunity to make changes. This pathway will make it easier for older Oklahomans to access high-quality services at affordable prices.

**“Simplify policies for the older citizens.”**

**- Access and Transparency subcommittee member, 2024**

### **Goal 4: Organizations serving older Oklahomans work together to share data, align resources and coordinate the use of public funding.**

#### **Pathway 4.1: Engage public and private partners, including current and prospective service providers, to align strategic plans.**

Many public, private and non-profit organizations use strategic plans to determine goals to complete their work. These plans often look forward one or more years, and some look far into the future. By working together to align their strategic plans, organizations that serve older Oklahomans can improve the quality of life for those served.

The inability to share data sometimes creates barriers to aligning strategic plans. Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data modernization projects have accelerated the effort at the federal level to create simpler ways to build data partnerships (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024).

*Aging Our Way* can build on this work to better share data and align strategic plans from public and private partners. This pathway will allow public, private, and non-profit organizations to learn from one another and use limited resources wisely as they support older Oklahomans.

**“The Plan needs to be inclusive of coordinated services from all state and Tribal departments.”**

**- Listening session participant, Oklahoma City, 2023**

## **Pathway 4.2: Identify methods to develop and track outcome measures for older Oklahomans.**

Health and human services organizations that provide services and support to older adults often use federal money along with state and local money. Senior centers in many communities combine federal, state, and local money to deliver all the services they provide. Organizations that receive federal funds are required to track and report program activities and how the funds are used. Reports often measure what the end results were of the person who used a service. For example, did an older adult in a community have fewer falls after attending a falls prevention class at the senior center?

This pathway looks to create and track measures for services and support regardless of which organization provides the funding. This pathway will allow leaders to better understand which services and support provide the most benefit to older Oklahomans.

**“We need data measurement, competence, and integrity.”**

**- Access and Fiscal Transparency subcommittee member, 2024**

## **Pathway 4.3: Develop a supporting infrastructure to sustain the Multisector Plan on Aging initiatives through practice, policy, legislation and funding.**

*Aging Our Way* outlines the actions that can prepare Oklahoma for the increase in the number of older adults in the state. For our Plan to have an impact that lasts, the state needs a way to put it into action. Setting up a structure that considers the core elements needed to meet our Plan’s goals is the first step to making lasting changes.

By creating a structure for organizations to work together, Plan partners can develop ways of doing things that make all the other *Aging Our Way* goals and pathways possible. This includes making changes to practices and policies, advocating for legislative changes and identifying funding sources for Plan pathways. This pathway will make it possible to achieve the goals of our Plan and help Oklahomans age their way.

**“I hope for age-informed practice across the continuum: health, behavioral health, social services – that is supported by policy, funding, and legislation.”**

**- Listening session participant, Oklahoma City, 2023**



## **Advocacy Pathways**

Advocacy may include outreach to public and private decision-makers in the state, writing articles for media outlets, or speaking at public forums. In addition to project plans, pathways through advocacy will be included in the Plan for this focus area and are listed below.

- Encourage competitive pricing by focusing on customers.
- Evaluate services and resources using cost / benefit analysis.
- Promote opportunities to balance usage of high-cost assets and services across the care continuum.
- Develop variable provider rates for services.



## Housing

*Housing is a basic need that ensures older Oklahomans are healthy and able to live life on their own terms. Our Plan seeks to improve older Oklahomans' access to safe, affordable, accessible housing that considers urban and rural differences and focuses on maintaining supportive housing arrangements.*

**Goal 5:** Oklahomans have safe, accessible and affordable housing options across their lifespan.

**Challenge:** Older adults can experience changes in income, health and level of independence as they age. These changes can affect the housing choices available to them. Most adults say they want to remain in their homes for as long as possible (USAgings, 2019). For some people, there may come a time when they no longer feel safe or comfortable living alone. They may also be unable to afford the housing that best meets their needs. Pathways for this focus area will help older Oklahomans stay in their homes, give more options when they decide a change is right for them and provide age-informed support to older Oklahomans who are experiencing homelessness.

## **Goal 5: Oklahomans have safe, accessible, and affordable housing options across their lifespan.**

### **Pathway 5.1: Expand the availability of housing options for older adults to live independently, such as multigenerational housing options.**

Close to 80% of adults in the United States 50 and older prefer living at home (AARP, 2021), also known as “aging in place.” Housing options that support independent living include multiple generations sharing homes and lots, as well as structured independent-living communities.

More United States residents are living in multigenerational housing now than five decades ago.

Nationally, almost 20% of the population lives in multigenerational homes, up from 7% in 1971 (Cohn et al., 2022). Living close to family and friends can have a positive effect on all generations. Benefits of living near friends and family include saving money, having companionship and sharing caregiving duties (Cohn et al., 2022; Generations United, 2021).

Accessory dwelling units, or “in-law homes,” are one type of multigenerational housing. They are smaller houses or apartments that are on the same lot as a larger, primary home, and can be attached or detached from the primary home. These housing options provide older adults the opportunity to live with or near people of their choosing. Across the country, some communities already allow residents to build accessory dwelling units, but sometimes local zoning and regulations do not allow for these types of homes (American Planning Association, n.d.). In Oklahoma, some communities have chosen to allow for these types of homes, and other communities are considering doing the same (Fieldcamp, 2024).

Independent living is another type of housing option for older adults. These structured communities provide services for adults 55 and older, like social activities, amenities and transportation (Van Dis, 2023). In Oklahoma, [LIFE Senior Services](#) in Tulsa is an example of an all-inclusive independent living community that provides wide-ranging resources to Oklahomans age 55 and older, including affordable homes, volunteer and continuing education opportunities, and adult day health services (LIFE Senior Services, 2024).

**“Children who are exposed to their grandparents benefit from the wisdom of their grandparents.”**

**- Listening session participant, Norman, 2024**

This pathway aims to expand the options for older Oklahomans to affordably live near loved ones of all ages by removing the obstacles and encouraging the development of these options.

## **Pathway 5.2: Expand the availability of housing with supports, such as adult family homes.**

Some older adults need or want housing options that provide support to help them live their best life. The term “housing with supports” includes options like assisted living communities, adult family homes and supportive housing.

Assisted living communities and adult family homes provide a step between independent living and nursing facilities. Assisted living communities are licensed and inspected by the Oklahoma State Department of Health. They can be good options for older Oklahomans who need help with activities of daily living, such as eating or bathing, but do not need skilled care. Adult family homes provide similar supports but are often smaller, providing a more personalized and intimate setting than larger facilities.

Supportive housing, sometimes known as permanent supportive housing, is provided by [Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services](#), providers and nonprofits like [Mental Health Association Oklahoma](#), and some Sovereign Nations. The services provided include things like helping tenants address physical health, mental health and substance abuse issues, and help with other issues like applying for Social Security benefits.

Settings like these can increase an older adult’s opportunities for independence, including the ability to remain in their own community when in-home support is not an option. While the living facilities described above may cost more than services provided in a person’s own home, these costs are proven to be less expensive than skilled nursing facility care and they give options for people with lower level of care needs. This pathway looks to expand the availability of these options through the use of new funding sources and partnerships. This pathway will give older Oklahomans options for high-quality housing with supports within their communities, wherever they choose to live in Oklahoma.

**“Rural older Oklahomans are isolated from family and friends; aging facilities in rural areas would greatly support rural older Oklahomans.”**

**- Listening session participant, Norman, 2024**



### **Pathway 5.3: Expand programs for assistance with evictions, home repairs, adaptive modifications and remote supports.**

A growing number of older Oklahomans rent their homes (Urban Institute, 2021). Rent in Oklahoma increased by 4.49% between 2016-2019 and 46,688 eviction cases were filed in Oklahoma in 2022 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022; Open Justice Oklahoma, 2023). Eviction mitigation programs can provide short-term financial or legal help to older tenants experiencing eviction.

Helping older adults remain in their home also requires living conditions to be safe and appropriate for their unique needs, whether the home is rented or owned. Homes must support independent living, fall prevention and caregiving (USAgging, 2019). Adaptive modifications and remote supports provide older adults help in repairing and adapting their home for accessibility.

Adaptive modifications programs offer help with things like adding handrails or a wheelchair ramp and are often very affordable. For example, a \$30 grab bar installed in a bathroom can prevent a fall that could cost thousands of dollars. Remote supports use technology to allow someone off-site to monitor and respond to a person's health, safety, and other needs. This type of technology can help older adults live as independently as possible.

This pathway will seek to expand current programs and help older Oklahomans remain in their homes by addressing housing stability needs, and accessibility and safety concerns.

**“[The] ability to assist and support elders in need of home repairs and/or handicap accessibility needs when they are unable to finance themselves [is what I would choose to fix].”**

**- Listening session participant, service provider to elder members of Tribes, 2023**

### **Pathway 5.4: Conduct age-informed outreach and engagement for older adults experiencing homelessness.**

In 2023, approximately 860 adults in Oklahoma age 55 and older lived in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or had no shelter. Because reports of individuals who are unhoused are based on point-in-time counts (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2023), the real number of older Oklahomans who are unhoused might be higher than reported. Experiences of being unhoused and the support available to older Oklahomans living without homes varies across the state. Older adults who are unhoused have unique needs and experiences, and on average have more instances of health and behavioral health concerns, as well as accessibility needs

**“Older Oklahomans will face homelessness and healthcare disparities even more than [they do] now if changes aren't made.”**

**- Listening session participant, McAlester, 2023**



(Henderson et al., 2023, pp. 4-5). These factors should be considered in the methods to engage older Oklahomans who are unhoused.

This pathway will improve the lives of older Oklahomans experiencing homelessness by sharing age-specific information for outreach and engagement strategies with the supporting organizations.

### **Advocacy Pathways**

Advocacy may include outreach to public and private decision-makers in the state, writing articles for media outlets, or speaking at public forums. In addition to project plans, pathways through advocacy will be included in the Plan for this focus area and are listed below.

- Expand awareness and improve transparency of real estate and housing placement practices to reduce the negative impact on older Oklahomans.
- Incentivize development of equitable public and private housing options to meet the needs of older adults of all income levels.



## Transportation

*Older Oklahomans' ability to live life on their own terms is directly tied to their ability to get to where they need to be on time. Whether they use personal transportation, a private transportation service, public transportation, or rely on a friend or family member for assistance, Oklahomans should have access to effective, reliable transportation resources. Our Plan supports effective transportation for older Oklahomans by coordinating transportation efforts and data collection across departments.*

**Goal 6:** Oklahoma's transportation services are safe, reliable, affordable, available and designed to meet the needs of older adults.

**Challenge:** Older adults have places they need and want to be. This includes shopping, social events, entertainment, faith services, medical appointments and many other activities. As we age, driving ourselves can become more difficult or impossible depending on our circumstances. Being unable to get where we want to go makes us less independent and socially connected in our communities. Public and private transportation services in Oklahoma do not meet the goals of many older Oklahomans, especially those in rural areas. Transportation service providers struggle to meet many of these needs due to rising costs and workforce shortages. Pathways for this goal address Oklahoma’s transportation challenges by making it easier for private and public transportation providers to work together, helping older adults know how to use the transportation options available to them, and hiring and keeping drivers.

## **Goal 6: Oklahoma's transportation services are safe, reliable, affordable, available and designed to meet the needs of older adults.**

### **Pathway 6.1: Optimize coordination of transportation services through mobility management programs.**

[Oklahoma Department of Transportation’s mobility managers](#) are experts in the transportation services available in their regional service areas. Across five regions, regional mobility managers help coordinate and plan rides, connecting Oklahomans to transportation services. In addition to serving individuals in their regions, mobility managers also collaborate with multisector partners to address evolving needs. These services provide valuable support to older Oklahomans and caregivers who are interested in accessing transportation solutions near their homes.

This pathway will work with Oklahoma Department of Transportation to bring mobility managers to all regions. It will also give Oklahoma’s mobility managers tools to coordinate the different transportation services in their regions to make them as effective and efficient as possible. This pathway will make it easier for older Oklahomans to receive the transportation they need.

**“[There is a need for] transportation hubs in rural Oklahoma.”**

**- Listening session participant, Oklahoma City, 2023**

## **Pathway 6.2: Collaborate with the Oklahoma Statewide Mobility Network's efforts to improve access to transportation.**

Older adults sometimes need more than a ride to get to their destination. They may need help getting in and out of a vehicle, or into the building when they arrive. If they plan to catch a bus to get home and miss it, they may need help finding another ride. Meeting these types of needs requires organizations that work with older adults to collaborate with transportation providers. Oklahoma currently has state and regional transportation taskforces to bring transportation agencies together; however, these taskforces may not include healthcare providers, senior centers, or other destination organizations.

This pathway looks to expand collaboration in the current mobility network. By working together, transportation and non-transportation organizations can meet the transportation needs of older adults safely and effectively.

**“Transportation is a major factor to accessing a lot of services, and rural Oklahoma is so spaced out when it comes to services. Participants normally travel 20 minutes to an hour or more for services whether it's groceries or healthcare services.”**

**- Listening session participant, McAlester, 2023**

## **Pathway 6.3: Develop strategies to improve rider and caregiver experience.**

Though transportation services exist for older Oklahomans, stigma around such services can affect how often they are used. Stigma refers to the negative views around using public transportation or not being able to drive. Additionally, caregivers and riders alike have reported negative experiences using ride services.

This pathway aims to improve the rider's experience and change views about using transportation services. The pathway leaders will look to address factors in riders' and caregivers' experiences such as destination needs, accessibility needs, transportation offerings that support personal choice, reliability of services, coordination with medical and non-medical destination organizations for safe drop-off and pickup and assistance while traveling to a medical appointment.

**“[Supporting older Oklahomans looks like] transportation systems that support personal choice; currently they do not.”**

**- Listening session participant, Norman, 2024**

## **Pathway 6.4: Implement age- and ability-informed training to equip and support mobility managers, transportation providers, drivers and other support personnel.**

Professionals providing transportation to older adults must be aware of the needs and challenges that can come with aging. A lack of understanding can create frustrations and problems for older adults and professionals. Increased awareness and understanding can help riders and caregivers feel confident that transportation professionals will have the information and tools they need to appropriately address the unique needs and experiences of older Oklahomans at all stages of their lives.

Trainings can help transportation professionals feel confident serving older adults and allow caregivers to overcome accessibility barriers, creating comfortable and safe environments in the vehicles. This pathway improves customer service in transportation through training professionals serving Older Oklahomans.

**“Reliable, senior-friendly transportation is needed. This is an issue in both urban and rural areas.**

**- Listening Session participant, Oklahoma City, 2023**

## **Pathway 6.5: Support public and private transportation agencies in leveraging existing workforce development programs to fill driver workforce gaps.**

A shortage of drivers limits the effectiveness of transportation services in Oklahoma. This pathway will address workforce gaps by helping transportation agencies use reskilling, job training and job placement programs to recruit and train professional drivers. Oklahoma’s job training and reskilling programs are available statewide for job seekers and employers to utilize, including to recruit professional drivers. These programs and services include [CareerTech and Oklahoma Human Services’ Work Ready Oklahoma](#), [CareerTech’s Business and Industry Training](#) and [Oklahoma Works’](#) job placement and career readiness services. Additionally, Tribes provide career services to their members, and private businesses serve Oklahoma’s employers and job seekers for specific industries and job types.

**“[A challenge in rural Oklahoma is] funding to pay drivers, struggling to keep drivers because of low pay in rural areas.”**

**- Listening session participant, Tulsa, 2023**

This pathway seeks to make it easier for Oklahomans to get to and from their destination by helping address the need for professional drivers.

### **Advocacy Pathways**

Advocacy may include outreach to public and private decision-makers in the state, writing articles for media outlets, or speaking at public forums. In addition to project plans, pathways through advocacy will be included in the Plan for this focus area and are listed below.

- Identify transportation workforce challenges and establish methods to effectively retain and support age-informed drivers.
- Build awareness of transportation provider challenges among legislators, public sector agencies, service providers and the public, to encourage increased public and private funding and policy support.





## Age-Friendly Communities

*Age-friendly communities allow Oklahomans to engage in their community without cultural or physical barriers to participation and ensure older Oklahomans' safety and security needs are considered in planning.*

**Goal 7:** Oklahoma champions age-friendly communities and opportunities for residents to participate in their local communities.

**Challenge:** Oklahoma communities must consider all resources needed to support maximum participation by all ages in a variety of ways. A community should provide safe, affordable and appropriate housing while supporting economic security throughout residents' lives. In age-friendly communities, buildings and spaces like parks and neighborhoods allow all people of different ages and abilities to use them to the greatest extent possible. They also promote safety and connectedness for all. Our Plan encourages communities to meet the needs of Oklahomans by becoming more age-friendly. Pathways for this goal will allow Oklahomans to engage in their community without barriers to participation.

## **Goal 7: Oklahoma champions age-friendly communities and opportunities for residents to participate in their local communities.**

### **Pathway 7.1: Adopt and promote an age-friendly framework for Oklahoma communities.**

Age-friendly communities help older Oklahomans become active participants where they live and work. Oklahoma will adopt an age-friendly framework that considers and complements other existing initiatives, such as the [AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities](#), [Dementia Friendly America](#) and [Blue Zones](#). The framework will have standards that specifically consider the needs, wants and preferences of Oklahomans with the flexibility to allow as many communities to participate as possible. The pathway workgroup will be representative of all Oklahomans geographically and culturally. The workgroup will coordinate with other private, local, state-level, Tribal programs and funding sources.

After Oklahoma adopts a flexible age-friendly framework, efforts will shift to planning, technical assistance and promotion of the framework. Pathway leaders will promote the age-friendly framework to communities that are not yet taking part. These leaders will support communities as they develop and implement plans to become age-friendly. Support includes technical assistance, directing Oklahoma communities to existing private and public funding and project opportunities aligned to the age-friendly framework, as well as promotional support and acknowledgement of their age-friendly community achievements. Communities will be able to share their age-friendly progress in their promotional activities. This pathway will encourage and help Oklahoma communities become more age-friendly and increase the quality of life for Oklahomans as we age.

**“We have an opportunity to embrace the development, expansion and sustainment of an age-informed society by figuring out ways and means to mitigate loss of knowledge, expertise... in our workplaces, communities, and change the lens to age-inclusive.”**

**- Listening session participant, Oklahoma City, 2024**



## Culture Change and Education

*Culture change and education address individual Oklahomans' preparation for later life and the shared understanding of aging.*

**Goal 8:** Oklahomans have a positive and realistic understanding of aging that empowers them to prepare for future stages of life.



**Challenge:** Culture and education play an important role in how people experience aging. Culture refers to the beliefs and ways of living shared by a group of people. Positive beliefs about aging directly affect the quality of aging and result in people living longer (Turner & Hooker, 2020). Changing the culture of Oklahomans to embrace positive and realistic views of aging plays an important role in our Plan. Along with culture change, education can help people prepare for becoming older, including setting themselves up for economic security and flexibility. *Aging Our Way* will build on existing initiatives and programs to promote a positive image of aging and foster culture change among all age groups. It will also educate Oklahomans on how to plan effectively to live life on their own terms.

## **Goal 8: Oklahomans have a positive and realistic understanding of aging that empowers them to prepare for future stages of life.**

### **Pathway 8.1: Adopt and disseminate the *Aging Our Way* framework to promote understanding of aging across the lifespan and preparation for healthy aging.**

In the 2024 Focus Area Survey conducted by Oklahoma Human Services, less than half of the respondents agreed with the statement: “Growing older provides opportunities for growth, happiness, and making meaningful contributions to society.” *Aging Our Way* will help inform Oklahomans’ perceptions of aging by actively promoting positive and realistic views. The *Aging Our Way* framework<sup>3</sup> will be adopted to serve as the basis for unified messaging and action for culture change related to aging in Oklahoma.<sup>4</sup>

This pathway will promote positive beliefs about aging and generate respect for all ages across the state.

**“In our trying to change the perception of aging by the public, campaigns must be inclusive of all ages to create a ‘WE’ mentality on taking on aging.”**

**- Culture Change and Education subcommittee member, 2024**

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<sup>3</sup> The *Aging Our Way* framework will be branded to make it easily recognizable. Branding the framework means developing symbols, colors, slogans, etc., that people associate with positive, realistic aging.

<sup>4</sup> The framework might pull in initiatives such as [Reframing Aging](#) to help Oklahomans prepare for their own and others’ healthy aging.

## Pathway 8.2: Inform Oklahomans on pathways for empowered aging.

Pathway leaders will use the *Aging Our Way* framework to effectively engage Oklahomans through education, media campaigns and community outreach. They will also engage leaders in government, education, business and community organizations to discuss how the aging of their communities affects their work and how they can help make Oklahoma a more age-friendly state. They will also support families seeking educational resources to prepare for aging, and will provide actionable information about safety, security and accessibility needs.

This pathway will empower Oklahomans to prepare for healthy aging in their own lives, as well as within their families and communities.

**“[If I had a magic wand], I would raise awareness of issues affecting seniors and develop actionable goals.”**

**- Listening Session participant, Lawton, 2023**

### Advocacy Pathways

Advocacy may include outreach to public and private decision-makers in the state, writing articles for media outlets, or speaking at public forums. In addition to project plans, pathways through advocacy will be included in the Plan for this focus area and are listed below.

- Foster and recognize the ingenuity, creativity and innovation of older Oklahomans.



## Wellness

*Wellness considers all the factors that contribute to a person's wellbeing, including mental, physical and social health. Our Plan focuses on interventions that support wellness for the whole person and promotes eliminating the separation between mental, physical and social challenges in treatment.*

**Goal 9:** Oklahomans are healthy and empowered, with high quality of life outcomes.



**Challenge:** The premature death rate, or the number of individuals who die before 75 years old, is higher in Oklahoma than the national average. Key drivers of wellness, such as food insecurity, access to mental health services, and social connection contribute to the premature death rate. For example, Oklahoma ranks sixth in the nation for suicide rates, and 13.8% of households lack reliable access to food (Oklahoma Human Services, 2023). Expanding and improving the support that maintains health and wellness can help us thrive as we age. Pathways for this focus area aim to improve access to food, wellness services and behavioral health support throughout the state. By nurturing the whole person, including physical, mental and social health, Oklahomans can age with a higher quality of life.

## **Goal 9: Oklahomans are healthy and empowered, with high quality of life outcomes.**

### **Pathway 9.1: Expand access to food options for older Oklahomans.**

Many older adults face issues accessing nutritious food due to factors like mobility challenges, isolation and limited income. Access to healthy food is central to the physical and mental health of older adults. Food insecurity means having limited access to enough food to live a healthy life. According to the United Health Foundation, 17% of Oklahomans 60 years and older faced the threat of hunger in the past 12 months (America's Health Rankings, 2023). Also, Oklahoma City has the highest rate of adults 50 to 59 who are food insecure of any metropolitan area in the country, according to Feeding America (Ziliak & Gundersen, 2023, p. 10). While Oklahoma has meal and grocery services to assist food insecure individuals, many older adults do not take advantage of them. As mentioned in **Pathway 1.5**, SNAP provides older adults with monthly food assistance, but less than half of eligible older Oklahomans are enrolled and receive these benefits (Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, n.d.).

This pathway seeks to make it easier for older adults to access food by expanding age-friendly, low-cost meal and grocery options, including food delivery.

**“[If I had a magic wand] Healthy food would be readily available and affordable.”**

**- Listening session participant, Oklahoma City, 2023**

## Pathway 9.2: Establish wellness hubs for older adults around the state.

Different organizations offer wellness services in various locations. Wellness hubs are sometimes called [Community Wellness Hubs](#) (National Recreation and Park Association, 2022), or [Community Care Hubs](#) (National Council on Aging, 2023). They can help bring resources like physical, mental and social services together, serving as a one-stop shop where multiple needs can be met. Examples of activities and services include food and meal pickup, exercise classes, social connection opportunities and health screenings.

Community needs assessments will identify the unique needs of each community and provide those specific services at the community wellness hub. Hubs can be developed at existing public places like municipal buildings, parks, libraries and senior centers. Wellness hubs especially benefit older adults living in areas with limited transportation services. This pathway will make it easier for older adults to access wellness services by utilizing existing infrastructure, especially in rural areas.

**“Rural areas have limited access to everything: healthcare, transportation, technology, caregiver services, specialized doctors, etc.”**

**- Listening session participant, McAlester, 2023**

## Pathway 9.3: Support implementation of the Older Adult Behavioral Health State Plan through partnership with the Behavioral Health Forum on Aging.

Like the Multisector Plan on Aging, the [Older Adult Behavioral Health State Plan](#) is a framework that fosters collaboration between agencies, service providers and aging experts for the improvement of behavioral health in older adults. It is developed by the [Oklahoma Mental Health and Aging Coalition](#) and will be implemented by the Behavioral Health Forum on Aging. The objective of the Older Adult Behavioral Health State Plan is to help support those living with conditions such as depression, substance misuse, addictions and suicidal thoughts and address prevention of these conditions. The [Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services](#), [Oklahoma Health Care Authority](#) and [Oklahoma Human Services](#) are the primary state agencies involved in the Behavioral Health Forum on Aging.

**“[There aren’t enough quality services and resources] in areas of mental health, health, etc.”**

**- Listening session participant, Tulsa, 2023**

This pathway will increase awareness and integration of behavioral health into any system interacting with older adults.

### **Advocacy Pathways**

Advocacy may include outreach to public and private decision-makers in the state, writing articles for media outlets, or speaking at public forums. In addition to project plans, pathways through advocacy will be included in the Plan for this focus area and are listed below.

- Promote the importance of physical activities across the lifespan for all Oklahomans.
- Expand the availability of mobile healthcare, telehealth and wellness services.
- Support practice and policy that address social drivers of health, wellness and social connection, across the lifespan, giving Oklahomans the opportunity to live and age well.



## Social Connection

*The frequency and quality of social interactions is directly tied to the mental and physical health of older adults. Physical and mental stimulation received from social interactions and community connectedness throughout a person's life are integral to sustaining health. Social isolation, the lack of meaningful social connection, is a key social driver of mental health challenges among older Oklahomans. Our Plan supports social connection throughout the lifespan.*

**Goal 10:** Oklahomans experience a sense of community across generations and opportunities for social and civic engagement.

**Challenge:** Many older adults live in isolation due to changes in income, limited mobility, and loss of friends and family. More than one-third of adults age 45 and older feel lonely, and nearly one-fourth of adults age 65 and older are socially isolated. Social isolation significantly increases a person's risk of premature death (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020). Social connection provides older adults with a sense of belonging and purpose that positively affects their mental and physical health. Pathways for this focus area aim to expand social connection opportunities for older adults. By expanding awareness of events, making events more accessible and encouraging connection between generations, Oklahoma can become a state where all people feel valued and accepted.

## **Goal 10: Oklahomans experience a sense of community across generations and opportunities for social and civic engagement.**

### **Pathway 10.1: Create a statewide community coalition to support and expand efforts to connect older adults and younger generations in meaningful ways.**

Connecting older adults to other age groups in their communities can foster a sense of purpose and provide younger generations opportunities to learn from their experiences. Examples of intergenerational opportunities include inviting older adults to serve as merit badge counselors in scouting programs and co-locating pre-schools with [adult day health services](#) or long-term care facilities. See **Pathway 11.3** for more information about how our Plan addresses adult day health services. Social opportunities for older adults must also be creative and interesting. People of all ages appreciate new and engaging activities.

This pathway seeks to support creativity and new ideas from aging services providers, community organizations, nonprofits and private businesses. These developments for older Oklahomans, including homebound adults, will facilitate diverse opportunities and inclusive social connection. This pathway will connect professionals and community members across the state to identify and promote social connection opportunities that resonate with Oklahomans.

**“[To help older Oklahomans thrive], create programs that connect older adults with younger people that have similar interests.”**

**- Listening session participant, Oklahoma City, 2024**

## Pathway 10.2: Promote lifelong learning opportunities in technology, arts and other subjects for older Oklahomans.

Older adults can improve their wellness and quality of life by participating in enriching lifelong learning activities. This pathway aims to increase access to lifelong learning opportunities virtually and in person. Lifelong learning refers to formal and informal learning opportunities throughout people’s lives for personal and professional growth.

The workgroup for this pathway will seek to identify existing lifelong learning programs across Oklahoma and expand the availability as well as quality of these types of programs. They will incorporate work from the Transportation focus area to align transportation solutions to destinations that offer learning opportunities. They will also consider how to best align with the [Oklahoma Broadband Office](#)’s efforts to expand access to “reliable and affordable, high-speed internet to all Oklahomans” (Oklahoma Broadband Office, 2024). This pathway will increase access to activities that contribute to individuals’ growth, expand opportunities for social connection, and support a sense of personal fulfillment.

**“[One thing I would change] is providing autonomy to seniors by empowering them with education, available resources, and opportunities to improve psychologically.”**

**- Oklahoma City, listening Session participant, 2023**

### Advocacy Pathways

Advocacy may include outreach to public and private decision-makers in the state, writing articles for media outlets, or speaking at public forums. In addition to project plans, pathways through advocacy will be included in the Plan for this focus area and are listed below.

- Identify and promote opportunities to collaborate, co-locate and integrate services for children and older adults.
- Invest in quality community facilities that meet the social connection needs of older adults.





## Unpaid Caregivers

*Unpaid caregivers are family, friends, neighbors and volunteers who provide care for older adults and adults with disabilities. They are often unsung heroes who play a vital role in the economy and the wellbeing of older adults.*

**Goal 11:** Oklahoma caregivers are valued and have the resources and support needed to provide quality care.

**Challenge:** As individuals age and experience changes, family members and friends often assist without expecting to be paid. Our Plan refers to these individuals as unpaid caregivers. Unpaid caregivers play a key role in society and Oklahoma’s workforce. As of 2021, about 490,000 Oklahomans provide an estimated total of 460 million hours of care for older adults per year (AARP, 2023). While some care for an older relative or a parent, others care for a neighbor or friend. Some are caring for older relatives while also caring for younger relatives and/or parenting their own children. In 2021, AARP estimated the economic impact of Oklahoma’s unpaid caregivers at \$6.6 billion (AARP, 2023). Recognizing the benefit unpaid caregivers bring to the state, Oklahoma became the first U.S. state to pass a tax credit for unpaid caregivers. In January 2024, Oklahoma’s [Caring for Caregivers tax credit](#) went into effect to help support those caring for older adults and people with disabilities (AARP, 2024). Pathways for this focus area will help Oklahoma continue its historic efforts to provide resources, support and respite to unpaid caregivers.

## **Goal 11: Caregivers are valued, and have the support and resources needed to provide quality care.**

### **Pathway 11.1: Create a toolkit for employers to support their caregiving employees and recognize those who demonstrate a commitment to them.**

In addition to providing unpaid care, 61% of caregivers in the United States work paid jobs to support themselves and their families. Caregiving responsibilities may negatively impact a caregiver’s employment and sometimes result in having to leave a job altogether (AARP, 2020). As the aging population continues to grow, the need for caregivers will continue to grow as well (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). Employers are encouraged to prepare for the likelihood that their employees will need to step into caregiving roles if they are not already caregivers.

**“Encouraging employer support and flexibility in the work environment will help caregivers.”**

**- Workforce and Caregivers subcommittee member, 2024**

Employer-provided support can help unpaid caregivers stay engaged in the workforce. Almost 80% of caregivers in the United States do not have workplace support available to them (Tyler, 2022). In the 2024 Focus Area Survey, caregivers identified the need for workplace flexibility and other support to help them remain in the workforce. Refer to Oklahoma Human Services’ *Aging Our Way Research Report*<sup>5</sup> for more detail about the 2024 Focus Area Survey results related to unpaid caregivers. [AARP’s Valuing the Invaluable report](#) also provides more information about caregiving’s impacts on working family caregivers.

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to <https://www.oklahoma.gov/aging> for information about the *Aging Our Way Research Report*.

Our Plan assists employers in fostering a supportive culture and internal structures to allow unpaid caregivers to remain in the workforce. This pathway aims to provide employers with the information and tools they need to make their workplaces as flexible and supportive for caregivers as possible. It also recognizes employers for their efforts to support caregiving employees. By creating awards and recognition programs, this pathway encourages employers of all sizes to strengthen and support their most valuable resource, their people.

### **Pathway 11.2: Create a toolkit for healthcare and direct care professionals that includes resources and information about the important role of caregivers.**

Part of the role for many unpaid caregivers requires interacting with healthcare providers and professionals to make medical and care decisions for their loved one. These professionals play a vital role in supporting caregivers making these complex decisions.

Oklahoma's 2014 adoption of the [Caregiver Advise, Record, Enable \(CARE\) Act](#) sets a standard for "family-centered care" in hospitals across the state (AARP, 2022). Oklahoma was the first state to adopt this Act, which helps family caregivers as their loved ones go into the hospital and as they transition home (AARP, 2014).

Building on the CARE Act's foundation, this pathway seeks to improve coordination between unpaid caregivers, healthcare and direct care providers through understanding the role of caregivers. It also provides tools and resources, such as Person-Centered Options Counseling for hospital discharge planners. Through stronger collaboration between caregivers and healthcare professionals, older adults can receive quality, person-centered care and support.

**"Make caregiver supports more accessible to caregivers, and increase the availability of services, public service announcements can help facilitate this."**

**- Listening session participant, Norman, 2024**

### **Pathway 11.3: Expand availability of adult day health services and other respite options and raise awareness of their important role in supporting caregivers.**

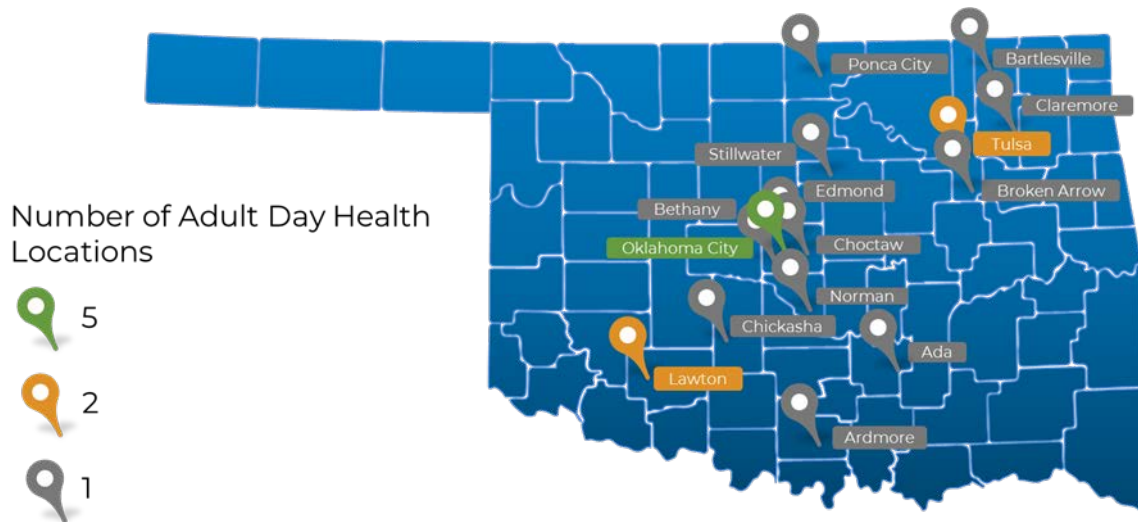
Respite refers to planned or emergency care provided to a child or adult with special needs to provide temporary relief to the family caregiver (OKCares, 2022). A type of respite care is [adult day health services](#). Adult day health services meet the physical, social and emotional needs of older adults and adults with disabilities (Oklahoma Human Services, n.d.). Oklahoma Human Services contracts with state funded adult day health services centers across the state to support the health, nutritional, social and daily living needs of adults in a professionally staffed, group setting.

**"Adult day centers give caregivers a break during the day."**

**- Listening session participant, OALA Kickoff, 2024**

As of April 2024, Oklahoma has [21 adult day health services centers](#), down from 23 centers in 2022 and from 38 centers in 2018 (Oklahoma Human Services, 2018, 2022). Currently, Oklahoma does not have licensed adult day health services centers serving residents in West, Northwest, the Oklahoma Panhandle, and Southeast Oklahoma (Oklahoma Human Services, 2022). Centers have closed for a variety of reasons, including funding, staffing and affordability for participants (Oklahoma Care Planning Council, 2013). See **Figure 6** below for the location of adult day health services centers in Oklahoma.

**Figure 6. Map of Oklahoma’s Adult Day Health Services Centers, as of May 2024**



This pathway seeks to increase the number of adult day health services and other respite options through innovative solutions like part-time mobile group services, and to encourage new service models that meet the varying and changing requirements of older adults.

### **Advocacy Pathways**

Advocacy may include outreach to public and private decision-makers in the state, writing articles for media outlets, or speaking at public forums. In addition to project plans, pathways through advocacy will be included in the Plan for this focus area and are listed below.

- Advocate for paid leave for caregivers in Oklahoma.
- Expand private and public funding for adult day health services and respite services.





## Workforce

*Workforce considers older adults who remain in the workforce, and the people in healthcare, direct care and social service roles who care for Oklahomans.*

**Goal 12:** Oklahomans have opportunities to remain engaged in the workforce for as long as they choose.

**Goal 13:** Oklahoma's health, behavioral health and social services workforce is able to provide quality services that consider the strengths and needs of older adults.



**Challenge:** A strong workforce is key to a strong economy and the well-being of all Oklahomans. Yet, like in many other areas of the country, Oklahoma has a serious workforce shortage (Workforce Transformation Task Force, 2023). While the reasons for this are complex, one factor is the growing number of adults reaching retirement age. And some of the most critical shortages are, and will be, in healthcare fields, where the demand for workers grows as the population ages. As discussed in the [Current State Report](#), Oklahoma has shortages of nearly all healthcare, behavioral health, social services and direct care workers, and those shortages are expected to grow (Oklahoma Human Services, 2023). The following Workforce pathways focus on recognizing the urgency to support older adults who are employed or seeking employment as well as recruiting and retaining Oklahoma’s healthcare, behavioral health, social services and direct care workforce.

## **Goal 12: Oklahomans have opportunities to remain engaged in the workforce for as long as they choose.**

### **Pathway 12.1: Collaborate with workforce development organizations to incorporate the employment needs of older Oklahomans.**

The increasing number of older Oklahomans has complex implications for the workforce. Many older adults retiring and younger individuals leaving the workforce to care for aging family members will intensify this challenge. Labor shortages may hinder future economic growth, making the state a less attractive place to start, locate and grow a business. The impacts of the aging population and retirement wave are expected to be felt across occupations and industries in Oklahoma. All job types in the state have at least one occupation where 20% or more workers are 55 or older (Oklahoma Works, 2019). Many older workers have institutional knowledge and deep experience in their field. Oklahoma will have to train younger workers and/or retain older workers to limit productivity loss. Workforce planners, economic developers, and their public and private partners must prepare for this complex set of circumstances.

This pathway will bring aging adults’ needs to workforce strategic planning efforts across the state. Having older adults and aging advocates in workforce planning conversations will support wider workforce preparedness and improved employment options.

**“Transition older adults to training and consultant positions to prevent brain drain.”**

**- Listening session participant, OALA Kickoff, 2024**

## Pathway 12.2: Recognize age-friendly employers who actively support and engage older employees in the workplace.

By 2028, 20% of Oklahoma's current workforce will be eligible to retire, and in some high-demand occupations, that proportion is 45% (Oklahoma Works, 2019). As mentioned in **Pathway 12.1**, the expected increase of retirements could have multiple impacts on all Oklahomans. This impact of the trend is lessened by more older adults remaining in the workforce. Nationally, adults 75 and older are the only group whose labor force participation rate is expected to increase, growing from 8.9% in 2020 to 11.7% in 2030 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). Whether working by choice or necessity, Oklahomans who remain in the workforce might require support to fully participate in the workplace. In the 2024 Focus Area Survey, 53% of respondents said it was "hard" or "very hard" for older adults to remain in the workforce. This survey also showed that respondents believed effective support, such as flexible work schedules, could make working easier for older adults.

As more older adults stay in the workforce, Oklahoma's employers can adapt to better meet the needs and use the strengths of older workers. *Aging Our Way* can achieve this by encouraging participation in an existing framework such as the national [Certified Age Friendly Employer Program](#). Age-friendly workplaces address age-discrimination, offer jobs with more flexible schedules and create opportunities for intergenerational teamwork and mentorship (Acemoglu et al., 2022; The Encore Network, 2023).

Employers' adoption of age-friendly workplace practices can help older adults remain in the workforce for as long as they choose. This pathway will benefit all Oklahomans by helping businesses retain valuable workforce members and create work environments that allow working Oklahomans to thrive.

**"Employers willing to hire older adults specifically would be helpful."**

***Oklahoma City, 2024***

## **Goal 13: Oklahoma’s health, behavioral health and social services workforce can provide quality services that consider the strengths and needs of older adults.**

### **Pathway 13.1: Collaborate with education, job placement and reskilling organizations to recruit individuals into health, direct care and support positions.**

As people age, they often require professional assistance to maintain their health and well-being. Many different professionals create a network of care to meet this need. Some of these are healthcare professionals, like doctors, nurses, medical assistants and mental health counselors. Direct care staff who work in homes and nursing facilities help individuals requiring assistance with activities of daily living, such as eating or bathing. Other necessary roles include community health workers, Indian Health Service Community Health Representatives and social workers, as well as support roles like insurance and billing staff.

Meeting the demand for these professionals in rural and urban areas requires strategic planning and recruitment. Oklahoma currently has two medical schools, 63 nursing education programs and other allied health programs to train individuals to meet the state’s healthcare workforce demands. The Oklahoma Legislature tasked the [Health Care Workforce Training Commission](#) to increase the number of physicians, nurses and physician assistants in Oklahoma, particularly in rural and underserved areas of the state (Oklahoma Health Care Workforce Training Commission, 2022). Please refer to the [Current State Report](#) for detailed information about Oklahoma’s healthcare workforce shortage.

*Aging Our Way* seeks to support ongoing recruitment initiatives for healthcare professions while also addressing workforce challenges among direct care and other support professions. This pathway will increase the size of the healthcare and related fields’ workforce through multiple new and existing initiatives targeting education, job placement and job training for people changing careers.

### **Pathway 13.2: Create a toolkit for employers that includes resources and information about providing flexible and supportive work environments for healthcare and direct care staff.**

A major factor in healthcare workforce turnover is burnout. In the healthcare industry, the number of employees quitting their job has increased at a faster rate than other industries. By November 2022, voluntary turnover in the healthcare industry was 32.5% higher than before the pandemic, compared to a 21.1% increase in turnover among all workers (Healthcare Financial Management Association, 2023). While salary issues factor heavily in

**“There should be outreach to junior high schools and high schools and partnerships with community colleges and trade schools to encourage young workers to go into health care careers.”**

**- Workforce and Caregivers subcommittee member, 2024**

employee recruitment, it has a lesser impact on retention. According to Harvard Business Review, pride in their work and loyalty to their colleagues are the primary reason care providers report staying in their organizations (Ryan & Lee, 2023). Understanding and responding to employees' desires and hopes lead to greater loyalty and resilience.

Health-related organizations can improve recruitment and retention by reimagining and redesigning the end-to-end employee experience. This pathway will equip Oklahoma's healthcare and direct care employers to develop and foster flexible workplaces, aiding recruitment and retention.

### **Pathway 13.3: Identify, share and recognize best practices in addressing workforce shortages in healthcare and direct care.**

Incentive programs are a tool commonly used to build workforce and talent pipelines. Oklahoma's state government has such incentive programs to support the healthcare and related professions talent pipelines, including those provided by [Oklahoma Human Services](#), [Oklahoma Health Care Workforce Training Commission](#), [Oklahoma Health Care Authority](#) and [Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Services](#). Examples include [DSP+](#) for direct support professionals, [Family Practice Resident Rural Scholarship Program](#), [Physician/Community Match Program](#), [Physician Loan Repayment](#) and [Physician Assistant Loan Repayment](#). Federal and Indian Health Service incentive programs, such as three [National Health Service Corps' \(NHSC\) repayment programs](#), are also available in Oklahoma. These programs all have slightly different objectives and outcomes across segments of the healthcare, behavioral health, social services and direct care workforce.

This pathway seeks to strengthen the health workforce by aligning best practices in incentive and recruitment efforts through strategic coordination.

**“The State’s DSP+ provides monetary incentives for direct care workers like Certified Nursing Assistants, Certified Medical Aides, etc. It is a great initiative to try and build the healthcare workforce.”**

**- Workforce and Caregivers subcommittee member, 2024**

## Pathway 13.4: Educate healthcare and direct care staff on understanding the needs of older adults.

Oklahoma prides itself with healthcare professionals committed to providing quality care and must equip this workforce to meet the aging population's diverse and evolving needs. In addition to developing a sufficiently sized healthcare and direct care workforce, fostering a workforce familiar with the uniqueness of caring for older adults through geriatric training and specialization enhances the quality of care for aging individuals. Professionals supporting us require the ability to help us age in the best setting of our choice.

A shortage of geriatricians is one example of the need for professionals with training in the unique needs of older adults. In its 2016 report, the American Geriatric Society projected that the state of Oklahoma would need 325 geriatricians in 2030 to meet the demand of the growing population (American Geriatrics Society, 2016). As of 2021, there were 30 certified geriatricians in the state.

Programs like the [Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program Coordinating Center \(GWEP-CC\)](#) seek to improve health outcomes by giving health and direct care workers age-informed training and education (American Geriatrics Society, 2024). This pathway seeks to improve person-centered care provided to older Oklahomans by implementing age-informed programs for the health workforce.

**“We need to have caregivers that are passionate about caregiving, we need caregivers that are compassionate of older adults, and care about older adults, we need the right people in the right job; caregivers need to be compassionate and understand that they're changing someone's life.”**

**- Listening session participant, Oklahoma City, 2024**

### Advocacy Pathways

Advocacy may include outreach to public and private decision-makers in the state, writing articles for media outlets, or speaking at public forums. In addition to project plans, pathways through advocacy will be included in the Plan for this focus area and are listed below.

- Incentivize employers to implement assistive technology to support older employees.
- Support businesses to thrive while providing higher wages for direct care roles in Oklahoma.





## Next Steps

Oklahoma Human Services and its partners are committed to Oklahomans aging on our own terms. In the next decade, our Plan will be updated based on the unique needs identified by older individuals, family caregivers and service providers.

## Listening

The power of *Aging Our Way* rests on the commitment to listen and respond to Oklahomans' voices. Oklahoma Human Services will continue to meet with partners and update our Plan over the next 10 years, adjusting to the evolving needs of Oklahoma's aging population.

The Executive Steering Committee, Advisory Committee, Advisory Subcommittees and Oklahoma Human Services will recruit Ambassadors statewide. Ambassadors will receive training and attend regular meetings. They will help to inform their communities and bring feedback for the *Aging Our Way* team.

## Planning

*Aging Our Way* leadership will work closely together during the 10-year implementation period. Executive Steering Committee and Advisory Committee members will continue in their roles, and Oklahoma Human Services will manage and track implementation. These leaders will regularly review our Plan's progress and make changes to address new challenges and opportunities.

Planning tools and strategies will be used to ensure progress and guide activities toward reaching expected outcomes. Oklahoma Human Services and partner organizations will have a strategy to address possible changes in leadership.

## Partner Organizations

Partnerships are central to *Aging Our Way's* prolonged success. Private and public organizations from different sectors will work closely with Oklahoma Human Services to plan and implement the Plan's pathways, creating measurable impacts across the state. Partners will serve as either pathway leads or collaborators, developing project plans and reporting the measurable impacts for their assigned pathway(s).

## Ambassadors

Ambassadors are also critical partners for this effort. Since the beginning, Oklahoma's Plan has been a grassroots movement with a bottom-up approach. Ambassadors play a vital role in bridging gaps, providing support and amplifying the impact of *Aging Our Way* initiatives across communities.

## Funding

Through collaboration and coordination, many of the pathways included in our Plan can be accomplished using current resources. Oklahoma Human Services or partner organizations may fund some pathways and will work together to identify new sources of funding like grants, federal and state appropriations.

## Reporting

In addition to the toolkit, an annual report and online dashboard will be available throughout the 10-year implementation period. Visit the [Aging Our Way website](#) for information about reports and presentations, and how to stay involved with *Aging Our Way*.

## Impact

Over the course of our Plan's implementation, Plan leaders will monitor the domains and factors measured by the [America's Health Rankings: Senior Report](#) and the [LTSS Scorecard Report](#) to understand the impact that Plan activities may have on these performance measures. Over time, additional measures will be identified and developed to track the impact of *Aging Our Way*.

## Conclusion

The *Aging Our Way* plan provides a framework to empower Oklahoma's response to the state's demographic shift toward an older population and to address the diverse needs of aging Oklahomans. Through a collaborative strategy that encourages partnerships between the housing, transportation, healthcare, workforce, direct care, aging services and social services sectors, our Plan will guide Oklahoma on a path that is inclusive of people of all ages. The pathways of our Plan, which were written with the input of Oklahomans' voices, will position our state over the next decade to support older adults and embrace the opportunities ahead of us.

## Appendix A. Implementation Summary

Appendix A. Implementation Summary provides the following information for each focus area:

- Pathway,
- Estimated time until completion and
- Performance measures and the data source for each measure.

**Table 1. Availability and Affordability of Services, Programs and Resources Pathways and Estimated Completion**

Pathway	Estimated Completion
<b>1.1</b> Develop an Ambassador program for awareness and education about Aging Our Way and the services and support available to Oklahomans.	1.5 years
<b>1.2</b> Address geographic challenges to improve availability of services.	1.5 years
<b>1.3</b> Establish methods to identify and track service gaps and unmet needs for Oklahomans.	1.5 years
<b>1.4</b> Explore and evaluate the potential of artificial intelligence systems and new technology to monitor and evaluate needs, services and available resources.	5 years
<b>1.5</b> Identify and implement improvements for eligibility processes for services.	3.5 years
<b>2.1</b> Create a network of certified No Wrong Door Navigators.	3 years
<b>2.2</b> Create a central website for older Oklahomans and caregivers to access services and support.	5 years

## **Availability and Affordability of Services, Programs and Resources Performance Measures and Data Sources**

### *Tracking of Plan Efforts (to be developed)*

- Number of partners focused on improving service delivery
- Number of partners tracking service delivery by speed/quality/cost/variation
- Number of *Aging Our Way* Ambassadors
- Number of identified service gaps
- Number of visitors to website

### *Partner Program Data*

- Number of days between service request and service delivery
- Number of days to determine eligibility for services
- Number of No Wrong Door navigators

### *Annual Survey of Partners (to be developed)*

- Percentage of partners reporting improved service delivery

### *Annual Survey of Oklahomans (to be developed)*

- Percentage of Oklahomans reporting satisfaction with services
- Percentage of Oklahomans reporting needs are met with current services
- Percentage of older Oklahomans reporting satisfaction with application processes



**Table 2. Accountability, Coordination and Fiscal Transparency Pathways and Estimated Completion**

Pathway	Estimated Completion
3.1 Collaborate with Oklahoma Managed Care entities to track measures and initiatives that lead to positive outcomes.	2.5 years
3.2 Identify and address regulatory barriers that hinder integration and coordination of service delivery.	1.5 years
4.1 Engage public and private partners, including current and prospective service providers, to align strategic plans.	3 years
4.2 Identify methods to develop and track common measures related to outcomes for older Oklahomans.	5 years
4.3 Develop a supporting infrastructure to sustain the Multisector Plan on Aging initiatives through practice, policy, legislation and funding.	10 years

**Accountability, Coordination and Fiscal Transparency Performance Measures and Data Sources**

*Tracking of Plan Efforts (to be developed)*

- Number of partners focused on accountability, coordination and fiscal transparency
- Number of public and private partnerships
- Number of partnerships with Managed Care Organizations (MCOs)
- Number of regulatory barriers identified
- Number of collective impact efforts or projects identified and pursued
- Number of collective outcome measures for the state

*Partner Program Data*

- Percentage of clients that report positive outcomes with Oklahoma Managed Care entities

*Annual Survey of Partners (to be developed)*

- Percentage of partners reporting improved accountability, coordination and transparency

**Table 3. Housing Pathways and Estimated Completion**

Pathway	Estimated Completion
<b>5.1</b> Expand the availability of housing options for older adults to live independently, such as multigenerational housing options	7 years
<b>5.2</b> Expand the availability of affordable assisted living and supportive housing, such as adult family homes.	5 years
<b>5.3</b> Expand programs for assistance with evictions, home repairs, adaptive modifications and remote supports.	5 years
<b>5.4</b> Conduct age-informed outreach and engagement for older adults experiencing homelessness.	2 years

**Housing Performance Measures and Data Sources**

*Tracking of Plan Efforts (to be developed)*

- Number of partners focused on housing for older adults
- Dollar amount of long-term services and support (LTSS) funding used for adult family homes

*Partner Program Data*

- Number of older adults participating in eviction mitigation and adaptive modification programs

*Annual Survey of Partners (to be developed)*

- Percentage of partners reporting improved housing options for older adults

*Annual Survey of Oklahomans (to be developed)*

- Percentage of older adults or caregivers reporting residing in multigenerational housing
- Percentage of Oklahomans reporting assisted living communities and supportive housing as high-quality and affordable

*National Data (HUD)*

- Number of older adults experiencing homelessness

**Table 4. Transportation Pathways and Estimated Completion**

Pathway	Estimated Completion
<b>6.1</b> Optimize coordination of transportation services through mobility management programs.	2 years
<b>6.2</b> Collaborate with the Oklahoma Statewide Mobility Network's efforts to improve access to transportation.	2 years
<b>6.3</b> Develop strategies to improve rider and caregiver experience.	3 years
<b>6.4</b> Implement age- and ability- informed training to equip and support mobility managers, transportation providers, drivers and other support personnel.	3 years
<b>6.5</b> Support public and private transportation agencies in leveraging existing workforce development programs to fill driver workforce gaps.	3 years

## **Transportation Performance Measures and Data Sources**

### *Tracking of Plan Efforts (to be developed)*

- Number of partners focused on transportation for older adults
- Number of partnerships with job placement and reskilling organizations

### *Partner Program Data*

- Number of mobility managers
- Number of Oklahomans utilizing mobility managers
- Number of trips successfully completed
- Percentage of Oklahomans reporting positive experiences with transportation services
- Number of individuals participating in reskilling and job placement programs focused on transportation services
- Percentage of mobility managers, transportation providers and drivers trained of the needs of older adults

### *Annual Survey of Partners (to be developed)*

- Percentage of partners reporting improved transportation for older adults

### *Annual Survey of Oklahomans (to be developed)*

- Percentage of Oklahomans responding positively to questions about transportation services

**Table 4. Age-Friendly Communities Pathways and Estimated Completion**

Pathway	Estimated Completion
<b>7.1</b> Adopt and promote an age-friendly framework for Oklahoma communities.	2 years

**Age-Friendly Communities Performance Measures and Data Sources**

*Tracking of Plan Efforts (to be developed)*

- Number of partners supporting age-friendly communities
- Number of communities pursuing age-friendly community certification/recognition/status
- Number of age friendly communities
- Number of awards given to communities for being age-friendly

*Annual Survey of Oklahomans (to be developed)*

- Percentage of Oklahomans living in an age-friendly community
- Percentage of Oklahomans interested in living in an age-friendly community

**Table 5. Culture Change and Education Pathways and Estimated Completion**

Pathway	Estimated Completion
<b>8.1</b> Adopt and disseminate the <i>Aging Our Way</i> framework to promote understanding of aging across the lifespan and preparation for healthy aging.	3 years
<b>8.2</b> Inform Oklahomans on pathways for empowered aging.	3 years



**Culture Change and Education Performance Measures and Data Sources**

*Tracking of Plan Efforts (to be developed)*

- Number of partners focusing on culture change and education
- Number of earned media for the framework
- Number of materials developed to promote *Aging Our Way*

*Annual Survey of Oklahomans (to be developed)*

- Percentage of Oklahomans reporting an understanding of aging across the lifespan
- Percentage of Oklahomans reporting an understanding of the needs of older adults and their caregivers
- Percentage of Oklahomans reporting knowledge of available services and resources

**Table 6. Wellness Pathways and Estimated Completion**

Pathway	Estimated Completion
9.1 Expand availability of food options for older Oklahomans.	6 years
9.2 Establish wellness hubs for older adults around the state.	4 years
9.3 Support implementation of the Older Adult Behavioral Health State Plan through partnership with the Behavioral Health Forum on Aging.	5 years

**Wellness Performance Measures and Data Sources**

*Tracking of Plan Efforts (to be developed)*

- Number of partners focusing on wellness

**Partner Program Data**

- Number of wellness hubs
- Number of older adults visiting wellness hubs
- Number of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) reporting that are age-informed
- Number of older adults calling 988

**Annual Survey of Partners (to be developed)**

- Percentage of partners reporting improved wellness of older adults

**Annual Survey of Oklahomans (to be developed)**

- Percentage of older adults and caregivers reporting availability of food options
- Percentage of older adults reporting mental, physical and social health needs are met

**National Data**

- Number or percentage of Oklahomans reporting food security
- Health status, Health Risks and Behaviors, and Healthcare

**Table 7. Social Connection Pathways and Estimated Completion**

Pathway	Estimated Completion
<b>10.1</b> Create a statewide community coalition to support and expand efforts to connect older adults and younger generations in meaningful ways.	4 years
<b>10.2</b> Promote lifelong learning opportunities in technology, arts and other subjects for older Oklahomans.	4 years

## **Social Connection Performance Measures and Data Sources**

### *Tracking of Plan Efforts (to be developed)*

- Number of partners focusing on social connection

### *Partner Program Data*

- Number of events connecting older adults with younger individuals
- Number of older adults participating in events with younger generations

### *Annual Survey of Partners (to be developed)*

- Percentage of partners reporting improved social connection of older adults

### *Annual Survey of Oklahomans (to be developed)*

- Percentage of older adults reporting engagement in their community
- Percentage of older adults responding positively to questions about social connection

### *Partner Program Data*

- Number of educational opportunities provided through the ADvantage waiver

### *Annual Survey of Oklahomans (to be developed)*

- Percentage of older adults reporting engagement in learning opportunities
- Number of learning opportunities in senior centers

**Table 8. Unpaid Caregivers Pathways and Estimated Completion**

Pathway	Estimated Completion
<b>11.1</b> Create a toolkit for employers to support their caregiving employees and recognize those who demonstrate a commitment to them.	2 years
<b>11.2</b> Create a toolkit for healthcare and direct care professionals that includes resources and information about the important role of caregivers.	2 years
<b>11.3</b> Expand availability of adult day services and other respite options and raise awareness of their important role in supporting caregivers.	5 years

**Unpaid Caregivers Performance Measures and Data Sources**

*Tracking of Plan Efforts (to be developed)*

- Number of partnerships with employers
- Number of partnerships with healthcare providers

*Partner Program Data*

- Number of adult day health services and respite services

*Annual Survey of Partners (to be developed)*

- Percentage of healthcare providers reporting improved engagement with caregivers
- Percentage of employers reporting efforts to support caregivers

*Annual Survey of Oklahomans (to be developed)*

- Percentage of unpaid caregivers reporting needs are met with services
- Percentage of unpaid caregivers indicating needs are met with employer

**Table 9. Workforce Pathways and Estimated Completion**

Pathway	Estimated Completion
<b>12.1</b> Collaborate with workforce development organizations to incorporate the employment needs of older Oklahomans.	5 years
<b>12.2</b> Recognize age-friendly employers who actively support and engage older employees in the workplace.	3 years
<b>13.1</b> Collaborate with education, job placement and reskilling organizations to recruit individuals into health, direct care and support positions.	5 years
<b>13.1</b> Create a toolkit for employers that includes resources and information about providing flexible and supportive work environments for healthcare and direct care staff.	5 years
<b>13.3</b> Identify, share and recognize best practices in addressing workforce shortages in healthcare and direct care.	3 years
<b>13.4</b> Educate health care and direct care staff on understanding the needs of older adults	5 years



## **Workforce Performance Measures and Data Sources**

### *Tracking of Plan Efforts (to be developed)*

- Number of partners focused on employment of older adults
- Number of partnerships with employers to support older adults
- Number of partnerships with healthcare and direct care employers
- Number of partnerships with education institutions and job placement and reskilling organizations

### *Partner Program Data*

- Number of employers with efforts to support and engage older adults in the workplace
- Number of trainings to educate healthcare and direct care staff on the needs of older adults
- Percentage of staff reporting improved knowledge of the needs of older adults
- Number and percentage of healthcare and direct care related education/job tracks

### *Annual Survey of Oklahomans (to be developed)*

- Percentage of older adults reporting ability to stay in the workforce
- Percentage of older adults reporting support from employer
- Percentage of healthcare and direct care employers with initiatives to improve recruitment and retention of staff
- Percentage of healthcare and direct care employers reporting improved recruitment and retention

## Appendix B. Plan Partners

### Executive Steering Committee Members

Name	Affiliation
Jeromy Buchanan	Oklahoma Human Services
Tonya Garman	Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services
Brenda Hoefar	Office of Disability Concerns
Olivia Hook	Oklahoma Department of Transportation
Regan McManus	Oklahoma Association of Area Agencies on Aging; Indian Nations Council of Governments
Rep. Nicole Miller	Oklahoma State Representative
Deborah Shropshire, M.D.	Oklahoma Secretary of Human Services
Deborah Smith	Oklahoma Human Services
Marshall Vogts – Executive Steering Committee Chair	Oklahoma Department of Commerce
David Ward	Oklahoma Healthcare Authority
Stephen Weaver	Oklahoma State Department of Health
Rep. Tammy West	Oklahoma State Representative
Alisa West-Cahill	Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

## Advisory Committee Members

Name	Affiliation
Pearl Barnett	ADvancing States
Jake Brownlow	Valir Health
Jeromy Buchanan	Oklahoma Human Services
Steven Buck	Care Providers Oklahoma
Claire Dowers-Nichols	Healthy Living OKC
Lola Edwards	CompleteOK
Kimberly Green	Diakonos Group
Marilyn Olson	Villages OKC
Karen Orsi	NorthCare; Oklahoma Mental Health and Aging Coalition
Pete Reed	LifeSpring Home Care Oklahoma
Maggie Shaffer	Alzheimer's Association
Mashell Sourjohn	AARP Oklahoma
Sean Voskuhl	AARP Oklahoma
Nadine Walter	Oklahoma Human Services
Reza Zeinalpour	Oklahoma Human Services

## Subcommittee Members

Name	Affiliation
<b>Access to Services and Fiscal Transparency</b>	
Pearl Barnett	ADvancing States
Tasha Black	Oklahoma Health Care Authority
Lauren Branch	NewView Oklahoma
Steven Buck	Care Providers Oklahoma
Kristi Colclasure	LeadingAge
Tony Incarnato	Oklahoma Human Services
Lisa James	Cherokee Nation
Christina Lorey	Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority
Annette Mays	State Council on Aging and Adult Protective Services
Kevin Richardson	Seniors Helping Seniors Central Oklahoma
Blair Schoeb	Areawide Agency on Aging
Luis Vargas	Oklahoma Human Services
Keeley White	Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma
Reza Zeinalpour	Oklahoma Human Services
<b>Age-Friendly Communities, and Culture and Education</b>	
Karen Cook	Chickasaw Nation
Dr. Julie Gordon	University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center
Grace Grajeda	Oklahoma Human Services
Kimberly Green	Diakonos Group

Name	Affiliation
Morgan Hamilton	State Department of Health
Lisa James	Cherokee Nation
Jeff Knapp	City of Bethany
Marilyn Olson	VillagesOKC
Dr. Emily Roberts	Oklahoma State University
Mashell Sourjohn	AARP Oklahoma
Marshall Vogts	Oklahoma Department of Commerce
Betty Wharton	Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority
Erika Wilhite	Oklahoma Arts Council
<b>Housing and Transportation</b>	
Dr. Marilyn Dillon	City of Oklahoma City Embark
Della Gregg	Oklahoma Health Care Authority
Olivia Hook	Oklahoma Department of Transportation
Jessica Izquierdo	Oklahoma Department of Commerce
Marilyn Olson	VillagesOKC
Staci Pierce	Grand Gateway Economic Development Association Area Agency on Aging
Carolyn Reconnu-Shoffner	Oklahoma Health Care Authority
Charla Sloan	Ki Bois
Mason Weaver	Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma
Rebekah Williams	Southern Oklahoma Development Association Area Agency on Aging; State Council on Aging and Adult Protective Services



Name	Affiliation
Suzanne Williams	Get Help
<b>Wellness and Social Connection</b>	
Joye Angel	Southern Oklahoma Development Association Area Agency on Aging
Anissa Chadick	YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City
Karen Cook	Chickasaw Nation
Felicia Cummings	Veteran Affairs Health Care System
Joshua DeBartolo	Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
Claire Dowers-Nichols	Healthy Living OKC
Steve Evans	Our Lord's Lutheran (Norman)
Tonya Garman	Oklahoma Department for Rehabilitative Services
AJ Griffin	Potts Family Foundation
Dr. Julie Gordon	University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center
Chris McKone	Physician Housecalls
Karen Orsi	NorthCare; Oklahoma Mental Health and Aging Coalition
Margaret Shaffer	Alzheimer's Association
Mark Waggoner	Mom's Meals
Mason Weaver	Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma
Dr. Brandt Wiskur	University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

Name	Affiliation
<b>Workforce and Unpaid Caregivers</b>	
Pearl Barnett	ADvancing States
Joanne Davis	Oklahoma City Black Chamber of Commerce
Amanda Dirmeyer	Daily Living Centers Oklahoma City
Jacob Guinan	State Department of Health
Cindy Hale	Association of South-Central Oklahoma Governments Area Agency on Aging
Alicia Hibbets	Oklahoma Department of Commerce
Dr. Karel Joyce Kalaw	University of Central Oklahoma
Kirsten Lindsay	Oklahoma CareerTech – Francis Tuttle Technology Center
LaShanya Nash	Caregivers Magazine; Better With Age
Kathy Sercel	Individual
Lisa Thomas	OnCue Express
Sean Voskuhl	AARP Oklahoma
Nadine Walter	Oklahoma Human Services

## 2024 Listening Sessions Hosts

Host Organizations
Healthy Living Norman
Latino Community Development Agency, with La Puerta Del Oro
Northeast Wellness Center, with the Oklahoma City Black Chamber of Commerce

## Host Organizations

Oklahoma Aging Advocacy Leadership Academy (OAALA)

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St. Luke's Methodist Church

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## 2024 Multisector Plan on Aging Engagement Hosts

### Host Organizations

Apache Tribe of Oklahoma

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Care Providers Oklahoma

---

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes

---

Healthy Living Norman

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Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Tribes

---

Kiowa Tribe

---

OKC Black Chamber of Commerce

---

Oklahoma Caregivers Coalition

---

Oklahoma Indian Council on Aging

---

Oklahoma Senior Journal

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Osage Nation Social Services

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Post 157 American Legion

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Senior Day at the Capitol

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State Council on Aging and Adult Protective Services

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University of Central Oklahoma

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VillagesOKC

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