



## Public Input for Aging Unit Plans

It is important to involve older adults and caregivers in the development of the Aging Unit Plan. This process is a large part of the Aging Difference. Advisory and Policy-Making Board members can play a significant role in the development of the plan. There are several ways to gather preliminary ideas from the public.

1. **LISTENING SESSIONS** – Hold a meeting where a facilitator guides a conversation based on a series of questions; and responses are recorded. These sessions should be widely advertised to get a large group of people from various backgrounds and experiences to get a broad perspective on your topic.

### Creative ideas for holding a Listening Session

- Start by having the group describe an older person –
  - Each person will likely have a different idea about who an “older person” is
  - Ensures we are all talking about the same “person”
- Hire/ask someone to facilitate the session or bring in speaker/someone different than aging staff to prompt more honest input and draw more people – consider asking a board member
- Partner with other organizations/agencies – have them host the meeting, if that organization receives OAA funding, ensure that connection between services and funding is made.
  - United Way – already doing community conversations
  - Non-English speaking groups
  - LGBT community center
  - Senior Living organization
  - Learning in Retirement groups
  - Silver Sneakers providers –

### Tips for a successful Listening Session:

- Choose a neutral location that is easy to access and where people feel comfortable
- Go to where the older people are
- Find a good facilitator
- Provide food if possible
- Have a clear goal and explain what that goal is before you start
- Set “rules of engagement” such as keeping things constructive, sympathetic and honest
- Encourage people to be specific in their answers
- If someone gets defensive or feels attacked, gently steer the conversation
- Ensure physical accessibility as well as accessibility of any handouts, resources or presentation materials.
- End on time

2. **FOCUS GROUPS** – Ask an existing group or group of invited persons to have a discussion about a designated topic(s) to collect information for your plan. A focus group is more controlled than a listening session and may not draw out as much diversity, but it is likely that the topic(s) could be discussed at greater length/detail. Groups to consider are:

- I-team
- Caregiver coalition
- Boards for local non-profits (food pantry, United Way, homeless coalitions)

- Your Aging, ADRC or Human Services staff
  - AARP leadership team meeting
  - TRIAD (older adults and law enforcement)
  - Invitation only focus group ideas: Veterans, dialysis social workers, homecare workers
3. **ONE ON ONE INTERVIEWS** – Meet one on one with an older person to listen to their thoughts and ideas on designated topics. This is a great way for board members to be involved by having them conduct the interviews. Members of various coalitions and volunteers could also be asked to interview people. Supply a common set of questions, but allow the interviewer to follow-up with their own questions for more detail or clarification. Interviews work best with 2 people, one to ask questions and one to take notes on the conversation.
4. **SURVEYS** – Gather information from people by giving them a printed questionnaire or using a web-based survey such as SurveyMonkey and/or Facebook, other social media or technology platforms to collect input. Surveys are a quick and easy way to collect information, but don't allow for as much flexibility, context or detail in the information you gather.
- Ongoing surveys – Provide a short questionnaire or comment card for people who have come to your office or otherwise used your services.
  - Focused survey – Ask for feedback on the specific focus areas that needs to be addressed in the aging plan.

### **Timeline for Writing Aging Plans**

1. Gather preliminary ideas from the public
2. Write draft plan with input from OAA Consultant and Advisory and Policy-Making Boards
3. Submit draft plan to GWAAR and revise as needed based on GWAAR feedback – *Summer, 2018*
4. Present draft plan to Advisory and Policy-making Boards
5. Collect feedback on draft plan by holding formal public hearings and other outreach
6. Revise as needed based on public feedback and resubmit to GWAAR *if significant changes were made*
7. Present final plan to Board for approval
8. Submit final plan to GWAAR for final approval – *November, 2018*