AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION WORKGROUP MINUTES

Date: 09/17/2020
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Facilitators: Kim Henry and Lucky Sohi

In Attendance

Terri Hansen	Lucky Sohi	Jill Kamenetz
Scott Ripley	Kim Henry	Mae Beale
Stuart Rosenthal	Kelly Kesler	Debbie Boyer
Jenna Crawley	Calvin Ball	Kathleen Krintz – Recording Secretary
Carl DeLorenzo	Jim Sanders	

Minutes Approved: August minutes not approved; will review at October meeting

Announcements:

Terri Hansen welcomed Dr. Ball to this workgroup.

Dr. Ball's comments: I would like to thank Terri and Jenna for their leadership and partnership. It was important for me to move forward with an Age-Friendly Howard County, and Terri and Jenna were the leaders that took up the charge to move the vision forward. We saw the critical importance, even more so now as we find ourselves at the intersection between a global health crisis, financial crisis and a critical conversation about race, equity and equality. Everyone isWe moving forward in their roles and objectives when it comes to Howard County being the very best place for all no matter what your age. It is critically important that no matter what we do we are able to communicate better. If we are not able to communicate, we aren't really able to educate and empower. One thing worse than not having a resource is having a resource that no one knows anything about. I am so proud of the work that this team has been doing to move forward with communication and information, because that is the action that will make all of our work accessible and achievable for future generations.

Terri: I want to give Kim Henry and Lucky Sohi an opportunity to share with Dr. Ball what this group has been working on.

New Business:

Kim talked about where this workgroup was coming from and also gave an overview of our methodology, first by defining what Communication means from the perspectives of an individual, as a Department, as the Office on Aging and Independence and the County Government as a whole. Took a look at the current communication vehicles; some are working really well, and some are not. These include:
- ✓ Press Releases
- ✓ Website
- ✓ Social Media

- ✓ Flyers and Newsletters
- ✓ Emails
- ✓ Constant Contact
- ✓ Town Hall meetings (in person and virtual)

During the current Pandemic, virtual programs allow people to attend from the safety of their homes. Within our group we have participation from some really involved folks – people who produce publications; serve on numerous boards and others who understand what is working in terms of how to get the word out in our Community. Other communication methods include:

- ✓ Word of Mouth
- ✓ Phone trees through churches
- ✓ Non-profit organizations
- ✓ Community organizations

Barriers to effective communication

- ✓ Cultural differences, including language barriers
- ✓ Social isolation – especially during the pandemic
- ✓ Technological challenges (lack of connectivity)
- ✓ ADA challenges – vision impaired, etc.

Current research is to address these and other communication issues and then draft communication action items for the Age-Friendly plan. Group members are:

- ✓ Considering supplemental methods (additional surveys, focus groups) to solicit input from residents that were missed in the original Survey Monkey to obtain more accurate results
- ✓ Reviewing other jurisdictions action plans that are posted on the AARP Age-Friendly and the World Health Organization (WHO) websites.
- ✓ Identifying communication action items which be implemented in Howard County.
- ✓ Researching ways to better communicate with the non-English speaking residents and residents with disabilities.
- ✓ Working with other Age-Friendly workgroups to unify and amplify Age-Friendly recommendations and messaging.

- • Kelly stated that from the Local Health and Improvement Coalition (LHIC) appreciates the idea of working together, and to align with what other Coalitions and groups across the County are doing. How do we identify where there might be gaps in terms of looking at Age-Friendly across the life span? The reason this particular group was important for LHIC to be a part of was so we can bring the perspective from different programs within LHIC - over 140 organizations and 400 individuals receive LHIC's daily communication. How can we engage them in a collaborative way? Also, as LHIC goes through their strategic planning process, how can it bring an Age-Friendly perspective to the work we currently do.
- • Mae stated that we had the opportunity to look at action plans from all over the country. One thing she found was many of them took surveys to see what the elderly people needed. On some, communication was not a high priority - they were looking more at things like health and housing. This is such is such a great opportunity, it is opening my eyes, but we need to make sure we are reaching the underserved seniors.

Dr. Ball thanked everyone for their work and said, what he heard is right where he thinks we should be. He liked the idea of looking at other places and pulling in best practices; looking at what is already being duplicated here; and identifying where the gaps are. Definitely agree that we cannot let communication fall by the wayside. The inclination may be if you build it, they will come; but if they are not aware of it, they can't come. Want to make sure people have all the resources that they need throughout their lifespan. Dr. Ball expressed appreciation for everyone's time and the presentation and looks forward to seeing more as we continue our work.

Old Business:

Jill looked at Age-Friendly plans from Houston, Texas and Sarasota, FL

- Houston, Texas – Provide ongoing education and information, recommendation was to provide computer literacy and information technology classes for older adults. Also develop and maintain Age-Friendly/Livable Community Website. Develop a senior listserv similar to Next-door. Create a senior communication volunteer network using trained "Ambassadors" and identify a recognizable senior advocate or champion from Civic Clubs/Super Neighborhood Councils, service organizations, faith-based institutions, residences.
    - o Terri liked the idea of the Senior Ambassador and is actually something she has been pondering; she talked with Darlene Vaselaros, volunteer coordinator within the Office on Aging and Independence.
        - ✓ Kim asked Terri to explain what a senior ambassador would do.
    - o Terri stated that it would be a volunteer in a community setting - someone that takes charge of bringing a certain message (Age-Friendly message) to that immediate community down to the neighborhood setting. Talking to the neighborhoods about what Age-Friendly is; championing an event, sharing flyers, holding a block party (when that is allowed) to talk about different elements of Age-Friendly. If you think about Age-Friendly think about it from a grass roots standpoint.
        - ✓ Terri asked Jill if they gave a lot of information about the Ambassador program or was it vague.
    - o Jill responded was thinking about Next-door in terms of having trained volunteers who were knowledgeable they could go to these neighborhoods and help spread the word.
    - o Kim liked the idea of a website where folks could upload their own HOA contact information and perhaps designate an ambassador. Maybe have a Community ambassador section on the Howard County website.
    - o Jenna added that our Commission on Aging has a lot of interest around communication, so we should engage the Commission around this. In thinking about advocates, how can we best utilize those commissioners who are in the local communities and willing to share information?
- Sarasota, Fl – Increase centralized access to community information. Promote availability of unbiased and relevant issues pertaining to aging. Explain availability and use of affordable technology
    - ✓ Create training to improve technology skills and access information and opportunities
    - ✓ Establish free access to computers and internet in public places such as libraries, senior centers or Government buildings.
    - ✓ Increase intergenerational training opportunities
- Mae reported on Miami-Dade, Florida – The communication and information is great, but the communication and information regarding event programs and services must be based on the needs and interest of older adults. Some strategies that were given:
    1. Older adult engagement – include older adults in the planning of communication and information.
    2. Older adults in all policies. Review policies related to civic participation and employment in order to determine if older adults are considered. Advocate for policy modifications as needed.
    3. Older adult representation and advocacy. Identify boards related to civic participation and employment which should include an older adult advocate on the committee or council.

- Kim stated that Mae reminded her of something she read in the Boulder, CO plan. They approached focus groups a little differently and identified 5 targeted groups of people:
  - ✓ Latinos
  - ✓ Family Caregivers
  - ✓ Low income older adults
  - ✓ Residents of senior housing sites
  - ✓ the LGBTQ community

Focus groups discussed the same four or five topics like housing and brought like-minded individuals together as a group. Perhaps rather than having a broader mix in our focus groups we can try this approach and focus on the needs of underserved groups. In Boulder, as a follow-up to the community conversations, they held quadrant work sessions to discuss the four most critical areas. The work sessions brought the participants together and encourage them to offer solutions based on their personal goals and needs for services. When Howard County was developing the Aging masterplan a couple of years ago, one of the things that struck me in the public meetings was that there were community members who stood up and said we don't expect Howard County to do all this for us. We expect to take an active roll in building an Age-Friendly community. Similarly, our workgroup is not here to solve everything related to communications. Our goal should be to open the conversation with and get a broad buy-in from the community, with residents stepping up and taking on some of these roles.

Lucky shared Scott's report on five U.S. cities and one international:
- o Kim noted that it does not look like Scott delved into the plans so much as an overview of the jurisdictions. Will have Scott go back and look for any action items that relate to communication. It is a great overview of those jurisdictions. One thing I did notice was that a lot of promote this, communicate that. Was not how we would successfully promote that? We need to market our programs better. Was wondering if anyone found specific items in the plans that included concrete communications that worked.
- o Stuart found in New York City that 30 to 40% people don't have cars, computers, or internet access. So, they developed something called OATS (The Older American Technology Services) and now Montgomery County is contracting with OATS and providing senior planning which includes free classes for seniors on all aspects of computer training. OATS is a non-profit organization.
  - ✓ Alexandria, MI – They have a group called Best Kept Secrets and they put kiosks in churches, senior centers, nursing homes and all over the town to post flyers about programs for seniors. Also have a radio station that gives them one hour a month for an open talk line for questions and answers. And mentioned a New Habitat for Humanity Aging in Place Program that provides assistance with home modifications.
    - ▪ Jenna mentioned Rebuilding Together is doing home modifications and funding for that.
  - ✓ East Port, ME – Collaborate with City Hall, senior citizens centers, health care agencies, nursing homes, art centers and libraries to get the word out that way.
- Kim asked Jenna in our report noticed that some of the reports would actually have the local AARP recommendations. Is our report expected to include info about United Way and AARP programs?
  - o Jenna said it would be up to the workgroups to determine what information should be included. If AARP has recommendations about best practices that the workgroups agree with and want to recommend that should be included.
    - ▫ Do we have participation from AARP, Maryland?

- ➢ Terri: we have contact with AARP Maryland but don't have anything specific in the way of recommendations. They offer technical assistance, and generally are a pass-through to the livability community, which is the national part of AARP that references the Age-Friendly.
- ➢ Jenna believes that this is the work of the people and our Age-Friendly work is really about our what our workgroups and co-chairs ultimately recommend.
- ➢ Terri also mentioned that this is not jus about Howard County Government, or the Office on Aging and Independence. This is the work of the workgroups and what the County as a whole wants to see going forward. It represents the needs of all.
- Mae talked about Peru – Had a program called "I'm good, look at me." They held expedition fairs for older adults as an opportunity for them to sell their crafts in the park twice a year. Were able to include the older population and gave everyone an opportunity to do what they like.
  - o Kim asked Stuart about the Baltimore County Expo, which includes an Art show and giving the older adults an opportunity to show what they do.
    - ▪ Stuart mentioned about a program where they invite all their readers to upload pieces of Art in seven different categories and over 600 entries.
- Kim mentioned that in San Antonio, the United Way put together a Leadership Development program to encourage older adults to volunteer within their skill set.
- Jim talked about one of the gaps in Howard County and the Government and Library could help correct – the need for a single portal of reliable information, with layers of data. Howard County is unusual in several ways:
  1. Soon to be a majority, minority community. Have more ethnic cultural groups growing faster than our infostructure really supports.
  2. Need to build relationships within the communities.
- Mae stated that you can have information overload. Providing more resources and information to reach the people is not necessarily the solution.
  - o Kim stated from a marketing standpoint it takes three messages to get the word across about one item. Also mentioned about the comment Jim made at a previous meeting regarding community organizations marketing to one another and not really reaching the intended end user.
- Kim: it has been eye-opening to hear about components of other Age-Friendly plans, especially as we identify specific communications action items that are working. I think the idea of residents and volunteers telling stories of what worked for them are important to include in our final report to show what is working in our community. In looking at some of the reports out there, the design and layout are not always ADA compliant.
- Jenna mentioned a survey that was recently released from the County Executive to ask for input in the redesign of the County website. Would encourage all of the workgroup members to complete that and share the link. The Commission on Aging and the Commission on Disabilities can provide a lot of feedback in your tasks regarding the usability of the website.
  - o Kim mentioned there is a link to the survey on the County Executive Facebook page and also on the Community Resource and Services Facebook page.
- Terri asked Kim to make sure to email the link to everyone in the workgroup. She encouraged members to keep doing homework reading and reviewing other jurisduitins'

action plans. And this is where we are going - to start writing our own action steps. What is it that we want? What is going to work, that is:
- ✓ Tangible
- ✓ Smart
- ✓ Relevant
- ✓ Something we can accomplish

Our goal is quality, not quantity. Start thinking about what you want. She asked Stuart, since he has done this before with Montgomery County, if there were things that would be helpful to please send that to the group.

- Jenna stated that one of our missions is reframing aging and what kind of language we should be using. Her recommendation would be to look at what Washington, DC has done; is our workgroup in agreement with all of this" Are there other things we want to add?
- Jim asked Terri, who owns ageism in the workgroup process? Ageism affects all the workgroups; to send a powerful message we would want one or several of the workgroups to take that on. But which workgroup owns it?
- Terri stated that her first inclination was Respect and Social Inclusion, because of the respect part, but does not think it belongs to just one group; it is everywhere.
- Jim asked how to do we be relevant with today's issues - is ageism part of that discussion?
- Jenna stated that Jim made an excellent point. As the co-chairs get together, they should discuss what the mechanism is to address ageism across the community?
- Terri said that the housing workgroup came up with a proposed framework on how to write our action plan tasks. With some minor tweaks we will be using that for all the workgroups. Had Charles Smith look at it since he will be writing the final report. He will share the framework out to all the workgroups. This way it will all look the same when submitting to the Steering Committee.

Stuart stated that the Beacon, Howard County Office on Aging and Independence and Baltimore County Department on Aging are all working together to have a virtual 50plus Expo starting in November and running through January. A lot of classes, different speakers, entertainment and exhibit hall with non-profits, Government Agencies and businesses as well. Information for everybody. And since there will be a lot of information - too much to absorb in one day - that is why it is running for three months. If you know of others who think should be involved with the site please send the information to Stuart or Jenna.

Homework Assignments:
Keep researching other jurisdictions' Age-Friendly plans assigned to you to report back to the group. Review the August and September meeting minutes for approval at the October meeting.

Next Meeting: October 15, 2020 – 1:00 p.m. via Webex