



**PROGRESS REPORT ON NC'S
MULTISECTOR PLAN FOR
AGING**

May 2, 2024



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

ROY COOPER • Governor
KODY H. KINSLEY • Secretary
SUSAN OSBORNE • Deputy Secretary

May 2, 2024

Dear Governor Cooper,

In response to your Executive Order 280: North Carolina's Commitment to Building an Age-Friendly State on May 2, 2023, we are submitting a progress report outlining the steps taken that led up to the Executive Order, the work completed since the issuance of the order, and what our next steps will be.

This progress report details the tremendous community engagement process undertaken to date, including collecting survey results from 3,209 people and engaging over 200 stakeholders to learn about the needs of our older adult community, the opportunities to positively impact their lives, and to develop recommendations for NC's Multisector Plan on Aging. Based on best practices from other states and input from stakeholders, our plan will focus on affording aging, optimizing health and well-being, strengthening communities for a lifetime, and supporting older adults and their families.

The next step is to prioritize and finalize the more than 100 recommendations that we received from stakeholders with the goal of focusing on the most impactful recommendations for the people of NC. We expect to deliver the final report in Summer 2024.

We are grateful for your leadership and vision to make NC an Age-Friendly State and for your commitment to the health and wellness of older North Carolinians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan D. Osborne".

Susan Osborne
Deputy Secretary for Opportunity and Well-Being

North Carolina is Aging

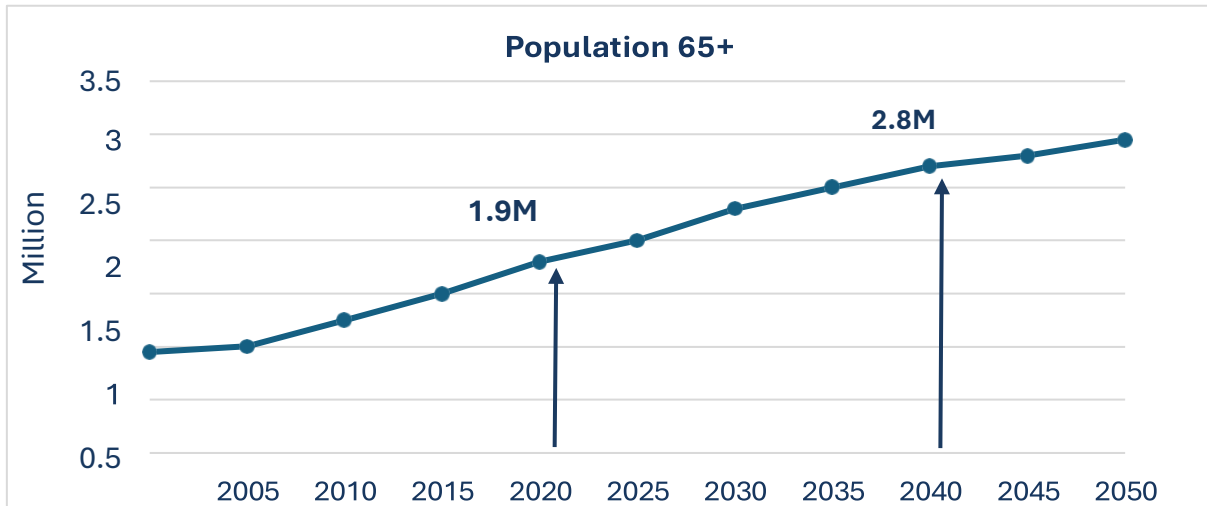
In North Carolina, a significant demographic shift is unfolding; the state holds the rank of 9th in the nation for its population aged 65 and older, encompassing 1.8 million individuals who represent 17% of the total population.

In 2025, approximately one in five individuals in North Carolina will be 65 and above. In fact, the aging population is projected to outnumber the younger population by 2031, highlighting the need for policies that address the changing dynamics and interactions between different generations within the state. Anticipating a 48% surge, North Carolina's population of those 65 and above is set to increase from 1.9 million in 2022 to an estimated 2.8 million in 2042.

By 2030, Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) will be between the ages of 66 and 84. This transformation is multifaceted, shaped by the aging of the Baby Boomer generation, an increase in life expectancy, a decline in fertility rates, and the in-migration of individuals from other states and abroad, contributing to North Carolina's rich tapestry.

Unprecedented Growth in Age Groups

Among the 65 and over population, the "youngest old" (ages 65-74) and "middle old" (ages 75-84) together account for 89% of North Carolina's aging demographic. The "oldest-old" (ages 85+), constituting 2% of the total population, stands at the cusp of a major transformation. Projections for the oldest old indicate a staggering growth of 114% over the next two decades, which will result in an increased demand for long-term services and supports. This phenomenon is largely attributed to the aging of the Baby Boomer generation and advancements in medical care and quality of life.



Source: NC Office of State Budget and Management, Standard Population Estimates, Vintage 2022; Population Projections, Vintage 2023, www.osbm.nc.gov/facts-figures/population-demographics

A Growing Trend: More 65+ Than Under 18

A distinct trend is observable within many counties of the state, where the population 65+ surpasses the number of those under 18. This phenomenon, currently witnessed by 88 counties necessitates innovative planning for services, accessible health care, and age-friendly urban planning.

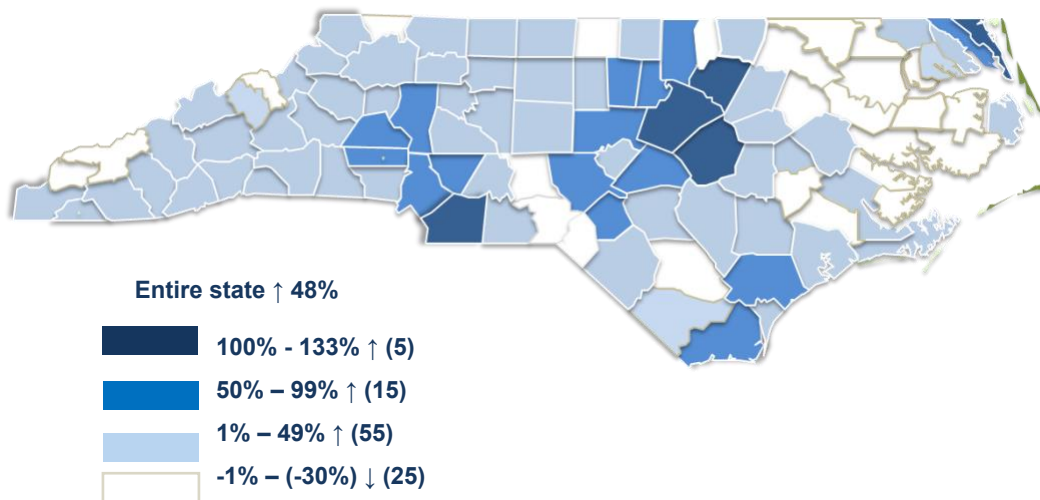
Geographic Distribution

As the demographic composition evolves, certain areas of our state will experience rapid growth in their older adult populations, while others will experience a decline in such populations.

Major urban areas like Mecklenburg and Wake Counties are set to become epicenters of substantial growth in the older adult population. Several counties will undergo more moderate growth, while many rural counterparts are expected to witness a continuing decline in their older adult populations.

These trends are due to the desire of older adults to age in place and in-migration. Individuals are gravitating toward more urban centers in pursuit of amenities such as health care facilities and proximity to their families.

Projected Change in Population 65+, 2022-2042



Source: NC Office of State Budget and Management, Standard Population Estimates, Vintage 2022; Population Projections, Vintage 2023 www.osbm.nc.gov/facts-figures/population-demographics

In-Migration Trends

In-migration patterns also indicate a significant influx of older individuals from other states and abroad, with an estimated 47,600 people aged 60 and above relocating to North Carolina in 2022. This in-migration underscores the appeal of the state's amenities, health care facilities, and potential for an active retirement lifestyle.

North Carolina's Response to an Increasing Aging Population

In response to the increasing aging population in North Carolina, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Aging, began a journey to establish a roadmap that would address the growing needs of all North Carolinians.

- Early 2022 –
 - The Center for Health Care Strategies (a policy design and implementation partner devoted to improving outcomes for people enrolled in Medicaid) invited DHHS to apply to participate in a multistate learning collaborative to learn about a “multisector plan on aging” (MPA), a 10+ year roadmap for restructuring state and local policies and convening a wide range of cross-sector stakeholders to collaboratively address the needs of older-adult populations. The Division of Aging and the Division of Health Benefits applied jointly.
 - Staff from AARP NC and Governor Cooper’s Hometown Strong initiative approached DHHS leadership about pursuing an Age-Friendly designation for the state.
 - DHHS developed a partnership with AARP NC and Hometown Strong and adopted the Older Americans Month “Age My Way” theme. Later, DHHS leadership created a steering committee which included representation from existing partners and later expanded to include representatives from the Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging and the NC Coalition on Aging.
- June 2022 – NC was notified that their application to be part of the learning collaborative was selected, making NC a member of the first cohort of the national MPA effort. Through the learning collaborative staff learned valuable lessons from experts and other states. Two of the most important lessons learned were the three core tenets for MPA development: transparency and inclusion, equity, and person-centered planning. For more information about these key tenets and best practices, visit <https://www.chcs.org/resource/developing-a-master-plan-for-aging/>.
- May to August 2022 – the AARP Research Team/Department, in partnership with the Division of Aging and Hometown Strong, conducted a detailed survey asking North Carolinians ages 45 and over how their communities, counties, and rural areas are meeting the needs of the state’s rapidly growing population of older adults. NC leveraged its vast network of area agencies on aging and local aging service providers to collect input via 3,209 surveys and nine listening sessions. The key findings indicated a generally high satisfaction when it came to “loving where you live”; however, the ability to live independently while aging was a primary concern. Other findings included:
 - Most people (88%) said that it is important to live in their community as long as possible.
 - Nearly all (99%) of the survey respondents said that it is important to live independently in their own home as they age.
 - A majority, (76%) rated their current community as an “excellent, very good or good” place to live as they age.
 - While 53% said they are likely to stay in their current residence and never move, 17% said they would relocate within their community and 30% said they would relocate elsewhere.
 - The two major factors for moving are having a house that allows people to live independently as they age, and to be able to afford the cost of maintaining their current residence.

- October 3, 2022 – The steering committee hosted a summit, where participants heard from steering committee members and Governor Roy Cooper. This event was a significant turning point in the effort, igniting a coalition of partners who played a key role moving forward.
- October 2022 to February 2023 – The team began its application to the Age-Friendly network to have North Carolina designated as an age-friendly state, replaced the title “master plan on aging” with the more descriptive title of “multisector plan on aging,” and worked with the governor’s office to pursue an executive order from the governor to call for the development of a multisector plan for aging (MPA).
- On May 2, 2023, Governor Cooper signed Executive Order 280: North Carolina’s Commitment to Building an Age-Friendly State.

Hitting the Ground Running After Executive Order 280

Since the Executive Order issuance, the work has accelerated.

- June 2023 –
 - A second summit was hosted to publicly initiate the MPA process, calling for stakeholders and partners to join a stakeholder advisory group and if interested, apply to join the steering committee. Over 200 stakeholders from various sectors – including government agencies, non-profit organizations, health care providers, community leaders, advocacy groups, and older adults – stepped up to join MPA workgroups and over 80 people applied to join the steering committee.
 - The name for North Carolina’s Multisector Plan on Aging – **All Ages, All Stages NC – A Roadmap to Aging and Living Well** – was announced.
- September 2023 – the steering committee once again convened the stakeholders. The large group broke into four workgroups who were tasked with developing objectives and recommendations by March 2024. The workgroups divided themselves into subgroups based upon related key issues, worked on developing objectives and recommendations, and reviewed existing initiatives from the NCIOM Task Force on Healthy Aging, the State Plan on Aging, the Dementia-Friendly initiative, the Olmstead Plan, Medicaid Transformation, the Adult Protective Services Improvement Plan, and NC Moves 2030.
- September 2023 – the Division of Aging contracted with the NC Center for Health and Wellness at UNC-Asheville to conduct targeted focus groups. The purpose of these focus groups was to hear from people who had been underrepresented in the initial survey, including those from structurally excluded and inadequately represented populations.
- March to April 2024 – the workgroups reconvened to review all draft objectives and recommendations and provide input. Steering committee members presented the draft to the Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging and the Senior Tar Heel Legislature, shared at multiple state conferences, and presented at a national conference to serve as a model for other states. The steering committee hosted a public comment period, input from which was shared back to workgroups who then revised their work. DHHS leaders presented the recommendations to the Governor’s cabinet policy leads to gather their input.
- Current – Steering committee leadership has been working on incorporating all feedback and revising the objectives and recommendations. The following section contains a summary of the key themes, goals, and objectives from the recommendations. A final report with the recommendations will be published this summer.

All Ages, All Stages NC Goals and Objectives

The workgroups have done a tremendous amount of work in gathering information to identify the key themes, goals, and objectives for this initiative. Through their efforts, over 100 recommendations have been gathered on how we will achieve these goals. Next steps will be to continue working with our stakeholders to prioritize those recommendations.

KEY THEME:

Affording Aging

GOAL: North Carolinians will have the means to effectively strategize for their later stages of life, ensuring sufficient and sustainable financial provisions, fostering avenues for personal growth and advancement, and actively contributing their knowledge and expertise to the betterment of their communities.

OBJECTIVES:

- Promoting educational opportunities for older adults
- Enhancing funding sources for home and community-based services
- Advocating for age-inclusive workplace practices
- Fostering intergenerational collaboration
- Expanding financial literacy and retirement planning education

KEY THEME:

Optimizing Health and Well-Being

GOAL: North Carolinians will have access to person-centered services and supports that will optimize their life-expectancy and health quality.

OBJECTIVES:

- Promoting innovative health care delivery and accessibility
- Fostering a culture of healthy aging
- Developing comprehensive continuum of care services
- Addressing long-term care financing and delivery challenges
- Advancing healthcare workforce

KEY THEME:

Strengthening Communities for a Lifetime

GOAL: North Carolinians will live in communities, neighborhoods, and homes that support thriving at all stages and ages.

OBJECTIVES:

- Addressing abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation
- Enhancing disaster preparedness and emergency management
- Strengthening transportation services and options
- Addressing housing challenges
- Increasing access to older adult food resources
- Promoting social connectivity and digital literacy

KEY THEME:

Supporting Older Adults and Their Families

GOAL: North Carolinians will have access to services and resources that will enable them to stay in their homes and communities as they age and will support their families in their efforts to provide care when needed.

OBJECTIVES:

- Creating multi-disciplinary teams for dementia care
- Promoting technology-based solutions
- Providing caregiver support
- Supporting aging individuals with disabilities
- Enhancing long-term services and support

Next Steps for North Carolina

There is still much work to be done. MPAs are designed to create a coordinated system of high-quality care and support services that promote healthy aging, independent living, and social engagement while addressing issues related to health care, housing, transportation, and other social determinants of health. They require large-scale commitment and systemic changes. Our efforts are part of a larger movement that is sweeping the nation. As of now, there are 24 other states with MPAs, either being implemented or under development.

A successful multisector plan for aging must involve all of our cabinet agencies, Council of State agencies, the North Carolina General Assembly, higher education, municipalities, county governments, and the private sector. It must receive input and support from the state government leadership to the grassroot levels of NC.

The efforts outlined in this progress report only mark the beginning of a much longer initiative. Below are important additional actions that must occur to ensure the success of the All Ages, All Stages NC multisector plan for aging:

- Review, refine, and prioritize objectives and recommendations based on feasibility and overall impact to hone attention and effort on key recommendations with partners.
- Publish the All Ages, All Stages NC report.
- Establish an All Ages, All Stages NC implementation committee to guide future efforts.
- Identify specific resource and policy needs for priority actions.
- Measure our success with agreed upon metrics on a public-facing data dashboard.
- Raise awareness across the state of NC and seek public and stakeholder input.
- Collaborate with other states and national partners to learn about best practices.
- Periodically revise the All Ages, All Stages NC Plan with accomplishments, new priorities, and emerging issues.

We look forward to the next steps in our MPA process and to sharing the final All Ages, All Stages NC report with the Governor and the public. We are hopeful that it will be a clear roadmap that individuals, communities, partners, and governments will use to make NC a great place to grow older.

Acknowledgements

Age My Way Team

Heather Burkhardt (NC Coalition on Aging), Rebecca Freeman (NCDHHS Division of Aging), Steve Hahn, (AARP NC), Mark Hensley (AARP NC), Neel Lattimore (NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources- Hometown Strong), Helen Mack (AARP NC, volunteer), Joyce Massey-Smith (NCDHHS Division of Aging), Michael Olender AARP NC, Mary Penny Kelley (NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources-Hometown Strong), Catherine Sevier (AARP NC, volunteer), Divya Venkataganesan (NCDHHS Division of Aging)

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