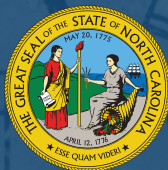


All Ages, All Stages NC



A Roadmap for Aging and Living Well

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**
Division of Aging

All Ages, All Stages NC Stakeholder Engagement

On May 2, 2023, Governor Roy Cooper signed Executive Order 280: North Carolina's Commitment to Building an Age-Friendly State which directed the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) to develop a multisector plan for aging (MPA). NCDHHS undertook an extensive stakeholder engagement process to develop All Ages, All Stages NC, our MPA. This document highlights our process, the 200+ stakeholders that led or participated in the process, and the 160 recommendations our stakeholders developed for improving the quality of life for older adults in North Carolina. These 160 recommendations were combined, prioritized and streamlined by All Ages, All Stages NC and NCDHHS leadership into 41 vetted, recommended action steps that the North Carolina state government will focus on over the next two years. To learn more about All Ages, All Stages NC and how to get involved in the implementation, visit www.ncdhhs.gov/imstillhere.

The Stakeholder Engagement Process Following Executive Order 280

On June 5, 2023, NCDHHS launched the Multisector Plan for Aging (MPA) with a kickoff event that officially initiated the planning process. Stakeholders and partners from across the state were invited to participate. Over 200 stakeholders representing government agencies, non-profit organizations, health care providers, community leaders, advocacy groups, and older adults signed up to participate in the MPA workgroups. During the kickoff event, North Carolina's MPA was officially named "All Ages, All Stages NC - A Roadmap to Aging and Living Well," and the four key topics that would become our workgroups were introduced: Affording Aging, Optimizing Health and Well-Being, Strengthening Communities for a Lifetime, and Supporting Older Adults and Their Families.

In September 2023, the steering committee convened the 200 stakeholders and workgroup leaders for a second time. These stakeholders were organized into four workgroups corresponding to the four topic areas and charged with producing objectives and recommendations by March 2024. Each workgroup was further divided into five subgroups, creating a total of 20 subgroups.

From September 2023 to February 2024, these subgroups met virtually. In the early stages, the workgroups focused on understanding the relevant issues and drew from existing state initiatives, such as the North Carolina Institute of Medicine 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 2050. By



February, workgroup members developed and refined their recommendations drawing from the existing plans, collective expertise, and insights of stakeholders across the state.

In March 2024, the steering committee reconvened the stakeholders for a third summit, where stakeholders reviewed the draft objectives and recommendations from each workgroup and subgroup, and provided feedback and collaborative refinement. Steering committee leadership incorporated input from the convening and an informal public comment period within the aging network. The stakeholder engagement process was the focus of the All Ages, All Stages NC [progress report](#) which was presented to Governor Cooper on May 2, 2024.

Our inclusive, stakeholder-driven process resulted in the drafting of 160 recommendations. The 160 recommendations were prioritized and refined by project and NCDHHS leadership into 41 recommended action steps that North Carolina will focus on in the first two years of our 10-year plan. The 41 recommended action steps were vetted with our partners and across the state government before being finalized in All Ages, All Stages NC.

160 Recommendations from Stakeholder Workgroups

The following objectives and recommendations were developed by our workgroup members. The recommendations suggest possible community- and state-level actions that could be taken to improve aging and living well. These recommendations represent the opinions and preferences of the workgroups and do not necessarily imply an endorsement by NCDHHS.



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.

The Supporting Older Adults and Their Families workgroup focused on identifying supportive services, caregiver support, and resources for aging individuals and their families, fostering aging in place and enhancing the quality of life. The following are the objectives and recommendations of the supporting older adults and their families workgroup and subgroups.

CAREGIVER SUPPORT: Ensure financial and workplace security for caregivers across the lifespan in North Carolina, to help prevent caregivers from withdrawing from the workforce prematurely, and/or from facing financial hardship.

- Analyze existing research and conduct new research at the state level to better understand the financial and employment issues faced by North Carolina caregivers in all 100 counties.
- Through a pilot program, educate employers and human resource management regarding challenges faced by family caregivers and their needs for support, to help caregivers remain in the workforce.
- Include family caregiving as a reasonable leave description in unemployment benefit eligibility.
- Promote financial education and planning for family caregivers by continuously funding the virtual NC Caregiver Portal and pilot in-person components of this program with existing elder support programs in local colleges and universities (e.g. elder law clinics).
- Explore caregiver payment options supported by public funding, including Medicaid.
- Establish protections against workplace discrimination based on family responsibilities as proposed in legislation titled "Protecting Family Caregivers from Discrimination."
- Explore and promote options for paid and unpaid family leave, time off, or flexible work schedules, as well as paid family caregiver leave insurance.
- Establish tax credits for caregiving expenses on the state income tax form such as allowable deductions, i.e., home modifications, purchasing/leasing assistive devices for ADLs, hiring direct care workers, or other services, in addition to the federal tax credit.

ADDRESSING NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA:

Expand upon the Dementia Capable NC plan to advance comprehensive strategies to address the unique challenges faced by individuals with dementia and their families.

- Explore funding options to sustain caregiver support programming including Project C.A.R.E. and the NC Caregiver Portal.
- Provide caregivers, medical personnel, and the general public needed comprehensive education and training about dementia.
- Provide materials to targeted groups for distribution among employers on the availability of publicly funded caregiver support programming, including respite.
- Create and utilize professional cross-sector teams at the county level to address community needs related to dementia.
- Establish a streamlined referral process to ensure caregivers receive comprehensive information about available training and resources, including access to the North Carolina Caregiver Portal, NC211, and NCCARE360.

AGING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR

CAREGIVERS: Provide targeted support for older adults with special challenges beyond dementia, including those with physical disabilities, chronic illnesses, or mental health conditions, by offering tailored services, accessibility accommodations, and appropriate health care interventions.

- Enhance the collection and analysis of disability data in North Carolina to better plan for adults with disabilities who have caregivers aged 60 years or older.
- Ensure that all Home and Community-Based Services and government-funded long-term care supports effectively meet the needs of individuals with disabilities whose caregivers can no longer assist them, while establishing a robust, coordinated system of consistent and transferable services across the state.
- Ensure the establishment of a crisis plan for individuals with disabilities in instances where their caregiver is unable to provide support, with priority given to such individuals for receiving Home and Community Based Services if they are not already receiving them.

- Secure funding for Future Planning Counselors to assist individuals with disabilities and their families in preparing a plan where a parent or caregiver is no longer available or able to provide care.
- Establish cross-disciplinary task forces and collaborative projects that bring together representatives from the aging and disability communities to identify specific shared challenges and develop targeted solutions promoting a more integrated and effective approach to addressing the unique needs of aging adults with disabilities.
- Create a public awareness campaign for policymakers and citizens to know the stories of people with disabilities and their families who have aging caregivers and the related significant financial, legal, health, and mental health challenges they confront.
- Ensure that the evolving housing and support needs of aging individuals with developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injury, and/or mental health needs are met so they can age in place and have equal and accommodative access to aging supports, programs, and facilities.
- Utilize recently appropriated funding for behavioral health funding and Tailored Care Managed Plans to ensure that aging adults with behavioral health needs, including I/DD and TBI, are met and integrated with other health care and related services.

ADAPTIVE AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY: Implement and support the use of assistive, adaptive, and enabling technologies to enhance individuals' quality of life and facilitate their access to the most accommodating environments feasible.

- Increase public awareness and education by launching a public awareness campaign defining technology-based solutions and providing public education on the benefits and impact of these types of technologies.
- Strengthen and support technical assistance and education by working with providers to embrace technology-based services.

- Promote and expand broadband access and affordability, working in collaboration with the NC Department of Information Technology's Office of Digital Equity and Literacy.
- Promote and identify funding and financial incentives supporting older adult aging in place including adaptive/assistive/enabling technologies, home modifications, ramp solutions, and use of artificial intelligence (AI) in assessment, service implementation, and training.
- Strengthen individual/family/caregiver education and technical assistance by developing and extending accessible technology training tailored for older adults and individuals with disabilities.
- Prioritize technology-based solutions stressing the importance of detailed assessments and identified needs that include support and funding for portable, temporary, and permanent ramp structures.
- Encourage universal design and implementation concepts as a proactive measure for aging in place within homes and communities by supporting state/local entities providing tax incentives for implementation of universal and accessible solutions, including communication accessible designs.
- Support training to staff assisting individuals and caregivers in various settings by providing resources, training, and support on technologies and applications that promote healthy living, mental well-being, and seamless access to support systems.



HEALTH RE-IMAGINED: Increase access to the services North Carolinians need to live at home and in their communities that will allow them to optimize their health and quality of life.


- Conduct a comprehensive Medicaid rate and wage analysis to guide rate-setting for Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS), address workforce shortages, and ensure ongoing updates for viable provider reimbursement rates. This analysis will support a trained workforce earning a living wage to meet the increasing demand for quality home and community-based care.
- Enhance service delivery options through the No Wrong Door Initiative by strengthening and streamlining existing programs, minimizing inconsistencies and duplication of services and financing options, with the aim of increasing participation of older adults in available services.
- Eliminate the waitlists and other barriers to cost-effective services options through increased Medicaid funding and efficient resource allocation for today and for future needs.
- Explore personal tax credits, employer incentives, and affordable long-term care insurance coverage options for personal care and attendant services that older adults need to remain as independent as possible in their homes, to avoid premature Medicaid entry.
- Establish Medicaid presumptive eligibility for Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS), a provisional service plan as indicated in the Justice in Aging National Initiative, to expedite services following a discharge from hospital/SNF.
- Create a wider definition of "medical services" for HCBS to address social determinants of health and health related social needs, such as meal delivery and companionship in community living.
- Fund and maximize the utilization of NCCARE360 as a resource to increase access to wrap-around services to help reduce ER visits and unnecessary hospitalizations.



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

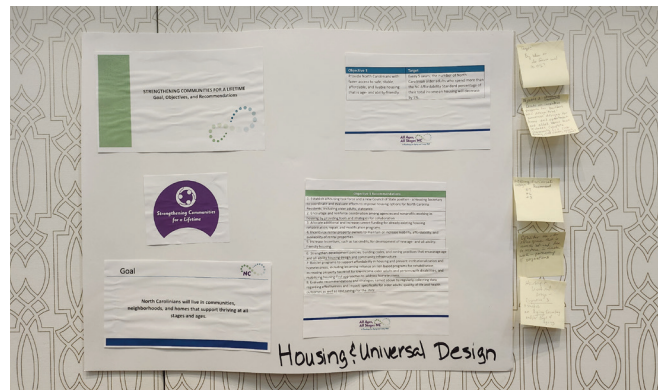
The Strengthening Communities for a Lifetime workgroup focused on creating inclusive and age-friendly communities by identifying strategies and initiatives that address housing, transportation, social engagement, health care access, and community services. The following are the objectives and recommendations of the strengthening communities for a lifetime workgroup and subgroups.

COMMUNITY SAFETY & PROTECTION: Enhance community safety by implementing measures such as crime prevention programs, neighborhood watch initiatives and providing resources for disaster preparedness and emergency response.

- Support and enhance the development of community registries and special population communication and transportation plans for older adults who may need additional assistance during a disaster.
 - Increase training opportunities for local emergency management professionals and disaster preparedness agencies on best practices and learned lessons regarding emergency management and disaster preparedness for older adults.
 - Encourage local communities to provide culturally specific training and awareness to volunteer groups such as Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and Neighborhood Watch.
 - Support increased collaboration between local emergency management teams, Area Agencies on Aging, and relevant state agencies to develop innovative approaches that enhance and protect the well-being of at-risk individuals.
 - Promote the progress of Adult Protective Services (APS) transformation initiatives with county departments of social services and key partners to enhance the safety, independence, health, and well-being of at-risk adults while advocating for funding and statutory changes.
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- The image shows two women from behind, looking at a large document or poster on a wall. The woman on the left has curly hair and is wearing a light-colored jacket. The woman on the right has straight hair and is wearing a dark floral patterned top. They appear to be in a meeting or collaborative work environment.
- Increase training and outreach to community partners, public and private entities, law enforcement, and older adults and people with disabilities and their families regarding frauds and scams and consumer protection.
 - Establish a Statewide Taskforce to address the behavioral health challenges older adults may experience that is comprised of a broad representation of those with interest and knowledge in this area including providers, advocates, consumers, policy experts, and funders.
 - Encourage training for law enforcement and medical responders on aging, disabilities, and special needs, including communication challenges and cognitive impairment, while promoting the use of appropriate technology to enhance the safety of at-risk older adults.

TRANSPORTATION & ACCESSIBILITY: Improve transportation resources and accessibility for all community members, including enhancing public transportation systems, promoting active transportation (cycling, walking), and ensuring access for people with disabilities.

- Strengthen transportation and land use planning efforts at the state, regional and local levels to address the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities.
- Promote innovation - including the use of incentives, the development of public private partnerships, and the identification of best practices (i.e. mobility on demand) that can be replicated in the design and delivery of transportation options.
- Identify and address barriers such as policies, regulations, funding restrictions, and accessibility that impede the ability to coordinate and maximize transportation resources and options, such as ADA considerations and crossing county lines/transit services/Intra-county transit restrictions.
- Increase awareness of transportation options through a community education campaign and compile a regularly updated inventory of transportation resources for older adults and people with disabilities in communities across the state.
- In partnership with the Older Driver Safety Workgroup of the NC Governor's Highway Safety Program, continue expanding public awareness of driver safety resources and promote safe driving among older adults.
- Strengthen existing transportation services to be accessible, responsive, coordinated, and inclusive by fostering collaboration between transportation providers and agencies/programs that serve older adults and people with disabilities.
- Seek technical assistance to examine existing funding sources and identify new, sustainable funding possibilities to maximize, strengthen and expand public transportation options in the state.
- Promote the development of volunteer transportation assistance programs particularly in those areas of the state where there are gaps in transportation service delivery.



HOUSING & UNIVERSAL DESIGN: Expand and strengthen housing options while addressing homelessness through initiatives such as affordable housing programs, supportive services, and homelessness prevention strategies.

- Establish a housing task force and a new Council of State position - a Housing Secretary - to coordinate and evaluate efforts to improve housing options for North Carolina residents, including older adults, statewide.
- Provide tools, strategies, opportunities, and a resource hub to encourage and reinforce collaboration among agencies and nonprofits working in housing and universal design.
- Increase funding for new and existing housing rehabilitation, repair, and modification programs.
- Incentivize rental property owners to maintain or increase livability, affordability, and availability of rental properties.
- Increase incentives, such as tax credits and no or low-interest funding, for development of additional age- and all-ability-friendly housing.
- Update development policies and ordinances, building codes, and zoning practices that encourage age- and all-ability housing design and community infrastructure.
- Bolster programs to support affordability in housing and prevent institutionalization and homelessness, including lessening reliance on lien-based programs for rehabilitation, increasing property tax relief for low-income older adults and people with disabilities, and mobilizing housing-first approaches to address homelessness.
- Evaluate effectiveness of housing strategies by collecting data on older adults' quality of life and better health outcomes through fairer access to safe, stable, affordable, and livable housing that is age- and ability-friendly.



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION: Ensure food security by addressing food deserts, promoting access to healthy and affordable food options, and supporting initiatives such as community gardens, food banks, and nutrition education.

- Build on an existing database (such as 211) to create a centralized and fully comprehensive database of senior food resources with instructions on how to sign up for programs, ranging from informal local programs to fully funded federal programs.
- Increase outreach, advertising, marketing, and messaging about what programs are available to address food insecurity.
- Replicate and scale successful existing programs (i.e., Hospital to Home, Healthy Opportunities Pilots, congregate and home-delivered meal programs), by increasing funding and expanding across the state for long-term food security.
- Create incentives and sustainable funding sources for programs and volunteers that provide home food delivery to seniors, with a priority on rural areas.
- Expand existing food programs for children and families to include seniors, particularly in food access, education, and family services (ex. grandparents raising grandchildren) with a focus on marginalized groups and those with disabilities, or language barriers.
- Promote the availability of Senior Farmers' Markets voucher program to cover all counties and increase benefit value (ex. Double Bucks Program).
- Create incentive for more private businesses to participate in providing food to older adults (ex. Doordash's Project Dash).
- Encourage health care providers to assess older adults and people with disabilities for food insecurity/malnutrition and encourage insurance companies to pay for accessible food options (ex. Food is Medicine).

SOCIAL CONNECTION, INCLUSION & BROADBAND:

Combat social isolation by developing programs and activities that foster social connections among community members, especially vulnerable populations, and promote inclusivity and diversity.

- Implement the recommendations in the 2023-2027 NC State Aging Plan to increase public awareness of mental health challenges and disorders and strengthen social connections systems to mitigate the effects of social isolation, loneliness, and elevated suicide risk.
- Increase affordable broadband access, digital equity, and digital literacy for older adults – especially in rural areas – and include funding/training for positions such as Digital Navigators.
- Increase collaboration between agencies, nonprofits, public service agencies and other organizations serving older adults to address social isolation and connectivity.
- Increase public awareness about social connectivity resources/services by increasing marketing to older adults, their caregivers, and communities.
- Initiate a public awareness campaign regarding social isolation with a focus on older adults.
- Expand existing social connectivity programs that identify and support isolated older adults through senior centers, call centers, and local public safety outreach programs.
- Conduct inclusive outreach to older adults and people with disabilities by recruiting staff members that reflect the diversity found within the community.



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

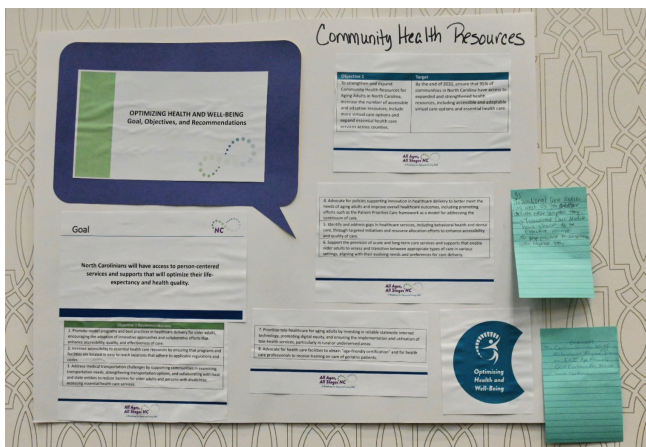
The Optimizing Health and Well-Being workgroup aimed to improve health care, promote preventive measures, and enhance overall wellbeing by exploring innovative approaches, health care accessibility, and mental health support. The following are the objectives and recommendations of the optimizing health and well-being workgroup and subgroups.

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESOURCES: Strengthen and expand community health resources for aging adults in North Carolina by increasing accessible and adaptive resources, incorporating virtual care options, and expanding essential health care services across counties.

- Promote model programs and best practices in health care delivery for older adults by encouraging the adoption of innovative approaches through collaborative efforts with other entities that include and involve participation of patients in their care to enhance accessibility, quality, and effectiveness of care.
- Increase access to essential health care resources by ensuring that programs and facilities are fully ADA compliant, located in convenient locations that adhere to applicable regulations and codes.
- Support communities by examining transportation needs, strengthening transportation options, and collaborating with local and state entities to reduce barriers to access to essential health care services for older adults and people with disabilities.
- Advocate for policies supporting innovation in health care delivery to better meet the needs of aging adults and improve overall health care outcomes, including promoting efforts such as the Patient Priorities Care framework as a model for addressing the continuum of care.
- Identify and address gaps in health care services, including mental health, behavioral health and dental care, through targeted initiatives and resource allocation efforts that enhance accessibility and quality of care.
- Support the provision of acute and long-term care services and supports plus case management that enables older adults to access and transition between appropriate types of care in various settings, aligning with their evolving needs and preferences for care delivery.
- Prioritize digital equity and tele-health for aging adults by investing in reliable and affordable statewide internet technology and ensuring the implementation and utilization of tele-health services, particularly in rural or underserved areas.
- Advocate for health care facilities to be fully ADA compliant and obtain "age-friendly certification" and for health care professionals to receive training on care of geriatric patients.

HEALTHY AGING PROGRAMS: Increase the promotion of a broad array of programs and services that support healthy aging for aging adults in North Carolina communities.

- Promote the enhancement and reach of consistent communication and marketing among healthy aging programs and stakeholders and leveraging online platforms for information exchange.



- Implement recommendations outlined in the report by the NC Institute of Medicine (IOM) Task Force on Healthy Aging in North Carolina to improve the delivery and accessibility of programs and services that promote healthy aging and prioritize evidence-based approaches.
- Foster a culture of healthy living across the lifespan within North Carolina communities through targeted initiatives, awareness campaigns, and education that promote healthy lifestyle behaviors among older adults (ex: NC Senior Games).
- Promote integrating exercise, nutrition, mental health, social engagement, and illness prevention into programs tailored for aging adults while fostering collaboration with key community partners for comprehensive support.
- Promote reimbursement incentives through NC Medicaid for older adults and people with disabilities engaging in evidence-based health programs to enhance accessibility and participation.
- Leverage senior centers as central hubs for delivering comprehensive support services and programs aimed at promoting healthy aging which serve as models for community-based initiatives.
- Prioritize data collection, research, and evaluation efforts to inform the development and refinement of programs and services, ensuring they meet the evolving needs of older adults and are based on robust evidence.
- Increase the utilization of culturally informed food and nutrition services by older adults while ensuring financial and material resources are maintained for their well-being.
- Work with stakeholders, including consumers, at the state, regional, and local levels to identify gaps and barriers to developing continuums of care in communities across our state.
- Address policies, procedures, funding restrictions and other hurdles and challenges to achieving continuums of long-term care services and supports that are accessible to community members.
- Develop and implement a strategic plan to expand services across the continuum of care and inform and educate the diverse residents of communities across our state about how to access them.
- Develop and implement a guide of available continuum of care resources which includes eligibility and application requirements, information on accessing the resources that are available to diverse aging adults in communities across the state.
- Establish a continuous quality improvement plan aimed at expanding and bridging services across the continuum of care to the citizens of North Carolina. The Quality Improvement Plan should incorporate identified best practices for bridging health care and Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) service gaps and ensuring health equity in care service delivery and quality at local levels.
- Provide culturally informed educational materials and resources in the languages of ethnic communities to enhance access to continuum of care services where they reside, including training for organizations on cultural appropriateness.
- Provide resources to support, monitor, and evaluate strategic plan implementation for expanding continuum of care services, integrating providers, bridging gaps, guiding individuals, and enhancing professional development opportunities identified in the baseline assessment.

CONTINUUM OF CARE: Ensure that North Carolinians can access and successfully transition between appropriate types of care in an array of settings in their community, based on their changing needs and preferences.

- Facilitate collaboration among care providers, community partners, and oversight organizations to compile a comprehensive inventory of existing long-term services and supports in communities across the state.



HEALTH CARE FINANCING AND DELIVERY INNOVATIONS:

Examine both public and private health care financing and delivery options, exploring innovative approaches to improve affordability, efficiency, and quality of care.

- Implement measurable and consistent reimbursement rates across care providers, adaptable to individuals' complex care needs, with additional consideration for increased rates for those with cognitive or medically fragile care needs.
- Advocate for expanding reimbursement coverage under Medicare, Medicaid, and private health plans to include medical specialty providers in areas such as audiology, ophthalmology, and dentistry which enhances access to comprehensive health care services.
- Facilitate partnerships between public and private entities to create adaptable funding for long-term care services and supports, exploring options such as employer-sponsored plans, integration into disability plans, and provisions in life insurance for accessing care.
- Increase health care access to those with no or inadequate health care coverage by exploring the utilization of Medicaid expansion or Medicare for All to cover more lower-income older adults, expanding value-based payment programs that incentivize providers and community-based organizations to expand services, and collaborate with the state and provider partners to improve health care delivery.
- Explore more efficient methods of delivering state funded long-term care services and supports including modifying state contracting requirements to expedite the review and selection process for vendors providing services in the state.

- Develop and disseminate culturally informed educational materials and resources that offer the public details about available programs and services, as well as options for payment and financial assistance, empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their long-term care needs.
- Evaluate and optimize VA benefits and coverage policies taking into consideration changes in the population demographics and health care needs.
- Convene a task force of consumers, providers, advocates, policy experts, and elected officials to examine challenges and opportunities in long-term care delivery and financing, identify best practices, and develop a plan to ensure access to essential long-term services and supports for all North Carolinians.

HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE SUPPORT: Stabilize and address the health care workforce crisis by supporting initiatives that recruit, retain, and adequately compensate paid health care workers and recognize them for their role in delivery of high-quality care.

- Advance data collection on the health care workforce to inform strategic decision making and address critical gaps in workforce planning.
- Advocate for policy changes aimed at enhancing educational and professional opportunities for the aging workforce, including policy standardization and broadening access to educational resources.
- Invest in academic-employer partnerships to strengthen collaboration between educational institutions and health care employers, aligning curriculum with workforce needs, and provide practical training experiences for health care professionals, while identifying and addressing wage issues to ensure equitable compensation for health care workers.
- Establish partnerships with community organizations and businesses to provide additional resources and support for health care workers that promote work-life balance, including family leave provisions, childcare assistance, wellness programs, transportation services and housing options, while advancing the data landscape of the health care workforce to inform strategic decision-making and address critical gaps in workforce planning.

- Increase licensure and professional pathways for health care workers, enhance opportunities for students interested in aging-related careers including sponsorship of international health care professionals and recruitment of immigrants and new citizens to work in health care, and standardize credentialing requirements and apprenticeship programs.
- Expand financial incentives and support mechanisms for individuals pursuing careers in health care, including loan repayment programs, tuition reimbursement, and stipends, while addressing wage disparities and advocating for fair and competitive compensation policies to attract and retain health care workers.
- Implement comprehensive training programs, mentorship programs, and workplace support initiatives for health care workers focused on aging-related care, prioritizing working with those with dementia.



Affording Aging

Goal: North Carolinians will have the means to effectively plan 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.

The Affording Aging workgroup focused on financial preparation, workforce opportunities, lifelong learning and leadership development, intergenerational engagement, and sustainability of public services. The following are the objectives and recommendations of the affording aging workgroup and subgroups.

FINANCIAL PREPARATION: Enhance financial security throughout the lifespan by prioritizing retirement planning, saving options, income assistance programs, and consumer protection measures to ensure comprehensive support for individuals' financial stability.

- Expand financial literacy, personal savings and retirement planning education for all ages by adding additional retirement planning content into NC Department of Public Instruction's Financial Literacy program requirements and lesson plans.
- Develop and promote pre-retirement educational

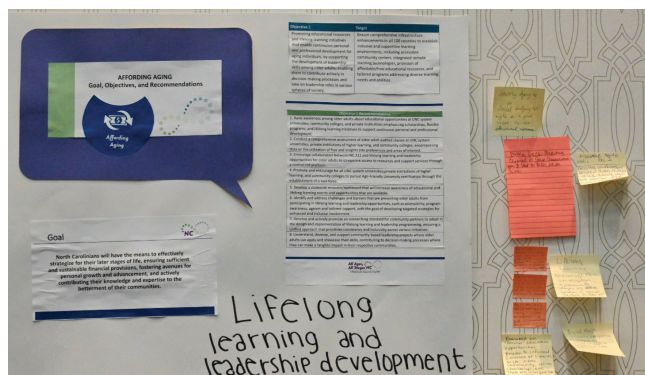
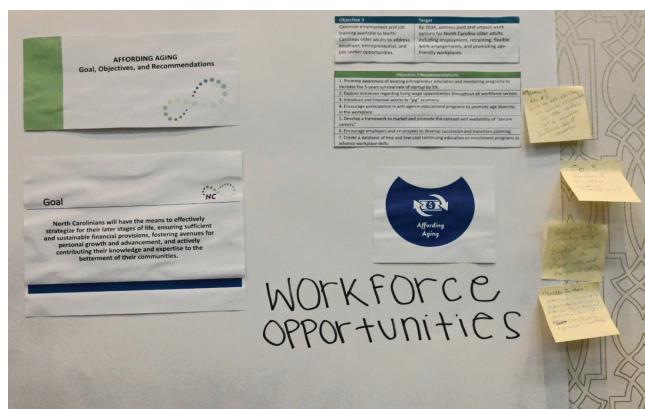
material and retirement planning tools to increase knowledge of long-term savings and retirement planning strategies for both public and private sector employees.

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing Income Assistance Programs to ensure they effectively serve economically disadvantaged individuals, with a focus on older adults.
- Put in place train the trainer programs for local community networks and other advocates to facilitate one-stop access to financial and other support resources for residents of all ages.

- Promote awareness and access to private sector entities to help ensure information about available financial and other support resources are provided to qualifying residents of any age.
- Increase the awareness and understanding of the costs of long-term care and the limitations of Medicare coverage for long-term care to individuals and families through the promotion of SHIIP's unbiased Medicare 101 sessions.
- Expand access to savings tools so pre-retirees have better opportunities to create additional personal savings, such as by implementing a Work and Save savings program.
- Encourage businesses with 401k plans to include automatic employee enrollment and annual contributions.
- Strengthen awareness and protection programs against financial fraud.

WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES: Enhance employment and job training opportunities for older adults in North Carolina to effectively meet employer needs, foster entrepreneurship, and support job seekers.

- Promote awareness of existing entrepreneur education and mentoring programs such as NC IDEA, AARP SCORE, and community colleges' business hubs to increase the 5-year survival rate of startups.
- Explore strategies to enhance living wage opportunities within workforce sectors, crucial for older adults, like Food Preparation and Serving Related, Personal Care and Service, Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance, and Health Care Support, all of which currently have median wages below \$15 per hour according to NCWorks, thereby addressing the unique economic challenges faced by older adults in securing sustainable employment.
- Explore the economy of part-time and temporary employment (gig economy) as an opportunity for older adults by facilitating participation, improving access, and raising awareness of independent contractor rights through community college programs and Small Business Centers.
- Encourage employers to participate in addressing ageism by revising new hire policies to incorporate education programs focused on combating age discrimination.



- Share best practices to market and promote the concept and availability of second, or late-life careers.
- Encourage employers and employees to develop succession and transition planning.
- Implement, promote, and encourage workplace initiatives that facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing across employees of diverse ages, while encouraging North Carolina's local businesses and community partners to update their statements to be inclusive of all age groups.

LIFELONG LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: Promote educational resources and lifelong learning initiatives that enable continuous personal and professional development for aging individuals, by supporting the development of leadership skills among older adults, enabling them to contribute actively to decision-making processes and take on leadership roles in various spheres of society.

- Create and promote a statewide resource/dashboard to raise awareness among older adults about educational and lifelong learning opportunities at universities, community colleges, and private institutions, emphasizing scholarships, flexible programs, and lifelong learning initiatives, while also

providing comprehensive information on available educational offerings for individuals of all ages.

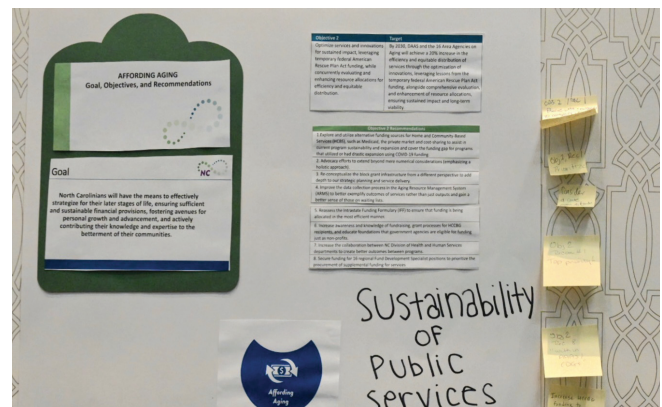
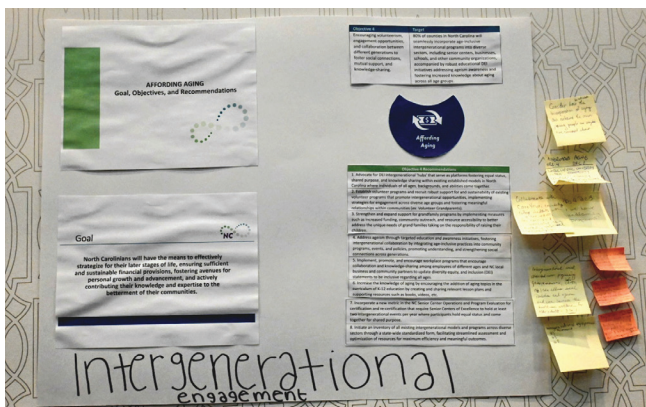
- Conduct a thorough evaluation of audited classes for older adults across the UNC system's universities, private colleges, and community colleges. Gather data on class attendance, preferences, topics of interest, and insights into the utilization of free tuition options.
- Encourage collaboration between NC 211 and lifelong learning and leadership opportunities for older adults to streamline access to resources and support services through a centralized platform.
- Promote and encourage all UNC system universities, private institutions of higher learning, and community colleges to pursue Age-Friendly University certification.
- Identify and address challenges and barriers that are preventing older adults from participating in lifelong learning and leadership opportunities through a survey created by the Division of Aging then shared with organizations such as senior centers, AARP, libraries and Area Agencies on Aging with the goal of developing targeted strategies for enhanced and inclusive involvement.
- Identify best practices for community partners to adopt in designing and implementing lifelong learning and leadership programming, with a primary focus on accessibility, addressing key needs, and ensuring equitable participation across diverse initiatives.
- Encourage and facilitate participation in community-based leadership projects by older adults, providing opportunities for them to showcase their skills and play active roles in decision-making processes within their communities.

INTERGENERATIONAL ENGAGEMENT: Encourage volunteerism, engagement opportunities, and collaboration between different generations to foster social connections, mutual support, and knowledge-sharing.

- Identify best practices to champion centralized community-based intergenerational models and advocate for their replication across the state.
- Obtain funding to support and maintain intergenerational volunteer programs and extend their reach into areas where they are not available. (Ex. Volunteer Grandparents).
- Strengthen and expand support for kinship programs to better serve the unique needs of grandfamilies raising children.
- Address ageism through education and age-inclusive practices in community programs, events, and policies to strengthen intergenerational connections.
- Promote awareness of aging in the curriculum of K-12 education by creating and sharing resources.
- Encourage Senior Centers of Excellence to hold at least two intergenerational events annually as part of NC Senior Center certification.

SUSTAINABILITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES: Maximize the impact of services and innovations using temporary federal American Rescue Plan Act funding, while evaluating the current ways funds are distributed.

- Explore and utilize alternative funding sources for Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS), such as Medicaid, the private market and cost-sharing to assist in current program sustainability and expansion and cover the funding gap for programs that utilized or had drastic expansion using COVID-19 funding.



- Broaden advocacy efforts to optimize services and innovations beyond numerical metrics, incorporating considerations such as social well-being and preferences for service delivery.
- Reevaluate the structure of the existing Home and Community Care block grant to ensure its ongoing effectiveness in fulfilling its intended goals.
- Improve the data collection process within the Aging Resource Management System (ARMS) to better capture outcomes of service delivery, efficiently identify individuals on the waiting list, and to facilitate data-sharing with community leaders.
- Reevaluate the Intrastate Funding Formula (IFF) to ensure that funding continues to be allocated efficiently and equitably.
- Increase awareness and knowledge of fundraising, grant processes for Home and Community Care Block Grant providers and educate foundations that government agencies are eligible for funding, just as non-profits.
- Increase the collaboration between NCDHHS divisions and offices to create better outcomes between programs.
- Secure funding for 16 regional Fund Development Specialist positions within the Area Agencies on Aging to prioritize the procurement of supplemental funding for services.



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• Supporting Older Adults and their Families:

- Jan Moore (Senior Tar Heel Legislature)
- Talley Wells (NC Council on Developmental Disabilities)

• Strengthening Communities for a Lifetime:

- Deryl Davis Fulmer (NC Retired Government Employees Association)
- Janice Tyler (Orange County Department on Aging)

• Optimizing Health and Wellbeing:

- Steve Cline (Oral Health Collaborative of the Foundation for Health Leadership and Innovation)
- Tracy Pakornsawat (NCDHHS Division of Health Benefits)

• Affording Aging:

- David Richardson (Lumber River Council of Governments)
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- Cynthia Banks (American Society on Aging, Governor's Advisory Council on Aging)
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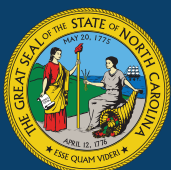
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Thank you to the numerous people who joined the workgroups and shared their knowledge and expertise as the objectives and recommendations were developed.



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Division of Aging

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