AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION WORKGROUP MINUTES

Date: 03/19/2020
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Facilitator: Terri Hansen

In Attendance
Diane Leonard
Jim Sanders
Stuart Rosenthal
Kelly Kessler
Lucky Soh
Kathy Jordan
Jill Kamenetz
Ted Meyerson
Scott Ripley
Terri Hansen

Approval of Minutes
First: Jim Sanders
Second: Diane Leonard

Announcement
- **Still looking for a Co-Chair among Community members. If you are interested, please let us know. You can also email or call Terri Hansen after the meeting.**
- **Kim Henry, the other co-chair, was not able to make the meeting today.**
- Terri Hansen is appealing again to consider the leadership opportunity.
- Lucky asked about the Howard County Age-Friendly website which is:
  www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly
- This is Kathy Jordon's first meeting, Kathy is a Licensed, Ordained Minister. She works with Howard County's Human Trafficking Office as a volunteer. "When I saw the Age-Friendly resources I just felt like I needed to join. Nothing else works without communication."
- Terri Hansen should be receiving copy of the analysis from the surveys today or tomorrow (we received over 3300 survey responses).

- Terri Hansen will review the draft survey analysis, add or format information as needed and send it out to all the workgroup members next week.
    - This is an extensive report which contains some good information that will be valuable for the focus of your workgroup's domain. Several questions focused on communication issues - how residents get their information.
        - One thing Terri Hansen noted from responses was that not a lot of people knew the Maryland Access Point number, showing that the Office on Aging and Independence needs to do more advertising.
        - Also, people only seem to want to learn things when they need them (not in advance) – our group must address how to get information out to people before a crisis arises.
- By mid-April you should receive a summary of reports; a compilation report of the different studies done over the last several years. The following reports and the survey will provide a bedrock of information and recommendations:
    - Columbia Association – 2014
    - Department of Community Resource and Services – 2015
    - Transportation – 2018 – Walk Howard, Bike Howard, etc.
- Members can decide whether to change some of these previous recommendations, tweak them using an Age-Friendly focus, or use the findings to develop new action points/goals. Is there other data workgroup members would like to have available?

- Jim Sanders mentioned access to previous work in several categories, specifically LHIC, which maintains an inventory of alerts and information sources. The library is also a source of information, as is the Beacon (publisher Stuart Rosenthal is part of our workgroup). It was suggested that we do an inventory of other resources that are already out there.
- Jim suggested the next question would be the gaps. Many of our communications are not in multiple languages and we know that we must do more to address diversity in both language and culture within our community. Do we want to do an inventory of where we are today?
- Diane added that we need to learn more about technology access of older adults - how many don't have access they may need?
- Stuart Rosenthal brought up the fact that since a lot of the surveys were done online, alternate methods like Age-Friendly focus groups may help reach people who do not have computers.
- Terri stated we will not be having our listening sessions as planned due to COVID-19 restrictions and that makes it more difficult for us to gather more information.
    - We will look at whether that should affect the timing of the report. This concern has been brought up by another workgroup as well.
- Kelly asked, given that the Governor is asking for extensions on the Federal level for some matters, could we continue to do what we had originally set out to do, but on a delayed timeframe?
- Terri Hansen plans to discuss extending the timeframe with County Administration but noted that the workgroups can review data that we already have or will receive soon. Members were asked to consider what else was needed.

- Terri Hansen spoke with the Housing co-chairs and they are going to be polling the members of their workgroup in the next week, asking what questions they have as it relates to data, and what else they need to make recommendations, etc. The Communication and Information workgroup is a little different, but we also may have questions as a group.
- Stuart Rosenthal asked if most of the surveys were done online. Terri explained there were a fair number submitted in writing which were then entered online.
- Stuart Rosenthal also asked:
  - If a lot of the surveys were picked up at the Senior Centers and Recreation and Parks facilities, did we get enough information from people who are not computer literate and not already familiar with 50+ Centers and Recreation and Parks? "In my view, the people who are most in need of Age-Friendly services are the ones who are not aware of what's out there and how to go about getting it."
  - Since we will have to postpone the listening sessions/focus groups, and may now have more time to collect data, should we put a survey in a publication, like the Beacon or the Flier?
- A member asked if there could be something in the meals on wheels packet? (We did distribute a survey with a return envelope to all the Howard County meals on wheels clients. We did not get a lot of returns, but we did make that effort.)
- The biggest gap is the isolation, those are people that are not fully engaged, and those people are the ones to worry about.
- The above issues should be revisited after the current health emergency.
- If we get more surveys back, we continue to put those in and rerun the analysis.
- We were able to get information out to several churches; about 150 to 160 surveys were completed by St. Johns the Evangelist Church at the Spanish-language mass. That group had been very underrepresented.
- Several 55+ communities called us to say that they had residents that don't have computers, don't go to the 55+ Centers but would like to fill out the survey. OAI staff delivered surveys to them, including to several Parkview communities.
- Terri noted that OAI did a much better job in getting surveys done than originally thought, including distributing hard copies in Owen Brown, which is a very multi-cultural, low income community in the heart of Columbia.
- All in all, survey respondents tended to be highly educated, female and Caucasian.
- Any comments or suggestions around the survey, listening sessions that whole topic?
- While supportive of what we are doing, a comment was made that "we know census data is used to create forecast adjustments by demographic group, location and gender. So, you have an approach, the challenge with all this work is we don't learn enough from the people in the greatest need."

New Business
- We already touched bases on the communication protocol for the meetings.
- If there is specific item that you think should be shared in a future WebEx meeting, either a Power Point or article, send to Terri Hansen in advance.

- A member proposed that since one of our themes is asset-based community development - meaning there are smart people in our community and on our committee right now. LHIC is represented in our committee and maintains an inventory of health information sources they can share what they learned about communicating updates from LHIC meetings and programs. Stuart Rosenthal is the publisher of the Beacon which is one of the major organs that Office on Aging uses to communicate its programs. So would like to know how well our current organs are getting to the audiences that we intend. The next step would like to have those people in our group to educate us about the process?
- Kelly from LHIC responded: From the LHIC perspective, attaining responses to the survey mirrors experiences that we have had. Although we do have some lessons learned about things that we have found to be anecdotally true in how we make assumptions about presentations, we have also had older adults appreciate when we utilize technology differently. We also face challenges reaching out to the underserved population.
  - In terms of what you are looking for, is it more of a presentation or an overview of the lessons LHIC has learned?
- The charter of the group is to understand how communication and information is relative to Age-Friendly.
  - What is the current methodology around communication and information for the Age-Friendly audience?
- LHIC is an organization that shares information about health services in the community.
  - What would a presentation look like?
  - What have we learned about how many organizations are creating information and programs relative to our community?
  - And how well are we communicating those programs?
  - How are overcoming the silo problem?
- This group may want to look at how our target audiences can get better access to information and how effectively programs are communicated to these audiences. How can we help get better access and information to our audience?
- A member mentioned the work plan that Jim Sanders created for the Civic Engagement workgroup, which was very detailed and includes a lot of good points to focus on.
  - Would that be something Jim would be willing to help this workgroup with?
- The Beacon distributes 17,000 copies a month to more than 350 distribution sites, including pharmacies, grocery stores, retirement communities, post offices, as well as some locations like restaurants which are now closed to the public; they are finding there is a high demand especially in drug stores.
- What the County chooses to put in the Beacon is up to them; the 50+ Connection insert was recently reduced to two pages.
- Basic question is are we accomplishing our objectives?
  - Does the senior audience get access/information to what they need?
  - Are programs effectively communicating to the audience we care about?
- As a group, what information are we trying to get out?
  - Information comes out through a variety of sources: businesses, government agencies, faith-based organizations, non-profits.
    - How is it presented?

- Information from an Age-Friendly lens needs to come from a variety of sources and presented in a variety of modalities.
- Keep in mind where our assets are and where the gaps are when putting together our ideas - not just looking at what the Government provides.
    - Lucky brought up that a lot of seniors get their information from tv and radio; has any thought been given to reaching out via radio and tv stations?
- They are absolutely a source to be considered as we look at how information is communicated.
- If we are looking at inventory of current resources and information that is provided to the community, do we have an idea of how we could develop such an inventory?
- LHIC does a good job of communicating all the things that go on in the health sector and addresses the question for health institutions creating programs who want to communicate what is going on in terms of their meetings, activities and programs. Not everyone is a member of LHIC, but it is the most developed collection point for inventory at this point.
- There is a lot of information in the health base that LHIC collects from its partner agencies, and shares information about programs offered through Department of Community Resources and Services, through the hospital and more.
- Would love to expand through LHIC, but the reality is that others are better leaders because of the positions they have in respect to the services they provide.
- There are many non-health related resources that could enhance communication in an Age-Friendly community, including financial planning, future planning and other things which may be related to health, but most people don't connect to health and may need resources to find these connections.
- The three big buckets are ACS, LHIC and the Government, all of which should be represented in our group.
    - ACS would develop many of the social determinants with clients regarding housing, financial planning and food access.
- One of the homework assignments from last week was to look through AARP livability web page at other organizations' action plans that were completed. Hopefully that will help us focus our function a bit. Members were asked to share what they found on the AARP livability website action plans that relates to communication and information?
- Stuart Rosenthal shared what was done in the District of Columbia, as he was involved in that Age-Friendly advisory board for 5 years.
    - Developed a comprehensive spreadsheet that was divided by each of the Age-Friendly domains. Each domain had a committee like ours, assigned to come up with 2 or 3 main goals that were accomplishable and measurable, then come up with 2 or 3 strategies to reach each of those goals. The section I worked with on the spreadsheet had our goals listed 1, 2, 3 and then strategies 1,2,3 and then specific in each box across the spreadsheet, what the elements were, which agency, individuals, groups in the community would be involved in achieving that. The timeline used a green, yellow, red color scheme – red meant a long way off, yellow meant making progress and green meant it was achieved. That was all updated at each meeting over the course of the year. This was done over the 5-year period.

- Jill Kamenetz looked at the action plan for New Jersey, some of which was very simple. They took the livability domains and they created plans for it. Some were as simple as putting some chairs and tables in an alley saving it. It was interesting seeing very simplistic takes on it versus very complicated ones. Thought that was intriguing because what does it mean to everyone Aging Friendly. The plans I looked at were specific to people age 50 and older, not about aging across the life span, but specific to the older population.
- Diane Leonard said that she did not look at specific locations, but instead had been going through the AARP road map to livability, a series of workbooks etc. provided for the program. As others noted, they are really all over the place. One of the takeaways is a picture of a roadblock and the comment was the bigger the project, the more obstacles and roadblocks will come in its path. Seems to me they were really promoting, start small and just do small pieces of whatever you were trying to accomplish within the community.
- Terri Hansen said she looked at a few as it relates to communication and social involvement. Her reason for doing this relates to the next item on the agenda, which is creating a vision statement. She did this with other groups in WebEx meetings, working with each to come up with a specific vision statement unique to their work group, not for the County Age-Friendly initiative.
    - What should the communication and information portion of this plan look like?
    - What is our aspirational statement which describes the long-term effect that work of this plan will produce?
    - What do we want it to look like?
- Terri Hansen looked at several action plans to see who included certain statements and who did not – there is a mixture. Each one has something in there about how they feel about each domain. Pulled up Honolulu around communication and involvement.
- Terri Hansen read the Honolulu vision statement:
    - We envision a Honolulu in which residents have access to relevant information that helps them stay connected with community events, activities, services and resources. As an Age-Friendly city, public information is widely available in different languages, culturally tailored, and distributed through multiple communication channels such as random television, newspaper and social media in a timely and sustainable manner. Information is also clearly accessible in visual and auditory presentations. There is wide access to computers and the internet in public places, such as libraries, along with readily available instructions and training for novice technology users. For nontechnology users and those in isolated areas, they can obtain information from informal contacts such as via-word-of-month, families, schools, churches, social and service clubs, and neighborhood associations. We also envision a Honolulu in which residents actively participate in a wide range of social and cultural events, leisure and recreational activities, and interface with other individuals and groups of all ages. There is an abundance of opportunities for intergenerational exchanges of information, knowledge, tutelage, and friendship building. The venues, facilities and settings are conveniently located in neighborhoods and near public transit routes. Neighbors and volunteers reach out to engage socially isolated individuals through personal visits or telephone calls.
        - The words you want to take out of the first sentence is:
        - Have access to relevant information, helps us to stay connected.

- o The vision statement brought up a lot of good points, some of which you all have touched on as relevant to ours.
- Would help to have an agreed upon goal/vision statement that we all come to together. This will ensure that we are all in the same direction.
- Not all the vision statements are like Honolulu. Some are very short, like Tucson's, which is:
  - o Develop culturally aware and accessible information communication for older adults.
- Looking for some input based on the statement that was read to help us pull together what we have talked about thus far regarding:
  - o Gathering additional information.
  - o Inventory of what we have in the way of assets and gaps.
  - o Sharing our trajectory going forward.
- Begin to construct a vision statement on your own to keep us on task.
- Jim believes the core part of the Honolulu statement is that you have easily available access and that it is relevant, meaning that there is great variety. Good idea - hard to do.
  - o It addresses our dilemma which is Howard County is blessed with a huge amount of activities, which are often siloed.
  - o One of our greatest challenges is how do we figure what each other is doing?
- Jim Sanders shared that he had just finished a focus group with Community Action Council on the 30 major organizations supporting poverty and programs
  - ▪ 50% of the communication between the community groups and the County were with each other, yet they didn't know what each other does.
  - ▪ 6 different information & referral services - each does a little bit different
  - o One of the challenges is we have great wealth, but we have difficultly knowing what each other does.
  - o Our mission statement should be accessible, relevant so we understand what is relevant to me and that we don't duplicate each other.
- Stuart Rosenthal asked as far as our goals and our vision statements go, do we have any limitations where we are not concerned with cost or the feasibility of getting this to the council?
- Terri Hansen's answer was this:
  - o When we write recommendations to eventually become part of the action plan, we need to write things that are realistic and measurable.
  - o In that respect we can't be too high in the sky, then it is not realistic or may not be measurable.
  - o From a budget standpoint, whose budget are we talking about, because some things we identify will be done by the County Government, some would be identified as a combination of business and non-profit organizations.
  - o It is policy changes, it's conceptual changes which may or may not have a fiscal note attachment to it.
- A member liked the Honolulu statement, and commented, "It is long but they put a lot in and of course they really do have a variety of languages as do we. Many more than we recognize as a community. More than many members of our community recognize."
- If nothing else comes out of the Age-Friendly initiative, we still need to make sure that the diversity of our community is acknowledged and planned for.
- So, we need to have an accessible, relevant, non-duplicative plan.

- Are there any other ideas from the other members of things that are important? We must make sure we address aspirations in our vision.
- Jim Sanders stated he is interested in empowering people, methods so that people can learn about how to manage their age processing, how to do homework around health needs or housing needs. There is a tendency in communication discussions to talk about how we distribute information to people; the other lens is how do we ask people to do their homework or to learn things that are relevant to them. That is an empowering idea; in an Age-Friendly program, we want to create tools and methods so people can access the information they need to improve their lives and to manage their aging process.
- Diane Leonard said that the Honolulu vision statement sounded more like a project plan. A vision statement is typically just a couple of sentences. Even looking at the AARP workbook it brings up stuff I used to know. What is a vision statement, it is basically a short memorable summary? That keeps everybody in line with the same goal, reaching for the same goal. A page and half of specific steps is not really a vision statement.
  - Volunteers helping happy towns older resident remain independent, one light bulb and one snow shovel at a time.
  - Just need one statement our goal our vision is to provide and enable two-way communication between all members of the community so that all have access to blah blah blah.
- Terri Hansen changed one of the words to incorporate what Jim said to provide and empower members of the community with two-way communication between all members of the community so that … (We didn't finish the … part).
- Diversity is something that would be helpful to be in there as well.
- Stuart Rosenthal asked what is meant by two-way communication? Jim was saying we should not be replicating things unnecessarily. So, all those people providing resources should communicate. Is that really part of our vision for Age-Friendly Howard County? ::O, is it more about making information available in all kinds of acceptable and pertinent and multi-media ways so that people have the information they need?
- Diane stated that what she meant by two-way is that people may need follow-up or who to go to for more information. Not an actual two-way conversation.
- If we are looking at time to pull together an inventory of what is working well, we need to know:
  - What our assets are in this community?
  - What information is already out there?
- There are a couple of ways to potentially do that.
  - We can look at the what government resources are available to people.
  - We can look at what is available in hard copy, hard print information that is out.
  - We can look at what is available online.
    - The issues with that is there is universe of information available online; do we pick a topic. Information about aging, well there is a lot about aging,
      - How do I prepare for retirement?
      - Health-related aging?
      - Financial issues around aging?
      - How do I age in place?
    - What information would we address?

- There are other domains out there addressing the needs. The job of communications is to see all the results, all the solutions and all the proposals of the other domains get communicated in a timely, accessible fashion to older adults in the county. We are helping them do their job. We don't have to do a work plan, we just have to help them get the workplan out. So, our job is to communicate that using multiple media and be accessible in an easy to understand way that reaches every corner of the community.
- Terri Hansen asked what the rest of the committee thinks about what was said.
- Comment: We are missing the power of the methodology. The methodology is each of these domains W.H.O. and their work with some hundred different communities have said aging communities are much more effective in how we communicate new information. We need to look at it independently and not wait to figure out what eight other communities do.
- The task of the group is to figure out how to better meet the needs of the senior community.
    1. What are their needs?
    2. What programs already in place try to meet their needs and what is the gap?
- Stuart Rosenthal statement was we don't think we can wait - our job is to be the communication outlet for what the other domains do in the program. If we do all the other domains' needs, then we are doing everyone else's job too. Our job is to teach them what information is available and pertinent relative to our seniors and our whole community. Getting it out to them in a way they absorb and attain easily, we are greasing the skids to make it available so that all the information that we determine as an Age-Friendly project gets communicated to the people who need it. Our job isn't to come up with what those needs are and to resolve those needs, our job is to communicate and inform people of solutions that we come up with as a group.
- Jim thinks it misses the power of the methodology, which is for us to take an independent look at what are the needs and gaps are.
- Our job is to address the gaps in communication, not the gaps in services. The gaps in the services are for the individual domains to determine. We can help them figure out the best way to get that information out to people if there are gaps in communication methods; that is what we are focusing on - the communication element.
    - Terri Hansen asked how can the group identify the gaps in communication?
    - Jill (who works for MAP) said she has found that while we have tried many ways of reaching out, some topics are interesting to people, and some are not. No one signed up for a presentation on advance directives because nobody wanted to talk about these things. Same with financial planning. Even though these topics are helpful, the question is how do we get people interested in them? People are caught in the moment, and life is already overwhelming with so much coming at you. How can we put it in a format so that they can easily get the information? People choose not to participate for personal reasons, how are we supposed to meet their needs?
        - If we get HOA's involved, they would be able to help disseminate information.
- A member said they like the idea of ground level neighborhood support.
- Terri Hansen asked the group to wrap up and determine where do we go from here? You will receive a report next week from the survey, full of information to read and go through. And then you will have more information about 2 to 2½ weeks later of the report compiled from the reports that have been done over the last several years.

- How do we choose the questions to answer when there are so many? We need to narrow our focus so that the group can determine the next steps?
- We want to move forward with purpose and use our time wisely so that everyone feels their work on this project is meaningful.
- Are there specific individual paths you can be moving on to educate yourself or identify what topics you need us to revisit? Would it help to bring in speakers to disucss what we have out there in the way of information and how it represents people and our community today?
- Stuart Rosenthal asked Terri Hansen to reread the first two sentences again of the Honolulu mission statement. He feels that the first part of the Honolulu mission statement is a very good conception of what we could be doing if other people like the idea?
- Terri Hansen said it has merit. And will send it out to everyone in the group to look at and find out what you like about it. Work on it as individuals and send us your thoughts. I will touch base with Kim Henry to identify other information you may need to get your task started beyond the documents that we are sending you. We will also let you know how we would like you to respond with any comments or questions regarding the survey. We will have a format for that as well.

Homework
- What questions do you need answered in order to create an effective Age-Friendly communications plan? What additional information would be most helpful to you?

Next Meeting
04/15/2020 – 1:30 p.m. – WebEx (invitation will be sent out before the meeting)