

City of Boston
Age Strong Commission
Area Agency on Aging, Region VI

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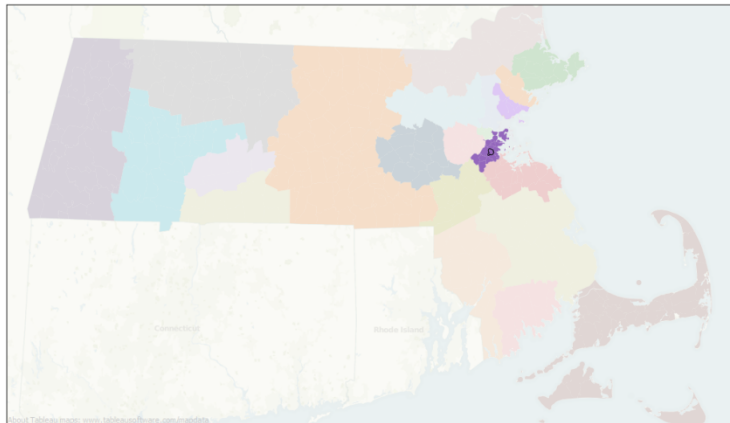
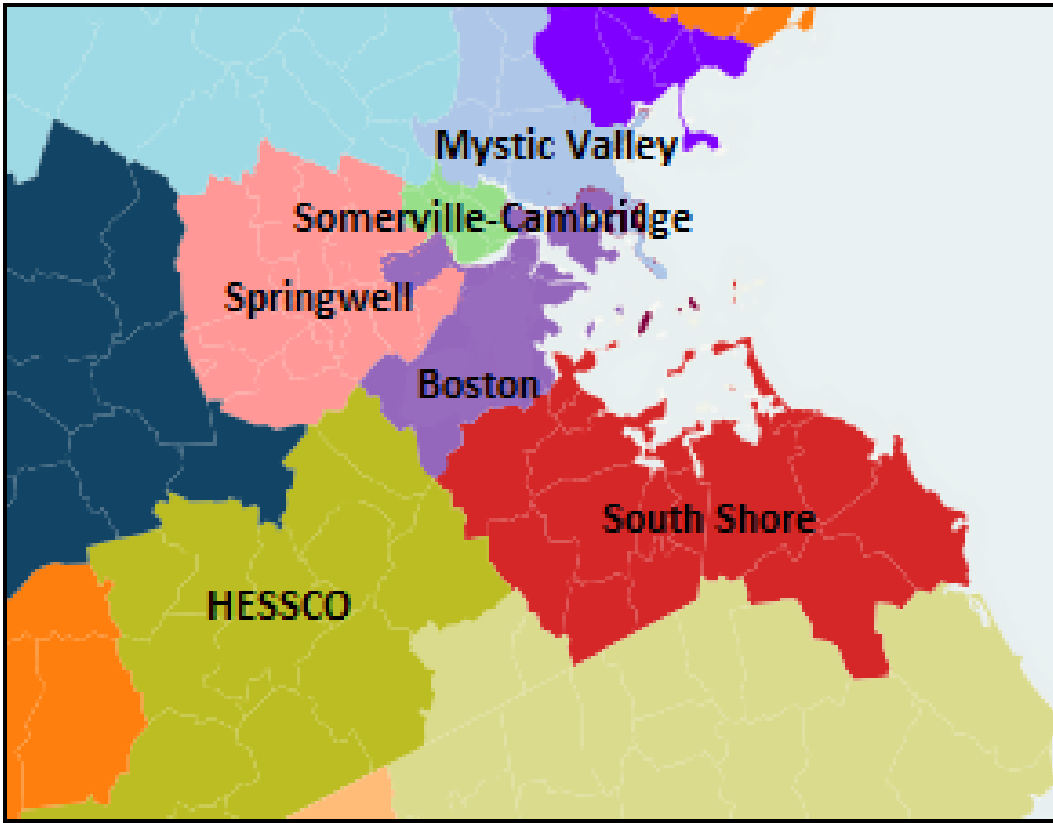
Attachments

Attachment A: Area Plan on Aging Assurances and Affirmation
Attachment B: AAA Informational Requirement
Attachment C: AAA Organizational Chart
Attachment D: AAA Corporate Board of Directors - Form 1 (not included - not applicable)
Attachment E: AAA Advisory Council Members - Form 2
Attachment F: AAA Designated Focal Points - Form 3
Attachment G: AAA Title III-B Funded Services - Form 4a
Attachment H: AAA Title III-C (1 and 2), D, E and OMB Funded Services - Form 4b
Attachment I: AAA III-E Family Caregiver Breakdown - Form 5
Attachment J: AAA Projected Budget Plan (not included - to be submitted separately)
Attachment K: AAA Focus Group Facilitator Guide
Attachment L: AAA Needs Assessment Survey

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Executive Summary

Boston is a diverse city with a rich history. Many of the older adults who reside in Boston today have lived in this city their entire lives, contributing to their communities through work and volunteerism, raising families, purchasing homes, caring for loved ones, and much more. It is this population that has and continues to create and advocate for change that pushes our city to grow and be a better place to age and thrive. Older adults play a key role in strengthening our communities and influencing the work at the Age Strong Commission. As the Area Agency on Aging, the Age Strong Commission along with its many partners in the academic, private, and public sectors will work to support this dynamic population.

Between 2010 and 2019, Boston's adult population (individuals aged 60 and older) grew by 28% from 91,676 to 116,981, according to American Community Survey data. This population is projected to grow by 21% over the next nine years and is expected to reach 141,425 by 2030. The aging network in Boston will work together to meet this growing cohort by providing quality services, new programming, and information that focuses on keeping this valuable population in the community of their choice for as long as possible.

During the next four years the Commission, as Boston's AAA, will continue to bring the Older Americans Act core programming to older adults by supporting and funding a strong network of agencies. The AAA will assist agencies with programming, networking, training, and other developmental opportunities. The AAA will continue to assist our community partners as they grow the Family Caregiver Programs to support the many individuals and their families caring for older adults and grandparents raising grandchildren. A large aspect of this work is to reach those who are caring for loved ones and are unaware of the support and services available to them, including but not limited to respite, support groups, one-on-one counseling, and financial support. To address food insecurity and nutritional needs among Boston's older adults, the commission is committed to the continued development of a strong nutrition program, including the expansion of cultural meal options available to older adults receiving home delivered meals. Virtual social programming for home delivered meal recipients will also continue to be supported. These core services will play a significant role in keeping older adults actively engaged in the community.

In addition to these areas, through Title III funding, the Commission will work with partners to fill in service gaps and expand programming to address changing needs within the different communities across the city. Understanding that the maintenance of health is a key contributor to enabling older adults to maintain independence and age in place, partners across the city will engage older adults in programming that focuses on chronic disease management, medication management, balance, memory, and behavioral health. Physical and mental health is only one part of the solution to keeping older adults in their homes; older adults also need knowledge and

support to remain independent. The Commission will expand its internal capacity and work with partners to educate older adults about benefits they are eligible for, how to enroll in benefit programs, and offer assistance with completing applications.

The local Aging and Disability Resource Center will provide information and assistance through options counseling and use a “No Wrong Door” approach to all who seek assistance. Another source of valuable engagement for older adults is being able to share their wealth of knowledge and skills with others through volunteerism. The Commission and its partners will continue to connect older adults to these opportunities and foster new ones. All partners in the aging field work to keep older adults in their communities of choice by creating programs that cater to individual needs and interests. Agencies also work with older adults to create individual service plans that are focused on choice.

As the home of Age Friendly Boston, the Commission continues to address different areas to improve the lives of older adults. The first five years of Age-Friendly Boston have been completed and the initiative is in phase two. While still in development, plans are to focus on Social Isolation, Dementia, and Economic Security. Other areas, including the improvement of the public realm, representing interests of the older adult population on interdepartmental task forces and planning processes, are ongoing. As a result of the initiative, there are maps of public restroom maps, benches and age-friendly walking paths, and an employment guide on the city website.

The Commission continues to be a resource for people with dementia and their families. Two memory cafes continue to be delivered to the community, one conducted in Spanish and one that is geared toward the African American population in Boston. The education of the public more generally continues through the Age and Dementia Friendly Business program. The customer service training is mandatory for certification and includes a section on Dementia, with resources and communication tips. Recently, all 30 branches of a local bank have been certified. Nearly 200 bank employees received the training. In the coming years, certification will expand to other banks across the City of Boston.

The Commission in partnership with community and government agencies works to protect seniors against threats to their independence. The long term care ombudsman program provides a voice to older adults in long term care facilities. The AAA funds a legal assistance program to help older adults with housing, social security, community and long term care benefits, as well as nursing and consumer issues. The aging network is also very active in advocating for state and federal legislature on behalf of older adult rights. The Commission also works with the Boston Police Department, the Attorney General’s Office, and others to educate older adults and address issues related to scams, fraud, safety, and consumer protection.

In the field of aging, information is constantly changing and new technologies are being created that can benefit older adults. Agencies and staff must continuously work to improve services and stay up-to-date on information and best practices. The Commission will continue to make advances in quality services by creating quality controls and standards for all staff and providing technical assistance to any older adult-serving agency needing support with quality management.

Over the next four years, the Commission will work with community partners to achieve these goals and improve the quality of services for older adults. The Mayor of Boston and the Age Strong Commission believe that older adults are a strong legacy to Boston as they continue to contribute in important ways to their communities. Together with its many partners, the Commission will strive to uphold and enhance the values graciously passed on by older adults across Boston.

Context

Needs Assessment

The Age Strong Commission began the planning of its 2021 Needs Assessment in August of 2020. The needs assessment team consisted of seven people, including two AAA staff, one graduate-level social work intern from Boston University, two staff from Greater Boston Chinese Golden Age Center, one staff person from Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción, and one staff person from Mass Senior Action Council. The team worked together to connect with older adults across the City of Boston primarily through virtual focus groups. Grantee and other nonprofit partners, assisted the AAA with outreach to older adults and coordination of virtual focus groups. Surveys were another means of obtaining information, which were distributed through grantee and other nonprofit older adult-serving organizations across the city.

Beginning October 26, 2020 and ending December 28, 2020, twenty-six focus groups were conducted via the virtual platform, Zoom, in compliance with in-person meeting restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the inability to conduct in-person focus groups, the AAA was faced with the challenge of identifying consumers who could proactively join a focus group meeting. To address this challenge, citywide partner collaboration was critical. Title III grantee partners, as well as other older adult-serving organizations across the city, older adult residential buildings, and community-based older adult groups were outreached to and collaborated with to identify participants and schedule focus groups.

Focus group attendance ranged from three to thirteen individuals who participated with video, without video, and by phone. Many of the focus groups were joined by providers of partner agencies that brought the group together, though some focus groups only consisted of older adults. All focus groups were led following a facilitator guide (see attachment K) to ensure

consistency and achieve objectivity to the best of the facilitator's ability. The facilitator guide was translated into Spanish and Traditional Chinese. The format for all focus groups remained consistent, with the entire group engaging together in a discussion. The focus groups began with a welcome, introductions of the facilitator and note taker, and an explanation of the purpose of the focus group and needs assessment. The facilitator then led the group in a 20-25 minute discussion to come up with as many concerns and needs related to being an older adult in Boston. When the group stopped listing concerns and needs, the facilitator then asked participants to choose 2-3 concerns to expand upon collectively. Following this discussion, participants were asked to brainstorm the positive aspects of aging in Boston. Finally, the session concluded by thanking participants for their engagement and notifying them that an electronic survey was also being distributed and that, should they see it and choose to complete it, they were welcome to do so.

To ensure accurate data collection, each focus group was facilitated by a team member who was different from the note taker. Following each focus group, the note taker and facilitator inputted information into the EOEA reporting form. Note takers for focus groups that were conducted in a language other than English took notes in the language in which the focus group was conducted, and then translated the notes into English for the purpose of completing the reporting form. All notes for each focus group were typed up and retained. Any immediate needs identified during the focus group sessions were shared with the appropriate individual/team within the Age Strong Commission to be addressed in a timely fashion.

In addition to focus groups, surveys were used to collect data and reach a broader population through electronic distribution and telephone calls. A survey (see attachment L) was created based on the facilitation guide and information identified by EOEA. Individuals were asked to volunteer demographic information and select concerns from a list of twenty-one items, which were provided by EOEA. Additionally, the survey included questions specific to feelings of sadness and depression, need to work, experience with workplace ageism, housing, caregiver resources, concern related to memory, current ways of learning about neighborhood and city happenings, and positives associated with aging in Boston. Surveys were translated into eight languages, including Cape Verdean Creole, Traditional Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. These languages were identified by the Age Strong Commission's Language and Communication Access liaison as the most commonly spoken languages, other than English, among older adult Boston residents. Survey links, along with the purpose of the needs assessment and surveys, were shared via email and included links to the electronic survey with the language of the survey. Partners were asked to share the email with their networks and, for those able to do so, complete surveys with older adults over the phone. As some programs were conducting check-in phone calls to consumers during the pandemic, the request was made to involve individuals who might have been less connected

through virtual programming and be less likely to join a focus group. Focus group participants were also made aware of the survey and invited to complete it.

A total of 592 surveys were completed, one of which was removed prior to data analysis, as the responder indicated that they are not a resident of the City of Boston. 32 of the surveys contained some missing data, due to misprinting, including the question that lists the twenty-one items of concern from which respondents were asked to select “all that are personal concerns of yours or those in your household.” The 32 surveys missing this data were removed prior to analysis discussed below. 78 of the analyzed surveys contained no response to this question.

The following areas ranked among the top ten concerns discussed in focus groups and were also among the top ten concerns selected on surveys:

- Access to Social Assistance Services
 - Discussed in 13 of the 26 focus groups and selected in 133 of the 559 analyzed surveys.
 - Much of the concern related to access to social assistance services related to understanding benefits, including but not limited to Medicare and SNAP. Specifically, understanding what benefit programs exist for older adults in Boston and how to navigate application processes. There was discussion related to a centralized agency, database, or website where resources related to aging and older adults could be compiled and accessed by consumers. Additionally, older adults who fall just outside of the income limits for certain programs expressed concern about lack of access to assistance.
- Economic Security:
 - Discussed in 13 of the 26 focus groups and selected in 95 of the 559 analyzed surveys
 - Discussions that centered on economic security related to increasing cost of living in Boston for older adults on a fixed income. Specifically, participants mentioned the unaffordability of nutritious food, the high property tax rate, high rental costs, and the high cost of technology and internet. Additionally, insufficient retirement income was voiced as a concern, along with the need for volunteer stipends to be more financially meaningful.
- Health Care
 - Discussed in 12 of the 26 focus groups and selected in 187 of the 559 analyzed surveys
 - The general theme related to health care centered on affordability. Common concerns related to obtaining costly equipment, supplies, and treatment (such as dental procedures) not covered by insurance. Another repeatedly voiced concern related to obtaining medication when transportation or leaving one’s home is a

barrier. Additionally, the cost of medication and more available education about medications came up in discussion. Lastly, the need for better care coordination was mentioned.

- Housing
 - Discussed in 20 of the 26 focus groups and selected in 125 of the 559 analyzed surveys
 - A top housing concern centered on unaffordability, including high costs related to homeownership, rent, property tax, utilities, home repair, home modifications, snow removal, etc. Relating to older adult-specific buildings, participants voiced concern about insufficient housing options, long waitlists to get into buildings, inadequate parking and safe walking paths on-site, and exclusion of grandparents caring for grandchildren. For homeowners, a common topic that arose pertained to finding trustworthy companies/contractors/individuals to complete repairs and assist with other household tasks, such as snow removal and yardwork, which was paired with numerous suggestions for the establishment of a centralized resource where older adults can refer to find pre-vetted assistance options.
- Maintain Independence
 - Discussed in 11 of the 26 focus groups and selected in 155 of the 559 analyzed surveys
 - On the topic of maintaining independence, participants expressed concern about obtaining affordable in-home assistance with tasks that enable them to continue living independently in their homes, such as cleaning, grocery delivery, dog-walking, changing light bulbs, and other household chores. Another area of concern related to minor home modifications, specifically obtaining and paying for the installment of a chair lift.
- Social Isolation
 - Discussed in 19 of the 26 focus groups and selected in 124 of the 559 analyzed surveys
 - Social isolation concerns were largely related to the COVID-19 pandemic and loneliness as a result of self-isolating. Concern was also voiced for older adults who are homebound and lack connection to their communities and programming, resulting in lack of knowledge about available resources. Participants discussed the need for more opportunities to engage with peers and programs, and stay physically active, which coincided with technology access.
- Transportation
 - Discussed in 18 of 26 focus groups and 122 of 559 analyzed surveys
 - Major transportation concerns related to the removal of public transit stops and with MBTA bus stops being removed from routes, some older adults face new barriers to getting around their neighborhoods and the city because they either

have to walk further to another stop or find alternate options (for those with mobility challenges). There was some mention of concerns related to racial discrimination and negative interactions with MBTA Ride drivers. Many participants expressed frustration about long wait-times/delayed arrivals and pick-ups that are too soon before an appointment for the MBTA Ride service. Another concern related to the operating time of the Age Strong Shuttle. With the last ride being mid-afternoon, it can be challenging for individuals to arrange transportation for appointments that occur later in the day. Additionally, the request for access to more taxi coupons was made.

The following areas ranked among the top ten concerns discussed in focus groups, but were not among the top ten concerns selected in surveys:

- Learning and Development
 - Discussed in 18 of 26 focus groups
 - The most commonly voiced learning and development concern related to affordable technology access, broadband, and appropriate training. Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, participants found an increased need and desire to be connected virtually and understand how to navigate programs, such as Zoom. Participants also voiced the need for more accessible financial literacy, legal, and tax education.
- Safety and Security
 - Discussed in 17 of 26 focus groups
 - Concerns voiced about safety and security related to uneven sidewalks, insufficient walking paths in the city, scams, snow removal on sidewalks, and maltreatment in nursing facilities. Another concern raised was how one can determine when it is no longer safe to live independently and for those concerned about friends/family/neighbors, the best ways to assist with this matter. One of the groups made up of Chinese-speaking participants discussed fear of safety while out in public, due to the increase in violence against individuals among the Asian American and Pacific Islander population during the COVID-19 pandemic, and shared stories about harassment on the street. Another group, consisting of individuals with low vision/blindness, expressed concern about insufficient lighting in buildings, and difficulty safely navigating the city, public transportation, and indoor spaces, such as grocery stores. A LGBTQ+ focus group discussed concerns about feeling safe when accessing resources, as well as the need for more discussion and education about remaining safe in relationships and intimacy.
- Nutrition
 - Discussed in 14 of 26 focus groups

- o Nutrition concerns voiced included food insecurity, unaffordability of healthy food items (fresh produce), lack of affordable or free grocery delivery, especially for older adults with mobility challenges and those who are unable to leave their homes due to illness or snowstorms, and insufficient fresh produce at food pantries. Another area of concern related to the quality of home delivered meals and the desire to have more options for individuals with dietary restrictions.

The following areas ranked among the top ten concerns selected on surveys, but did not rank among the top ten concerns discussed in focus groups:

- Caregiver support was selected in 92 of the 559 analyzed surveys
- Leisure and recreation was selected in 192 of the 559 analyzed surveys
- Staying active and wellness promotion was selected in 253 of the 559 analyzed surveys

Mental and behavioral health did not rank among the top ten concerns in the focus group or survey data. Only 5 of the 26 focus groups noted mental and behavioral health as a concern and only 66 of the 559 surveys that contained data relating to this concern indicated mental and behavioral health as a concern. However, in response to the question, “I have been feeling sad or depressed recently,” 313 of the 579 surveys that contained this question indicated “some days,” “most of the days,” or “everyday” (12 of the analyzed surveys were missing this question due to a misprint and were not counted in the total). This self-reported data indicates a total of 64% of survey respondents were experiencing sadness or depression at the time of completion at least some days.

ACL Focus Areas

Older Americans Act Core Programs

Through partnerships with twenty-four nonprofit organizations, the City of Boston delivers an array of Title III-funded in-home, community-based, and virtual services. Through the work of the Age Strong Commission and its partners, the City of Boston is able to deliver services uniquely needed in each of the seventeen neighborhoods that make up the City of Boston, enabling older adult residents to age in place and thrive in their communities. As a city composed of several communities with rich cultural and language diversity, Boston’s Title III programs aim to reflect the communities in which they serve, delivering culturally and linguistically appropriate services.

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, social isolation and food access challenges among older adults reached an all-time high, illuminating the need for more thoughtful and active outreach to isolated individuals. This need sparked an increased effort across several Title III-funded programs to conduct telephone check-ins to identify emerging needs, provide necessary assistance, and make appropriate referrals. The City of Boston has also observed a growing need for access to technology, including devices, connectivity, and appropriate training,

as opportunities for in-person social engagement, learning, and medical appointments were halted. This need sprang to the forefront during many needs assessment focus groups and in a large number of surveys. In partnership with sub-grantees that receive Title III funding, the City of Boston is and will continue to work toward expanding access to technology and opportunities for virtual programming, including, but not limited to, recreation, exercise, health promotion and disease prevention activities, and family caregiver support groups. Additionally, the Age Strong Commission is working to create a Technology Coordinator position that will serve to support both internal and external needs related to technology.

Food access challenges emerged at the beginning of the pandemic and shed light on an existing barrier related to access to affordable groceries among older adults. Over the course of the past year, the Age Strong Commission, with the City of Boston's Office of Food Access and other partner organizations, has successfully delivered groceries to the homes of isolated, low income older adults, at no cost to the consumer. Though this emergency feeding program was temporary, it brought to light barriers to obtaining affordable groceries that will continue for some older adults and has led to an effort to better understand their root causes. For example, for some older adults, the barrier to nutritious food is not only unaffordability, but also a physical limitation that makes it difficult to carry groceries into one's apartment. In the coming year, the City of Boston will continue to look closely at these intersecting barriers, so that they can be addressed and sustainably mitigated.

Lack of available affordable housing continues to be a barrier for older adults in the City of Boston, a theme that was prominent in the FFY2017 needs assessment data, and is seen again in the current data. With new and exacerbated housing-related challenges, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Boston is also seeing and anticipates to see more of an increase in housing advocacy and affordable housing needs. To address this need, the Age Strong Commission has expanded its Housing Unit, creating new Housing Specialist positions to serve older adults, citywide, with applications for housing, eviction avoidance, and referral to programs that assist homeowners with grants for home repairs and tax deductions.

Assistance with public benefits programs is another area that the Age Strong Commission is expanding, as data shows that older adults are increasingly contacting the City of Boston to seek information about and enrollment in programs, such as SNAP and fuel assistance. To address this need, the Age Strong Commission created a Benefit Coordinator position, expanded its Constituent Services Unit to include at least three additional Advocate positions, and recently formed a partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, enabling the ability to more directly assist older adults with eligibility determination and enrollment. Additionally, the Age Strong Commission developed and launched a citywide public benefits campaign, highlighting a different benefit program each month and providing contact information for obtaining additional information about the program, eligibility requirements, and enrollment.

Participant-Directed/Person-Centered Planning

In partnership with the City of Boston's three Aging Services Access Points (ASAPs), the Age Strong Commission is committed to the promotion of participant-directed/person-centered planning, especially as the demand for this form of service delivery continues to increase. Caregiver services, as well as vendor services, have become increasingly consumer-directed and will continue to move in this direction. Regardless of the program enrollment, consumers play a key role in assessing their needs, care planning, and care plan development. Feedback from consumers is also gathered regularly across all programs to ensure that individuals obtaining the services have a say in what those services look like and how they are delivered.

Across all long term care planning programs, including those housed within the ASAP agencies, the delivery of unbiased information, available in multiple languages, is key to ensuring that consumers have the necessary knowledge to make care decisions that best suit their individual needs. Offerings, such as Options Counseling and Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone (SHINE), which empower consumers to make informed decisions, continue to expand to meet the need of consumer-choice.

As an increasing number of family members become caregivers of older adults, out of necessity and as a result of programs, such as the MassHealth Personal Care Attendant (PCA) Program, the need for more deliberate outreach, emotional support opportunities, and respite service increases. The PCA program is growing increasingly popular among families across the City of Boston, enabling consumers to identify family members to serve in a personal care attendant capacity and be compensated through MassHealth. With Boston's vast cultural and language diversity, this program addresses the barrier to finding caregivers through agencies that match the consumer's specific language and cultural needs while simultaneously offering support opportunities to family members who would likely be providing care to their loved ones, even without the PCA program.

In an effort to identify family caregivers who are not already tapping into available resources, Boston Senior Home Care is creating and unrolling a large-scale outreach campaign in the coming years. Additionally, the program is ramping up its person-centered approach to supporting family caregivers and their loved ones through the implementation of a more direct feedback system, which will inform the continued development of existing and new programs that aim to educate and support caregivers. One example of this process in action is, in response to feedback from caregivers for more opportunities to engage in skill development, Boston Senior Home Care is offering in-home and virtual caregiving practical skills training. Programs, such as this, will continue to address needs identified directly by caregivers, for caregivers, so that they feel better equipped to care for their loved ones.

With the continuing expansion of vendor partnerships within the City of Boston's partner agencies comes the opportunity for greater consumer-direction in vendor services, such as caregiving and home delivered meals. For example, if a consumer requests a change in caregiver or caregiving agency to better align with individual or cultural needs, this can be done, provided that the request is not racially-driven. Similarly, if a home delivered meals consumer wishes to

receive meals from a different meal provider or switch to a different ethnic or dietary menu, the variety of vendors enables such a change to be easily accommodated. In the coming years, consumers will have increasingly more ethnic meal options to choose from, as the City's Nutrition Program expands its vendor partnerships and menu offerings.

Elder Justice

The City of Boston's Age Strong Commission continues its long-standing partnership with Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS), which serves older adults, citywide, promoting elder justice. Through access to legal representation, older adults can obtain assistance with housing issues, government benefits, health care access, and protection against abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. GBLS' work includes advice and counsel, brief service, and full representation, as appropriate. While an older adult may seek assistance with a discrete problem, GBLS advocates will work to identify other areas in which an individual might need help, including being vigilant for abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation.

GBLS plays an active role in coalitions and works with community partners to protect older adults against threats to independence, well-being, and financial security. For instance, GBLS will continue collaborating with coalition partners to advocate for nursing home residents, including advocacy to respond to the COVID-19 crisis in nursing homes. Similarly, the work of long term care ombudsman representatives, through the City of Boston's partnership with Ethos, will continue to be the eyes and ears of the outside world for nursing homes and other facilities, reporting and mediating any quality of life issues within facilities and reporting any safety or medical issues, as necessary, to the Department of Public Health.

Through continued outreach and training opportunities, GBLS will promote the well-being and safety of older adults, which, in the coming years, will be heavily focused on housing-related issues. In collaboration with community partners, GBLS will respond to Boston's housing crisis, which has become exacerbated during the pandemic, by providing representation to low income older adults in an array of housing cases, including advocating for victims of abuse to protect housing options, which could mean relocation for safety reasons or preservation of existing housing when abuse puts them under threat of eviction. GBLS will also continue its work to move forward legislative and policy initiatives, develop proposed funding mechanisms to create and preserve affordable housing units, and advocate for a visible Emergency Assistance shelter safety net.

The Boston Elder Protective Services Program, housed within Central Boston Elder Services, also works diligently to prevent, detect, and investigate/intervene in abuse and neglect among older adults, working in close partnership with Boston's other two ASAPs. For substantiated reports, a service plan is developed in partnership with the consumer, to mitigate the abuse or neglect, and collective efforts are made with other programs and organizations to provide care and services to alleviate such abuse and neglect. Protective Services also works with Probate and Family Court for Guardianship and Conservatorship for older adults who are no longer able to make decisions, as well as Housing Court to advocate for maintaining housing. An integral part

of the Protective Services process is reassessment of needs to ensure that, when risks are adequately reduced and services are no longer needed, appropriate referrals are made and services do not unnecessarily continue.

In recent years, financial exploitation has become increasingly common and destructive, especially among the older adult population. As instances of financial exploitation continue to rise, in addition to the work that GBLS and Central Boston Elder Services are doing to address this pervasive issue across the City of Boston, additional steps are being taken to educate older adults about the signs of financial exploitation, remove stigma associated with identity theft and financial exploitation, and empower individuals to make decisions to protect themselves and their finances. The Age Strong Commission is preparing to launch Money Smart for Older Adults (AmeriCorps Senior-funded), a program designed to raise awareness among older adults about financial exploitation and educate individuals about advanced planning and informed decision-making. Additionally, the ASAPs' Money Management Program continues to assist older adults with bill-pay services, resulting in greater housing security, avoidance of utility shut-off, and financial exploitation prevention.

Lastly, GBLS is committed to working to address racial health disparities, including the health care obstacles faced by older adults of color. GBLS will work directly to improve the health and welfare of vulnerable and underserved populations, promote equal care for all regardless of their class, race, or ethnicity, and alleviate conditions contributing to human suffering by providing services to help people access basic needs. GBLS staff does legal advocacy in collaboration with community partners to achieve systemic change based upon benchmarks jointly established. Changes brought on through legal advocacy alongside GBLS, the community, and community partners, as staff works within coalitions, will provide benchmarks for how this work will measure progress. GBLS is in the process of assessing the reach of its direct legal aid and community partnerships to work towards combating systemic racism.

Goals, Objectives and Strategies

A. Older American Act Core Programs

Goal 1: Create and fund a strong network of older adult service agencies throughout Boston to provide Title III Programming

- 1. Objective:** Provide Title III funded social service programs to increase the quality of life for older adults.

Strategy: Have a bi-yearly competitive grant process to award our Older American Act Title III funds to community partners servicing older adults in support services, nutrition services, disease prevention/health promotion, and caregiver services.

Strategy: Fund a variety of older adult-centered programs to provide opportunities for recreation, health education, translation/interpretation, information and assistance,

and/or other services equitably across neighborhoods for older adults to access them more conveniently.

Measurable: Throughout the fiscal year the AAA will provide technical assistance, six month review of programming and a year-end evaluation to ensure quality of services and that at least 10% of older Boston residents are accessing services.

Goal 2: Organize a series of training and/or development opportunities for older adult services workers and others to learn more about how to work together in addressing current topics related to older adults and programming.

1. Objective: Increase Commission and community partners staff knowledge on the older adult service network and programmatic topics. The AAA will be working with community partners and older adults to establish topics of interest and arrange venues.

Strategy: Host at least two informational and networking opportunities for staff of any community organization to increase their knowledge on current topics related to older adults.

Strategy: Provide two programmatic trainings per year to older adult service agencies to enhance the delivery of their programs to older adults. Topics may include but are not limited to- programmatic evaluation, mandated reporting and benefits review.

Strategy: Increase grantee networking meetings for Title III award recipients to quarterly to share information and best practices with agencies on a regular basis. These grantee networking meetings will also serve as trainings.

Measurable: Will provide evaluation forms at the end of each training or informational session to review material presented. Also, staff will work with agencies during the year end assessments to see if sessions are increasing staff knowledge to better serve older adults.

Goal 3: Continue to grow and develop the Family Caregiver Support Program.

1. Objective: Work with grantees to ensure administrative expectations and data entry into the Senior Information Management System for accurate National Aging Program Information System reporting.

Strategy: Work directly with MSPCC to get all participants of the KINnections Program (grandparents raising grandchildren) into NAPIS

Strategy: Collaborate with EOEA to clarify any questions regarding administrative expectations.

- 2. Objective:** Partners in the Family Caregiver Program will engage in a multimedia and multilingual outreach approach to deliver Information Services.

Strategy: Efforts will include distribution of information packets, visibility at events throughout all neighborhoods of the City such as health and resource fairs, utilization of local papers and cable TV, websites and electronic newsletters and list services.

- 3. Objective:** Work closely with Boston Senior Home Care and EOEa to see a long reach in access to and participation in the Savvy Caregiver Program

Strategy: The Commission and community partners will work together to educate staff and potential consumers about the valuable services available throughout the city to better support caregivers and grandparents raising grandchildren.

Measurable: The AAA staff will assist and review the outreach plan to caregivers in Boston. By increasing administrative efficiencies staff will have more time to help caregivers experiencing stress and frustration. The AAA staff will work with grantees to review twice a year the number of caregivers and grandparents raising grandchildren per neighborhood being served to ensure equity across the city of Boston and that goals are being met.

Goal 4: Provide nutritious meals to seniors in Boston and grow the number of seniors receiving Title III meals by 10% per year over the next 4 years.

- 1. Objective:** Work with Title III nutrition providers to review menus, routes, programming, and other items to ensure the state nutrition standards are being met.

Strategy: Review all material provided for the nutrition program monthly

- 2. Objective:** Work with nutrition programs and other interested parties to review the Title III city wide nutrition program including the distribution of funds and strategies for increasing efficiency and growth of seniors participating in the program.

Strategy: Reconvene Nutrition Task force to review the home delivered meals and congregate lunch site service gaps, usage and efficiencies for Boston Seniors. As well as ensure that nutrition programs focus on food access, and are aware of additional nutritional resources and initiatives such as HIP.

- 3. Objective:** Work with nutrition programs and interested seniors in developing more culturally appropriate meals for ethnic seniors.

Strategy: Utilizing Nutrition Task Force, create, distribute, and analyze a survey asking seniors what changes they would like to see made to current nutrition menus.

Measurable: The Commission will require monthly menus, monthly reports and other materials from nutrition providers to ensure nutritious meals are being provided to Boston

Seniors. Within the first year, staff will work with interested parties to find ways to increase the number of Title III seniors receiving quality meals.

Goal 5: Assist older adults to safely remain in their homes and active in the community.

1. Objective: Provide funding for the top tier of evidence based programs as established by the ACL.

Strategy: Work with community partners to provide a variety of evidence based programs to older Boston residents. Programming may include HomeMeds, Matter of Balance, Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance, Chronic Pain Self-Management, PEARLS, and Chronic Disease Self-Management programs.

Measurable: Work with agencies on recruitment of older adults to participate in evidence based programs throughout Boston. Every six months review the number of completers per evidence based program and other programming issues or successes.

2. Objective: Provide a variety of events throughout the city for older Boston residents to attend by utilizing the Age Strong Commission's Outreach and Engagement Unit

Strategy: Work with older adults on the type of events they want to attend and assist with organizing.

Strategy: Create outreach activities to engage new older adults to participate in the events organized by the Commission.

Measurable: Work with various community groups to recruit ~2,000 unduplicated older adults to attend the events.

Goal 6: Empower and assist older adults with gaining knowledge, information, and resources to remain in their homes and support community living.

1. Objective: Provide 1-2 units of Information and Referral to older adults and families contacting community partners and the Age Strong Commission's Constituent Services Team.

Strategy: The Advocacy Representatives will outreach to older adults and groups to educate them about the valuable services offered by the Commission.

Measurable: The Commission will review and evaluate the number of information and referral units being provided to older adults and conduct quarterly telephone surveys to obtain feedback from seniors that received information and referral services.

2. Objective: Continue to work with community partners to provide benefits review and application assistance

Strategy: Our Advocacy Representatives will assist seniors about eligibility guidelines for various programs and follow-up with any application assistance that is needed.

Measurable: Periodically review and evaluate the number of questionnaires and applications completed to assist Boston seniors.

3. Objective: Continue the expansion of the Property Tax Work off Program to grow participation from both seniors and organizations to hire them.

Strategy: Work with our Communications Team to market the program to property tax payers.

Strategy: Increase outreach to city offices to help them see the benefit of having a PTWO program volunteer working in their office.

Measurable: Every 6 months review participant recruitment, challenges, success and recruitment for new locations for the Property Tax Work off Program.

4. Objective: Continue to provide educational, entertaining and relevant information to seniors and caregivers via our various communications platforms.

Strategy: Continue providing 10 issues per year of Boston Seniority Magazine, a community resource seniors use to gain knowledge on important topics, enjoy familiar faces and reminisce.

Strategy: Provide weekly updates and information to seniors and caregivers through our e-newsletter, Weekly Digest, and social media platforms

Strategy: Provide a central location for all programs and resources for older adults and caregivers on our website www.boston.gov/agestrong

Strategy: Use the technology of "robocalls" to inform older adults about important safety and public health information.

Strategy: Provide various printed collateral including brochures and flyers on many aging topics, translated into 11 different languages.

Measurable: The Commission will print 15,000 copies of Boston Seniority Magazine per issue. The Commission will continue to increase the number of likes on our Facebook page and email sign-ups for our newsletter, indicating we are reaching more individuals. The commission will develop a neighborhood by neighborhood specific "street" marketing plan to (not electronic marketing) reach older adults where they live.

Goal 3: Play an active role in the Suffolk County Aging Disability Resource Center (ADRC) as it continues to grow.

- 1. Objective:** Continue to provide options counseling to Boston older adults and continue to grow and enhance the program.

Strategy: The three Boston ASAPs and the Center for Independent Living will continue to employ options counseling trained staff.

Strategy: The Boston Center for Independent Living, as the lead ADRC agency will, coordinate options counselors and collect and report data used to improve the program.

Strategy: The Commission will continue to review options counseling data, provide support as needed and promote the program.

Measurable: Commission staff will actively participate in all ADRC activities including monthly leadership team meetings and quarterly networking meetings.

Goal 4: Create a diverse range of volunteer activities that serve communities to create measurable impact, benefit volunteers through the service experience, and create community capacity through utilizing the Age Strong Commission's Volunteer Unit.

- 1. Objective:** Through the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) which the Commission runs we will ensure that volunteer assignments are made consistent with the interests and abilities of the volunteers and the needs of the community served.

Strategy: RSVP volunteers will assist with meeting health needs within communities including access to care and aging in place.

Strategy: RSVP volunteers will provide translational services to improve the economic well-being of economically disadvantaged individuals.

Strategy: RSVP volunteers will be effective resources by assisting VITA and other low income tax preparers in ensuring that all deductions and credits available are obtained, as well as, by providing outreach to Boston Seniors regarding Circuit Breaker Income Tax credit.

Strategy: The Commission Volunteer Unit will train RSVP volunteers as financial capability workshop facilitators. The curriculum includes Money Smart for Older Adults, developed by JP Morgan Chase, and identifying scams that target older adult populations. Volunteers will also receive the Department of Justices' Tech Support Take Down toolkit, which will increase the volunteers and clients knowledge of Tech support scams. Upon completion of the workshop, clients will report improved financial knowledge.

Strategy: RSVP volunteers will deliver virtual Opioid Prevention and Education workshops.

- 2. Objective:** Through the Senior Companion Program that the Commission runs, we will enable low-income persons aged 55 and over to remain physically and mentally

active and to enhance their self-esteem through continued participation in needed community services.

Strategy: Provide supportive services to adults with physical, emotional, or mental health limitations, especially older persons in an effort to achieve and maintain their highest level of independent living

Measurable: The Commission will enlist approximately 350 volunteers for RSVP. The Commission will work with approximately 55 Senior Companions to support approximately 400 clients per year.

Goal 5: Provide and refer older adults to valuable and reliable transportation options to keep them active in the community.

1. Objective: The Age Strong Shuttle, run by the Commission, will provide primarily medical rides to older adults in Boston.

Strategy: The Commission will have approximately 22 vans on the road Monday thru Friday transporting older adults. Medical appointments will be prioritized and when opportunities are available the Age Strong Shuttle will assist with social and/or recreational transportation and grocery shopping rides.

Strategy: The Age Strong Shuttle will also partner with local agencies to provide grocery store trips and outings for older adults.

Measurable: Provide ~35,000 round trip rides to older adults in Boston per year.

2. Objective: The Commission, in collaboration with the Police Hackney Division, will make available to older adults taxi coupons to help ease the burden of transportation in the City of Boston.

Strategy: The Commission, upon availability, will provide older adults the opportunity to purchase taxi coupons at City Hall and throughout the community.

Measurable: Upon availability, the Commission will provide 40,000 taxi coupons per year.

3. Objective: The Commission, in collaboration with the Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics, will modernize the taxi coupon program to create more equitable access to transportation options across all city neighborhoods.

Strategy: Engage a consultant to help design and lead an RFP process based on what we learn from recently conducted user research. In this phase, we will engage and select a product that will create greater access and allow for improved manageability of the taxi coupon program.

Measurable: The Commission will determine the design, goals, and objectives for the

modernized taxi coupon program, hire a consultant to advance the implementation of the program modernization, craft an RFP and move forward the process to pick an implementation partner, and identify equity goals for the overall program.

Goal 6: Continue to make Boston an Age Friendly City, focusing on economic security, dementia, and social isolation.

1. Objective: Implement the second phase of the Age Friendly Boston action plan.

Strategy: Develop phase two action items that focus on economic security, dementia, and social isolation with an equitable lens.

Strategy: Continue certifying Boston businesses to be Age & Dementia Friendly businesses.

Strategy: Continue engaging older adults and integrating age-friendly concepts into City planning processes.

Strategy: Continue front facing City of Boston Age and Dementia Friendly staff trainings

Measurable: In our second phase we will assess needs, and craft and implement additional Age and Dementia Friendly action items, while continuing ongoing Age-Friendly initiatives.

Goal 7: The Commission and its Elder Mental Health Outreach Team (EMHOT) partners will address and support the mental and behavioral health of older adults in Boston.

1. Objective: The Commission will develop a program to serve older adults experiencing a hoarding disorder and increase the safety of housing situations.

Strategy: We will contract with a clinical provider and a clean out provider.

Strategy: Work with six city departments involved with hoarding cases to refer older adults to the program and we will use the language line to ensure that we are able to communicate with and serve individuals who speak languages other than English.

2. Objective: The Commission's Title III partner, Ethos, which runs an EMHOT, will continue to assess the mental health of older adults and connect individuals to therapeutic services, such as the Healthy Ideas evidence-based program.

Strategy: Ethos will continue outreach for and delivery of the Healthy Ideas evidence-based program, providing approximately 240 sessions each federal fiscal year.

Strategy: The Commission will hire a new Behavioral Health Manager to implement, coordinate and train Age Strong staff and service providers as well as provide consultation, assessment and evaluations of older adults.

Measurable: The hoarding program will serve up to 100 Boston residents in need of support for hoarding disorder and assist with the maintenance of housing stability for up to 95% of residents identified as needing support. Ethos will deliver 240 Healthy Ideas sessions and serve 80 older adults through this program each federal fiscal year.

Goal 8: The Commission will continue to address elder economic security issues across the City of Boston to increase equity and financial stability.

1. Objective: The Commission will partner with UMass Boston to develop and analyze data relevant to an in-depth understanding of the levels and disparities in financial security of older Boston residents.

Strategy: Data from the American Community Survey, the Elder Index database, and other publicly available sources will be compiled to describe disparities in financial security among older Boston residents.

Strategy: We will identify, secure, and analyze any data that our partner departments have available with respect to program participants

Strategy: Based on available data through the above two mechanisms, we will summarize how Boston seeks to bridge the gap between resources and cost of living among older residents

2. Objective: Create a policy strategy and action plan to address economic security.

Strategy: Convene a city-wide task force that includes city departments that have an impact on the economic security levers for older adults, including: housing costs, transportation costs, healthcare costs, food costs, employment, benefits enrollment, and other collaborators.

Strategy: Engage a consultant to drill down on Boston's data including any disparities between populations, research best practices from other communities, and convene a series of working sessions with city departments.

Strategy: We will work with our CANALA partners to convene neighborhood-specific forums or focus groups to engage with community partners and explore opportunities to advance goals of the action plan in underserved communities.

Measurable: A brief report/materials will be produced to summarize findings from efforts along with recommended avenues for developing solutions (both policy and

practice-based). The results of this work will be used by the Commission's task force on elder financial security to generate an action plan focused on economic security.

Goal 9: The Commission will create a supportive environment where diversity, equity, and inclusion are prioritized for staff, older adults, and community partners.

- 1. Objective:** Proactively institutionalize racial equity within programs and policies, while encouraging other organizations to do the same.

Strategy: Ensure employment equity to better serve all Bostonians by increasing the representation of the city's diverse population in the Age Strong Commission. Provide and encourage racial equity training to Age Strong staff. Continue working with and supporting our Racial Equity Work Group led by staff.

Strategy: Prioritize and support community partnerships to cultivate a diverse aging network to support more equitable service delivery to older adults in the community.

Strategy: Facilitate an open, ongoing dialogue for healing, learning and strengthening social cohesion in communities by hosting events/conversations for older adults to engage in.

- 2. Objective:** Promote services and opportunities for all older adult populations, with a focus on inclusivity and accessibility to individuals with disabilities and the LGBTQ+ community.

Strategy: Maintain and grow partnerships with organizations that specifically serve these populations.

Strategy: Increase equitable access to information, communications, and events through the Commission and its partners.

Measurable: Information from the Commission and aging network is translated into multiple languages and accessible to individuals with vision and hearing loss. Commission staff reflects the racial and linguistic populations served. Event planning includes and addresses accessibility needs of individuals with language diversity and differences in ability.

B. Participant-Directed/Person-Centered Planning

Goal 1: The local Aging Service Access Points and the Commission will continue to work with individuals around keeping them in or getting them back into the community, for as long as possible.

- 1. Objective:** To use person centered planning when working with individuals to achieve their defined goals in the community.

Strategy: Staff will meet with individuals to learn about their wishes for environment, medical, health, social and financial needs in the community

Strategy: The staff and individual will create an Individual Service Plan where goals are set for successful living within the community.

Strategy: The staff will continue to work with individuals as the Individual Service Plan is carried out, ensuring the goals are meeting the individual needs and assisting with any other items as they arise.

Measurable: To work with all older adults expressing interest to remain or transition into the community, for as long as possible.

C. Elder Justice

Goal 1: Assist with protecting the rights, benefits, and entitlements of long term care residents.

1. Objective: Work with Ethos, our community partner, to protect the health, safety, welfare and rights of long term care residents by identifying, investigating and resolving resident complaints over a broad range of issues.

Measurable: The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program will have a trained ombudsman visit every long term care facility twice a month to identify and resolve either individual or facility wide issues.

Goal 2: Help to make legal assistance programs available to older Boston residents in need of assistance with housing, social security, community and long term care benefits, nursing, and consumer issues.

1. Objective: Work with local legal assistance agencies to provide legal services and education to older adults.

Strategy: Fund local legal assistance agencies at least 22% of Title III B funds per year.

Measurable: Work with contracted agencies to provide legal assistance, advocacy, educate on consumer issues, information, and advice to older adults.

Goal 3: Work with Police, Consumer Affairs, and Attorney General's Office to educate seniors and address issues around scams, safety, and consumer protection.

1. Objective: Work with Boston Police Department to educate and inform the larger elderly population on crime prevention techniques and how to protect themselves from victimization.

Strategy: Collaborate to create educational materials, present at special events or distribute information to home-bound elders.

- 2. Objective:** Collaborate with the Boston Police Department's Community Service Officers when safety of socially isolated seniors is in question.

Strategy: Have the Constituent Services Team request and participate in wellness checks on seniors with the Boston Police Department.

Strategy: Have the Constituent Services Team assist with organizing and participating in crime watch meetings when seniors need assistance.

- 3. Objective:** Partner with the Consumer Affairs and Licensing Department to educate seniors on how to protect themselves.

Strategy: Share information as it becomes available on scams.

Measurable: Have the Commission, community partners, police, consumer affairs, and the Attorney General's Office meet quarterly to review any safety issues affecting seniors and educational materials for seniors.