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Elements for successful community engagement in the care of older adults



1. Work alongside the community at every step.

Partner with older adults and caregivers to create community-driven programs that address their needs and offer lasting solutions. Encourage shared leadership and ownership by using models like community ambassadors and provide personalized support, such as coaching.



2. Make engagement fair and inclusive.

Ensure everyone can take part by removing barriers like transportation and cost. Meet people where they are, such as in residential buildings, and use inclusive group activities like roundtable discussions. Work with community leaders to connect with diverse groups, including families, volunteers and staff.



3. Celebrate and build on the community's strengths.

Work with local leaders and groups who understand local needs and can connect with the wider community. Use existing resources such as networks and buildings like nursing homes to deliver programs and strengthen engagement.



4. Partner strategically for extra support.

Collaborate with experts in areas like research, evaluation or communications to strengthen your efforts. Their skills, networks, and influence—along with access to meeting spaces or public platforms—can help secure funding, raise awareness and even influence policy changes.



5. Build strong relationships through open and regular communication.

Start conversations early, communicate regularly and show respect. Create clear ways for community partners to share feedback and ensure two-way communication. Strengthen relationships by being open to different viewpoints and working through challenges together.



6. Stay flexible and use evidence.

Work with the community to collect and use data responsibly, ensuring people understand how their information will be used to meet the community's unique and changing needs. Learn from feedback, successes and mistakes to improve and expand your efforts. Use evaluation to show impact and guide shared decision-making.



7. Support ongoing leadership.

Support community members in taking on leadership roles beyond individual projects, such as advocating for older adults in policy and governance through groups like seniors' councils. Provide spaces for community members to continuously learn and share skills, build connections, and celebrate successes.

How this was developed:

This resource is based on [four case studies](#) that showcase successful aging-in-place initiatives from Canada and around the world. It provides practical tips for building strong, lasting partnerships between older adults and organizations, encouraging readers to apply or adapt these ideas in their own work.



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