

Building Age-Friendly Communities

SAMPLE CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

To inform your community's age-friendly assessment, you will need to gather information from citizens. Using some kind of consultation process will enable you to solicit views and perspectives from people in the community. There are numerous consultation mechanisms you can use, such as:

- surveys;
- focus groups;
- meetings with various stakeholders; and/or
- community chats or community cafés.

The kind of consultation process you choose will depend on the resources you have available and how extensive your Age-Friendly Committee wants the consultation to be.

Whichever consultation process you choose, you may find it helpful to provide participants with the Age-Friendly Checklist. This will help to inform participants on the features of an Age-Friendly Community and to guide discussions. A downloadable version of the Age-Friendly Checklist is available www.health.alberta.ca.

Below are sample survey and focus group questions that you may find useful.

You may wish to adapt or expand these questions, depending on the consultation process you have chosen and the unique circumstances of your community.

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Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Sample survey questions requiring a “yes” or “no” response:

- There are sidewalks linking residences and essential services in most or all areas of my community.
- Sidewalks in most or all areas of my community are well-maintained and accessible to everybody (e.g. curb ramp or sloped area, good lighting).
- Snow clearing is done in a timely manner so walking and driving are safe.
- There are enough street crosswalks in busy business, residential and/or recreational areas.
- Crosswalks are accessible to everybody, including individuals with visual or mobility impairments (e.g. crosswalk has audio signal, crossing control provides adequate time for persons with limited mobility to cross the street).
- There are enough public washrooms in key areas of my community (e.g. business and recreation areas).
- Public washrooms accommodate people with wheelchairs and strollers in my community.
- Most or all businesses and public buildings are easily accessible to everybody (e.g. they have wheelchair ramps, automatic doors).
- Public facilities, including recreational facilities, transportation systems, parks, trails and other outdoor spaces are accessible.

Sample open-ended survey question:

Considering the questions above, can you think of an outdoor space, building or public facility that is not accessible or needs to be improved? If yes, please identify the space and how it could be improved.

Possible focus group discussion questions:

- When you leave your home to go places, what is that experience like for you?
- How accessible do you find buildings and outdoor spaces to be? Think about parks, sidewalks, streets and stores.

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Transportation

Sample survey questions requiring a “yes” or “no” response:

- The road signs in my community are easy to read and large enough for older drivers.
- Roads are in good repair and are well-maintained.
- Roadways are clear of obstructions that block a driver’s vision.
- Driver education and refresher courses are promoted for all drivers.
- Roads and parking areas are promptly cleared of snow and ice.
- Affordable and accessible transportation options are available for those who do not drive, to facilitate access to necessary services (food, medical care, etc.) and opportunities for well-being associated with recreation and social activities.
- Public transportation is easy to navigate, with accessible routes, and can accommodate people with hearing, visual or mobility impairments or strollers.
- Persons with disabilities are able to access reliable and affordable transportation.
- Affordable transportation services are available where public transportation is too limited.
- Information about transportation services (public and private) is available.

Sample open-ended survey question:

Considering the questions above, can you identify a priority transportation issue your community can address to enhance or improve its age-friendliness?

Possible focus group discussion questions:

- How would you describe the availability of transportation in our community?
- What have your experiences been like when you try to get around and from place to place?
- In what ways would you like to see improvements?

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Housing

Sample survey questions requiring a “yes” or “no” response:

- Appropriate and affordable housing is available in areas that are safe and close to community services and amenities which help people stay connected with the community.
- Affordable housing options are available for people with a wide range of economic circumstances.
- Appropriate and affordable home maintenance and support services are available.
- Appropriate housing options are available that support the changing needs of people as they grow older.
- Information about how housing needs can change with age is available in the community.

Sample open-ended survey question:

Considering the questions above, can you identify a priority housing issue in your community?

Possible focus group discussion questions:

- Tell me about the housing you live in. Does it meet your needs at this stage of your life? Why or why not?
- How do you think your housing needs will change in the future?
- What kind of housing options exist in your community? Are there a variety of housing options available that will suit varying needs?

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Social Participation

Sample survey questions requiring a “yes” or “no” response:

- There are opportunities for people of all ages to be socially active in my community.
- There are a wide variety of activities offered to appeal to a diverse population of people, including older people and people with disabilities.
- Events and activities are affordable and located in community venues that are comfortable and safe for older people and persons with disabilities.
- Good information about activities and events is provided, including details about accessibility of facilities and transportation options for those who don't drive.
- There is consistent outreach to include people at risk of social isolation.

Sample open-ended survey question:

Considering the questions above, can you identify one way your community could make it easier for people to participate in the community?

Possible focus group discussion questions:

- How easy is it for you to participate in social activities in the community? Consider educational, recreational, cultural and volunteer opportunities.
- Are there enough social activities that appeal to citizens of different backgrounds?
- How could things be improved to better meet your needs and interests?

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Respect and Social Inclusion

Sample survey questions requiring a “yes” or “no” response:

- There are opportunities for people of all ages to be socially active in the community.
- Older people and persons with disabilities are included in activities for all community members.
- Older people and persons with disabilities are recognized in their community for their past and present contributions.
- Schools provide opportunities to learn about aging and older people, and involve older people in school activities.
- There are opportunities to socialize and maintain good networks of friends, family and neighbours.

Sample open-ended survey question:

Considering the questions above, can you identify a way to improve respect and social inclusion in your community?

Possible focus group discussion questions:

- Do you feel that our community is respectful of people with different backgrounds and needs?
- Do you think our community does enough to include people of different ages, backgrounds and circumstances? How could it be better?

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Civic Participation and Employment Opportunities

Sample survey questions requiring a “yes” or “no” response:

- There are opportunities for people of all ages to participate in suitable volunteer, civic and employment positions.
- Appropriate training and guidance are provided to citizens to support a wide range of volunteer and employment opportunities.
- The skills and attributes of older employees and persons with disabilities are well-promoted.
- Citizens have options that allow them to remain in the workforce if they choose to continue working, including a range of flexible and appropriately paid opportunities.
- Local employers are aware of the potential contribution of mature workers and persons with disabilities and are aware of the benefits of attracting, retaining and developing these individuals.
- Our community recognizes that healthy aging may involve working longer and a gradual transition from the workforce to retirement.
- Decision-making bodies in public, private and voluntary sectors encourage and facilitate membership for older people.

Sample open-ended survey question:

Considering the questions above, can you identify a way to improve civic participation and employment opportunities in your community?

Possible focus group discussion questions:

- Describe your experiences in community life, such as volunteering or engaging community organizations. Do you feel able to fully participate and access these?
- Do you think there are accessible employment opportunities for seniors and persons with disabilities?

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Communication and Information

Sample survey questions requiring a “yes” or “no” response:

- Our community has a basic, effective communication system that reaches community residents of all ages.
- Information is readily available on community events, activities and opportunities.
- There is affordable and accessible public access to computers and the Internet.
- People at risk of social isolation receive needed information.

Sample open-ended survey question:

Considering the questions above, can you identify a way to improve communication and information sharing in your community?

Possible focus group discussion questions:

- Are you able to access information about what’s happening in your community?
- Is information accessible, readable and understandable?
- How could governments, businesses and organizations communicate better with you and other community residents?

Community Support and Health Services

Sample survey questions requiring a “yes” or “no” response:

- There is an adequate range of health and community support services offered for promoting, maintaining and restoring health.
- Older adults are supported in staying physically active and safe.
- Affordable services to help seniors and persons with disabilities, such as snow removal or lawn care, are available in the community.
- Local health care services meet the needs of older citizens, or transportation is available to bring them to services.
- Community emergency planning takes into account the needs of older citizens and persons with disabilities.

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Sample open-ended survey question:

Considering the questions above, can you identify some community support and health services that are needed in your community?

Possible focus group discussion questions:

- Do you think services in the community meet the needs of citizens with varying needs?
- What kinds of community services would you like to have better access to?

General Focus Group Questions

- How can we make our community a more age-friendly community?
- What are the gaps in availability, accessibility and awareness of services and supports in our community, specifically for older adults and persons with disabilities?
- What is needed to help citizens remain in the community and age actively?
- What are some priorities our community can address to become more age-friendly?

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