The City of Orange Township's AARP Age-Friendly Community Action and Evaluation Plan

"Orange Golden Gems Project"

Introduction

The City of Orange Township is committed to creating an inclusive, supportive, and accessible environment where older adults can age safely, remain socially connected, and maintain independence. Through participation in the **AARP Age-Friendly Communities Initiative** and support from the **New Jersey Age-Friendly Grant Program**, the City conducted community assessments, stakeholder engagement activities, and outreach efforts to identify barriers impacting older residents.

Findings from community surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder discussions identified several recurring challenges affecting older adults, including limited awareness of available community resources, transportation barriers, social isolation, reduced access to healthcare services, and communication challenges among culturally diverse populations.

This action plan establishes a strategic framework to address these barriers by improving transportation access, strengthening community outreach, expanding social engagement opportunities, and promoting healthy aging initiatives that improve the quality of life for older adults in Orange Township.

Strategic Goals

The Orange Golden Gems Project will focus on six strategic goals:

1. Improve access to safe, reliable, and affordable transportation options for older adults.
2. Increase awareness of health, social, and supportive services available to seniors.
3. Reduce social isolation by increasing participation in community activities.
4. Strengthen trust and engagement between older residents and community organizations.
5. Promote healthy aging through education, wellness programming, and preventive care access.
6. Develop sustainable partnerships that support long-term age-friendly community development.

Priority Areas and Action Plan

Goal 1: Improve Transportation Access and Mobility

Reliable transportation remains one of the greatest barriers preventing older adults from accessing healthcare appointments, grocery stores, pharmacies, community programs, and recreational activities.

Action Steps

- Partner with **EZ Ride**, county transportation providers, and **NJ TRANSIT** to improve transportation awareness.
- Develop multilingual transportation guides explaining eligibility requirements, scheduling procedures, service availability, and contact information.
- Conduct transportation workshops in senior housing buildings, community centers, and libraries.
- Explore development of scheduled shuttle services for older adults attending healthcare appointments and community programs.
- Increase awareness of transportation assistance programs through targeted outreach campaigns.

Evaluation Measures

- Number of seniors utilizing transportation services monthly.
- Increase in transportation program enrollment rates.
- Reduction in reported transportation-related barriers.
- Number of transportation workshops conducted annually.
- Participant satisfaction surveys measuring ease of transportation access.

Goal 2: Improve Communication and Community Outreach

Older adults often face communication barriers that prevent them from accessing services and participating fully in community life.

Action Steps

- Develop culturally responsive educational materials in multiple languages.
- Launch citywide outreach campaigns using flyers, phone calls, email communication, local newspapers, and social media platforms.
- Partner with faith-based organizations, senior housing buildings, healthcare providers, and community organizations to distribute information.
- Establish regular information sessions in accessible community locations.

- Create a centralized senior resource directory listing available health and social support services.

Evaluation Measures

- Number of educational materials distributed.
- Number of outreach events conducted annually.
- Percentage increase in awareness of available services among older adults.
- Number of community partnerships established.
- Survey results measuring effectiveness of communication strategies.

Goal 3: Community Ambassador Program

Community Ambassadors will serve as trusted messengers connecting older adults to available services and reducing barriers to community participation.

Action Steps

- Recruit local residents, including older adults, to serve as volunteer Community Ambassadors.
- Train ambassadors on transportation services, health resources, referral procedures, and community navigation.
- Conduct door-to-door outreach and face-to-face engagement in senior residential buildings.
- Assist older adults with service enrollment and resource navigation.
- Utilize ambassadors during health fairs, senior events, and community workshops.

Evaluation Measures

- Number of Community Ambassadors recruited and trained.
- Number of residents reached through ambassador outreach.
- Number of referrals made to supportive services.
- Increase in service utilization following ambassador engagement.
- Resident feedback regarding trust and program satisfaction.

Goal 4: Social Participation and Reducing Isolation

Social isolation negatively impacts emotional well-being, mental health, and overall quality of life among older adults.

Action Steps

- Expand senior-centered recreational, educational, and wellness programming.
- Host monthly community engagement activities including health fairs, educational seminars, exercise classes, and support groups.
- Partner with community organizations and churches to develop culturally inclusive programming.
- Increase transportation support to improve attendance at community activities.
- Promote volunteer opportunities that encourage civic engagement among older adults.

Evaluation Measures

- Attendance rates at senior activities and events.
- Percentage increase in participation in community programs.
- Participant satisfaction survey results.
- Reduction in self-reported feelings of loneliness or isolation.
- Number of new programs created specifically for older adults.

Goal 5: Promote Health, Wellness, and Independent Living

Supporting preventive health services and wellness education helps older adults maintain independence and improve long-term health outcomes.

Action Steps

- Provide wellness education programs focusing on chronic disease prevention, nutrition, exercise, and mental health.
- Increase access to preventive health screenings through community health fairs.
- Connect older adults to healthcare navigation services.
- Provide medication management and chronic disease self-management education.
- Promote healthy aging campaigns emphasizing independence and preventive care.

Evaluation Measures

- Number of health education workshops conducted annually.
- Number of residents participating in wellness programs.
- Increase in preventive healthcare screening participation.
- Improvement in participant knowledge following educational workshops.
- Self-reported improvements in health management and independence.

Implementation Timeline

Timeline	Key Activities
Short-Term (0–6 Months)	Launch transportation awareness campaign, create multilingual resource guides, begin transportation workshops, initiate community outreach partnerships
Medium-Term (6–18 Months)	Implement Community Ambassador Program, pilot transportation shuttle services, expand senior engagement programming, begin regular evaluation surveys
Long-Term (18+ Months)	Establish Senior Resource Hub, secure long-term funding partnerships, expand transportation options, strengthen sustainability planning

Comprehensive Evaluation Framework

Program success will be measured using both **quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods**.

Quantitative Indicators

- Number of seniors enrolled in transportation programs
- Attendance rates at workshops and community activities
- Number of community outreach contacts made
- Number of referrals completed by Community Ambassadors
- Increase in utilization of healthcare and supportive services
- Participation rates in health promotion activities

Qualitative Indicators

- Resident satisfaction surveys
- Focus groups with older adults
- Community Ambassador feedback reports
- Stakeholder interviews with community partners
- Assessment of perceived reductions in social isolation
- Participant feedback regarding service accessibility and communication effectiveness

Annual Outcome Targets

- 25% increase in senior participation in community programs
- 20% increase in transportation service utilization
- 30% increase in awareness of available senior services
- 15% reduction in reported transportation barriers
- 20% reduction in self-reported social isolation among participating seniors

Sustainability Plan

To ensure long-term sustainability, the City of Orange will:

- Pursue additional funding opportunities through state and federal grants.
- Strengthen partnerships with healthcare providers, nonprofits, and transportation agencies.
- Integrate age-friendly planning into future municipal planning initiatives.
- Expand volunteer leadership opportunities for older adults.
- Continue annual evaluation to refine programming based on community needs.

Conclusion

The City of Orange Township's Golden Gems Age-Friendly Community Action Plan represents a long-term commitment to creating a community where older adults can live independently, remain socially connected, access critical services, and age with dignity.

Through strategic investments in transportation accessibility, community outreach, social engagement, wellness programming, and sustainable partnerships, Orange Township will continue building a stronger, healthier, and more inclusive community aligned with the principles of the **AARP Age-Friendly Communities Initiative**.