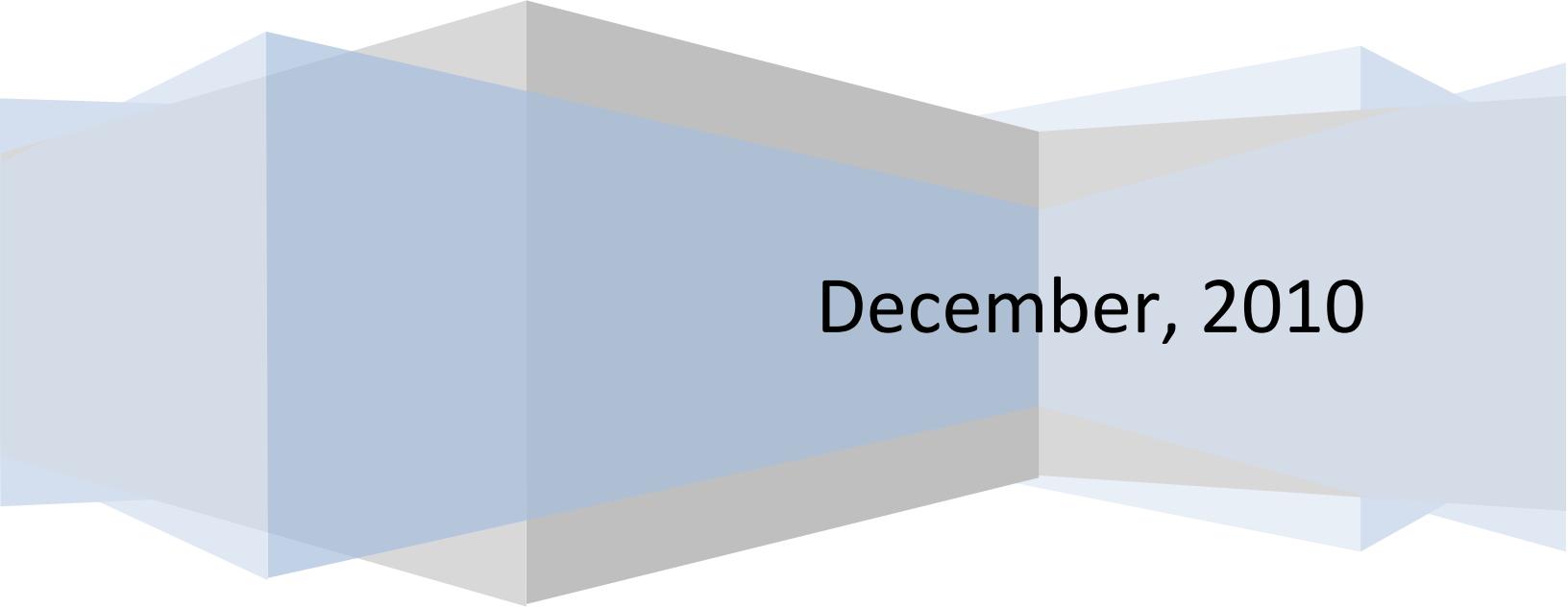


Age-friendly British Columbia

Lessons Learned from

October 1, 2007-September 30, 2010



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Submitted by Gerotech Research Associates to the Seniors' Healthy Living Secretariat, Ministry of Health Services

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Acronyms

AFBC	Age-friendly British Columbia
AFCIT	Age-friendly Communities Implementation Team
AFLP	Age-friendly Leaders Partnership
AFRRCI	Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities Initiative
MoHS	Ministry of Health Services
SHLS	Seniors' Healthy Living Secretariat
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

This is an evaluation of the Age-friendly British Columbia (AFBC) initiative from October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2010. The purpose of this evaluation is to:

- Identify the factors that led to the successes of the AFBC initiative, and areas that would benefit from improvement; and
- Recommend future actions that will help ensure sustainability of the initiative.

The AFBC initiative builds on the World Health Organization's (WHO) global age-friendly cities project conducted in 2006, which resulted in *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide* (2007). This was followed by the Canadian Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities Initiative (AFRRCI) led by Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors, which resulted in the publication of *Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide* (2007). This global, national and provincial movement concerning age-friendly issues is indicative of concerns that communities will need to plan and prepare for ever growing seniors' populations. In British Columbia (BC), statistics show that 14.6 percent of the population was 65 or older in 2006, a figure projected to be nearly 25 percent by 2031.¹ These figures make a strong case for the need to continue promoting age-friendly planning and principles in BC communities for some time.

The broad purpose of the AFBC initiative is to enhance the activity and independence of seniors living throughout BC, thus improving their overall health and quality of life. In 2007, the Age-friendly Communities Implementation Team (AFCIT) was recruited to assist with this purpose through these specific goals:

1. Enhance community capacity.
2. Facilitate multi-sectoral engagement.
3. Provide education, training and communication.

Enhancing Community Capacity

The AFCIT used a variety of outreach methods in order to enhance community capacity for becoming more age-friendly. Eight key factors emerged that contributed to success:

1. Having the strong support of local government.
2. Having a champion in the community.
3. Appointing a dedicated staff person to work on the initiative.
4. Having strong local partnerships that are inclusive of seniors and other stakeholders.

¹ Source: Forecast BC-Stats, 07/07; Estimated Stats Canada.

5. Obtaining a small grant to get started and using that to leverage additional money and resources.
6. Introducing small changes at the outset of the project.
7. Cultivating a good relationship with the local media.
8. Taking full advantage of the services offered by the AFCIT.

While these factors are crucial to enhancing community capacity, some additional recommendations to ensure future success of the AFBC initiative are that the Province of BC:

- Produce a detailed guide for communities that outlines the eight factors leading to age-friendly success, as well as the barriers identified and actions undertaken by local governments.
- Continue with some type of small grants program.
- Create a recognition program to acknowledge communities that have achieved success in becoming age-friendly.
- Continue providing communities with planning support and advice for age-friendly activities.

Facilitating Multi-sectoral Engagement

A leadership network to facilitate multi-sectoral engagement was formed, consisting of leaders of business, financial, professional, government, Aboriginal, service, community, ethnocultural and seniors' organizations. The specific objectives of the Age-friendly Leaders' Partnership (AFLP) were to:

- Advise on the most effective approaches to influence communities to be more age-friendly.
- Identify potential roles for member organizations to collaborate on and coordinate age-friendly initiatives.
- Provide leadership, thinking and action on age-friendly communities implementation.
- Support and guide the work of the AFCIT.
- Champion the age-friendly movement among member organizations.
- Report on member organizations' progress on implementation of age-friendly strategies, plans, programs and outcomes.

While multi-sectoral engagement is recognized as an essential feature of promoting the age-friendly initiative, the current structure of the AFLP may not be the most effective for accomplishing this goal. Some recommendations to realize the full benefits of multi-sectoral engagement are for the Province of BC to:

- Expand membership through the creation of a virtual network that is more inclusive of the province's seniors' organizations and relevant non-profit agencies.

- Engage Aboriginal communities in the age-friendly initiative in ways that recognize their unique needs and distinct cultural approaches to community development.
- Engage the business community by introducing an age-friendly business recognition program.
- Promote the incorporation of age-friendly strategies and principles into all local, regional and provincial networks and initiatives.

Providing Education, Training and Communication

The AFCIT undertook a wide variety of educational, training and communication activities in order to support the AFBC initiative. These included:

- Delivering presentations and conducting workshops.
- Attending provincial and national meetings focused on age-friendly issues.
- Assisting in the creation of an age-friendly section on the SeniorsBC.ca website.
- Producing a variety of age-friendly resources and materials for distribution.

These activities were critical in raising awareness about the AFBC initiative in the province. Some recommendations to further bolster these successes are for the Province of BC to:

- Increase age-friendly awareness by providing additional training workshops and seminars.
- Produce more educational materials to support age-friendly developments.
- Continue national and international engagement in the age-friendly realm.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Scope of Report

This report provides an evaluation of the Age-friendly British Columbia (AFBC) initiative, spanning October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2010. The report includes: a brief history of the initiative; a description of the Age-friendly Communities Implementation Team (AFCIT) and its work; an explanation of the evaluation methods utilized; and finally, an analysis of the results and recommendations for future directions based on findings gathered during the course of this initiative.

The purpose of the evaluation is to:

- Identify the factors that led to the successes of the AFBC initiative, and areas that would benefit from improvement; and
- Recommend future actions that will help ensure sustainability of the initiative.

This document, prepared for the Seniors' Healthy Living Secretariat (SHLS) of the BC Ministry of Health Services (MoHS), serves two purposes: first, as a record of the results and achievements realized during the first three years of the AFBC initiative; and second as a tool to help guide the decision-making process in identifying the next steps of the AFBC initiative. Portions of this document will also prove to be a valuable resource for local governments in BC and other jurisdictions that either plan to or have already undertaken age-friendly work.

1.2 History and Goals of the Age-friendly British Columbia Initiative

The broad purpose of the AFBC initiative is to enhance the activity and independence of seniors living throughout BC, thus improving their overall health and quality of life. The AFBC initiative builds on the World Health Organization's (WHO) global age-friendly cities project conducted in 2006, which resulted in *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide* (2007). This was followed by the Canadian Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities Initiative led by Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors, which resulted in the publication of *Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide* (2007). This global, national and provincial movement concerning age-friendly issues is indicative of concerns that communities will need to plan and prepare for ever growing seniors' populations.

While inspired by the global age-friendly movement initiated by the WHO study, the impetus for this initiative in BC is apparent upon examination of the province's demographics. In 2006, just over 14 percent of BC's population was 65 or older, and by 2031 this proportion is

projected to be nearly 25 percent.² These figures make a strong case for the need to continue promoting age-friendly planning and principles in BC communities for some time. An aging population poses challenges to communities, but communities that plan and take action to accommodate the needs of older residents can ensure a livable, attractive and thriving community for all ages. Older people who live in age-friendly communities can remain active and independent, while also contributing to the social and economic fabric of their community.

In an age-friendly community, policies, services, settings and structures enable older people to age actively; that is, to live in security, enjoy good health and continue to participate fully in society by:

- Recognizing the wide range of capacities and resources among older persons.
- Anticipating and responding flexibly to aging-related needs and preferences.
- Respecting decisions and lifestyle choices.
- Protecting those who are most vulnerable.
- Promoting inclusion and contribution in all areas of community life.

Furthermore, there are eight key features that help make communities age-friendly and serve to benefit the whole community.

Eight key features of an age-friendly community:

1. **Outdoor spaces** and public buildings that are pleasant, clean, secure and physically accessible.
2. Public **transportation** that is accessible and affordable.
3. **Housing** that is affordable, appropriately located, well built, well designed and secure.
4. Opportunities for **social participation** in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities with people of all ages and cultures.
5. Older people are treated with **respect** and are included in civic life.
6. Opportunities for **employment and volunteerism** that cater to older persons' interests and abilities.
7. Age-friendly **communication and information** are available.
8. **Community support and health services** are tailored to older persons' needs.

Source: World Health Organization's (WHO) *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide*.

² Source: Forecast BC-Stats, 07/07; Estimated Stats Canada.

The AFBC initiative involved a number of activities to support communities across BC to become age-friendly. The AFCIT was formed in October 2007 to assist and enable local governments to identify barriers and take action to plan and adapt their communities to be more age-friendly.

The three key goals at the outset of the AFBC initiative were to:

1. Enhance community capacity.
2. Facilitate multi-sectoral engagement.
3. Provide education, training and communication.

In September 2008, the provincial government released *Seniors in British Columbia: A Healthy Living Framework*. This document outlines four cornerstones to build the best system of support in Canada for older citizens, the first of which is to “Create Age-friendly Communities.”

1.3 Age-friendly Communities Implementation Team

In 2007, AFBC began with a competitive bid to form an implementation team to assist and enable local governments to identify barriers and take action to create age-friendly communities. Gerotech Research Associates was the successful proponent. The team comprised the following members.

- **Dr. Elaine Gallagher** of Gerotech Research Associates was the project lead. She was also the lead researcher in the Saanich WHO global age-friendly cities project and the Canadian AFRCI.
- **Dr. Veronica Doyle** of Clare Research Associates brought many years of experience as a provincial and health authority leader in seniors’ housing and health initiatives.
- **Edith Loring-Kuhanga** of First Nations Training & Consulting Services has been providing training and consulting services to Métis, First Nations and Inuit peoples across Canada since 1993.
- **Faye White** of Faye White Consulting has 25 years of leadership experience in the health and social service sectors.
- **Angie Mallhi** is the Project Manager. With diverse government experience, she served as the central contact for the project. Janet Love preceded her in this role.

The AFCIT worked closely with staff from the Province, including: Silas Brownsey, Lauren Syverson, Doni Eve, Kim Abraham, Robin Burgess, Matt Herman, Winnie Yu and Tessa Graham.

2.0 Evaluation Methods

This evaluation and the resulting recommendations are based on observations and data collected from diverse sources during the course of the AFBC initiative. These include:

- The age-friendly communities follow-up questionnaire distributed to the 30 communities with which the AFCIT had active contact during the life of the project.
- Meetings and discussions held with the SHLS and the AFLP regarding the initiative.
- Feedback from and discussions generated by attendees of age-friendly workshops and presentations led by the AFCIT.
- Individual community consultations and on-site visits, particularly focus groups and public forums led and/or facilitated by the AFCIT.
- Telephone and e-mail exchanges with individual communities regarding the initiative.
- Community generated reports from age-friendly assets and needs assessments.
- One-page community profiles compiled in consultation with individual communities.
- Interviews conducted with individual communities for feature stories in the AFBC Newsletter.

The questionnaire was the most comprehensive and useful tool in conducting this evaluation and making recommendations. With 25 of 30 communities responding up to the time of this report, a response rate of 83.3 percent was attained, allowing data to be gathered from a wide range of both rural and urban communities in BC.

3.0 Lessons Learned

The lessons learned from this evaluation are presented here according to the three key goals specified at the outset of the project:

1. Enhance community capacity.
2. Facilitate multi-sectoral engagement.
3. Provide education, training and communication.

Each of these categories is in turn discussed under the following headings: introduction; highlights; analysis; and, conclusions and recommendations.

3.1 Enhancing Community Capacity

3.1.1 Introduction

A major goal of the AFBC project was to enhance the capacity of BC's communities to become more age-friendly. The AFCIT supported this objective in a variety of ways, including:

- Providing support and expertise via telephone and e-mail contact.
- Undertaking site visits to guide and assist with community assessments.
- Leading focus groups attended by community stakeholders, local governments and senior residents.
- Conducting data analysis and report writing.
- Creating one-page community profiles highlighting age-friendly community achievements.

The value of these services to communities was assessed through a follow-up questionnaire, in which communities were asked about their level of satisfaction with the services of the AFCIT. Among the 23 communities that responded to this question, 17 (73.9 percent) indicated they were 'very satisfied', four (17.4 percent) said they were 'somewhat satisfied', and two (8.7 percent) felt that the team 'needs work'. These satisfaction ratings indicate that the majority of communities valued the opportunity for individualized consultation and on-going support.

3.1.2 Highlights

In addition to providing the above services, the AFCIT sought to enhance community capacity in becoming more age-friendly by encouraging communities to follow a list of nine recommended steps. Table 1 summarizes their reported success rates in following the steps, expressed as a percentage of the 30 communities that participated in the AFBC initiative. The results are analyzed more fully in section 3.1.3.

Table 1. Success Rates for Age-friendly Steps Undertaken (n=30)

Recommended Steps	Number of Communities that Successfully Undertook Step	Success Rate
Obtained funding	30	100%
Appointed a local coordinator	16	53%
Formed a local steering committee	24	80%
Presented to local council	21	70%
Passed a council resolution	18	60%
Conducted a local assessment of assets and needs	27	90%
Set priorities for addressing needs	25	83%
Took local action on priorities identified	24	80%
Evaluated/celebrated outcomes	15	50%

Based on the results of the follow-up questionnaire, a detailed report on the wide range of issues identified, community goals, actions undertaken and plans for future actions was also completed. In reviewing the questionnaires and compiling the results, it became clear that the issues identified by communities were similar regardless of the settings – in other words, urban and rural seniors seem to face quite similar challenges. However, the solutions tended to be unique to each community depending, for instance, on the capital and human resources available. This record will be of value to future communities who are interested in the kinds of achievements obtained by this first cohort.

While this age-friendly work in some communities began as a result of the AFBC initiative, it is important to note that in others, community enhancement projects were already underway as part of another seniors' initiative or a sustainable community development project. For example, the Village of Lumby had completed a pathway study to assess their existing pathway system. This led to the construction of a one kilometre paved trail linking the north village to the downtown core and parks that is used by the community at large. By applying an age-friendly lens to this existing project, the Village ensured that the improvements would also be in the best interests of seniors in the region.

"This project has provided us with invaluable information in planning for affordable age-friendly housing and age-friendly neighbourhoods, as well as raising awareness of the importance of issues such as social inclusion. It has provided insights into what issues are important to people in the 55+ age group and how to engage this group in discussions around community planning."

-City of Chilliwack

3.1.3 Analysis

From October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2010, 30 communities either took steps towards, or fully completed, age-friendly projects. Based on an analysis of the results of the questionnaires and the records and observations of the AFCIT, eight **key factors** contributing to success in creating a more age-friendly community were identified. Communities were more successful if they:

1. Had the strong support of local government.

Local government support was secured in a variety of ways. A number of communities asked the local municipal council to pass a resolution declaring that the council endorse the age-friendly initiative. Many of the local steering committees also did presentations to their councils, reporting on the findings of their assessments and the recommended actions. In at least four communities, the mayor or a town councillor sat in on the local steering committee and played an active role in the whole process.

2. Had a champion in the community, someone passionate about the issue.

The age-friendly project made better progress if there was at least one individual in the community who had a vision that this was an exciting, manageable and worthwhile project. These champions were from a range of backgrounds including members of the local council, public health nurses, hired consultants, town planners, local seniors, and recreation coordinators. Without a champion, some projects never gathered momentum and failed to complete all of the recommended steps in the process.

3. Appointed a dedicated staff person to work on the initiative.

The most successful communities had a dedicated staff person assigned to see the age-friendly project through to completion. These people were most often municipal employees and it was clearly evident that this work was given a high priority as part of their role. They served as a link between the steering committee and the politicians, offering such services as providing meeting space, photocopying, and other support as needed.

4. Had strong local partnerships that were inclusive of seniors and other stakeholders.

Successful communities had steering committees made up of a wide range of stakeholders, which first and foremost included seniors. They also included representatives of local non-profit groups, businesses, law enforcement, ambulance, health care, public works, recreation centres and multicultural organizations. Many committees included people who had visual impairments, used wheelchairs or scooters, or had other physical disabilities. Inclusion of members from the latter

group proved to be extremely valuable, since many people with disabilities face similar accessibility challenges as seniors in the community. Several committees also included youth, as it was felt that seniors' issues impacted on people across the life span.

5. Obtained a small grant to get started and used that to leverage additional money and resources.

All of the communities obtained grant funding from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) or other sources to get the age-friendly project off the ground. Successful communities also used this grant to leverage additional funds and created innovative partnerships to enhance their work on projects such as trail enhancement and accessibility initiatives.

6. Introduced small changes at the outset of the project.

One strategy used by successful communities was to select "low hanging fruit" to demonstrate that some worthwhile change could take place quickly and with limited resources. Examples of such projects included production of a guide to local seniors' services, installation of seating along a public walkway, and posting of signs to a public washroom. These small projects instilled confidence in the community's age-friendly initiative as a whole, required little cost or time, and also inspired people to tackle more complex issues.

7. Cultivated a good relationship with the local media.

An additional strategy used by several communities was the development of a strong relationship with local media. This resulted in good coverage of events and project activities, thereby raising awareness of the initiative, as well as engaging the public by keeping them informed.

8. Took full advantage of the services offered by the Age-friendly Communities Implementation Team.

Having at least one person available from the AFCIT to meet with community groups on site and assist with their process was a valuable feature. This consultant served as a catalyst to guide the local initiative at the outset and provide ongoing support. Telephone and e-mail support was also well utilized and beneficial for the life of the project.

"Our experience working with the age-friendly team was extremely valuable as we prepared the downtown plan. We utilized their resources as part of a transportation committee and worked very closely with the group to ensure that we were able to get input from a variety of seniors groups that we likely would not have otherwise reached. We have been able to develop a relationship with seniors that will be invaluable moving forward with all future planning exercises. The relationship we have been able to develop will allow us to collaborate on efforts designed to ensure that seniors are included in the public consultation process."

-City of Vernon

3.1.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

In order to promote sustainability of this effort in BC and elsewhere, four major recommendations are put forward.

1. Produce a Detailed Guide for Communities

This evaluation found that at least eight key factors led to successful age-friendly projects. The detailed results of efforts in communities across BC are remarkable and would be useful for groups getting started in this process. A wealth of information was also gathered regarding the barriers identified and actions undertaken by communities in BC. Combined, these would provide a rich resource guide for communities embarking on age-friendly initiatives. It is acknowledged that the Public Health Agency of Canada, Division of Aging and Seniors, is currently developing a detailed age-friendly guide that will be made available to communities across Canada. The Province could either ensure that this guide incorporates the lessons learned and recommendations provided in this report, or develop complementary information and/or tools specific to BC communities.

Recommendation:

That the Province produce a detailed guide for communities that outlines the eight factors leading to age-friendly success, as well as the barriers identified and actions undertaken by local governments in BC.

2. Provide Funding

UBCM's Seniors' Housing and Support Initiative (SHSI) was created in 2004 through a one-time \$2 million grant from the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development to assist local governments to prepare for an aging population. In 2007, MOHS provided a \$0.5 million grant to further support the initiative and to incorporate a focus on age-friendly projects. As of September 2010, this funding has been depleted, with the last round of grants distributed in early 2010. Almost every community expressed a desire to continue with this type of small grants program (between \$5,000 and \$20,000) in order to plan and carry out their age-friendly work. Many stated that the funds were not only useful unto themselves, but more importantly, they were helpful in leveraging additional money from a range of sources. Most people expressed satisfaction with the UBCM grants process and wished to see it continue in some form.

Recommendation:

That the Province continue with some type of small grants program to carry out age-friendly work. The UBCM grants process worked well and it is recommended it be continued in some form as funds are available.

3. Recognize & Promote Success

Recognizing and promoting success is an important element of community development. One aspect of the AFBC initiative that was missing was some form of program to officially recognize communities that have successfully undertaken steps to becoming more age-friendly. Some type of certification program would give communities an identifiable recognition of achievement that can help continue to promote age-friendly principles within the community; through province-wide promotion, it could provide the added benefit of helping develop areas such as seniors' tourism or attracting retirees to live in the area.

Recommendation:

That the Province create a recognition program to acknowledge communities that have achieved success in becoming age-friendly.

4. Provide Support to Communities

The majority of communities expressed strong satisfaction with their interactions with the AFCIT. The most valued services appeared to be the access provided to educational materials; the facilitation of town hall and focus group meetings; the examination of local data; and the establishment of priorities for action.

Recommendation:

That the Province continue to provide communities with support and advice, as well as access to tools to help them plan and implement age-friendly activities.

3.2 Facilitating Multi-sectoral Engagement

3.2.1 Introduction

A second goal of the AFBC initiative was to establish a leadership network that would not only promote the age-friendly initiative in a broad array of sectors, but also enhance the quality of life for older people living in rural, remote, urban and on-reserve communities. To this end, the Age-friendly Leaders' Partnership (AFLP) was formed in December 2007 and consisted of leaders of business, financial, professional, government, Aboriginal, service, community, ethnocultural and seniors' organizations. The intent was that the AFLP would help local governments and members of their organizations to identify actions that could be taken in their built and social environments to make communities accessible, inclusive and age-friendly. The AFLP members were to serve in an advisory capacity to the AFCIT and SHLS.

The specific objectives of the AFLP were to:

- Advise on the most effective approaches in influencing communities to be more age-friendly.
- Identify potential roles for member organizations to collaborate on and coordinate age-friendly initiatives within sectors and communities.
- Provide leadership, thinking and action on age-friendly communities implementation.
- Support and guide the work of the AFCIT.
- Champion the age-friendly movement among member organizations to generate greater awareness and action.
- Report on member organizations' progress on implementation of age-friendly strategies, plans, programs and outcomes.

The AFCIT provided logistical support to the AFLP by booking meeting space; arranging for catering; inviting members; circulating meeting agendas; taking and circulating meeting minutes; and arranging for travel and accommodation for those requiring such assistance. MOHS staff developed the agenda; set up discussions; coordinated guest speakers; and chaired the meetings.

3.2.2 Highlights

Over the three years of the project, six AFLP meetings were held at participating agencies in the Lower Mainland. Meetings typically included a brief roundtable where members provided an update on the age-friendly initiatives being considered and/or implemented by their agency. However, the primary focus of the meetings was to learn about, discuss and consider actions on

specific age-friendly themes that were pre-selected by the members. Learning opportunities were provided by specialized speakers invited to present on the selected theme. Examples of themes included: age-friendly developments in municipalities in Europe; age-friendly businesses; and age-friendly transportation. In some cases partnerships for further action were formed. For instance, a small reference group was formed to help guide the development of the age-friendly business guide following a meeting that explored the topic of age-friendly businesses.

The meetings were well attended, with about 90 percent of those invited in attendance at each gathering. This suggests that most people found the meetings of value.

3.2.3 Analysis

This assessment is based on observations made from telephone and e-mail correspondence and participant observations at the meetings, in relation to the AFLP's objectives outlined in section 3.2.1 above. The following indicates the extent to which the AFLP objectives appear to have been met.

- There were several opportunities for members of the AFLP to **advise** on the most effective approaches to influencing communities to be more age-friendly. For example, the AFLP provided feedback to SHLS concerning the overall plan for making BC more age-friendly.
- At least two member organizations were able to **identify potential roles** for collaboration concerning age-friendly initiatives. The Council of Senior Citizens Organizations (COSCO) and the United Way of Lower Mainland (UWLM) both focused their provincial AGMs on the topic of age-friendliness.
- There were indications that network members began to provide **leadership thinking and action** on age-friendly communities implementation. Several members applied the concepts of age-friendly into their day to day work, as it fit into their mandates. For example, the representative from BC Transit provided many examples of new and innovative approaches to public transit for older persons, tailored to specific communities. Members also provided high level input and feedback at the meeting on provincial age-friendly initiatives.
- Members of the network provided **support and guidance** to the AFCIT. This was primarily in the way of editorial review of resources and tools created by the AFCIT. For example, several members read and critiqued two of the team's publications, the *How Age-friendly is Your Community? A Guide for Local Governments to get Started* and the age-friendly business guide.
- Network members demonstrated the willingness to **champion** the age-friendly initiative within their organizations. They provided information about the age-friendly initiative to their boards and membership and invited members of the AFCIT to speak

at various events. For example, an AFCIT member was invited to be a key-note speaker at a provincial meeting of the BC Retired Teachers' Association at the invitation of one of the AFLP members.

- There was considerable success in terms of **regular reporting** on member organizations' progress on implementation of age-friendly strategies, plans and programs. While many of these were not originally initiated under an age-friendly banner, AFLP members were able to see how their projects were compatible with, and synergistic to, the age-friendly goals.

3.2.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

Multi-sectoral engagement is an essential feature of promoting the age-friendly agenda. The AFLP was successful in raising awareness and promoting the age-friendly concept to member partners. It also ensured members were up to date on provincial implementation strategies and initiatives, and that they had an opportunity to provide input, feedback and leadership.

Measurement of specific age-friendly actions by each organization was considered beyond the scope of this evaluation, therefore a full assessment of the success of outcomes of the AFLP is not available. Based on observations during the meetings, as well as anecdotal information from some partnership members, the current structure of the AFLP should be reviewed to determine if it is the most effective method of stimulating and sustaining multi-sectoral engagement. The following recommendations should be considered in order to realize the full benefits of multi-sectoral engagement.

1. Create Larger Network – A Community of Practice

While AFLP members had good input and opinions about the topics discussed, they represented only a handful of the many organizations and stakeholders whose opinions are critical in addressing the challenges identified. An alternative approach would be to set up a much larger virtual network – a community of practice – with a broader membership that could be promoted to all of the province's seniors' organizations and relevant non-profit agencies. This network could meet via teleconferences or webcast and could include municipal representatives from participating communities. A face-to-face meeting or summit could be held to bring people together annually to share successes and challenges. A full discussion of issues on such topics such as housing, transportation and recreation could be a part of such meetings.

Recommendation:

That the Province support a virtual network – a community of practice – that is open to all of the province's seniors' organizations, participating communities and relevant business and non-profit agencies.

2. Engage Aboriginal Communities

Different approaches are needed to engage BC's Aboriginal communities in the age-friendly initiative. Aboriginal organizations were invited to the AFLP meetings, but not all of the invited representatives could attend each meeting. One approach to increase awareness of the AFBC would be to partner with an interested Aboriginal community to conduct a pilot project. This project could be used to develop and then launch an age-friendly guide for Aboriginal people.

Recommendation:

That the Province, in partnership with interested Aboriginal agencies, engage Aboriginal communities in the age-friendly initiative in ways that recognize their unique needs and distinct cultural approaches to community development.

3. Engage Business Community

On behalf of the Province, the AFCIT produced a draft guide for businesses to use in becoming more age-friendly. This was submitted to the SHLS for finalization and consultation with business organizations. During development of the draft, several provincial business organizations expressed interest in a recognition program that would acknowledge and promote businesses that met certain criteria to become age-friendly. This has good potential for a future partnership initiative.

Recommendation:

That the Province, in partnership with interested agencies, roll out an age-friendly business recognition program.

4. Promote the Age-friendly Lens

A limited number of government agencies, community organizations and local governments were able to recognize the connection between their goals and objectives and those of the AFBC initiative. There is good potential for other organizations and levels of government to use an age-friendly lens in a wide range of their decision-making processes, an approach that would create more livable communities for all citizens.

Recommendation:

That the Province promote the practice of incorporating age-friendly strategies and principles into existing local, regional and provincial networks and initiatives.

3.3 Providing Education, Training and Communication

3.3.1 Introduction

In addition to enhancing community capacity and facilitating multi-sectoral engagement, AFBC also involved a wide variety of educational, training and communication activities. The goal was to develop tools and resources for use by communities and others, to promote the age-friendly concept and AFBC initiative to key groups and organizations, and to coordinate information-sharing about age-friendly activities across BC. To this end, the AFCIT and SHLS undertook a number of activities from October 2007 to September 2010:

- Developed and delivered presentations and workshops for a wide variety of audiences identified as key groups to engage in the age-friendly initiative.
- Participated in provincial and national meetings focused on age-friendly issues.
- Produced two age-friendly resource guides, one for local governments and the other for businesses.
- Developed a new Age-friendly British Columbia section on the www.SeniorsBC.ca website.
- Produced one-page profiles showcasing community age-friendly achievements.
- Produced and distributed two newsletters.
- Supported the production of a video on age-friendly communities by the Simon Fraser University (SFU) Seniors Outreach Project.
- Conducted this evaluation of the AFBC initiative covering the period from October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2010.

3.3.2 Highlights

The AFCIT has undertaken a wide variety of education, training and communication activities in order to support the AFBC initiative. Opportunities for training and directly engaging with representatives from various government and seniors' service providers were realized through presentations, workshops and meetings.

The team delivered 11 talks to various audiences, and conducted eight workshops for diverse groups such as the BC Rural Summit, the BC Retired Teachers' Association, the Planning Institute of British Columbia, the Council of Senior Citizens Organizations (COSCO) and the Local Government Leadership Academy. Team representatives also attended provincial and national meetings focused on age-friendly issues. For example, a team member participated in a national meeting in Ottawa on age-friendly communities, hosted by the Public Health Agency of Canada, where she was asked to be part of a working group investigating a standard evaluation of the age-friendly process.

Another strategy employed to increase the educational reach of the AFBC initiative was through the production of resource guides. A guide for local governments entitled *How Age-friendly is Your Community? A Guide for Local Governments to Get Started* provides a practical step-by-step guide to help local governments begin the process of creating an age-friendly community. It discusses the features of an age-friendly community, the steps communities can take to get started, and who to contact for more information and support. A guide to help businesses become more age-friendly, developed with input from seniors and the business community, has been produced for the Province. This guide describes the features of an age-friendly business and provides an assessment tool for seniors and businesses to use. The local government guide is available through the www.SeniorsBC.ca website, and development of the business guide is still underway at the time of this report.

Promotion of the AFBC initiative through communication to the general public was another important element of the project. An age-friendly section of the SHLS website, www.SeniorsBC.ca, features a range of resources and tools, as well as information on what communities in BC have done to become more age-friendly. Of the 25 communities that responded to the questionnaire, 60 percent reported that they had accessed this website. The Age-friendly BC section of the website will be further enhanced through the development and posting of one-page community profiles, created to showcase and highlight age-friendly community goals and accomplishments in BC communities.

Two newsletters produced during the project further supported communication efforts in promoting the AFBC initiative. These newsletters were distributed to all local governments in BC, as well as to members of the AFLP. Feedback from several recipients – including Dr. Louise Plouffe of the Public Health Agency of Canada – was very positive regarding the content and format of these newsletters. Of the 25 communities who responded to the questionnaire 56 percent reported that they had read the newsletters.

Finally, the AFCIT participated in the creation of a unique educational tool to promote the AFBC initiative in the province. The video, *A Place for Everyone: Age-friendly Communities*, was a joint initiative of the SFU Seniors Outreach Project and SHLS. Moderator Mark Forsythe (host of CBC Radio's *BC Almanac*) interviewed Lewis Villegas (Architect and Planner), Gordon Price (City Program Director and former Vancouver City Councilor) and Dr. Elaine Gallagher (Gerontologist and AFCIT Lead) on how transportation, housing and public spaces impact seniors' quality of life.

3.3.3 Analysis

The impact and efficacy of the educational, training and communication activities carried out by the AFCIT can be assessed based on participant and community feedback, demand for resources produced, data from the questionnaire and AFCIT observations.

The team successfully provided essential information to a wide array of interested stakeholders through workshops and lectures. Factors pointing to the success of these educational and training initiatives include: high attendance levels at each venue, with a broad range of professions and sectors represented; active participation by attendees, who asked questions and provided local examples of issues and concerns; and interest expressed by many audience members in learning more about the initiative through the newsletter, website and additional resource materials. Many of the workshops and presentations were conducted as an interdisciplinary team that included municipal politicians and employees, as well as members of the SHLS and AFCIT. This worked well as each had different expertise and jurisdictional experience to share on the topic at hand.

Resource documents, such as *How Age-friendly is Your Community? A Guide for Local Governments to Get Started*, proved to be very useful tools for communities. The original guide, developed in 2007, was reprinted twice and then revised in 2010 to fully update the information due to high demand. In addition, while the age-friendly business guide is yet to be published, a number of requests for it have already been received. This indicates a desire for easy to use resources on becoming age-friendly.

Creative resources such as *A Place for Everyone: Age-friendly Communities* have also shown to be effective educational tools. The video is designed to facilitate dialogue among older adults, as well as promote awareness and greater understanding of age-friendly issues. SFU reported that the video is in very high demand and that community groups are finding it helpful in stimulating discussion.

Overall, BC is seen to be a leader in Canada in terms of the work carried out since the launch of this initiative in 2007. Members of AFCIT and SHLS have been invited to provide updates and guidance to others at every national meeting held to date. This leadership role in the country is respected and speaks to the many successes of the project.

3.3.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

Age-friendly education, training and communication are critical in raising awareness about the AFBC initiative. The following recommendations should be considered in order to further bolster the successes in these areas.

1. Increase Age-friendly Awareness

More awareness of the age-friendly initiative is needed among seniors' organizations, community groups and local governments, as well as professional groups such as planners, architects and engineers.

Recommendation:

That the Province provide additional training workshops and seminars to professional and other organizations, and continue efforts to raise awareness in communities.

2. Provide More Educational Tools

More educational materials would be useful to support age-friendly developments. For example, many communities found that additional assessments were needed to fully understand their needs in relation to such issues as the walkability of neighbourhoods; housing; health and social services; and recreation. It would be useful to compile an inventory of these types of assessment tools in the form of an age-friendly toolkit.

Recommendation:

That the Province continue to produce and promote educational materials and tools to support age-friendly developments.

3. Continue National and International Engagement

BC is seen as a national and international leader in relation to its efforts to become an age-friendly jurisdiction. Members of the team and SHLS have been invited to serve on national committees and to speak at national age-friendly meetings. Participating in these opportunities has enabled BC to share experiences, lessons and successes, as well as to learn from other jurisdictions. It also ensures that BC has input into the development of national tools and resources so that they represent the needs of BC communities, and establish approaches that are consistent and complementary. BC continues to monitor developments by the WHO in furthering the global age-friendly communities initiative to ensure that international recognition of age-friendly communities will include BC communities.

Recommendation:

That the Province continue to engage nationally and internationally in sharing BC's experience with others, learning about developments elsewhere and ensuring that the age-friendly accomplishments of BC communities are recognized and promoted.

4.0 Summary and Conclusions

This evaluation has assessed the AFBC initiative by identifying both the successes of the initiative and the areas that would benefit from improvement. Recommendations for future actions to help ensure sustainability of the initiative were put forth based on this analysis.

Each of the following three key program categories/objectives was discussed in detail to provide a framework for the highlights, analysis and recommendations of the AFBC initiative:

1. Enhance community capacity.
2. Facilitate multi-sectoral engagement.
3. Provide education, training and communication.

Enhance Community Capacity

The AFCIT used a variety of outreach methods in order to enhance community capacity for becoming more age-friendly, and supported 30 communities that either took steps towards, or fully completed, age-friendly projects. Based on an analysis of the results of the follow-up questionnaires and the records and observations of the AFCIT, eight key factors contributing to success in creating a more age-friendly community were identified.

While the factors identified are crucial to enhancing community capacity, some additional recommendations to ensure future success of the AFBC initiative were also put forth. It was recommended that the Province of BC:

- Produce a detailed guide for communities that outlines the eight factors leading to age-friendly success, as well as the barriers identified and actions undertaken by local governments in BC.
- Continue with some type of small grants program.
- Create a recognition program to acknowledge communities that have achieved success in becoming age-friendly.
- Continue providing communities with planning support, advice and tools to implement age-friendly activities.

Facilitate Multi-sectoral Engagement

A leadership network to facilitate multi-sectoral engagement was formed to support the AFBC initiative. The group – the Age-friendly Leaders' Partnership – met many of its objectives.

The AFLP achieved success in relation to the following: advising on effective community engagement approaches; identifying potentials for collaboration between member organizations; and supporting and guiding the work of the AFCIT. Some indications of success

were also identified regarding members' experiences with providing leadership, thinking and action on age-friendly communities implementation. AFLP members reported on significant strategies and programs that were compatible with, and complementary to, age-friendly efforts.

While multi-sectoral engagement is recognized as an essential feature of promoting the age-friendly initiative, additional approaches could be considered. Hence some recommendations to realize the full benefits of multi-sectoral engagement were put forth. It was recommended that the Province of BC:

- Expand membership through the creation of a virtual network that is more inclusive of the province's seniors' organizations, participating communities and relevant non-profit agencies.
- Engage Aboriginal communities in the age-friendly initiative in ways that recognize their unique needs and distinct cultural approaches to community development.
- Engage the business community by introducing an age-friendly business recognition program.
- Promote the practice of incorporating age-friendly strategies and principles into existing local, regional and provincial networks and initiatives.

Provide Education, Training and Communication

The AFCIT undertook a wide variety of educational, training and communication activities in order to support the AFBC initiative. The success of educational and training initiatives, such as presentations and workshops, was demonstrated by attendance and participation levels and through the interest expressed by many audience members in learning more about the initiative through the newsletter, website and additional resource materials. Furthermore, high demand for materials such as the resource guides and age-friendly DVD were indicators of the effectiveness of these resources.

While these activities were critical in raising awareness about the AFBC initiative at both the provincial and national levels, some additional recommendations to bolster these successes were put forth. It was recommended that the Province of BC:

- Increase age-friendly awareness by providing training workshops and seminars to engage key organizations.
- Produce and promote educational materials and tools to support age-friendly developments.
- Continue national and international engagement in the age-friendly realm.

Conclusion

Overall, the AFBC initiative was successful in reaching a wide variety of individuals, organizations and communities across the province, resulting in a number of age-friendly changes and accomplishments in BC communities. This report provides evidence of that success and has highlighted specific recommendations for the Province of BC to implement to ensure sustainability of this effort. BC is currently seen as a leader in this field in Canada and abroad and can take pride in the efforts to date.