

Executive Summary

Aging and Disability Services

Community Outreach and Engagement Strategic Plan (2026–2031)

City of Seattle Human Services Department



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Introduction

Aging and Disability Services (ADS) is the designated Area Agency on Aging for Seattle and King County, operating within the City of Seattle's Human Services Department (HSD). ADS coordinates and advocates for a comprehensive system of services for older adults, people with disabilities, and family caregivers. In 2025, ADS partnered with the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) to develop a five-year Community Outreach and Engagement (COE) Strategic Plan. This plan aims to ensure that every person in King County is aware of, and can access, ADS programs and services—especially those from Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and other historically underserved communities.

Goals

ADS's goals for the COE Strategic Plan include:

- Create a framework for how ADS manages all aspects of community outreach and engagement.
- Raise awareness of services, especially with BIPOC and traditionally underserved communities.
- Strengthen relationships with network providers.
- Increase diversity with clients, vendors, and subcontractors.
- Assess opportunities to reintroduce or expand programs and develop new initiatives addressing emerging needs.
- Streamline efforts to address capacity issues.

Research and Community Engagement

The COE Strategic Plan is grounded in extensive research and community engagement, designed and facilitated by DON in partnership with ADS. The process included:

- **Internal and external surveys** (ADS staff, partner agencies, senior centers, and community members)
- **Focus groups** with priority audiences (e.g., Black elders, Latinx Spanish speakers, urban Native elders, LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities, and caregivers)
- **Interviews and conversations** with program staff and partners
- **Review** of existing reports and data

In total, the engagement effort reached hundreds of stakeholders, including 191 community survey respondents and 41 focus group participants.



DON and ADS identified the following priority communities to engage in the strategic plan data-collection effort, and to ultimately benefit from enhanced communication and engagement efforts:

- Older adults (ages 60 and up)
- People with physical disabilities (ages 18 and up, and challenged by two or more “activities of daily living” e.g., eating, bathing, dressing, toileting, transferring/walking, and continence)
- Unpaid family caregivers (someone who helps an elderly or disabled family member, friend, or neighbor continue living at home)
- Urban Native elders
- Latinx Spanish speakers
- Black and African American elders
- Older adults living in south and east King County
- LGBTQIA+ elders

Key Findings from Focus Groups and Community Survey

DON heard from community that:

- Communication must be multi-channel, accessible, and continuous, with feedback loops that show community input is valued.
- Inclusive participation and ongoing dialogue are essential—community members want to be part of planning and decision-making.
- Trusted partnerships with community organizations and leaders can make outreach more personal, credible, and far-reaching. People tend to trust information from official or familiar sources, such as libraries, professionals, or recognized community organizations.
- Cultural relevance improves engagement—staff or volunteers who share or respect community culture help people feel welcome. Participants value when messages reflect their traditions and community context.



Recommendations

The COE Strategic Plan outlines three high-level goals, each with actionable strategies and measurable outcomes.

Each recommendation is paired with specific actions and metrics to track progress, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

1. Maximize Efficiency and Partnerships

- Empower community partners as primary access points for ADS.
- Provide toolkits, training, and resources to partners.
- Reduce direct, on-the-ground outreach by ADS staff in favor of partner-led efforts.

2. Effectively Reach Priority Populations

- Design communications from the client's perspective, focusing on needs and inclusivity.
- Promote Community Living Connections as a central resource.
- Continue to translate materials into priority languages and provide interpretation at events.
- Update and centralize communication hubs and support networks.
- Strengthen and diversify Advisory Councils.

3. Strengthen Internal Support and Processes

- Update internal resources (e.g. SharePoint site) for staff.
- Require annual staff training on accessibility, anti-racism, and outreach best practices.
- Be open to adopting new technologies to improve outreach.
- Contract with more BIPOC-led organizations and ensure multilingual needs are met.



Implementation and Next Steps

ADS will develop a detailed implementation plan, mapping out timelines, roles, and evaluation methods for each recommendation. The plan emphasizes the use of data visualization to monitor equity and reach, with a focus on increasing representation among historically underserved populations. Success will be measured by intentional overrepresentation of non-white groups among ADS clients, reflecting true equity in service delivery.

Conclusion

This strategic plan provides a clear framework for ADS to enhance community outreach and engagement over the next five years. By centering equity, partnership, and community voice, ADS aims to ensure that all older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers in King County can access the services and supports they need to thrive.