Center for Health Care Strategies

Multisector Plan for Aging Toolkit

Getting Started with an MPA

As the U.S. population ages and becomes increasingly diverse, state leaders and stakeholders are recognizing the need to conduct system-level, cross-sector planning. A multisector plan for aging (MPA) is a state-led, cross-sector, planning resource that spans 10 or more years. MPAs convene a broad coalition of public and private stakeholders to collaboratively address the needs of all aging individuals. MPAs can help states transform the infrastructure and coordination of services, maximizing the impact and efficacy of state programs to better and more efficiently serve their population — not just for people who are currently older, but also their caregivers, people with disabilities, and young people planning for retirement, among others. The truth is, "we are all aging."

This toolkit can support states and their partners in developing, implementing, and refreshing an MPA. It offers concrete strategies and practical resources that states can use to advance their MPAs. The toolkit is organized into six modules:

1. **Getting Started with an MPA** *(this module)*: Introduces the toolkit, including describing what an MPA is and providing an overview of the MPA development process — from engaging state leadership to drafting, implementing, and refining an MPA.
2. Securing State Leadership Buy-In: Describes the pathways for obtaining authorization for an MPA — typically through a governor's executive order or legislation — and strategies for obtaining leadership support.
3. Working Across State Agencies and Sectors: Highlights the steps for creating clear governance that involves input, leadership, and accountability from various departments and agencies across the state, as well as the nonprofit and private sectors.
4. Engaging Stakeholders and Community Members: Explores opportunities for involving a wide range of stakeholders in the MPA process, including advocates and older adults themselves, as well as nontraditional partners, such as private employers and faith-based organizations.
5. Creating a Data-Driven Approach: Details practical strategies for identifying, accessing, and using diverse data sources to identify areas of unmet need, initiatives that the state can consider, and opportunities to demonstrate MPA progress and impact.
6. Drafting, Refining, and Refreshing an MPA: Outlines a structured approach for writing the MPA, including documenting goals, strategies, and initiatives, assigning drafting responsibilities, and establishing mechanisms to refresh the MPA based on progress and goal attainment.

Throughout the toolkit there are concrete examples of how states have developed their MPAs, as well as links to resources to further support effective approaches to designing and implementing an MPA.

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Phases of MPA Creation

The following section provides a framework for understanding the MPA process and how this toolkit can guide states in developing, implementing, and refreshing an MPA. While there are essential phases of MPA creation, it is important to note that some of the activities within each phase may occur simultaneously based on each state's timeline and process for development:

Build the Case and Secure Buy-In

- ✓ Document the need for an MPA
- ✓ Recruit champions to lead the MPA
- ✓ Secure commitment from state leaders
- ✓ Engage partners across agencies and sectors

Develop the Plan

- ✓ Collect input from stakeholders and community members
- ✓ Define goals and priorities
- ✓ Draft the MPA

Implement, Track, and Refresh

- ✓ Create accountability and track progress, impact, and outcomes
- ✓ Regularly revisit and revise the MPA

Build the Case and Secure Buy-In

States often have existing planning efforts that define programs and services for aging individuals and people with disabilities *(see sidebar)*. An MPA should build on existing efforts, bolstering opportunities for success of existing programs and the overall MPA. It is also essential to leverage existing aging and disability partners and initiatives to catalyze MPA activities.

A foundational step in developing an MPA is to conduct a landscape analysis of the state's current initiatives, resources, and partnerships that currently serve aging and disability populations. Conducting a comprehensive analysis that is wide reaching, beyond traditional health care and community services agencies, will allow for more cross-sectional collaboration that incorporates an aging and disability lens across all state priorities.

Recruiting champions who are committed to advancing the MPA, especially those who can dedicate staff and resources, is essential to securing buy-in for the MPA. Champions can include individuals from state agencies, the legislature, local governments (e.g., county- or city-level officials), community-based organizations, advocates, and philanthropic organizations.

How is an MPA different from other aging-related state efforts?

An MPA is distinct from other state planning efforts that may only involve one agency, funding stream, or program type. For example, state units on aging are required to create a **state plan on aging** (SPA), which is focused on programs for older adults and their families or caregivers. To learn more about the differences and alignment between SPAs and MPAs, see this brief from The SCAN Foundation.

Similarly, public health departments are required to develop a **state health improvement plan** that includes a focus on older adults, but is specific to public health programs.

An **MPA acts as an umbrella** that builds on these other efforts and coordinates across agencies. A West Health brief describes 12 state MPAs and highlights other state plans that work in tandem with MPAs in these states.

Engagement with state leaders who are invested in aging and disability populations is imperative at each phase of the MPA process. Engaging executive and state legislative branches is key because many of the initiatives in the MPA may need a governor's executive order or legislation to be implemented. Opportunities to obtain buy-in from legislators include:

- ***Engage Legislative Committees:*** Working with state legislative committees focused on aging, disability, health care, and other relevant topic areas is a key opportunity for establishing buy-in for an MPA. Ask them to attend, present at, or co-host MPA meetings. Consider an affinity caucus for aging to convene legislators across committees.

Messaging the Need for and Benefits of an MPA to Stakeholders

Some key messaging that can convey the importance and benefits of an MPA to potential partners include:

- Everyone is aging!
- By 2030, more than 1 in 5 Americans will be over 65. MPAs help prepare for this shift.
- MPAs benefit people of all ages and stages, not just people who are currently older.
- MPAs help state agencies work together — helping states to reduce duplication and use resources more wisely.
- MPAs bring together policymakers, state agencies, and other diverse stakeholders.

- ***Identify Legislative Champions:*** Seek out legislators who have expressed interest in issues of aging and disabilities in the past, which may appear in public statements. Individuals who have caregiving experience are also possible strong champions for MPA efforts.

See the Center for Health Care Strategies' (CHCS) *Getting Started with an MPA* tool that outlines additional steps to support early phases of the MPA.

Develop the Plan

Each state's development process will look different depending on priorities, political landscape, initiatives, funding opportunities, and stakeholder engagement efforts. The development process can vary greatly in time and effort at each stage and often is iterative rather than linear. States can tailor the following common elements of developing an MPA to align with their own state context:

- ***Get Organized:*** Building on existing planning efforts at this stage will help expedite and streamline the drafting process. Use CHCS' **organizing framework tool** to help structure data, initiatives, and stakeholders and align them with the plan's broad goals and priorities.

- ***Establish Governance:*** Creating steering committees and subcommittees can be extremely valuable at this stage. Committees can serve as important MPA leaders and can be a vital link with the community and government officials. Subcommittees can conduct analyses and make recommendations to the steering committee on topics that align with the MPA's goals — such as housing, rural aging, long-term services and supports, and transportation. The steering committee can also be tasked with creating recommendations for the governor or legislature on the MPA.

- ***Continue to Engage Leadership:*** Meet regularly with state leaders from the executive and legislative branches to share progress on the MPA, including opportunities for involvement in the development and implementation process.
- ***Involve Stakeholders and Communities:*** Engaging stakeholders at all stages of an MPA is essential, including during development. This will help ensure an MPA reflects the goals and needs of all sectors and community members. Engage with both traditional aging and disability stakeholders and those not traditionally involved in aging work. Traditional stakeholders, include individuals who are aging and have a disability, family caregivers, advocates, direct care workers, and care and service providers. Non-traditional stakeholders might include leaders in transportation, housing, parks and recreation, economic development, emergency preparedness, private industry, and academia, among others.
- ***Use Data and Report Progress:*** Documenting milestones and communicating progress can help build continued momentum around the MPA. It is important at the development stage to embed structures for data collection, analysis, and reporting. This will allow for clear and streamlined communication of updates to a broad range of stakeholders, showcasing the effectiveness of MPA efforts.

Core Tenets of a Successful MPA Development Process

There are **three core tenets** to keep in mind when developing an MPA:

1. **Promote transparency and inclusion at all stages of MPA development**: Having a transparent and inclusive process during all stages of MPA development fosters greater trust and buy-in for the MPA, as well as encourages broad stakeholder involvement. Examples of transparency could include a website, local media promotion, and public events to provide progress updates and opportunities for engagement.
2. **Ensure equity in all stages of development**: At the outset, clearly identify how the MPA will address disparities in the state related to race, gender, socioeconomic status, and marital status, among other factors.
3. **Incorporate the principle of person-centered planning**: In the context of MPA development, "person-centered planning" involves considering the needs of older adults and people with disabilities holistically and addressing system navigation challenges created by state agency silos.

Implement, Track, and Refresh

A state's MPA is a living document, not a static plan. Once it is developed and implemented, the expectation is that the state will continue to be accountable to stakeholders for progress reports and measurement of goals, and the MPA will be regularly refreshed. Following are key strategies for ensuring successful MPA implementation, accountability, and ongoing value:

- ***Coordinate with Other Efforts During Implementation:*** The implementation phase involves assessing current programs and their process flows. This can assist in determining strategies for aligning MPA activities into existing programs and initiatives. This assessment should include efforts to create partnerships with other programs and agencies and identify regulatory or legislative actions that need to be taken to execute the MPA's strategies and tactics.

- ***Publicly Report Progress:*** Production of regular reports can assist in highlighting key accomplishments and progress. For transparency, these reports should be published on the state's MPA website. States can also schedule other methods of providing updates to state leadership, such as presentations and memos.
- ***Regularly Update the MPA:*** An MPA should have built-in mechanisms for reassessing the state's needs, priorities, landscape, and goals. Established timelines for these reassessments and refreshing the MPA will ensure it is aligned with state and community priorities. States should continue to prioritize maintaining leadership commitment for the MPA, providing examples of how it has supported the process and achievements to date. As needed, request additional authorization or resources to support MPA efforts.