Center for Health Care Strategies

Multisector Plan for Aging Toolkits

Working Across State Agencies and Sectors

A key element of successful MPA development, and ultimately a sustainable plan, is relationship building. Creating an MPA involves working across all sectors throughout the state, including government, nonprofits, and the private sector. To successfully work across sectors, relationship building, partnerships, and structured collaboration are necessary. These partnerships will support the MPA in both the immediate and long term. For practical strategies on working across state agencies, see the CHCS tool, *Working Across State Agencies to Build a Multisector Plan for Aging*.

This toolkit module highlights four key steps for working across sectors to develop and implement an MPA, beginning with clear governance that ensures input, leadership, and accountability from state departments and agencies.

1. Create a steering committee to lead the work.

A steering committee typically sets goals, organizes and oversees MPA work, and serves as the primary decision-making body. Each state MPA is organized by overarching broad goals that are informed by stakeholder and community input, and typically decided on by the steering committee. Some states establish both a steering committee and an advisory committee. In this case, the steering committee retains decision-making authority, while the advisory committee — typically made up of state officials, external stakeholders, and sometimes community members — provides input to the steering committee.

States may, however, name these governing bodies differently. For example, **Maryland** created a steering committee made up of state agency representatives and external stakeholders. Each member brought subject matter expertise related to Maryland's four "epic" goal areas and participated in one of four workgroups related to the goals. **Missouri** formed a similar group of state agency representatives and external stakeholders, but refers to it as an advisory council.

Multisector Plan for Aging Toolkit

States across the U.S. are pursuing high-level, cross-sector planning efforts to ensure that the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers are met over the coming decade.

This module is part of the ***Multisector Plan for Aging Toolkit***, which outlines steps to support states and their partners in developing, implementing, and revising an MPA. It offers concrete strategies and practical tools that states can use to advance their MPAs. Access the full toolkit at **www.chcs.org/mpa-toolkit**.

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2. Form subcommittees aligned with state MPA goals.

Every MPA has a set of broad goals to guide the organization and focus of the plan (see examples from **North Dakota** and **North Carolina**). States often develop subcommittees around these goals and will recruit members from state agencies, legislators, and community members to participate. Subcommittee members can be chosen by invitation or by putting out a call for volunteers. States often require at least one steering committee member to participate in each subcommittee, either as a chair or as a liaison to ensure consistent communication and workflows across committees. It is important to note that the more members on the subcommittee, the more challenging it may be to schedule and manage meetings. There is no "right" number but limiting subcommittee membership to no more than 20 people has shown to be effective. Furthermore, ensuring that there is diverse representation of perspectives in each topic area will provide robust recommendations from the subcommittee and support equitable participation. For example, a subcommittee focused on transportation could include representatives from the department of transportation, rural health organizations, people with lived experience accessing public transportation, university partners conducting research on transportation, emergency services, faith-based organizations, centers for independent living, and other community or age-friendly partners.

Missouri, for example, formed seven subcommittees aligned with their seven broad goal areas. Each subcommittee was led by two co-chairs, typically one from a state agency and one from an external organization. The members included subject matter experts, state agency representatives, and other community partners.

Another consideration when creating MPA subcommittees is to develop a charter, similar to **Iowa's SAIL Charter,** to guide the work of the committee. Having a charter can keep the subcommittee's work focused, set expectations for participation, and support trust and shared responsibility among the group. Furthermore, giving subcommittees templates, like this example from **Vermont**, provides a structure and clear expectations for what should be accomplished in a meeting. Templates also ensure uniformity in how recommendations are provided to the steering committee.

3. Assign leads for strategies and initiatives in the MPA.

As the subcommittees or workgroups develop recommendations to include in the MPA, it is important to think about who will lead the implementation of these recommendations. Leading various initiatives within the plan should not fall on one agency, but should be shared across state agencies and stakeholders. Sharing leadership and accountability will make the plan sustainable long-term. Embedding the work across agencies and sectors is a useful strategy to safeguard against loss of momentum when obstacles or competing priorities arise. States will often have members from the subcommittee commit to leading (or co-leading) some of the strategies and initiatives in the plan, particularly when there is subject matter expertise and/or authority over certain programs in state agencies. Since MPAs are meant to elevate efforts currently happening in the state, leads for these initiatives may already be

MPA Leadership Structure Example

Oklahoma's MPA leadership structure, on page 10 of its plan, shows how the MPA executive steering committee, advisory committee, and subcommittees are organized, with members of each committee (as of June 2024) listed on pages 73-78 of its plan.

doing some of this work. For example, if the Medicaid agency is working on long-term services and supports reforms, they could be the lead for an initiative around improving quality of or access to home- and community-based services. If the housing agency is involved, they may lead initiatives related to improving current senior housing programs or coordinating with developers and local governances on initiatives related to development and zoning.

Pennsylvania's plan, Aging our Way, PA, assigns owner and partner agencies to each tactic to build accountability into the plan. **North Carolina's** plan, All Ages, All Stages NC, has a state agency commitment section that highlights ongoing cross-agency efforts to support older adults. These examples emphasize the cross-sector nature of MPAs and demonstrate how many state departments play a role in serving older adults.

4. Be ready to track implementation progress, refresh the MPA, and stay accountable.

When the plan is ready to be implemented, it is important to have tracking measures in place to assess and ensure progress on its goals. Tracking methods vary from state to state, with some states, such as **California**, using a data dashboard to track implementation, while other states, such as **Vermont**, rely on a simple document or spreadsheet to track progress. Many states, including **Massachusetts**, produce regular progress reports to highlight successes and challenges of MPA implementation each year. Whatever the tracking method, planning ahead for how progress will be measured and tracked as the plan is being developed makes the implementation process smoother.

Continuing to hold subcommittee meetings during implementation will also support accountability. These meetings may occur less frequently than during MPA development, but serve as checkpoints for progress. For example, the lead for each strategy or initiative can report on their assignments to the relevant subcommittee, and the subcommittee lead can provide updates on the progress of all initiatives to the steering committee on a regular basis.

The MPA is a living document and should be reviewed and updated every few years to reflect the changing needs and priorities of stakeholders and community members (see the toolkit module, *Drafting, Refining, and Refreshing an MPA* for more details). It is ultimately up to each state to determine the time frame that works best, but having a predetermined schedule for review and refresh supports accountability. A clear framework for the refresh process is also helpful. For example, reassessing the original goals of the plan, identifying needed stakeholder engagement to update the goals, and evaluating the effectiveness of the subcommittee structure are good places to start. If new goals or strategies are identified, subcommittees should be restructured accordingly, with new state agency representatives or stakeholder members recruited as needed.