

AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities

An Introduction to the Program

The **AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities** serves as a catalyst to educate, encourage, promote and recognize improvements that make communities supportive for residents of all ages. The network provides cities, towns, counties and states throughout the U.S. with the resources to become more age-friendly by tapping into national and global research, planning models and best practices.

As the population of the United States ages and people live healthier, more active and longer lives, communities must adapt. Well-designed, livable communities promote health and sustain economic growth, and they make for happier, healthier residents — of all ages.

Illinois Members Thus Far

- **Evanston** 2015 Population: 75,430
- **Champaign** 2017 Population: 84,513
- **Urbana** 2017 Population: 42,311
- **Alton** 2018 Population: 27,865
- **Arlington Heights** 2018 Population: 75,101
- **Danville** 2018 Population: 33,027
- **Woodstock** 2019 Population: 25,286

What Membership Is and Isn't

- Communities in the AARP age-friendly network are not retirement villages, gated developments, nursing homes or assisted living facilities.
- Membership in the network does not mean that the community is, currently, "age-friendly" or a great place to retire.
- Membership in the network is *not* an endorsement by AARP.

What membership **does** mean is that a community's elected leadership has made the commitment to actively work toward making their town, city or county a great place for people of **all** ages.

Background

The **AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities** is the United States affiliate of the **World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program**, an international effort launched in 2006 to help cities prepare for rapid population aging and the parallel trend of urbanization. The program has participating communities in more than 20 nations, as well as 10 affiliates representing more than 1,000 communities.

AARP's Role

AARP's participation in the program advances efforts to help people live easily and comfortably in their homes and communities as they age. AARP's presence encourages older adults to take a more active role in their communities and have their voices heard. Initiatives focus on areas such as housing, caregiving, community engagement, volunteering, social inclusion and combating isolation among older citizens.

AARP works with local officials and partner organizations around the country to identify communities for membership in the Age-Friendly Network. AARP facilitates the community's enrollment and guides its representatives through the network's

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities program supports AARP's goal of being recognized by elected officials and others as a leading resource for how to improve the livability of communities for people age 50+ and their families. Communities are able to access these resources in support of their work towards being an Age-Friendly Community: **AARP Livable Communities** <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities> and the **AARP Public Policy Institute** <https://www.aarp.org/ppi/>

The Benefits of Membership

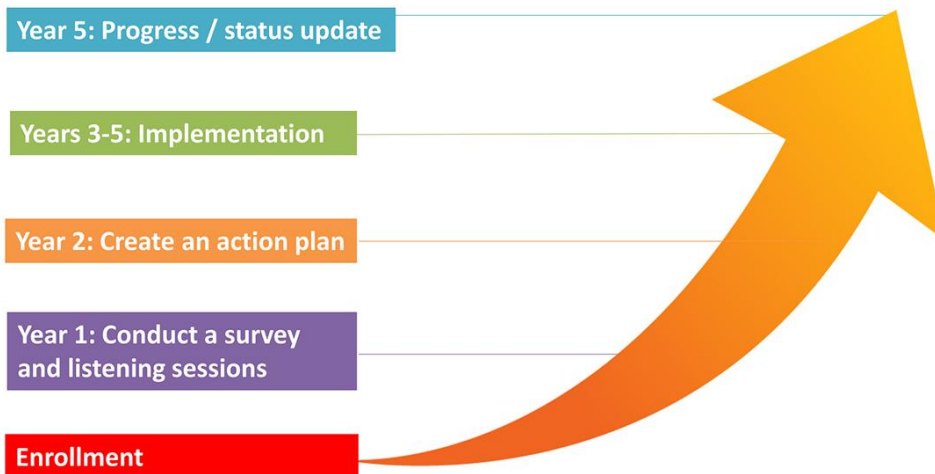
There is no fee to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. Members of the network become part of a global network of communities that are committed to giving their older residents the opportunity to live rewarding, productive and safe lives. The benefits of membership include:

- Access to a global network of participating communities, as well as aging and civil society experts
- Access to key information about the program, such as the latest news and information about best practices, events, results, challenges and new initiatives
- Opportunities for partnerships with other cities, both domestic and international
- Mentoring and peer-review evaluation by member cities
- Public recognition of the community's commitment to become more age-friendly
- Speaking engagements at conferences and events hosted by AARP and promotion through AARP's media channels

The Program Cycle

The work toward age-friendly livability involves a continuous 5-year process of improvement

Developing an age-friendly community: the process



Members of the **AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities** program commit to improving their age-friendliness and submit to a rigorous membership assessment cycle. Being an age-friendly community requires a commitment to a five-year cycle of continuous improvements.

Enrollment

Communities interested in joining the network can find the membership application and related information at <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2014/sample-letters.html>. Questions can be addressed to the applicant's AARP Illinois staff representative Terri Worman tworman@arp.org or 312-458-3610.

Year 1: Conduct a Survey and Listening Sessions

In order to improve the community for older adults and people of all ages, an age-friendly community needs to assess the community's needs. AARP provides a **survey template** (available in English and Spanish) that can be used for local needs. A free guide to **conducting community listening sessions** is part of our **Roadmap to Livability** workbook series. <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2017/roadmap-to-livability-collection.html>

Year 2: Create an Action Plan

This phase has four key elements:

1. The establishment of mechanisms to involve older people throughout the age-friendly community cycle
2. A baseline survey or assessment of the community's age-friendliness
3. The development of a three-year community-wide action plan based on the assessment
4. The identification of indicators for monitoring progress
5. This phase is completed when an action plan is submitted to the World Health Organization for review and endorsement.

Examples of action plans and action planning guidance can be found in the **Age-Friendly Resource Guide** at <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2014/age-friendly-resource-guide.html>

Years 3-5: Implementation

Upon endorsement and recommendation to the World Health Organization by AARP, a community begins a three-year period of implementation. At the end of this period the community is required to submit a progress report to AARP outlining its progress against the indicators developed in the action plan. Examples of progress reports can be found within **The Member List** at <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2014/member-list.html>

Year 5+: Progress and a Status Update

At this point a community is able to continue its membership by entering into further planning, implementation and evaluation cycles.

The Age-Friendly Resource Guide

<https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2014/age-friendly-resource-guide.html>

Joining the Network

Towns, cities, counties and states seeking to enroll in the **AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities** are required to submit a membership application, as well as a letter of commitment, which must be signed by the jurisdiction's highest elected official. (For example, the state's governor, the town's mayor, a county's executive, etc.)

The application and letter should be provided to the AARP staff member with whom the community has been working. Communities that are working independently may submit their documents via email attachment to Terri Worman, AARP Illinois tworman@aarp.org or by mail 222 N. LaSalle Street, Suite 710 Chicago, IL 60601

Download the Membership Application

<https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2014/sample-letters.html>

The application includes automatic membership in the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. (An opt-out option is available.)

The Letter of Commitment

While there is some flexibility in how the letter can be worded, the following commitments must be addressed in the content of the letter.

1. Establishing mechanisms to involve older people
2. A baseline assessment of the age-friendliness of the community
3. The development of a community-wide action plan based on the findings of the assessment
4. Identification of indicators so progress can be monitored against the action plan

You can find sample letters of commitment used by several cities at this link as well.

In addition to the required membership application and commitment letter, some communities choose to pass a resolution or issue a proclamation – again available at the above link.

Submitting the Application — and Next Steps

The membership form includes details about how to submit the application.

Once the application is approved and processed, member materials and resources will be provided by AARP.

For questions prior to or after enrolling, please contact:

Terri Worman, AARP Illinois tworman@aarp.org 312-458-3610