



## History of the Age-Friendly Movement

Age-Friendly uses the life experiences, or the “lens,” of older adults to make communities friendly for all ages.

Age-Friendly helps you look at your community the way others may see it.

- With active leadership and involvement of older adults, it brings a new “lens” to seeing our communities.
- Age-Friendly Committees work to include everyone.
- Age-Friendly benefits all ages so the places we call home become “all ages friendly.”
- As we say on the Age-Friendly Saskatchewan website, “If it serves older persons, it will serve all persons.”

Age-Friendly is a journey – a long-term, ongoing commitment building on the wisdom, ideas and experiences of all the community.

In your journey, you will be supported by Age-Friendly Saskatchewan on behalf of SSM (Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism) and the growing network of Age-Friendly Communities, which supports and learns from each other. Through this network, and through the involvement of Age-Friendly in the community, relationships are built both within communities and among communities. Not only are great tangible strides made in communities, but also fun, laughter, personal satisfaction, and other intangible rewards have been and continue to be part of the Age-Friendly experience.

In this document, you’ll find FOUR sections: a brief history of WHO (World Health Organization) involvement; a brief history of Canadian involvement; a brief history of Saskatchewan involvement; and an indication of current Age-Friendly work in Saskatchewan. The document includes urls for more information.

## Section 1: The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Age-Friendly Movement

In 2002, at a meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, WHO and project partners developed a protocol for research into the concept of age-friendly, laying out focus group guidelines in a document used by 33 cities around the world who participated in the initial studies that led to the formation of Age-Friendly Communities.

In 2006, the results of those initial focus groups led WHO to form the global Age-Friendly Communities process that promotes healthy, accessible, inclusive communities where all people are valued, included and supported. They identified eight domains, or areas of focus, that are the core of any Age-Friendly community's journey, anywhere in the world. Whether the community is Moosomin, Moose Jaw, Montréal, Madrid or Melbourne, the basic domains are the same. The domains are:

- Outdoor Spaces and Buildings,
- Transportation,
- Housing,
- Social Participation,
- Respect and Social Inclusion,
- Civic Participation and Employment,
- Communication and Information, and
- Community Support and Health Services.

You may find the following publications helpful in understanding the history and thinking behind the global development of Age-Friendly:

- Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide <https://tinyurl.com/ys9m5wu8>
- WHO Checklist of Essential Features of Age-friendly Cities <https://tinyurl.com/byy2bpj9>

Since the beginning of the Age-Friendly movement, when WHO's focus was mainly on urban areas, their thinking has expanded to consider the great variety of rural and remote communities throughout the world. In 2014, they added the Canadian resource, Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide (see section 2) to their website. In 2017, in partnership with the International Federation on Ageing, they presented a webinar about Rural and Remote Age-Friendly Communities. Their work continues to grow and expand in cooperation with rural communities all over the world.

## **Section 2: Canadian Involvement in the Development of the Age-Friendly Movement**

In 2007, the Federal, Provincial, Territorial Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities Initiative began the process of building the Canadian version of the Age-Friendly Communities process. The rural community of Turtleford, Saskatchewan was one of the communities consulted in the Initiative. Their report, *Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide* formed the basis of the Canadian approach to Age-Friendly. <https://tinyurl.com/4vuw3yvj>

Following on from this report, the Public Health Agency of Canada developed five milestones describing the steps a community needs to take to successfully apply the Age-Friendly Communities model in Canada. These milestones were adopted in 2011. They are:

- Establish an advisory committee that includes the active engagement of older adults,
- Secure a local municipal council resolution to actively support, promote and work towards becoming age-friendly,
- Establish a robust and concrete plan of action that responds to the needs identified by older adults in the community,
- Demonstrate commitment to action by publicly posting the action plan, and
- Commit to measuring activities, reviewing action plan outcomes and reporting on them publicly.

Note: Although the Guide named “rural and remote communities,” it’s important to understand that provinces such as Ontario and Saskatchewan may have a very different understanding of what is “rural.” For example, *Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide* indicates that in the initial study, the communities “range in size from fewer than 600 to approximately 5,000 people, and represent varying degrees of rurality and remoteness.” In Saskatchewan, a population of 5,000 would rate designation as a city!

For reference you will find the general website for PHAC-AF (Public Health Agency of Canada—Age-Friendly) at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/4thm79ax>

### Section 3: History of Saskatchewan Involvement

In 2012, SSM began working toward developing the Age-Friendly program in Saskatchewan. Initial plans were gradually built on in the following few years. This included SSM becoming the primary Saskatchewan link to the Public Health Agency of Canada Age-Friendly Reference Group. At the same time, the Saskatoon Council on Aging (SCOA) focused on the development of Age-Friendly in Saskatoon.

SSM's annual conference in 2014 explored what an age-friendly community is and worked to identify the connection between age-friendly communities and reducing elder abuse.

Using the 8 domains of WHO along with the milestones set up by the Public Health Agency of Canada, they developed a strong program that continues to grow to the present day.

The basic understanding of the milestones in Saskatchewan is illustrated by this graphic:



Other tools were developed to aid communities as they form their committees and embark on their work. These tools include a sample poster, a sample resolution, guidelines for developing an action plan with an action plan template, an age-friendly assessment tool and more.

Two crucial elements of these tools are

- the Age-Friendly Saskatchewan brochure, which is found in English at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/yfpczy6z> and in French at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/m8y92f3>.
- the resource manual, *Becoming an Age-Friendly Community*, which is available in English at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/5n7e43pd> with an addendum about record keeping and evaluation here: <https://tinyurl.com/bdraj329>. The resource manual is also available in French at <https://tinyurl.com/2ur2asrx>.

An Age-Friendly Business Guide is available as well: <https://tinyurl.com/37hx9er2>

All of these resources, and more, are available on the Age-Friendly Saskatchewan website: <https://tinyurl.com/4m7v7ub3>

From small beginnings, Age-Friendly Saskatchewan has grown to include many communities, with more to come. There is a Provincial Recognition (PR) program for communities that have successfully completed the milestones.

Because Age-Friendly is a journey rather than a destination, over time local Committees progress well beyond their original plans associated with the initial Provincial Recognition. To acknowledge the ongoing work of Age-Friendly at the community level, a Maintaining Recognition (MR) component has been instituted by SSM. This does not affect original Provincial Recognition status, but serves to acknowledge those communities that have evolved significantly since their formation.

#### **Section 4: Current Age-Friendly Work in Saskatchewan**

As of early 2023, there are more than 15 communities in Saskatchewan at various stages of Age-Friendly work. Recent significant Age-Friendly activity means that approximately 500,000 Saskatchewan people live in communities on the Age-Friendly journey. A hard-working Age-Friendly Saskatchewan Committee oversees all the communities and their equally hard work. As a new Age-Friendly Community comes on board, AF SK appoints a liaison from the wider AF community to support them in their work. SSM provides a .75 time staff person who is dedicated to Age-Friendly work in the province. Gatherings of the provincial network of Age-Friendly Committees happen either virtually or in person, to provide encouragement, education and impetus for the continuing journey, as do virtual Coffee Hours.

In 2018, in an event at the Legislative Building in Regina, the communities of Regina Beach/Buena Vista/Kinookimaw, Rosetown, and Strasbourg were recognized by the Government of Saskatchewan as Age-Friendly Communities. In 2019, Saskatoon was similarly recognized. In November 2022, the Government of Saskatchewan granted Recognition status to the communities of Kipling & District, Moose Jaw, and Regina. In December 2022, Rosetown was recognized by SSM as Maintaining Recognition.

A glance at the community profiles and the domain pages on the Age-Friendly Saskatchewan website shows that there is much being done in all eight domains. The Communities Page is found at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/3dtvthe6> and the Domains Page is here: <https://tinyurl.com/4km252kr>.

These actions include, but are not limited to, these examples in each of the eight domains:

- **Outdoor Spaces & Buildings**
  - Commemorative/Memorial Benches added to walking paths
  - Park revitalization
- **Transportation**
  - Age-Friendly Saskatoon/SCOA, with Saskatoon Transit, developed a video for Transit employees to learn how to serve older adults and for older adults to learn how to use City Transit.
  - Several communities have ensured that rides are available to events when people need them.
- **Housing**
  - Age-Friendly Moosomin hosted a speaker from Sask Housing at one of their meetings, to become more aware of community options.
  - Age-Friendly Rosetown shared their concern about eligibility for seniors' housing with the Town of Rosetown, who, along with Age-Friendly Rosetown, sent letters to various politicians, resulting in the question being brought to the floor of the Legislature.
- **Social Participation**
  - Several Age-Friendly Communities have partnered with various groups and organizations in their communities to provide events and activities for older adults.
  - Several Age-Friendly Communities, along with schools and sometimes other partners, have teamed up to provide intergenerational experiences for older adults and kids, as far-ranging as literacy events, Tech Buddy programs, story walks, and more.

- **Respect & Social Inclusion**
  - In Moose Jaw, partner organizations (SHA Moose Jaw Literacy, Family Service Bureau, Community Living Division, Moose Jaw Express, Salvation Army) were called on to address isolation and food insecurity April 2020 and September 2021, which led to sustainable change as it applied to needs of seniors during the pandemic.
  - Age-Friendly Regina has added a Land Acknowledgement to their Community Page on the Age-Friendly Saskatchewan website, and includes a Land Acknowledgement in their newsletter.
  - Age-Friendly Regina is working to ensure that their four-part community directory is translated into languages other than English, to aid newcomers to the city.
  
- **Civic Participation & Employment**
  - Age-Friendly Committees work closely with municipal governing bodies not only to address immediate concerns, such as sidewalk repair, but to advocate for systemic change, modeling a critique of ageism as it appears, and working to ensure governing bodies consider the older adult's point of view and needs in everything they do.
  - Age-Friendly Regina is working toward adding an "Age-Friendly Lens" to City work and planning. This would include adding older adults to advisory panels, commissions, etc., ensuring older adults are easily able to participate in town halls (considering location, time of day, length of session), engaging City of Regina managers in awareness of Age-Friendly Regina goals and actions particularly in the Age-Friendly domains, identifying City of Regina departments responsible for specific concerns raised through the Age-Friendly Regina survey, etc.
  
- **Communication & Information**
  - Age-Friendly Committees use various means such as newsletters, Facebook pages, town hall meetings, community directories, and media articles to keep people informed of their actions and work.
  
- **Community Support & Health Services**
  - Age-Friendly Rosetown advocates for and assists in facilitation of home and health services that are accessible, available, affordable and timely.
  - Age-Friendly Saskatoon/SCOA has written a White Paper titled Beyond the Pandemic, urging a focus on age-friendly actions as we move through and out of the pandemic.
  - Some Age-Friendly Communities host Wellness Days which cover a wide variety of health and wellness topics.

The Age-Friendly journey builds on itself in each community as each strives to improve the lives of all ages of people in the area. The work brings great emotional rewards that

come with broadening perspectives, meeting others, and pursuing common goals. Age-Friendly lights up older adult lives in many ways.