

MCOA Action Plan FY20-24

<p>Categories</p>	<p align="center">Suggestions From MCOA Members and Regional Representatives for Investments over Next 3-5 Years</p> <p align="center"><u>Table of Contents (8 Sections)</u></p> <p># 1-16 Advocacy Topics #17-24 Capacity Building #25-26 Civic Engagement #27-30 Food and Nutrition #31 Member Services #32-52 Programs including Arts; Economic Security; Health; Life Long Learning; Social Connections; Transportation #53-56 Reaching and Serving Underserved Populations #57-62 Training and Technical Assistance</p>
<p><i>Advocacy/Age Friendly</i></p>	<p>1. Create CLEAR UNAMBIGUOUS descriptions of what it means for a town to be Age and Dementia Friendly for older adults. Prepare 3 separate (Tier 1, 2 and 3 investments) descriptions. Make the pitch as clear as can be, so it's easier to convert it into a price tag.</p>
<p><i>Advocacy/Caregivers</i></p>	<p>2. Is the Care Act being implemented by hospitals and/or other institutions? Are caregivers being contacted and trained in their duties? What needs to be done to ensure local hospitals and/or other organizations comply?</p>
<p><i>Advocacy/COA Funding</i></p>	<p>3. COAs Advocating for Local Municipal Resource Support Our Board and Town officials constantly want staff to use the data to "tell the story" while using data <u>from MySeniorCenter and MyActiveCenter</u> for online registration. Data can also be pulled from tax records, Clear Governments and UMass Boston Community profiles. We would greatly benefit from some training on how to go about extracting the data to do exactly that. Use it to our advantage to show growth and advocate for more funding locally and beyond to support our organization.</p>
<p><i>Advocacy/COA Funding</i></p> <p>Also an item of the AF State Plan</p>	<p>4. "Give us the tools and communications tactics to educate and convince selectmen, municipal staff and thought leaders to invest in seniors! (For example: "If the school budget is 51%, even as the school pop is dropping, seniors should get more than less than 1%, as their numbers are rising!" "In my town, the salaries of top 5 school administrators are more than my entire annual budget!" "Compare the percentage of taxes paid by older adults versus the percentage of town budget dedicated to senior related concerns. ")</p>

<p><i>Advocacy/COA Funding</i></p> <p>Also an item of the AF State Plan</p>	<p>5. Educate select board members and finance department heads about aging issues and the need for a basic level of competent local services. The purpose would be to persuade/compel them to build sufficient service capacity in areas where it is lacking. For example, MCOA could fund forums to educate the select individuals. In the forums, MCOA would reframe aging so that local decision makers will view it in a different, more accurate way and be more supportive of addressing local needs of older adults.</p>
<p><i>Advocacy/COA Funding</i></p>	<p>6. To Build New Centers:</p> <p>a. Issue a report that compares utilization of services by older adults who have or do not have a physical senior center location to access for help. This will assist towns that do not yet have a physical center to strengthen their case for space. "If you build it, they will come".</p> <p>b. Provide help to COAs that need help with knowing how to pitch a capital project to local leaders.</p>
<p><i>Advocacy/COA Funding</i></p>	<p>7. Advocate for a living wage for COA staffs.</p>
<p><i>Advocacy/Food</i></p>	<p>8. The way farmers' market coupons are distributed seems very inequitable. Couldn't a fairer way be set up to ensure coupons are distributed to people in need, and that one person doesn't get more than their share? Also, to ensure people at home or away on the 1 day of 'first come first served' could be included. Perhaps create a fair process in advance that allows for mailing coupons out, once provided, instead of a FCFS chaos.</p>
<p><i>Advocacy/Food</i></p>	<p>9. Share the MA Food Trust resource name with network so they may link up local markets with him/her to address small food deserts.</p>
<p><i>Advocacy/Funding for Staff</i></p>	<p>10. Develop strategies to increase staffing levels at Councils on Aging across Massachusetts.</p>
<p><i>Advocacy/Funding for Staff</i></p>	<p>11. Create a threshold funding formula in all COAs so all may have an essential level of outreach worker hours to serve the needs of their older residents.</p>
<p><i>Advocacy/Housing</i></p> <p>Also an item of the AF State Plan</p>	<p>12. Advocacy for passing a new zoning reforms bill that includes improved access to accessory dwelling units (ADU) (e.g. in law units) in MA.</p>
<p><i>Advocacy/Housing</i></p>	<p>13. MCOA should form a housing issues taskforce.</p>
<p><i>Advocacy/Program Funding</i></p>	<p>14. Convene the Social Day Program Workgroup to work on the disparate ASAP reimbursement rates (e.g. 3 sites receive \$30/\$35/\$35/day for 3 year contracts). No one is happy with their rate – they may need training in contract negotiations and/or pricing unit services.</p>
<p><i>Advocacy/SHINE</i></p>	<p>15. Propose and lobby for a separate state line item be devoted to health benefits counseling for older adults – ala SHINE function -- about Medicare, MassHealth, and all the supplemental insurance options available in MA. Seek</p>

	SHINE Funding at a level that can ensure sufficient counseling resources are available to manage all tasks throughout the year.
<i>Advocacy/Transit</i>	16. Advocate to the RTAs to set up more regional coalitions to offer extra transit at night and on weekends, door to door, for all ages. Modeled upon the work GATRA has done with Attleboro/Taunton and now Plymouth.
<i>Capacity Building</i> Also an item of the AF State Plan	17. Would it be possible to retain monies for MCOA to develop a professional marketing campaign that could be adopted by all COAs? (Video, print, etc...)Would be a great opportunity to promote MCOA and local councils and giving us a standing in media market as an exceptional resource for aging MA residents.
<i>Capacity Building</i>	18. Internships at a COA: a. Sites want to engage MSW interns. If MCOA could pay for their mileage, that would help a great deal. As part of the plan, for sites that don't have a LICSW to provide 1 hour/week of supervision, could MCOA engage one? Could MCOA pay for interns' mileage? That would help a great deal. b. Could MCOA help its members form affiliations with local schools or job training programs for youngsters who may have Autism or other disabilities and could benefit from a work placement with supervision in a COA?
<i>Capacity Building</i>	19. SHINE Issues a. It's so beneficial to have at least one SHINE-trained COA staff – but the SHINE training is so long. (And one site had been told they couldn't have a volunteer if their staff were trained so she gave up her certification to ensure she could have volunteers on site – not consistent message). Could this be solved in some way? Spread it out, or offer something on line for COA staff (basic versus advanced so they can help with some stuff, esp. during high demand periods). b. SHINE requests for assistance are very high – relief is needed in the short term and long term. In the next year, figure out how SHINE counseling could be reorganized and delivery needs revised-- to re-set its responsibilities, especially at it pertains to overwhelming the capacity of COA outreach workers. Review roles ASAPs should be responsible for, e.g. completing MassHealth and other applications, which take a lot of time. The program ought to cut some topics, too, to lower the level of technical complexity. Several sites agreed they do not get enough hours from their volunteers (3 hours a week). The group agreed that “today's volunteer” is not looking for an 8 hour job every week. And the method of training needs to be modernized to support on line acquisition of technical knowledge. This group recommends a separate state line item be devoted to benefits counseling for older adults about Medicare, MassHealth, and all the supplemental insurance options available in MA.
<i>Capacity Building</i>	20. Could MCOA arrange for access to the following types of expert(s)? a. Financial Literacy trainers (Also an item of the AF State Plan) b. Attorneys (active or retired) who can help older adults defend against evictions?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. A mechanic (retired) so older adults can call and get advice on the fair price ranges for routine car maintenance and repair bills. Likewise for home repair projects d. A Prescription Advantage video on “Open Enrollment Part D 101” for consumers that could be posted on YouTube and accessible constantly during high domain /or at all times. Even consider shorter “video clips” that can be used to remind people about certain dates/events/deadlines. e. Discussion ensued about proactively cultivating a large list of YouTube videos COAs can use to educate consumers and access from our site or FB site. And also produce new videos (via Plymouth or other CATV sites) as needed on new topics. A great way to build advocacy voices if they can more quickly, deeply learn about a topic and be able to listen more than once.
<p><i>Capacity Building</i></p> <p>Communications is an item of the AF State Plan</p>	<p>21. Rural Areas Unique Capacity Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Offer funding for regional COAs to lease space to have a senior meeting space. b. Fund outreach staffs. c. Offer mini grants (e.g. of \$1,000 or so) for starting up local newsletters. d. Have MCOA host websites for local COA. e. Subsidize internet access in rural communities, to make their centers Wi-Fi centers. f. Fund a regionally Rotating Senior Center Days for areas without a COA, or sufficient programming or staff capacity, so that adults have the benefit of a full slate of lifelong learning programs, screening and outreach services periodically. One example is the Travelling LGBT Programming Days held in CT – bring that to MA. Or, as another example, replicate the monthly supper club for LGBT seniors age 60 and older, younger partners, friends and allies that WestMass Elder Care offers.
<p><i>Capacity Building</i></p> <p>Also an item of the AF State Plan</p>	<p>22. Build and or find and promote “Aging in Place Village platforms” those local communities could tap into; to organize individuals to exchange support that helps them age in place, healthfully and happily.</p>
<p><i>Capacity Building</i></p>	<p>23. Help members in consortia development at the regional level, that can result in nonprofit organizations becoming a member and available/interested in facilitating eligibility for some grants as well as to ease the contracting process with third parties who cannot contract with municipalities.</p>
<p><i>Capacity Building/Age Friendly Advocacy</i></p>	<p>24. Project Managers: Please consider funding coordinators for efforts to build Age and Dementia Friendly Communities. We could do so much more with a few years of consistent, part-time staffing.</p>
<p><i>Civic Engagement</i></p> <p>Also an item of the AF State Plan</p>	<p>25. Advocacy Skills Training: Fund for a series of educational workshops to prepare adults to be competent advocates at local and/or state level. Overall goal is to teach our senior residents the importance of civic engagement and how impactful they can be. Teach seniors how local and state government operates as well as how legislature and budgets are drafted, amended and</p>

	<p>voted on. Related idea: Consider convening AMP Graduates to work as these advocates and or as public educators. For example, they could become important allies in the AF movement or senior advocacy academies.</p>
<i>Civic Engagement</i>	<p>26. Hire project staff to work on a “volunteer service opportunities directory” for their town and region that would help older adults find satisfying volunteer jobs that bring would provide social connection and occupational satisfaction. Note: MCOA partners with Empower Success Corps for doing this in 5 pilot sites during FY19-20.</p>
<i>Food & Nutrition</i>	<p>27. I would like to see a Healthy Breakfast program. We serve day old pastries from Panera and Stop and Shop and have cold cereal available but I would like a way to provide yogurt, and fresh fruit on a regular basis. I would imagine trying to find a vendor to provide these items so staff would not have to go out shopping for them - maybe the school departments would collaborate? Funding would be to pilot program and see if participants would support it by paying 50 cents or \$1 for these items.</p>
<i>Food & Nutrition</i>	<p>28. It may be a good time to conduct a big-picture review of nutrition and seniors, such as having AAA's focus on reaching the home-bound adults through MOW and create a training program aimed at helping COA's create their own sustainable congregate meal programs. It would be helpful to have some best practices and training in how other COA's have created and flourished with the home-cooked model being offered at many sites. Perhaps there could also be some SIG funding allocated to enable new programs to hire the cook for 2 years, as long as the COA has gone through the training. The goal would be to have evidence of improved participation to provide to the municipality with incentive to increase the budget to include the paid kitchen person/staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared-On-Site Lunch Program It has been noted by a fair number of COA's that there is a steep decline in participation of Congregate Meals that are prepared off-site and trucked in. Reasons for this are varied and range from quality of food, to the elder-elders discontinuing to drive, lack of transportation, and the home-bound receiving meals through MOW. • There is a trend in newer centers to have the meals planned and prepared on site by hiring a part-time cook, supplemented with a corps of volunteers. • Those Centers, such as Westfield, Holyoke and Ludlow are seeing a phenomenal response in numbers. I have heard that these sites have managed to contain costs, some to the point of being self-sustaining. • The Congregate and MOW programs have been underfunded forever, and even more-so with inflation. • Such a program would provide: * fresher ingredients, *create another level of ownership, civic / social engagement, and develop community in the creation, serving and clean up in 'their own house'. *allow for cultural influences in food choices Hadley is building a new Center.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our clients voice their interest in having meals prepared on-site as an alternative to the Congregate Meal program prepared by ASAP.
<i>Food & Nutrition</i>	29. Develop an Organic Meals menu with recipes for local COAs to use.
<i>Food & Nutrition</i>	30. I would like to start an organic/clean meal program with a cook/chef, a nutritionist consultant, in hopes to provide nutrition, clean, appetizing meals. (We currently utilize a caterer. The quality in the past 1.5 years has diminished, and the meals are not appealing. As such, many of our seniors have stopped attending the congregate meals.) The congregate meals are not just for nutrition, but also for socialization and recreation.
<i>Member Services</i>	31. Organize a Ride Sharing Program to attend membership meetings.
<i>Programs – All</i>	32. Sharing Programming Recommendations Within Network Create a closed listing about great lifelong learning program leaders, added by referral of COA staff only. Then, activities staff could post recommended artists and learn about new ones.
<i>Programs – Arts</i>	33. Organize regional contests/shows for Poetry, Quilting, Art, Storytelling, etc.
<i>Programs – Economic Security</i>	34. Set up a Small Necessities Fund to help pay for essential needs of an older adult, for urgent needs that are not currently addressed by other charities or nonprofits.
<i>Programs – Economic Security</i> Also an item of the AF State Plan	35. Training and/or toolkits for offering financial assistance & resources: a. Create a simple portable fact sheet/intake form/job aide for caseworkers so they may easily screen for financial eligibility for all types of benefits programs. b. Training on SNAP (new 36 month approvals and, for those in public housing, permission to use medical costs used for housing rent for SNAP benefits calculation also (approved in early summer 2018 – release tbd). c. Training about HIP and vendors who honor it. d. The Community Preservation Act as a source for funding local repair homes , in towns where CDBG funds are not available or in addition to same. Could MCOA develop a tutorial about it and how to access it? Add to the MCOA Housing Issues Manual, too. e. Provide a toolkit for supporting all outreach workers (of COAs and other systems) to screen for benefits , connect with resources, provide enrollment assistance, and thereafter conduct annual Financial Tune Ups with clients. f. Provide the <i>A Time to Share</i> consumer manual about rental income as source of relief.
<i>Programs – Economic Security</i>	36. Help to set up minor home repair teams or programs that COAs may call upon to help low income elders.

<p><i>Programs – Health</i> Also an item of the AF State Plan</p>	<p>37. Mental health for elders: We need to explore ways of increasing home based therapy/counseling and outreach so that EMHOT services are provided statewide.</p>
<p><i>Programs – Health</i></p>	<p>38. Home Visitors: Develop training for volunteer companions to be trained and comfortable visiting an older person at home who has some dementia. In it, include suggestions for shared social activities. (ACL Caregiver Respite Project doing to, with aid from the models set up by Billerica and Chelmsford).</p>
<p><i>Programs – Life Long Learning</i></p>	<p>39. Explore and or support access to the Virtual Senior Center, a learning network that offers online streaming classes. 40. Virtual Reality systems can bring new interesting and exciting experiences to the user.</p>
<p><i>Programs – Life Long Learning</i> Also an item of the AF State Plan</p>	<p>41. Develop a PowerPoint presentation for local centers to use that will draw in and educate the 45-65 year olds about what to think about as they prepare for and transition into a new lifestyle that starts after their mid-life roles end or change.</p>
<p><i>Programs – Social</i></p>	<p>42. UCLA Memory Training Program Request: To fund the state license with UCLA so that local COA's could offer the 4 week evidence based memory program. The purpose of this program: Help participants develop good memory habits and to teach techniques to improve memory To develop strategies to help participants with the 4 most common memory complaints*Forgetting names/faces*Forgetting dates in the future*Forgetting where you put things*Tip of the tongue (that word you can't remember) We implemented this program in January in hopes that 40 people would sign up to take the class; 160 people signed up.</p>
<p><i>Programs – Social</i> Also an item of the AF State Plan</p>	<p>43. Funding for a series of educational programs for clients/older adults about cultural diversity. Funding to support a facilitator who would be responsible for coordinating a yearlong program of monthly themes based on cultures represented in our community. Translation services may be needed cost of entertainment, ethnic food and educational presenters. I would suggest Brazilian Portuguese, Hebrew/ Jewish, LGBT, Irish, Italian, English, and Haitian/Creole to start.</p>
<p><i>Programs – Social</i> Also an item of the AF State Plan</p>	<p>44. Continue to provide COAs with materials to conduct training about dementia issues and dementia sensitivity for other members of municipal government. DFM</p>
<p><i>Programs – Transit</i> Also an item of the AF State Plan</p>	<p>Transportation Services: 45. Training on how to make a municipal transit programs better/more comprehensive and more flexible in service modalities. MassDOT would be a resource. 46. Invest in 'active transportation options' of bicycling. For example, purchase safety vests and install more traffic lanes for bikes. 47. Organize 'travel training' for non-drivers and other people who are coping with 'driving retirement'.</p>

	<p>48. Offer funding to run transit services at off times/extra time at night and weekends.</p> <p>49. Offer to pay for Gas Cards for local workers who can take trash to the transfer station for a person who cannot drive nor do those type of chores.</p> <p>50. Fund a driver for rural towns to be able to pay a driver to go longer distances as required in rural areas for routine errands, including picking up and delivering grocery orders (pre-shopped by in store personnel) and prescriptions.</p> <p>51. To build a transportation program for door to door rides need to provide long distance medical transportation and local transit when nothing else is available. Some funding to help with staffing is needed.</p> <p>52. Show COAs how to buy vehicles at a low price at used vehicle auctions held by RTAs.</p>
<p><i>Reaching & Serving Underserved Populations</i> Also an item of the AF State Plan</p>	<p>53. Assemble and distribute guidelines (accommodation tips and techniques) on how to include adults with visual impairments into center programs/activities.</p>
<p><i>Reaching & Serving Underserved Populations</i> Also an item of the AF State Plan</p>	<p>54. Offer to subsidize for 2 years part of the wages of a to-be-hired bilingual staff person who can facilitate and deliver programs and services in additional languages at a senior center. This would convince local funders of need and provide time to build it into local budgets.</p>
<p><i>Reaching & Serving Underserved Populations</i></p>	<p>55. Supporting the Hilltown Senior Outreach program with Outreach Staff and Space Rental. . <u>Our aim is to provide services five days/week, staffed by two part-time outreach workers.</u> The Hilltowns represent a rural underserved area, with most seniors falling into the low to moderate income categories. All COAs in this region are part-time operations and none have dedicated outreach workers. <u>This outreach effort will fill the hole that currently exists in the area's COAs, and provide a "neutral" space to get outreach services for those who might never darken the door of a local COA.</u> The program would provide Information and Referral, SHINE counseling, Benefits Checkup, Application assistance, SNAP and LIHEAP assistance, Veterans assistance, Caregiver support, Grief support, and support for those with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders.</p>

<p><i>Reaching Out To and Serving Underserved Populations</i></p> <p>Also an item of the AF State Plan</p>	<p>56. Funding to support creative ways to connect with those who are isolated. There are elders who are homebound or nearly homebound and not connected to COAs because they can't get to the center to participate. For example, funding to <u>support Friendly Visitor / Companion</u> programs and other creative means like <u>live streaming some programs</u> such as the annual holiday party. A trained volunteer could be at the home of the elder with a device loaned by COA (IPad) and live stream so the elder can virtually participate and have a little holiday cheer.</p>
<p><i>Training and Technical Assistance</i></p>	<p>57. Train board members In how to advocate for their COA budgets. ("We make the snowballs and they throw them".")</p>
<p><i>Training and Technical Assistance</i></p>	<p>58. COA Managers Training:</p> <p>a. 1. Develop a manual of best practices and policies about topics including property tax work-off program, payment of instructors, senior center safety plan, etc. Promoting Property Tax Relief Programs is an item of the AF State Plan 2. Conduct training on financial matters, i.e., what to know about managing a municipal revolving account, donation account, operating account, etc. 3. Conduct training on management of Council on Aging personnel in a municipality. Please feel free to contact me for any additional information regarding staffing, duration of time for seeking funding, etc.</p>
<p><i>Training and Technical Assistance</i></p>	<p>59. Friends Groups Training</p> <p>a. Training is needed on Roles and Responsibilities, as some think they are the Board! b. Also, about paying for rent if they take up space in the center, and of course, fundraising targets and methods.</p>
<p><i>Training and Technical Assistance</i></p>	<p>60. Volunteer Management Training Topics:</p> <p>a. TA in all the methods towns may use to provide supplemental drivers insurance to insure volunteers. (Incl. private supplemental insurance, adding to town employee roles, etc.) b. Training in the Good Samaritan Law and how it can protect volunteers from liability while serving appropriately as a volunteer. c. Training in how to supervise volunteers effectively. d. Circulate sample vol management tools, such as job aides, orientation kits, etc.</p>
<p><i>Training and Technical Assistance</i></p>	<p>61. Strengthen Behavior Management Skills and Continue Focus on Training:</p> <p>a. Staff needs to know about early dementia and how to respond and support individuals living with dementia and their caregivers. For example, how to alter one's communication practices to serve someone who developed mild cognitive impairments and/or more severe level of dementia. b. How to interact with someone who is acting strangely or exhibiting signs of severe mental distress or illness. c. How to discourage bullying and exclusionary social cliques.</p>

<i>Training and Technical Assistance</i>	<p>62. All COA Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Offer all employees training from SAGE. (SAGE Care LGBT training courses are designed to be suitable for all levels of employees. 1 hour trainings can be delivered in-person, via live webinar, or through a digital training platform.) b. Offer a financial literacy and education about retirement savings programs to COA staffs for their own retirement savings/economic well-being. c. Modify (b) to train older adults and/or caregivers about financial issues. <i>Also an item of the AF State Plan</i>
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Footnotes:

1. This list was compiled through discussions at all Membership, Board, and Advisory Council Meetings from April 1, 2018 through June 14th 2019. Input was also sought through our weekly MCOA Briefs, at regional and workgroup events. Select MCOA Partners were also consulted on ventures that would require direct cooperation.
2. This list has been accepted as our Action Plan over the next five years, though we do not anticipate that we can achieve all that is listed. We will proceed with Action Items as funding sources and necessary partners are identified.
3. This is a “working list”. Action Items may be eliminated or added at any time.
4. Priorities are established by our 17 member Board of Directors.