



Messaging Guide: Telling Your Story

Councils on aging and their centers are integral parts of local government. Essential to the municipal structure, they respond to increased needs of older adults while maintaining day-to-day business. This was evident through and since the pandemic, as roles changed, and services increased. Feel free to use this guide to structure and support your marketing and outreach plans.

IDENTIFY

Identify three or four things about your council on aging that will help you “Tell Your Story”, and that impacted your community. Some of these may relate to the work you did during the height of COVID-

19. What unique factors of the COA will your community benefit from knowing? For example:

- Did you know that in Massachusetts, COAs booked more than quarter of a million older adult vaccine appointments in only four months?
- Did you know that council on aging staff worked over 117,000 hours to book those appointments?
- Did you know it would take one person working a 40-hour week, over 19 years to book those appointments?
- Did you know 2,000 COVID-19 vaccination clinics were held at councils on aging?
- Did you know more than 175,000 people received a COVID-19 vaccine at a COA clinic?

How can you use this information to educate your community on what you did and what you do? What metrics can you share? Emphasize what you accomplished, and be sure to emphasize all the extra work done during the pandemic while doing other work. Examples:

- COVID-19 vaccines in your community
- Meals distributed
- Transportation (medical, shopping)
- Grocery shopping
- Wellness checks
- Total older adults reached
- Total older adults new to your COA
- Free income tax preparation
- Fuel assistance
- Adult education programs
- Exercise programs
- Support groups (caregiver support)
- Memory cafés
- Technology training and support
- Food assistance/SNAP applications
- Special events, field trips, holiday parties
- Cultural celebrations
- Musical performances
- Entertainment
- Medicare open enrollment/SHINE counseling
- Health and wellness programs (flu & blood pressure clinics, foot care)

CONVEY

Convey why these accomplishments matters.

Councils on aging are vital resources to their municipalities. Emphasize your vital role to your municipality and accentuate that by adding not only are you a council on aging, but also a council on *achievement, advocacy, accomplishment, action, etc.*

CUSTOMIZE

Customize your media messages.

What new partnerships did you create during COVID that can help expand and leverage your reach? Use the [‘Marketing Tools for Any Senior Center’](#) guide in the members section of MCOA’s website. Map out a timeline or calendar and schedule what to share, when and how often. Examples:

- Press release
- Letter to the editor
- Newspaper story
- Local cable company
- Newsletter story
- Message from the director
- Tables at events
- Website copy
- Infographics
- Social media posts

SHARE

Share your story.

Tie everything together in powerful and impactful individual messages, to educate your community on all that you do. Use the messages separately or combine to emphasize the crucial importance of the council on aging in your community. Create a tag line or hashtag like those in italics below to reinforce your messages. Examples:

- Message #1
Did you know the COA in Anytown provided 5,000 bags of groceries to 250 older adult households in 2021? COA staff delivered this food seven days a week at no cost and with no catch to isolated neighbors. Anytown’s council on aging is a council of accomplishment! *#anytownpullstogether*
- Message #2
Did you know the Anytown COA scheduled 1,450 vaccine appointments online for older adult residents? Our COA maneuvered through the process for older adults without computers and transportation to keep them safe from a COVID-19 infection. Anytown’s COA is a council of achievement! *#anytownpullstogether*
- Message #3
Did you know the Anytown COA quickly scheduled 30 different online activities and classes for older adults that kept folks active and engaged while at safer at home. Anytown’s COA is a council of action. *What can you uncover at the council on aging?*
- Message #4
Did you know in 2021, the Anytown COA provided resources to 148 adults caring for their older parents? The resources provided enable caregivers to help their older parents to remain in their homes and part of the community. *What can you uncover at the council on aging?*

For additional data and statistical information on Senior Centers responses to COVID-19, please see the “NEW FACTSHEETS” on the UMass Boston CSDRA Website, at

<https://www.umb.edu/demographyofaging/community>