

Metro Area Age-Friendly Exchange

November 5, 2025

Community Priorities and Perspectives

Overview

Age-Friendly Minnesota (AFMN) partnered with the University of St. Thomas to host a Metro Area Age-Friendly Exchange on November 5, 2025 in Saint Paul, Minnesota. This was one of six Regional Exchanges held across the state in fall 2025.

More than 115 cross-sector attendees gathered at the University of St. Thomas to learn and share about age-friendly work happening in the region and the state, and to explore opportunities ahead.

This summary presents themes and highlights from the event so that attendees and other regional partners and community members can see key takeaways from the event, and use them to help guide and inspire age-friendly work moving forward.

Pulse Check: What We Heard from the Community

The event included a presentation from the Age-Friendly Minnesota Council about its big areas of work, including the [grants program](#) and the [Multisector Blueprint for Aging](#), and new developments over the past year.

Later, attendees discussed the following question in small groups and with the full room as part of a “Pulse Check” conversation:

For all Minnesotans to live well as we age in community, what are some potential realistic solutions? What is some progress that’s been made on key issues and gaps?

The Pulse Check was a critical part of the Exchange. It created an opportunity for reflection and discussion among attendees, who could then share their ideas and insights with each

other, with regional leaders, and with Age-Friendly Minnesota. AFMN captured this input and is sharing it back to the community through this document.

Below is a summary of the most frequently mentioned topics, as well as ideas and issues related to finding solutions. These are far from exhaustive; instead, a glimpse into priority issues and possibilities.

Community Opportunities: Challenges and Solutions

- **Ageism:**
 - **Continue to invest in “reframing aging” work**
 - **Bring aging conversations to other networking organizations**
 - **Create and deliver media training on ageism**
- **Built Environment:**
 - **Invest in walkable communities.** Prioritize sidewalks and biking infrastructure, and work with cities.
 - **Benches, benches, benches!** More seating across the board is important.
- **Caregiving:**
 - **Increase and expand support for caregiving:**
 - Reach more people earlier in the journey
 - Make services like chore and homemaker available to caregivers, not just care recipients
 - **Increase post-diagnosis support** for people with dementia and caregivers
- **Service Access:**
 - **Address food security as an urgent need;** funding is cut *everywhere*.
 - **Increase use of key resources and services:**
 - Address stigma associated with using services, a common barrier to people taking advantage of existing services. Consider how services are advertised and marketed.
 - Raise awareness of MN Aging Pathways (former Senior LinkAge Line), a free statewide resource that is often underutilized.
 - **Expand use of successful models and approaches:**
 - **Community Health Workers** helps people navigate services and systems.
 - **Mobile food markets or mobile clinics** bring resources to people instead of people needing to go to resources.
 - **Explore use of newer models,** such as:
 - Appointment helpers to increase health literacy
 - Virtual home care model

- **Create more resources for medical appointment support:**
 - Educate medical providers about presenting information in an accessible format.
 - Re-think medical appointment summaries.
- **Housing:**
 - **Explore modeling a promising program:** Coalition for Rochester Area Housing is funding a two-year pilot program that provides mentorship to older adults to help them transition into suitable housing before they reach a crisis.
 - **Utilize the Blueprint Action Team on Affordable Housing** to advance the work.
 - **Make sure shelters can accommodate older adults** experiencing homelessness.
 - **Increase support and funding for home modifications.**
 - Consider partnering with big hardware stores (such as Menard’s) to provide resources to builders/owners to help with home modifications.
 - **Promote use of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)** (a smaller living space on the same property as a main house) to create more housing options.
- **Transportation**
 - **Replicate promising models of on-demand options and circulator buses,** such as NewTrax in White Bear Lake.
 - **Explore micro-transportation initiatives at a municipal level,** such as local rides to public transit connections, errands, etc. Consider hospitals as partners/sponsors.
 - **Address reimbursement policy for volunteer drivers,** which hinders recruitment of volunteer drivers, a critical transportation resource.
- **Connection, Communication, and Inclusion:**
 - **Local-level solutions:**
 - Create and utilize more neighborhood councils to help people remain living at home.
 - Utilize local TV to get information to people; not everyone is online.
 - **Expand use of existing resources/programs:**
 - Aging with Gusto helps connect, include, and empower older people.
 - Memory Cafes help people with dementia and their care partners connect with others and find support.
 - **Social connection and inclusion:**
 - Address isolation in a culturally-responsive way; use preferred language and connect people with others from shared culture.
 - Include long-term care in communities.
 - Create cross-generational interest groups.

- **Partnerships and Collaborate:**
 - **Widen the net:**
 - Step up efforts to engage people beyond aging sector stakeholders; partners include all in the community. For example, go to them and their convenings; join other coalitions as a voice in aging.
 - Bring key groups to the table, such as city planners and payers.
 - **Explore and consider replicating promising models**, such as the cities of Golden Valley and St. Louis Park, which work together on various issues, including quality-of-life related to aging.
- **Structural/Advocacy:**
 - **Extend the AFMN Council** and grants beyond June 2027.
 - **Have realistic conversations about investments** in aging services – what is being funded (particularly outside of residential care)?
 - **Communicate with the public the need for advocacy and funding.**
 - **Create age-friendly rating of political candidates** to hold them accountable for their votes/stances

This input, along with community input gathered through the other Regional Exchange events, is being shared back to communities and will be integrated into Multisector Blueprint work as it continues to evolve.

Regional Age-Friendly Projects

AFMN is proud to have invested more than \$1.7 million in Metro-based projects through 42 Community Grants since 2023. These grants are advancing goals of Minnesota’s [Multisector Blueprint for Aging](#), which is grounded in community voices and is addressing many of the issues that emerged from the community at the Central Age-Friendly Exchange.

Several grantees shared information about their grant projects at the Exchange:

- [Roundtable Rx](#) is expanding its work to redistribute safe, unused prescription medications to people who need them.
- [Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research \(HACER\)](#) is conducting a community-based project exploring the financial well-being, strengths, and challenges of Latino older adults and caregivers across Minnesota to inform inclusive, age-friendly policies.

- [KaleidoScope-Kawm Thiab Siv LLC](#) created a Healthy Aging Framework for the Hmong community and is creating a plan for implementation.
- [Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services \(SMRLS\)](#) is upgrading and rolling out the Legal Risk Detector, a legal health “check-up” tool that service providers can use to identify older adults with legal needs.
- The [University of St. Thomas](#) joined the Age-Friendly University of Global Network and is actively working to promote age inclusivity across campus through lifelong learning and intergenerational connections, being intentional about the needs, interests, and priorities of older adults, and by preparing students to work across the lifespan after graduation.

Learn more about AFMN Grants at the [AFMN website](#).

Learn more!

This work hinges on collaboration. We encourage you to reach out with questions, concerns, and ideas.

Age-Friendly Minnesota:

- Website: mn.gov/dhs/age-friendly-mn/
- Email: mn.dhs.AgeFriendlyMN@state.mn.us

Led by the Age-Friendly Minnesota Council, AFMN champions vibrant communities where we thrive as we age. We do this through collaborative partnerships, community engagement, and innovative strategies. Age-Friendly Minnesota creates and nurtures systems that include and value all Minnesotans as we grow older.

University of St. Thomas

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University of St. Thomas (UST) is the largest private university in Minnesota and one of the largest Catholic colleges or universities in the nation, with more than 9,000 undergraduate and graduate students at its eight schools and colleges. UST is ranked as a "Top National University" and "Best Value School" by U.S. News & World Report.

With support from an Age-Friendly Minnesota grant, UST was [officially recognized as an Age-Friendly University](#) (AFU) in early 2025, joining the prestigious Age-Friendly Global Network. It is the first private university in Minnesota to earn this recognition.