Title III & VII 4-Year Area Plan

East Central Council of Governments (ECCOG),

Area Agency on Aging Region 5



STATE FISCAL YEARS 2024-2027

(July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2027)

# Introduction

The Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) were formally established in the 1973 Older Americans Act (OAA) comprehensive services amendments. The Agency of Community Living (ACL) oversees the Older Americans Act funds. Requiring that each individual AAA submit a 4 Year Plan outlining how they will use their OAA funds to achieve the initiatives set forth, by the Agency of Community Living to their respective State Unit on Aging.

Under the Older Americans Act, as amended through Public Law 110-246 effective May 22, 2008), each Colorado AAA is required to develop an Area Plan for their Planning and Service Area at a frequency determined by the State Unit on Aging, prepared in accordance with OAA Section 307(a)(1).

The Colorado State Unit on Aging Policy Directive 22-05 is the Planning Assistance document provided to each of sixteen Colorado AAAs respective to their Area Plans.

State Unit on Aging Policy Directive 22-05 Purpose

To provide AAA’s planning assistance and necessary forms. The overall purpose of the Area Plan is for each AAA to realize its full potential by articulating the prioritization, range and delivery of services to older adults, their caregivers and other eligible consumers during the period between State Fiscal Years 2023 and 2027.

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Background on the Older Americans Act (OAA), State Funds for Senior Services (SFSS) and the East Central Council of Governments, Area Agency on Aging

The Older Americans Act was signed into law on July 14, 1965, establishing the Administration on Aging at the Federal level in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Act is intended to assist elderly Americans maintain their dignity and live independently in their own communities by removing barriers to independent living and providing continual care for vulnerable older individuals. As a result of this Act, community-based services and nutrition service programs for America’s older adults were established, and the national structure of the “Aging Services Network” was formed. Under the Older Americans Act, the network was charged with the responsibility for promoting the development of a comprehensive and coordinated system of home and community-based services for eligible persons 60 years of age or older, and their caregivers. Through its Title III and VII programs, the OAA identifies Federal funds to be used by the State and by local communities to provide and develop aging services.

The Older Coloradoans Act established programs and cash funds that, together with a General Fund portion, known as State Funds for Senior Services. The General Assembly appropriates SFSS monies that are distributed to AAAs to provide programs, services, and supports that mirror the services standard and requirements outlined in the OAA.

The AAA is a division of ECCOG, which serves the counties of Cheyenne, Kit Carson, Lincoln, and Elbert. The AAA focusses older adult population, particularly those with the greatest social and economic needs. This plan describes the efforts of ECCOG’s AAA in addressing sustainable home and community-based services. ECCOG programs help older adults remain at home, independent, enjoy good health and quality of life through contractual arrangements with other agencies. The OAA, the SFSS and other funds (local, county, in-kind, etc.) are used to administer, monitor, and improve services and programs available across the region.

East Central AAA serves as the main focal point and leading advocate for aging issues in the planning and service area. The primary goal of this AAA is to develop and administer a comprehensive and coordinated system of programs and services for residents 60 and over.

## MISSION STATEMENT:

To ensure that supportive services are available, accessible, and utilized by the older adult populations of Cheyenne, Kit Carson, Lincoln, and Elbert counties, with focus on those individuals with the greatest social and economic need.

This mission will be achieved by ECCOG partnering with local agencies and entities who contractually provide services or programs that ECCOG itself cannot provide directly. These programs, services and partners work collaboratively to continue to enable older adults remain independent, healthy, and have a high quality of life, as long as possible.

Every four years, the AAA is required to develop an Area Plan that focuses on activities, services, and programs. The AAA will also provide technical assistance to outside agencies or civic organizations. Continuing to develop educational methods to increase community awareness of the AAA and the services or programs offered is a standard practice.

# Section I: Executive Summary

**East Central AAA will make every effort to review its current service delivery systems and implement changes as needed. In the past several years, the levels of service to unduplicated clients for registered services has decreased. However, the agency works to attract the “young” older adults and recently retired individuals to participate. Since social media marketing was added in 2019, the promotion to residents has been minimal but a renewed effort is underway in 2023. ECCOG advertises in local newspapers, radio PSAs, movie theater previews, and updated brochures to increase awareness of our service and program offerings.**

**Our HelpMATE program (material assistance) remains an integral program for our older adults who find it hard to pay for essential goods or services that improve their quality of life. Goods include dentures, eyeglasses, hearing aids, mobility devices and related equipment, and other in-home devices (EMS alert systems, carbon monoxide & smoke detectors, etc.). These services are provided locally by professionals who assess and create tailored goods for the individuals. Services such as dental or eye examinations, in-home assessments and evaluations determine the best solutions or modifications to the home. These solutions improve personal mobility and independence, which allow older adults to continue to age in place.**

**ECCOG’s staff is knowledgeable about the region, the communities within and the programs provided. Our staff is trusted by the communities because we possess 100 years of program and service experience. Therefore, we can work towards improving existing programs and developing new services. Agency leadership continued services and programs through the pandemic and strives to increase them in the future. The administrative staff have and will continue to work diligently to maximize available financial resources. By doing so, this will increase potential older adults’ participation in the programs and services they need.**

**Public transportation is almost non-existent in the region as there is no longer a commercial bus service or no ride share options (Uber, Lyft, etc.). Many folks are limited in transportation options within the four counties. There are two small businesses that offer some type of on-call service. ECCOG’s Outback Express transit system is available as a fixed-route demand response service. Even though it is available, it is still only a part-time public transit service. ECCOG’s staff develops strategies to improve the transit system and better serve the public. Working with local officials, client’s feedback, and other open community discussions, we’ve learned how to improve the system.**

**INSERT GRAPHIC HERE (Avg. Miles to METRO)**

**Goals and Outcomes:**

* **Increase awareness of the AAA programs and services**
	+ **Performing monthly outreach through Senior Service Coordinators, AAA staff and provider referrals**
	+ **Increase advertising in local newspapers, radio, print materials and social media**
	+ **Conduct annual community conversations to collect feedback**
* **Increase client participation by 10% in existing program or service using 2022 as a baseline**
	+ **Track number of clients gained since December 2022 using SUDS**
	+ **Initiate one new contractual agreement with a mental health services**
* **Expand programs and services**
	+ **Implement a chore voucher program**
	+ **Explore creation of a restaurant voucher program**
* **Maintain current services and programs using OAA and SFSS funds to help maintain older adult independence through:**
	+ **Project HelpMATE, Project SMILE, Outback Express, Legal Assistance, Ombudsman, Caregiving/Caregiver Respite, Homemaker, Information & Referrals, and Grandparenting supports**

# **Section II: Public Input**

**East Central AAA held three public input meetings, two were held on March 1st, and the other was held on March 17th. All three meetings along with Community Conversation Surveys distributed throughout the region, provided feedback on the AAA’s services and programs. The results will help guide efforts in the coming four years to improve and expand assistance to the older adult population in the region.**

**The first meeting held on March 1,2023, was attended by 11 older adults. Ten of which are program participants, and the other one is the Senior Services Coordinator for ECCOG. There were also three State Unit on Aging representatives present for the conversation. The meeting was conducted in the American Legion Post 82, located at 228 South Banner Street, Elizabeth, CO 80107. Senior and Transit Services Director (STS Dir.) Sean Vanous began the discussion at 1:12 PM to discuss services and programs from the East Central AAA.**

**Sean gave a quick introduction about the Area Agency on Aging then left the floor open to comments, questions, and suggestions from the attendees. Initially one participant asked about the transportation system and how is currently functions to their understanding. After a quick clarification, Sean went on to detail how the buses could be used to pick-up residents and bring them to the meals, improving socialization and attendance. It was mentioned that staff capacity currently, may not be able to meet that need, but potential solutions could be volunteer drivers to assist on meal days. This would also need to be approved by County Commissioners as they own the vehicles, and this would mean more maintenance and operation costs for them to consider.**

**The conversation moved towards Project SMILE (Shared Moments In Living and Eating), as the participants and guests had just finished a meal. The discussion was brief as most of those attending commented they like the menu and options provided. There was a request for some new items to be offered which included prime rib and lobster! That was noted with excitement in the crowd.**

**Following the nutrition discussion, the conversation shifted towards the prospective “Community/Senior Center” that the Town of Elizabeth is working on. This is only in the preliminary planning stages as a design plan has not been finalized. STS Dir. Reassured those attending that the overall goal of that facility will be to provide an all-encompassing, inclusive space for the Town of Elizabeth, including the older adults. Due to a current absence of an actual senior center in Elizabeth, the older adults have not had a consistent location to meet, socialize, and eat. The AAA hopes to partner with the Town of Elizabeth to be able to provide meals out of that new facility and increase programs offered in Elbert County.**

**Lastly, the attendees and STS Dir., spoke about the Caregiving and Caregiver Respite services that ECCOG offers. Sean mentioned that this service is provided through contractual agreements with agencies not based in Elbert County which is a limitation. On top of that, staffing has been difficult to find more folks in the rural eastern plains. There is a need to find agencies that will serve Elbert County, and bring more homemaker, caregiving/caregiver respite and chore services to the communities. Sean mentioned ECCOG is looking into a chore voucher service to help fill some of this gap, but that will take a little time to be approved and get things off the ground.**

**As time approached 2:20PM Sean concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for their time and requested any further input on some Community Conversation Surveys. Sean remained until all those who filled out a survey were finished and thanked them again for their input.**

**The second public meeting was held in Limon at the Hub City Senior Center during the ECCOG board meeting beginning at 7PM. As the board oversees the work done by the East Central AAA, there was not a lot of discussion about the programs and services. Sean did talk about the conversation earlier that day in Elizabeth and how there is need to expand some services like transportation, and homemaker/chore services. Those present are in support of these expansions to better serve those within coverage area. The STS Director asked for the board members’ input through the same Community Conversation Surveys, and those responses were tallied with the other responses received.**

**The last meeting was held on March 17, 2023, at the Stratton Senior Center located at 132 Colorado Avenue, Stratton, CO 80836. Flyers were posted through the community at the post office, TBK Bank, and local grocery store. There were 13 attendees, 12 of which are participants in programs offered by ECCOG, and the other is the Senior Services Coordinator.**

**Discussion began with a brief introduction by Sean at 1:10PM. The floor was open for all to comment or pose suggestions about programs and services. The Project SMILE meal program was the first topic of interest. Again, most everyone is pleased with the menu and the diversity of offerings from month to month. There was a comment about how the program won’t be able to please everyone in terms of wants, and that is okay. There is some room for improvement however, when comparing quality and quantity to the kitchen location. Consideration will be taken by ECCOG staff to improve kitchen efficiency and transportation of food to Stratton, and all other sites across the region to increase satisfaction. There was a suggestion to have more steak, lobster, shrimp in the menu, which sounds familiar to a request from a meeting held earlier in the month. This was noted as well with excitement through the attendees.**

**The topic shifted then towards the transportation system, Outback Express. Initially there was the request to gather up isolated, or home-bound individuals. This suggestion was welcomed again by Sean and is absolutely an allowable use of the vehicles. Similarly, to Elbert County, this extra service would require drivers either paid or volunteer to be cleared to drive the vehicle to bring these other community members into the meal site. ECCOG will work towards opening the transit system to meet this request to bring more community members into the meal site. Also, a request to increase the number of scheduled trips to the city or even locally for doctor appointments to better meet the needs of those needing to see a specialist. There are times those specialists are only in the area, rural or metro, for only a day.**

**Going along that expanding transit talk, the older adults also asked about feasibility to have private use of the bus to go the city for various recreational needs and wants. Locations ranging from the soon to re-open Casa Bonita, to the Denver Botanic Gardens, the Aquarium, and other local attractions. All these ideas are being put on the AAA’s radar, and it will investigate being able to offer these trips through a network of volunteer drivers or paid staff.**

**The discussion moved into a few other services and requests including some more information about the caregiver respite program, Tax Assistance, and a request for more health classes or workshops. Sean clarified there are caregiving/caregiver respite providers with a limited capacity due to staffing. Tax assistance is provided externally from ECCOG by the Colorado East Community Action Agency.**

**Lastly, in regard to the health and fitness classes that fall within evidence based programs are also being investigated by the AAA. Prior to the pandemic, there were classes offered through a partnership with the Independence Center of Colorado Springs. Due to safety concerns those offerings had to cease and through that, contracts were not reestablished. The STS Director has been in contact with the Independence Center and is working on bringing back these health classes to the region to improve physical wellbeing of the older adult populations. The conversation ended at around 2:15PM.**

**In mid-February, the East Central AAA sent out Community Conversation Surveys to senior centers, kitchens, and remote meal sites to gain input across the region. The surveys asked questions related to: how older adults receive information on programs and services; their overall well-being (physically, mentally, financially) compared to the previous year; opinions on challenges faced today by older adults; technology and the need for education; knowledge of supportive services for grandparents raising grandchildren, individuals with dementia or Alzheimer’s, and mental health; intergenerational programs; and existing programs that the AAA should invest more money into.**

**There were 132 surveys distributed, with the potential for copies to be made if needed. However, of the 132 distributed, 65 responses were returned to the AAA, equating to a response of 49.2%. Responses were then tallied based on the number of responses to each question when applicable.**

**Overall, most of the participants are feeling similarly to how they were in the past year (45 responses), with nine who claim to be worse off, and nine better than the last year. The top three challenges facing older adults are Finances (36 responses), Medical/Healthcare (32 responses), and Loneliness/Isolation (27 responses). Questions regarding technology and access showed a great need for classes or trainings to help educate the older adults on technology and how to use it. Of the 65 surveys received, 56 individuals responded either Yes (36) or No (20) to needing assistance with technology.**

**Older adults also provided types of technology they either use currently or may need to use in the future to age well. Technology such as, computers with internet, smartphones, tablets, email, telehealth, and a few others. The top three response were Smartphones (47), and Computers with Inter and Email both with 41 responses.**

**In questions regarding dementia, Alzheimer’s, grandparents raising grandchildren and mental health assistance, predominately all who responded did not know enough about the available supports.**

**Lastly, for questions regarding bridging a gap between younger generations and the older adults, many were interested in skills mentoring or skills classes, and hobby groups or classes. These responses will help ECCOG focus efforts towards bringing in more intergenerational offerings to let the older adults teach the youth, and vice versa. Also, this gives ECCOG avenues to pursue hobbies of their older adults and help those individuals find more like-minded peers who are eager to get involved or learn a new hobby.**

**In conclusion the Community Conversation Survey responses will help guide the AAA. ECCOG sees a great need to offer some classes and trainings to the older adults for technology. This could be done through a system of intergenerational workshops where younger adults could teach the older adults how to use the technology. The responses also convey a need for better outreach and information regarding topics like dementia, Alzheimer’s, mental health, and grandparents raising grandchildren. ECCOG will take these survey responses along with feedback during public meetings and work towards improving services, programs, information dissemination, and expanding on existing services.**

# **Section III: Demographics**

The AAA will include the population projections for the AAA Region over the next four years for individuals over 60 in the categories of: low-income, over 75, rural, ethnic minority, and below the poverty level. The AAA will provide an interpretation of how the AAA region is changing in terms of the demographic shifts and what impact these changes may have on the funding levels and services provided by the AAA.

Statistics were sourced from the State Demographer’s website to create the figures below. The Demographer’s data is categorized by gender and age. ([State Demography Website](https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/assets/html/coareaaging.html))

This first graph shows the composition of older adults age 55-100 in population across the region through 2020-2023.

As you can see the Baby Boomer generation dominates compared to the other three generations in total population. Generation X adults are just coming of age to be eligible for AAA programs and services. That shift will bring some new needs as the older generations ‘Boomers’, ‘Silent’ and ‘Greatest’ are progressing towards the later stages of life. They are less inclined to use newer technology and resources available, while the Generation X will likely use technology more and as years progress. Increasing the need for better technological infrastructure and supports to serve the older adults moving forward.

The following graph shows a depiction of the next four years, 2024-2027.

From the above graph you will see more of the Generation X population coming into the picture and should notice that their cumulative numbers still are not near what the Baby Boomer generation is comprised of. This shows a trend that for the next 20 years or so, Region 5 will have a lot of older adults who will be needing more services. This will require diligent use and monitoring of OAA and SFSS funds to ensure the AAA can support them and others as best they can.

The graph on the next page shows a comparison of population between male and female individuals across age categories 0-85.

As you may notice, there are more adults between 55 and 60 than any other category. There have not been as many people born in subsequent generations, which is reflected in this graphic.

The ratio of male versus female individuals in each age range is almost 50/50. This coincides with the two graphs above and their data trend showing the Baby Boomer generation being larger than those following, Generation X. Reiterating that the population will see a decrease in the coming three decades. Also, in terms of gender there are 115 more female individuals across the region than males who are age 50 and over.

When you compare the number of men who are 50+ to those who are younger, the younger ages possess about 4,357 more individuals. Women who are 50+ plus compared to their younger populace are outnumbered only by 3,052 individuals. Together this means the younger population in 2020 outnumbered the older adults 50+ by 7,409 individuals. This means that over time as generations age in coming decades overall, service levels will remain constant with little variance in 5-year increments. ECCOG will see a slight boom here in the next 15-20 years as those who are 50-60 now, continue to age and may rely more heavily on services provided.

Based on this information, the AAA services will continue have a strong client base to provide services to, and there remains a strong demand for such services in the next four years.



The East Central Region is comprised of an area over 8,000 square miles consisting of flat or gently rolling terrain. The region is sparsely populated with most communities located along I-70, or other major highways. For Kit Carson County and the northern portion of Lincoln County, the largest communities are near I-70. Elbert county’s major communities lay along Highway 24 and Highway 86. This hold true as well for Cheyenne county where their major communities are found along US-40.

 If the total population (40,664) was evenly spread across the region (8,377 mi2) there would be approximately 4.9 individuals per square mile. Let’s break that down by county for a comparison of the region to its parts.

Elbert County reports 14.2 persons per square mile, compared to previous 12.5 persons per square mile. Cheyenne County reports just under 1 person (0.98) per square mile compared to 1.0 person per square mile in the past. Kit Carson County following a similar decline in population now reports 3.3 persons per square mile compared to 3.8. Lincoln County held steady reporting 2.2 people per square mile versus 2.1 previously.

The previous chart shows the breakdown at a county level, various ethnicities, and races. Please note that Lincoln County is home to a correctional facility (group quarters), which influences the percentage of ‘People of Color’.

By considering the various races in our older population, the East Central AAA is adapting their services to better meet the needs of diverse race and ethnic backgrounds and traditions. While our population is comprised of predominantly white non-Hispanic residents, the AAA strives to better its understanding the needs of these other individuals. Through more inclusive and diverse service offerings ECCOG will improve the livelihood of all its regional residents, while maintaining respect for those of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds.

For example, within the Hispanic culture, one may see multiple generations living in one home. This would mean the AAA or other community partners may need to adapt services to better fit the needs of multigenerational household dynamics, compared to traditional white homes comprised of one generation.

The chart above compares the counties in four levels of poverty. The county with the least amount of people living in poverty is Elbert County, while the county with the most people living in poverty is Lincoln County. This will assist the East Central AAA in prioritizing financial assistance to those in the greatest socioeconomic needs.

Chart Sources: https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/assets/html/coareaaging.html

# Section IV: Community Assessment Survey of Older Adults (CASOA)

From the September 2022 CASOA for the East Central Council of Governments, AAA received 769 surveys back from a total of 5,634 distributed by POLCO. That gave the region a response rate of 14.69 percent.

There are 17 livability topics that fall within six domains: Community Design, Employment and Finances, Equity and Inclusivity, Health & wellness, Information and Assistance, and Productive Activities. Of those 17, our regions strongest were, Safety, Community Inclusivity and Physical Health. The greatest needs for improvement were housing, independent living, and employment.

To help mitigate needs for improvement, the East Central AAA has staff members that sit on a local affordable housing board, and another sits on the State Housing Board. ECCOG staff also participates in the Roadmap to Recovery & Resiliency Initiative to improve efforts related to housing within the four counties. The AAA also partners with the Independence Center to help provide access and assistance to older adults in modifying their homes to improve accessibility as they age. Prairie Development Corporation also offers low to moderate income households’ rehabilitation loans at very reasonable interest rates to also provide assistance with home maintenance or repairs. ECCOG will continue to advocate for availability of housing stock that is both affordable and suitable for older adults.

To help improve independent living conditions for residents of the region, ECCOG will champion for sustained hospital, clinical and nursing home availability. To support more aging in place ECCOG will continue partnerships with local providers who can provide homemaker or chore services, and exercise/fitness classes. The East Central AAA also expanded their material assistance program beginning in January of 2023, to offer more assistance towards home modifications to improve the livability of older adults’ homes.

To help combat employment limitations for older adults in the region, ECCOG will provide some technology training and workshops to improve their work skills. In partnership with the Colorado Workforce Center, ECCOG plans to offer a senior job fair, potentially of fall of 2023. This would offer seniors a first look at opportunities available in the region and see where they may fit in local organizations and businesses.

Through paid and unpaid contributions older adults in the AAA region in 2022 totaled $231,256,476. Unpaid versus paid contributions were in close proximity to each other contributing almost a 50/50 split. This shows how important these individuals are towards the overall economic health of the region. If they all retired and did not volunteer, the region would take a huge hit in the workforce and financially.

To summarize, the quality of life within the region shows that 77% find this region as a place they wish to live and retire. Along with that, 67% also want to remain within the community or region. Older adults feel safe, included and physically able to remain independently in their homes and communities to continue to age well.

For those who wish to read more details about the CASOA report please go to the following link to the C4A website and you will find the East Central Council of Governments’ report there.

<https://www.c4a-colorado.org/casoa-reports/>

# Section V: Volunteers – their contributions now, and future opportunities

**Currently, the Eastern Central AAA has volunteers predominately in the meal program, Project SMILE. These volunteers help predominantly by delivering the meals to home-bound individuals. Some volunteers help in congregate sites by setting up tables, chairs, and arranging table settings.**

**The AAA will work towards opening more volunteer opportunities through various programs like transportation, and evidence-based workshops/classes.**

# **Section VI: Covid-19/Pandemic Response**

1. **How has the pandemic impacted social isolation and loneliness in the Region? What is your AAA and Region doing to address this?**

**During the pandemic older adults were told to stay home and stay safe which escalated the effects of isolation and loneliness. To mitigate loneliness and isolation, ECCOG staff, specifically the Senior Service Coordinators, sent “Thinking of You cards” and called the seniors routinely to check in and see how they were handling the isolation. Staff also established a Buddy Reassurance system so that older adults could also check in with each other, helping to maintain some socializing through texts and phone calls.**

1. **What changes in service delivery have been implemented during the pandemic that have been identified as a best practice that will continue?**

**When congregate meals could not be offered anymore due to risk of spreading COVID-19, all meal delivery services were converted to home delivery. This practice will continue in the future and if another emergency arises, we are already prepared to react to that demand.**

**For all participants FEMA Food Boxes were distributed throughout the region. This helped provide shelf stable food items when families weren’t able to get out within the community and shop for themselves.**

1. **What strategies has the AAA used to retain staff and volunteers to ensure well-being during the pandemic?**
	1. **Self-care packages for employees**
	2. **Increase in wages across all positions to increase competitiveness with other companies and corporations**
	3. **Provided appreciation bonuses for employees who stayed with ECCOG through the pandemic**
	4. **Volunteer Home-delivered meal drivers receive a mileage reimbursement**
	5. **Office staff pivoted towards work from home to continue service delivery and tracking as required to reduce spread**
2. **How was the AAA able to use the current and previous stimulus funding to respond to community needs?**

**East Central AAA used the flexible stimulus funding to supply all home-delivered meals (HDMs) with goods like plastic bags, to-go containers, gloves, masks, hand sanitizer, and thermometers. ECCOG also was able to maintain all staff through wage increases, sick pay and being empathetic and compassionate.**

1. **Are there any services and/or service locations that have been permanently stopped or closed as a result of the pandemic?**

**No, ECCOG managed to actually increase available meal sites by opening a remote site in Elizabeth. Also, through SB21-290 renovations within in a previous remote site will lead to a new kitchen being created in a food desert (Kit Carson).**

# **Section VII: Equity**

**ECCOG is working on a contractual agreement with a bilingual individual who will assist in better reaching the Hispanic populations. This contractor will also help ECCOG translate existing print materials into Spanish versions so they can better reach those community members. Through future outreach events and a connection with the Fresh Conversations and Text 2 Live Healthy (T2LH) initiatives ECCOG will be able to reach even further into minority populations. Through monitoring of new clients in SUDS, within minority designations ECCOG will be able to identify the effectiveness of the new outreach.**

**Senior Service Coordinators are reinvigorating social activities and events that interest their local older adults to provide a more diverse and inclusive ecosystem. ECCOG will continue to their support towards participant-directed/person-centered programs with assistance from the Ombudsman services and contract providers. Providers include Eastern Colorado Home Care, Lincoln County Department of Human Services, Kit Carson County Home Health Agency, Centennial Mental Health, and Cheyenne County Public Health.**

# **Section VIII: Questions**

**The Area Plan covers State Fiscal Years (SFY) 2024-2027 (July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2027). The Area Plan shall respond specifically to each of the following questions.**

### **Services**

1. **What service/services are the highest priority in the Region and why are these services prioritized?**

The services of highest priority in the region based on need are meals, transportation, and material assistance. These are prioritized due to the vast rural area and lack of amenities found in metropolitan areas. Through some community input surveys distributed across the region East Central AAA has also found that there is a very strong need for technology and assistance classes for older adults. Out of about 132 surveys distributed, 65 were returned and tallied for responses. Technology assistance was marked 36 times out of a total of 56 responses to that question specifically.

1. **What is the workforce and volunteer capacity in the Region relative to the need?**

The region has a limited labor pool to recruit staff and volunteers from. Many of the younger generations move out of the region leaving older adults as a main source of the labor pool. Which means turnover is high every few years and training costs are high relative to the turnover.

1. **What is your current process for monitoring providers and what plans do you have to update it and improve over the next four (4) years?**

ECCOG monitors providers through a combination of virtual and in person desk evaluations, client feedback surveys and impact reports. ECCOG will develop new monitoring documents that are more pertinent to the work of each individual provider.

1. **What services currently have a waitlist? What is the process for monitoring the waitlist and how are individuals prioritized to receive services?**

Currently no service or program has a waitlist because of our continuous monitoring of the programs. ECCOG staff and administrators monitor client service units, intake assessments and funds to providers and direct services to ensure service delivery throughout the year.

### Ombudsman and Legal Assistance

1. **What long-term care issues would you like the State Ombudsman to give priority to, as a systems advocate during the next four (4) years?**

Acquire and provide more funds to run the Ombudsman program so that other Area Agency on Aging OAA/SFSS monies are not used.

1. **In addition to resident council meetings, family council meetings, and presentation to the community, what other activities will the local Ombudsman participate in during the next four years to educate the community regarding long-term care ombudsman services?**

Local Ombudsmen may present to the public on their services and the rights of older adults throughout the four counties. See future planning in the ‘Targeting & Outreach’ section.

1. **How will the AAA prioritize legal assistance in the form of advice or representation from the Legal Assistance Program during the next four (4) years for cases related to those identified in the Older Americans Act, including income, health care, long-term care, nutrition, housing, utilities, protective services, defense of guardianship, abuse, neglect, and age discrimination?**

Legal assistance providers may present at senior centers on the various services identified in the OAA, in conjunction with Colorado Disability Law’s support. See future planning in the ‘Targeting & Outreach’ section.

1. **What challenges does the AAA anticipate to ensuring that the Legal Assistance provider is able and willing to provide representation for these issues and how will the AAA address these challenges?**

East Central AAA is weary of the capacity of the Legal Assistance provider being able to represent multiple individuals across the various cases identified in the OAA. To combat this, the AAA will look for guidance and assistance form Colorado Disability Law and other local Legal providers to help fill gaps where the existing provider may lack the capacity to serve the needs of more individuals.

1. **PACE Ombudsman (if applicable): For the local programs that have a PACE organization in your area, what are your ideas to address the growth?**

N/A

### Other Services

1. **What are the AAA’s plans related to providing evidence-based health promotion or disease prevention programs?**

The AAA plans to restore previous agreements with the Independence Center to offer more regionwide Evidence Based health promotional programs. ECCOG joined with the Fresh Conversations and Text 2 Live Healthy (T2LH) initiatives to promote more nutritional and disease prevention information across the region to both English and Spanish residents. East Central AAA will also form a partnership with Centennial Mental Health to provide Evidence Based mental health services and programs for the four counties.

1. **In addition to funding received through the Older Americans Act (OAA) and State Funding for Senior Services (SFSS), what other funds are received by the AAA to provide services for older adults (e.g., Senior Health Insurance Assistance, Colorado Choice Transitions, etc.)?**

Other than OAA and SFSS funds, the Colorado Department of Transportation provides funds to support the transportation system known as Outback Express. These funds help procure vehicles and provide operation and administration funds that facilitate the transit program for older adults and the public.

### Targeting and Outreach

1. **What are some successes the AAA has used that improved access and utilization of services by individuals who are at greatest social and economic need?**

Beginning in 2023, ECCOG expanded the material assistance program Project HelpMATE to offer Home-Modification assistance. This provided clarity on how much assistance could be provided to individuals for the material costs related to modifying their homes. This helps the older adults remain safe, secure, and independent in their homes.

1. **What strategies will the AAA use to raise awareness of the services provided over the four years of the Area Plan to target populations?**

ECCOG will complete their updates to existing print materials and brochures to help with some of the outreach. Along with assistance from the bilingual contractor, those print materials will be translated into Spanish. The AAA will also offer community outreach meetings annually starting in late 2024, to educate older adults and their family members of services and programs available. Through extended field staff training, the region will have more consistent outreach and information dissemination.

### Innovation and Expansion of Services

1. **What type of innovations is the AAA planning to try during the next four years to improve the quality and availability of services provided or funded by the AAA?**

Technology training and assistance classes/workshops will be provided to help educate older adults on using technology. This would improve their confidence in the usage of computers, smart phones, and email. New equipment will be provided to the senior centers to modernize their technological access as well, improving classes, telehealth, and connectivity throughout the region. These improvements will also help provide means of virtual presentations to increase awareness of resources related to dementia, Alzheimer’s, mental health, and other health related needs. These needs were identified on the Community Conversation Surveys.

1. **What plans do you have to measure the effectiveness, efficiency, and outcomes of your programs and services?**

Attendance will be tracked at all trainings and future community outreach meetings. Questionnaires will be used before and after the meetings/workshops to determine the efficiency of the information. ECCOG will utilize a year over year comparison to track increases in services provided and new clients. The AAA will use the end of State Fiscal Year 2023 as a baseline measurement.

# Section VII: Title III / VI Coordination

N/A (not applicable) to ECCOG

# Section IX: Additional Priorities Identified by the AAA (Optional)

N/A (not applicable)

# Section X: Forms

The forms required in the Area Plans will be completed in Google Sheets. All forms are required to be completed with the exception of “Worksheet A: Direct Service Waiver Request”. Only AAAs requesting waivers need to submit Worksheet A.

**Worksheet A:  Direct Service Waiver Request**

Only AAAs providing services directly will submit this form.  Waivers for all OAA/SFSS programs are allowable to permit demonstrations and to promote innovations or improve service delivery providing the waiver will not diminish services already provided.  A direct service is identified for any service funded with non-administrative funding to support AAA staff.  The Long-term Care Ombudsman Program does not need to be identified as a direct service.

Before requesting a waiver, the AAA shall conduct a public hearing.  The AAA shall notify all interested parties in the area, of the public hearing and furnish the interested parties with the opportunity to testify.  The AAA shall prepare a record of the public hearing and shall furnish the record of the public hearing with the request for a waiver to the SUA when the Area Plan is submitted.

**Worksheet B:  Nutrition Services**

This form provides information about each OAA/SFSS congregate meal site and home delivered meal provider.

Congregate Meal Site/Grab-N-Go Site Name/Address (Column B):  List the contact’s name, street address, phone number, email address, and fax number of each meal site in the AAA Region.

Which Program(s) Operate Out of This Site?  (Columns C and D):  Identify if the site provides Congregate, Grab-N-Go, Drop-Shipped, and/or Home Delivered Meal programs.

Are meals prepared on-site?  (Column E):  Answer ‘Yes’ or ‘No’.

Which meal is served / delivered each day?  (Columns G, H, and I) Check the site(s), which serve one or more than one complete meal per day.  If additional meals are charged to OAA or SFSS, each meal served must provide at least one-third of the current Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA), Dietary Reference Intakes (DRI), and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Dietary Guidelines for older adults (662/3 for two meals, 100% for three meals).

Number of Days of the Week Congregate Meals and/or Grab-N-Go Meals are Served: (Column J) List the number of days of the week each meal site serves meals using C1 and/or state funds.

Number of Days of the Week Home Delivered Meals are Delivered: (Column K) List the number of days of the week each meal site delivers meals using C1 and/or state funds.

**Worksheet C:  Community Focal Points and Senior Centers**

This form provides information on the name and location of senior centers and focal points within each region.

Contact Information: (Column A) - List the name, address, city, zip code, and telephone number of each senior center and/or focal point facility within the AAA Region.

Focal Point: (Column C) Check the box if the facility is a Focal Point (the term "focal point" means a facility established to encourage the maximum co-location and coordination of services for older individuals.)

Senior Center: (Column D) Check the box if the facility is a Senior Center.  (The term "Senior Center" means a facility for the organization and provision of a broad spectrum of services, which shall include, but not be limited to, provision of health including mental health, social, nutritional, and educational services and the provision of facilities for recreational activities for older individuals.)  A facility can be both a focal point and senior center.  If that is the case, please check both boxes.

Funded by Title III-B and/or SFSS:  (Column E) Check the box if the facility is funded through Title III-B or SFSS.  Indicate if the facility is a senior center and a recipient of Title III B or SFSS funds for Senior Center Operations.  Do not check if the Senior Center is a congregate nutrition site and only receiving Nutrition funds from OAA or SFSS.

**Worksheet D:  Regional Advisory Council Membership**

List all persons presently serving as members of the AAA’s Regional Advisory Council.  In the Organizational Affiliation column, note whether this advisory council member represents older persons, the general public, provider organizations, health care provider organizations, local elected officials, county councils on aging, county commissioners, etc.  For multiple county AAA regions, note which county or town the appropriate advisory council member is representing.  Provide the total number of members who are low-income, minority, and/or 60 years of age or older on row 60.