

Brookline Council on Aging (COA) Community Engagement SMART Goals

August 25, 2021

Goal 1: To provide access to technology to older adults who are economically disadvantaged.

COA Staff: Ruthann Dobek, Julie Washburn, Maria Foster, Mark Catalano and BSC volunteers

Specific:

- **What:** Work with the Town of Brookline Emergency Operations Center and Brookline Housing Authority to provide tablets and internet connection to Brookline older adults who qualify. This project will specifically target outreach efforts to people of color and senior women living alone in addition to disabled individuals, and non-native English speakers. The recipients of the tablets will be mentored by volunteers.
- **Why:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, many programs and services shifted to online and there was a need to provide older adults with technology support.
- **Who:** Ruthann Dobek, Julie Washburn, Maria Foster, Mark Catalano, BSC volunteers and other community partners.
- **Where:** Zoom meetings, the Brookline Senior Center, Brookline Housing Authority sites, the Public Libraries of Brookline, VIBRANT, possible other community forums, other civic and faith community spaces and possibly individuals' homes.
- **Which:** Interdepartmental coordination meetings; recruit, train and support volunteers; develop training materials for participants, staff and volunteers; conduct workshops on technology, online programming, services, and platforms; collection of data to demonstrate and direct work; work collaboratively with VIBRANT to support visually impaired program participants; and provide public information outreach including TV shows and monthly newsletter articles.

Measurable: Maintain statistics for number of older adults who received tablets from the project, the number of older adults who received free internet, and the number of older adults who received ongoing training from the project. In addition, we will maintain statistics on technology matches completed, programs offered, referrals made to COA staff for other services, and funding secured.

Attainable: The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for increased technology. The COA collaborated with Emergency Operations to obtain a grant and we've been working in the planning process since the grant was awarded on April 29, 2021. We have successfully worked with Emergency Operations and Brookline Housing Authority to coordinate COVID-19 vaccine clinics thereby demonstrating that we have a strong working history and the capacity to complete projects. Recent staffing changes at the COA and Emergency Operations have led to new energy and expressed interest in this work. Additionally, community events on technology have also been very well-attended in the past.

Relevant: The pandemic spotlighted social isolation amongst older adults and the related concerns around loneliness and the lack of access to programs and services. Many of our low and moderate income older adults do not have technology devices, internet service, and/or the skills required to utilize the technology. The COA has a successful model for educating and supporting older adults with rideshare applications. This model can be expanded for this project.

Time-Bound:

Next 6 Months: Continue to develop educational materials; continue outreach to and recruitment of participants; continue outreach to and recruitment of volunteers; continue work with the Public Libraries of Brookline and VIBRANT to create educational workshops; apply for additional funding to sustain and expand the project; and continue to evaluate new technologies and applications.

2022: Continue to develop educational materials; continue outreach to and recruitment of participants; continue outreach to and recruitment of volunteers; continue work with the Public Libraries of Brookline and VIBRANT to create educational workshops; apply for additional funding to sustain and expand the project; and continue to evaluate new technologies and applications. Depending on the status of our goal and the availability of additional funding resources, we will assess the need to continue going forward.

2023 and Beyond: Depending on the status of our goal and the availability of additional funding resources, we will assess the need to continue going forward.

Goal 2: To provide opportunities for socialization and decrease loneliness among Brookline adults.

COA Staff: all COA staff, COA Board members, and COA volunteers

Specific:

- **What:** The Council on Aging will create a campaign to combat social isolation and loneliness among older adults living in Brookline. This project will specifically target outreach efforts to people of color and senior women living alone in addition to disabled individuals, and non-native English speakers. The COA will collaborate with town and community partners to provide education and action steps to decrease loneliness.
- **Why:** Social isolation and loneliness are identified as a major health problem among older adults. The COVID-19 pandemic decreased the opportunities for social engagement.
- **Who:** all COA staff, COA Board members, COA volunteers, and other community agencies.
- **Where:** Zoom meetings, the Brookline Senior Center, Brookline Housing Authority sites, the Public Libraries of Brookline, VIBRANT, possible other community forums, other civic and faith community spaces and possibly individuals' homes.
- **Which:** Interdepartmental coordination meetings; recruit, train and support volunteers; develop training materials for participants, staff and volunteers; conduct workshops on combatting loneliness, online programming, services, and platforms; collection of data to demonstrate and direct work; work collaboratively with VIBRANT to support visually impaired program participants; work collaboratively with Chinese Golden Age Center to support our Asian residents, work collaboratively with the Aging Project to support LGBTQI+ residents, and provide public information outreach including TV shows and monthly newsletter articles.

Measurable: Maintain statistics for number of residents served and number of volunteers trained, projects on isolation completed, programs offered, referrals made to COA staff for other services, and funding secured.

Attainable: The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the problem of social isolation. The COA has a strong partnership with other providers on bringing educational programs to the community.

Relevant: The pandemic spotlighted social isolation amongst older adults and the related concerns around loneliness and the lack of access to programs and services.

Time-Bound:

Next 6 Months: Continue to develop educational materials; continue outreach to and recruitment of participants; continue outreach to and recruitment of volunteers; continue work with other community partners to create educational workshops; apply for additional funding to sustain and expand projects; and continue to evaluate project effectiveness.

2022: Continue to develop educational materials; continue outreach to and recruitment of participants; continue outreach to and recruitment of volunteers; continue work with community partners to create educational workshops; apply for additional funding to sustain and expand projects; and continue to evaluate project effectiveness. Depending on the status of our goal and the availability of additional funding resources, we will assess the need to continue going forward.

2023 and Beyond: Depending on the status of our goal and the availability of additional funding resources, we will assess the need to continue going forward.

Goal 3: Support the mental and physical health of Brookline residents aged 60+ with a focus on clutter and how it impacts their lives.

COA Staff: Ruthann Dobek, Michael Allen, Katie McClean + Social Work Interns

Specific:

- **What:** Work with the Brookline Hoarding Task Force (HTF) to increase community support for Brookline residents as they struggle to manage clutter, with an ultimate goal of securing durable funding to support this ongoing work.
- **Why:** Brookline residents struggle with the tendency to accumulate clutter. Clutter and hoarding are common and can significantly impact lives in a range of ways including increasing psychological distress, leading to the condemnation of homes, and causing evictions. Those without financial resources are disproportionately impacted as they cannot pay for cleaning and organizational services. Currently available support is limited and efforts to coordinate between agencies have historically lost traction without funding.
- **Who:** Ruthann Dobek, Michael Allen, Katie McClean, Social Work Interns
- **Where:** Zoom meetings, the Brookline Senior Center, the Brookline Department of Public Health, possible other community forums, senior and public housing developments, other civic and faith community spaces, and individuals' homes
- **Which:** Interdepartmental coordination meetings, community/provider/home care worker trainings, written materials for residents, written materials for providers, collection of data to demonstrate and direct work, direct clinical and material support for residents, payment for clinical support and cleaning services, and public information outreach including TV shows and monthly newsletter articles.

Measurable: Maintain statistics for providers and workers trained, assessments completed, programs offered, health department reports made, first responder visits registering clutter challenges, funding secured, and HELP Program clients referred. Develop a protocol between COA and DPH to collect data on number of clutter cases.

Attainable: Expanding the work of the HTF leverages the ongoing work of several departments and agencies on this issue. The HTF has already existed for many years, indicating that interest in the issue is long-standing. The work of the HTF has featured interagency meetings to collaborate on strategies and discuss relevant cases, but funding has often waylaid momentum (efforts for which there are no resources fall by the wayside; hoarding cases themselves often need resources). In addition to its strong historical foundations, recent staffing changes at the COA and Health Department have led to new energy and expressed interest in the work. In the past, community events on the topic have also been very well-attended

Relevant: Clutter has been a challenge for Brookline residents for decades, as evidenced by the long tenure of the HTF. There is also anecdotal agreement among departments that we are seeing more cases than ever before. Hoarding cases are recurrent and pose immediate, significant risk to individuals' health, safety, and financial security. They are also more difficult to manage in the absence of significant financial resources, making the issue one of equity as well. Also, in addition to being relevant to Brookline residents, HTF work helps town departments and community organizations effectively and efficiently effectively collaborate with each other.

Time-Bound:

Next 6 Months: HTF continues to meet. Support for individuals in the community through case work, other direct support, and interagency coordination continues. Consolidate data to guide next steps, demonstrate need. Applications for one-time funding submitted. HTF re-brands and clarifies long-term strategies for collaboration, funding, and support for community members.

2022: Continue direct support of individuals, HTF meetings, data gathering, etc. Present to appropriate community groups for input. Actively pursue durable funding (line item), continue to expand interagency coordination through the HTF, offer trainings to providers, home care workers, and community members.

2023 and Beyond: Continue ongoing work, making sure through the HTF that all work is concurrent with best practices. Consider how to use durable funding (dedicated staff person or direct support for residents are possibilities). Consider how to replenish one-time fund in the future.

Goal 4: To provide transportation resources, information, and subsidy to town of Brookline older residents (aged 60+).

COA Staff: Ruthann Dobek, Maria Foster, Jamie Jensen, and BSC volunteers

Specific:

- **What:** Provide Town of Brookline residents (aged 60+) with the resources they need to efficiently and safely get around the community for all purposes. This project will specifically target outreach efforts to people of color and senior women living alone in addition to disabled individuals, and non-native English speakers. Options include public, medical transportation, COA vehicles, subsidized Lyft, GoGo Grandparent, Lyft Concierge, and public transportation.

- **Why:** Transportation is often cited as one of the priority needs for older adults and is an important factor in supporting those older adults that want to stay in their homes and remain active in the community.
- **Who:** Ruthann Dobek, Maria Foster, Jamie Donchin, and BSC volunteers. In addition, other social service providers and COA collaborators.
- **Where:** Zoom and in person meetings with volunteers, outreach events at Senior Housing buildings, face-to face and small group meetings with older residents. Outreach via flyers, newsletters, and other social media.
- **Which:** Interagency coordination meetings with Brookline Interactive Group, Metropolitan Planning Organization, and Massachusetts Council on Aging. Recruit, train and support volunteers; develop training materials for participants. Outreach to older adults on new technologies and transportation modes; collect and analyze usage of our subsidized transportation options. Support program participants across a spectrum of abilities and capacities. Offer translation as needed. Provide public information outreach including social media and monthly newsletter articles.

Measurable: Maintain statistics for number of older adults new to programs and number of residents who utilize monthly subsidy. Continue to sign up 3-4 residents per month. served both through direct service with subsidized transportation options and outreach to those seeking information, resources, and support. Amount of funding secured to sustain subsidized transportation programs.

Attainable: TRIPPS began with a grant from the Mass Department of Transportation in 2015 and has since secured funding from a variety of sources to continue. Continual outreach is necessary as people realize they need transportation, often when they begin to cut back on driving. We recruited and maintained a loyal group of volunteers who are dedicated to the issues and challenges of transportation in our community.

Relevant: Transportation is usually listed as top priority of need by older adults. The transportation landscape has changed dramatically especially with the decline of the taxi industry and newer options require more technical ability and training support. BSC Transportation programs support low and moderate income older adults who benefit from a subsidy in order to provide equitable access to community services.

Time-Bound:

Next 6 Months: Continue outreach to and recruitment of participants; continue outreach to and recruitment of volunteers; ongoing training for older residents on new technologies to access transportation; continue work with the Brookline Interactive Group to create additional training materials on rideshare; continue outreach to Brookline Housing.

2022: Continue outreach to and recruitment of participants; continue outreach to and recruitment of volunteers; ongoing training for older residents on new technologies to access transportation; apply for additional funding to sustain and expand the program; and continue to evaluate new technologies and applications. Assess data and survey participants on program satisfaction.

2023 and Beyond: Because we know transportation will continue to be a high priority beyond 2022, apply for additional funding to sustain and expand the program.

