

Collective Impact Evaluation of Aging in Place, Aging in Community Strategic Plan

THE CLIENT

The City of West Hollywood (WEHO), West Hollywood, CA

THE CHALLENGE

WEHO initiated the development of a five-year strategic plan - *Aging in Place, Aging in Community* (AIP) - to help the city evolve as a community where aging is embraced and where people can remain in the housing of their choice for as long as possible. The city's strategic plan built on the city's existing policies and programs, such as arts and cultural events, lifespan-friendly housing, senior services, and other approaches to wellness, while responding to the demographic trend of people living longer and living independently in their homes. West Hollywood is home to LGBTQ community members; long-term HIV survivors; Russian-speaking emigrants, many of whom are 80 and 90 years of age; Baby Boomers reaching retirement age; and a large population of single head of household families. As a caring and supportive city, demonstrated by 31 years of proactive and progressive policies and services, it was important to WEHO to be able to measure their progress in this work.

WEHO needed an evaluator to create and implement an evaluation plan to determine whether the investments into the initiative were resulting in the desired changes. WEHO engaged HMA Community Strategies (HMACS) to advise on advanced evaluation planning during the completion of the strategic plan, and then contracted HMACS for the full evaluation to measure the impact of the strategic plan across the community.

THE APPROACH

The five-year plan addresses several key questions, and HMACS created an evaluation that would probe, track and measure:

- **Implementation:** What does implementation of the AIP initiative look like?
- **Changes in awareness of AIP:** To what degree is the community aware of the initiative, its agenda, and its concepts and goals, and is awareness growing?
- **Changes in incorporation of AIP concepts:** To what degree are key leaders incorporating age-friendly concepts into their work?
- **Changes to programs and services:** What changes to programs and services occurred in the city and to what degree can these changes be attributed to the work of the initiative?
- **Development of shared measurement for future year evaluation:** In the first year of the evaluation, to what degree are steps toward a shared measurement system taken?
- **Work toward sustainability:** Will the year one activities support the implementation of years two-five of the initiative in ways that contribute to meeting future goals?

- **Short-term outcomes for older adults:** To what degree do older adults experience changes or improvements in access to services and resources; participate and engage more in the community; and have improved quality of life?

HMACS employed a mixed-method evaluation approach and followed implementation of the complex and extensive strategic plan. The evaluation team worked to identify appropriate data points to capture the information needed to answer the priority questions, advising WEHO on adjustments to the plan that would be effective and practical as initiatives were implemented and strategies were adjusted. Through multiple, annual city-wide surveys, interviews, focus groups, analysis of key city meetings, documentation of program activities and their changes, review of outreach activities, and city department activities and accomplishments, the evaluation captured significant data.

RESULTS

Following the first year of the evaluation, HMACS published a comprehensive report about WEHO's work and the results thus far. The evaluation contained notable findings on the progress of the work.

Awareness of the concepts of age-friendliness and what it means for a city to be age-friendly is high and growing among older adults, city staff, and members of the WEHO advisory boards and commissions. WEHO staff and city leaders are providing increased attention to the needs of older adults and to AIP, suggesting these issues are a growing and a sustained priority. There is evidence that the initiative is helping city staff and city leaders understand how they can contribute to making WEHO more age-friendly, believe that their work can move WEHO in that direction, and supporting their intentions to do so.

The AIP initiative is having an impact on how WEHO staff do their work in concrete ways. A higher percentage of programs and services being offered, and funded by the city, are focused on serving older adults. Tangible activity has been documented within every division of WEHO, with some divisions having done a considerable amount. Activities include enhancements or new efforts as well as significant planning for future work.

The work of the evaluation had a noticeable effect of increasing awareness of WEHO's priorities for older adults and in some cases, it drove implementation of the strategic plan as program leaders were reminded of the importance of the work. The project and the report also reinforced WEHO's role as the backbone organization in the city leading many stakeholders in their shared AIP goals.

[Report](#)

[Strategic plan](#)