
The Leverett Elders Studies Needs Assessment Final Report Summary

A Community-Based Participatory Project
Led by the Leverett Council on Aging & Town Common Research

Agenda

- Project Background and Goals
- Overview of Data Collection
- Analysis and Results
- Recommendations Based on Project Findings
- Q&A

Background

2021 to early 2022

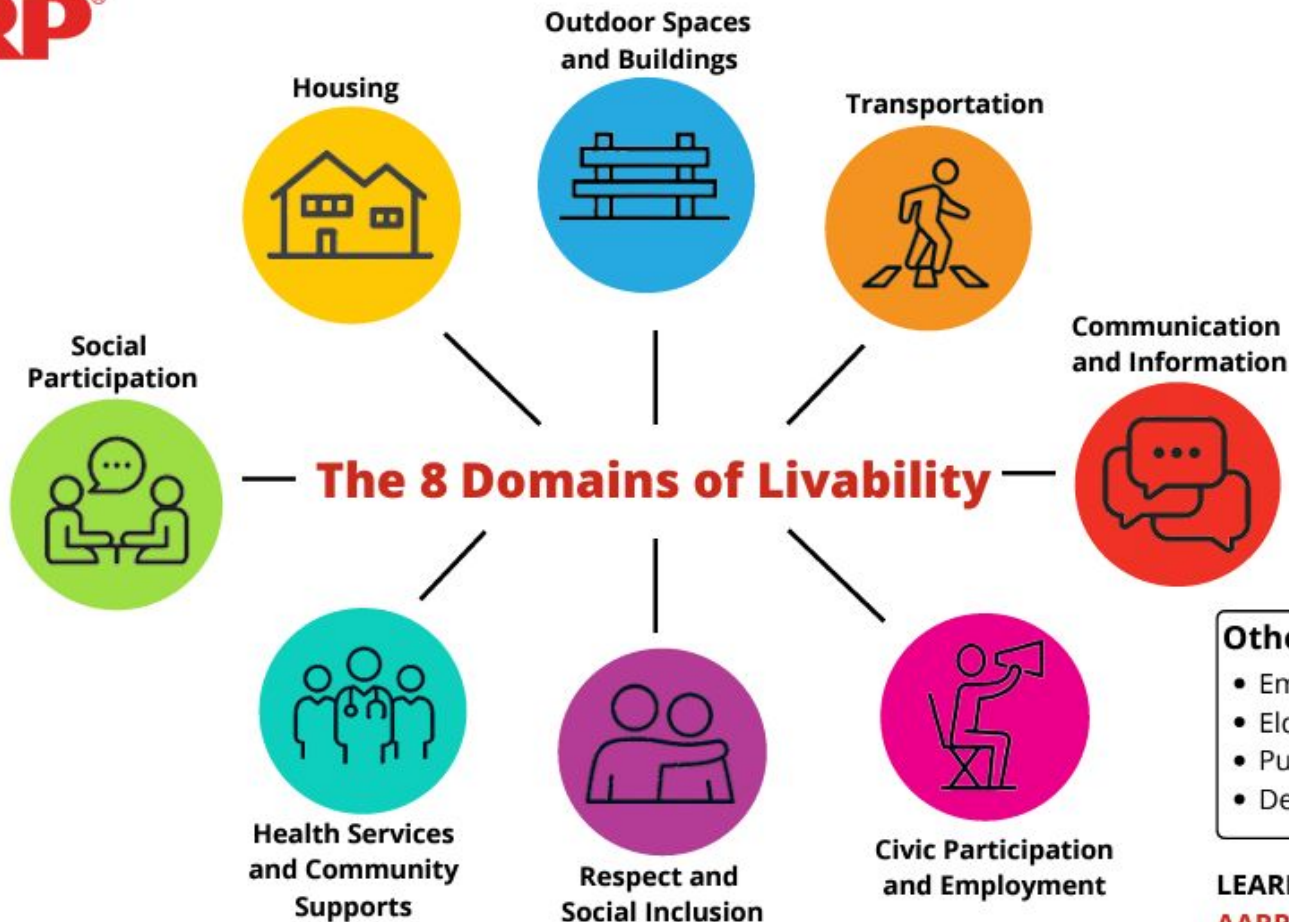
COA won a two-year grant from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. They published a request for proposals and selected Town Common Research (TCR) to conduct an in-depth needs assessment in Leverett.

TCR proposed **community-based participatory research** methodologies that prioritized:

1. Project ownership by the Leverett COA, and
2. The self-determination of Leverett's elder community.

Project Goals

- Discover needs and priorities of Leverett residents aged 50+
- Inform Age-Friendly programs that meet priority needs
- Ensure that Leverett continues to provide services and to cultivate a community environment, with inclusivity, accessibility, and age-friendliness by design.



- Other Areas**
- Emergency Preparedness
 - Elder abuse
 - Public safety
 - Dementia-friendly

LEARN MORE
[AARP.org/Livable](https://www.aarp.org/Livable)

Data Collection

February through December 2022

TCR reviewed secondary data from town, regional, state, and national sources. TCR collected three types of primary data:

1. Lifepath **Aging and Dementia Friendly Community Needs Assessment** survey
2. Confidential, one-on-one **Key Informant Interviews** (KIIs)
3. Two **Focus Groups** with Leverett residents aged 50+

Demographics	Leverett	Franklin County
Population	1,875	70,529
Households	727	30,790
Median household income	\$93,942	\$61,198
Poverty rate age 65+	5%	7%
Median age	47.4	47
Age 50-59	10% (about 190 people)	15% (about 11,000)
Age 60+	37% (about 695 people)	31% (about 22,000)
Asian	5% (about 95 people)	1% (about 700)
Black, Hispanic, 2+ Races	3% (about 60 people)	7% (about 5,000)
White	91% (about 1,710 people)	90% (about 63,000)

Category	Leverett	2022 US median	Category Measurement
Housing	41	52	<i>Housing is measured by metrics and policies that promote affordability, availability, and accessibility.</i>
Neighborhood	42	48	<i>Neighborhood is measured by metrics and policies focused on proximity to key destinations, safety, and supporting mixed-use development.</i>
Transportation	50	49	<i>Transportation is measured by metrics and policies related to convenience, safety, and options.</i>
Environment	73	54	<i>Environment is measured by metrics and policies related to air and water quality, as well as energy efficiency, and hazard mitigation plans.</i>
Health	54	50	<i>Health is measured by metrics and policies that promote healthy behaviors including smoking cessation, and exercise opportunities.</i>
Engagement	64	53	<i>Engagement is measured by metrics and policies that include voting rights, human rights, and cultural engagement.</i>
Opportunity	48	52	<i>Opportunity is measured by metrics and policies that capture job availability, government creditworthiness, and graduation rates.</i>

Table 1: Leverett's AARP Livability Index Scores

In April, 2022, the AARP Public Policy Institute released updated Livability Index scores for communities.

Leverett's overall livability score was 53, compared to the US median score of 50.

AARP develops these scores by analyzing policies, built environment, municipal services, environmental health, accessibility, affordability, and socioeconomic data.

LifePath Survey Participation

February to April 2022

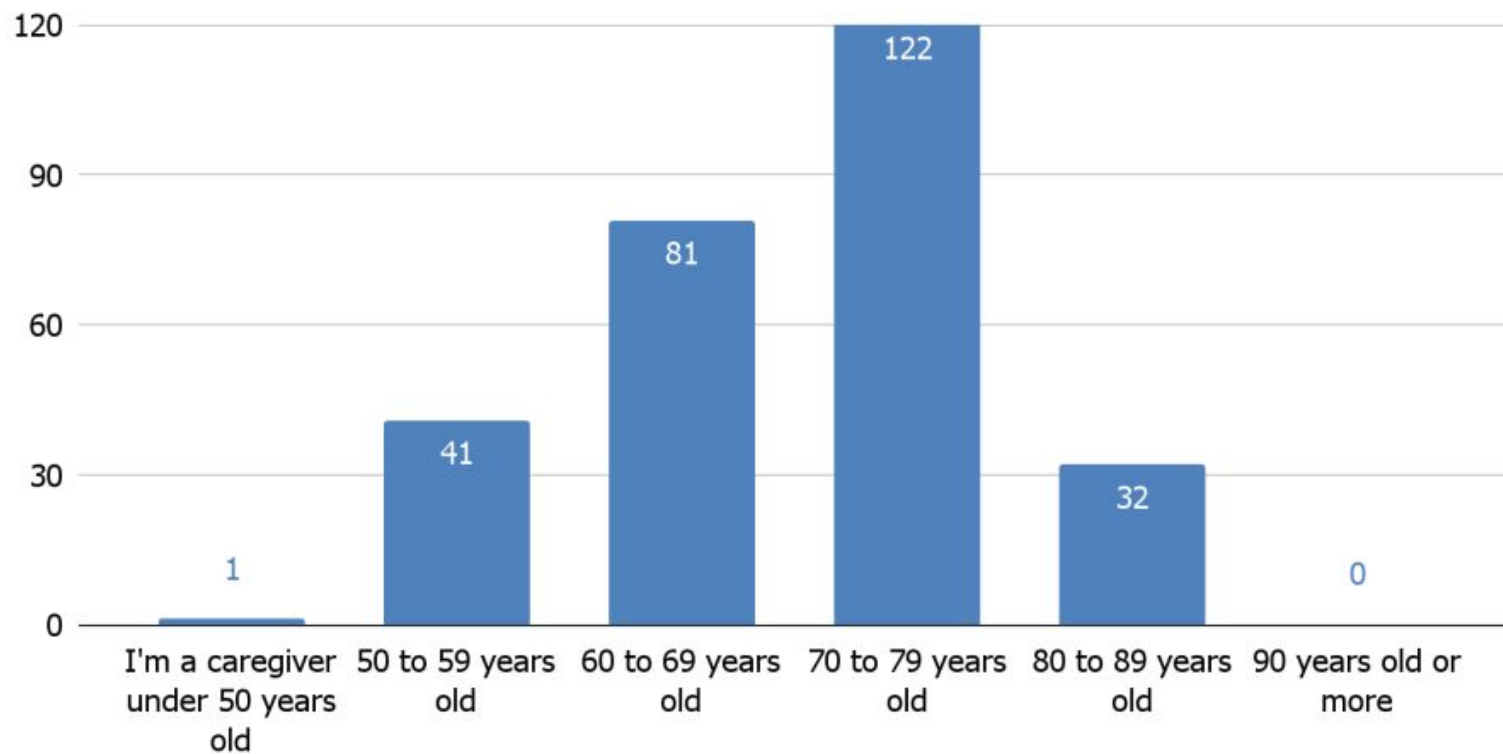
TCR activities with COA and LifePath supporting the survey of residents 50 and older:

- Mass communication, survey distribution
- Personal outreach
- Delivering a printed survey to 1 home
- Joining Select Board member Melissa Colbert at the Town Transfer Station to discuss the survey, distribute printed copies, and encourage online participation.

277 Leverett residents aged 50+ responded to LifePath's survey, the highest response rate across towns in Franklin County and the North Quabbin.

How old are you?

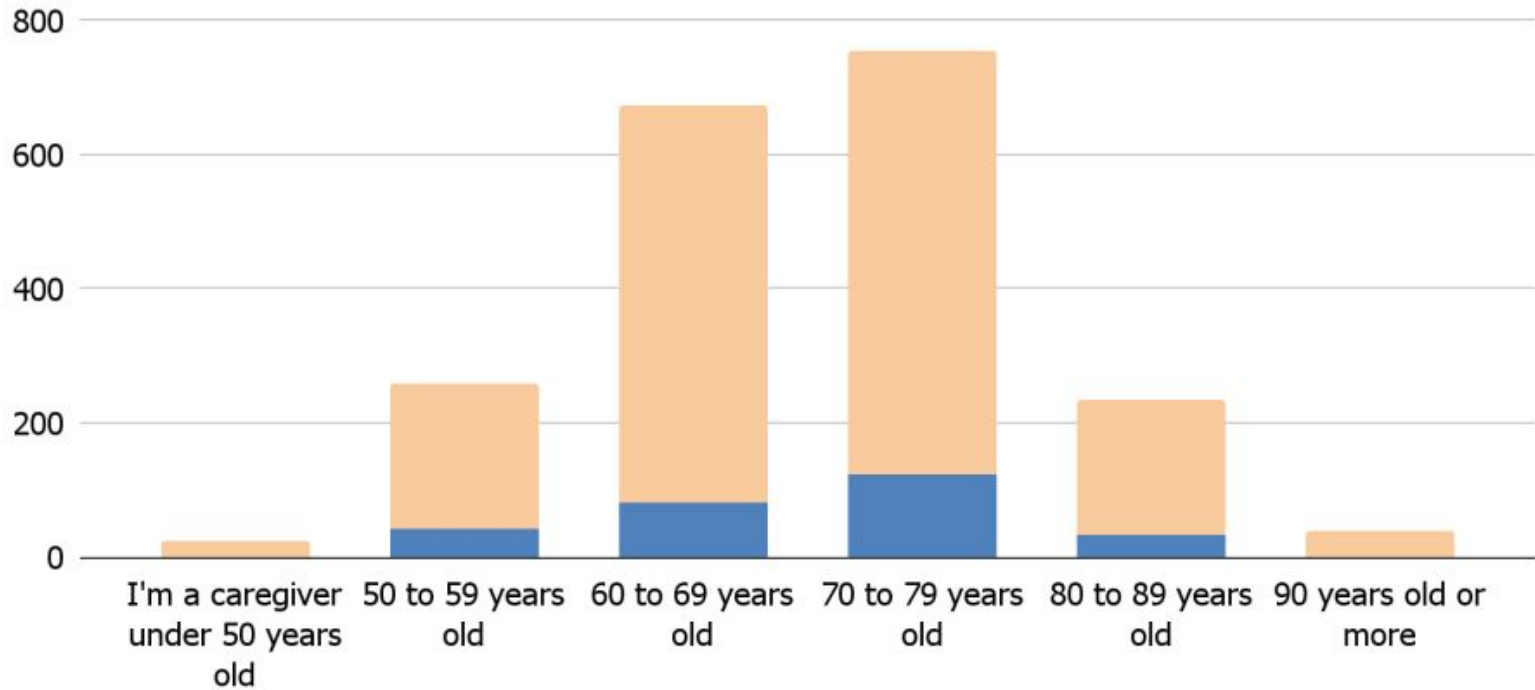
(Leverett Only)



How old are you?

(Region)

Other towns Leverett



Key Informant Interviews

April through June 2022

TCR activities on Key Informant (KI) outreach and interviews:

- Developed a list of KI prospects with the COA, prioritizing people with a record of civil service, community participation, and opinion leadership among seniors.
- Reached out to 31 people, including COA nominees and referrals made by others
- **Conducted confidential interviews with 24 KIs**, in person or by Zoom

Based on self-report or public identification, TCR assigned KI roles:

- Caretaker
- Community organizer
- Leverett senior
- Member of town government

- Multi-generational family member
- Nonprofit service provider
- Town-funded service provider
- Volunteer

Data Analysis: Survey & Interview Responses

Data from the LifePath survey and the KIIs revealed the greatest need in the following areas:

- Access to Facilities and Services
- Aging-in-place Support
- Transportation
- Community awareness of senior needs

Needs in terms of AARP Domains:

- Health Services and Community Supports
- Communication and Information

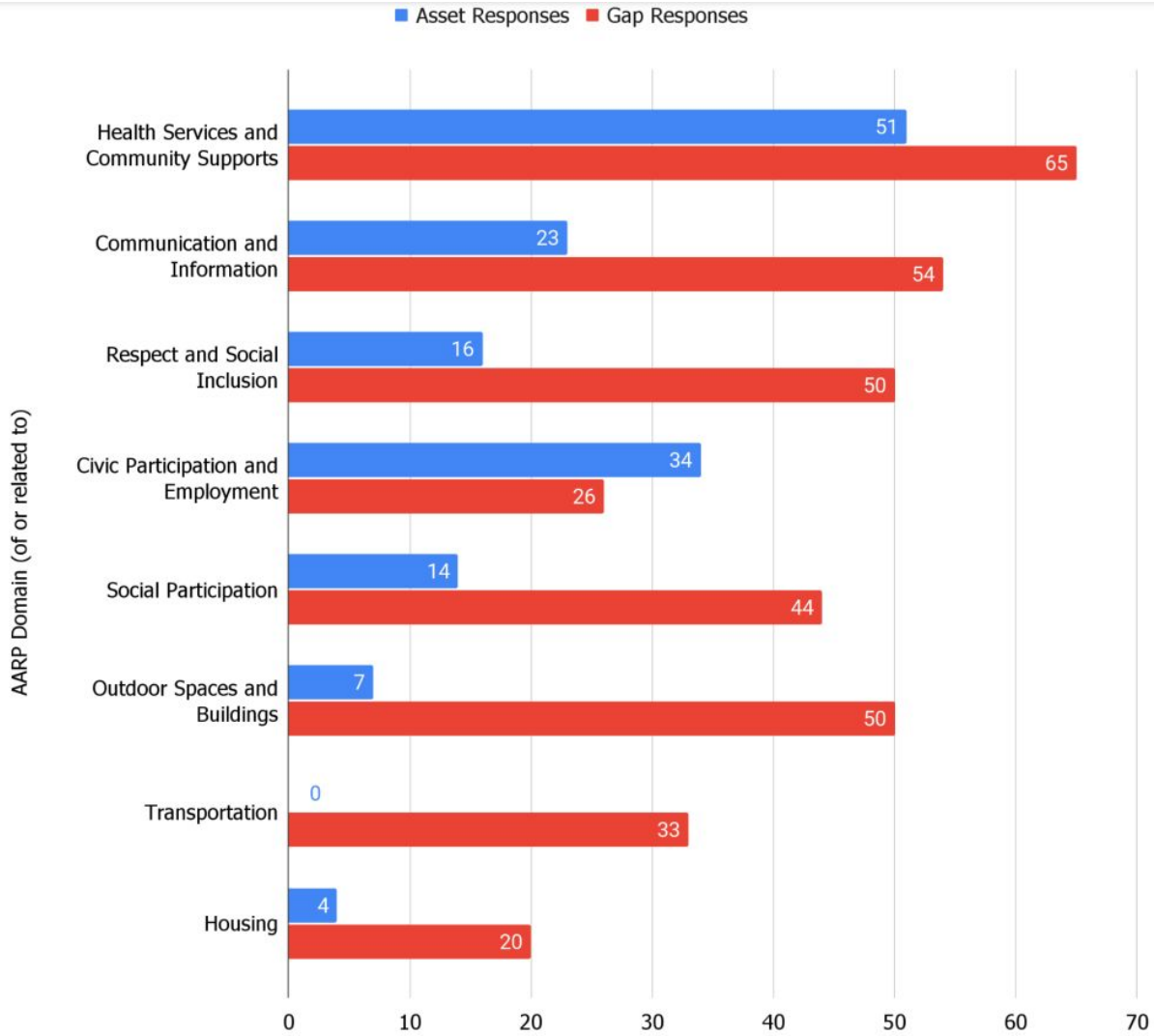
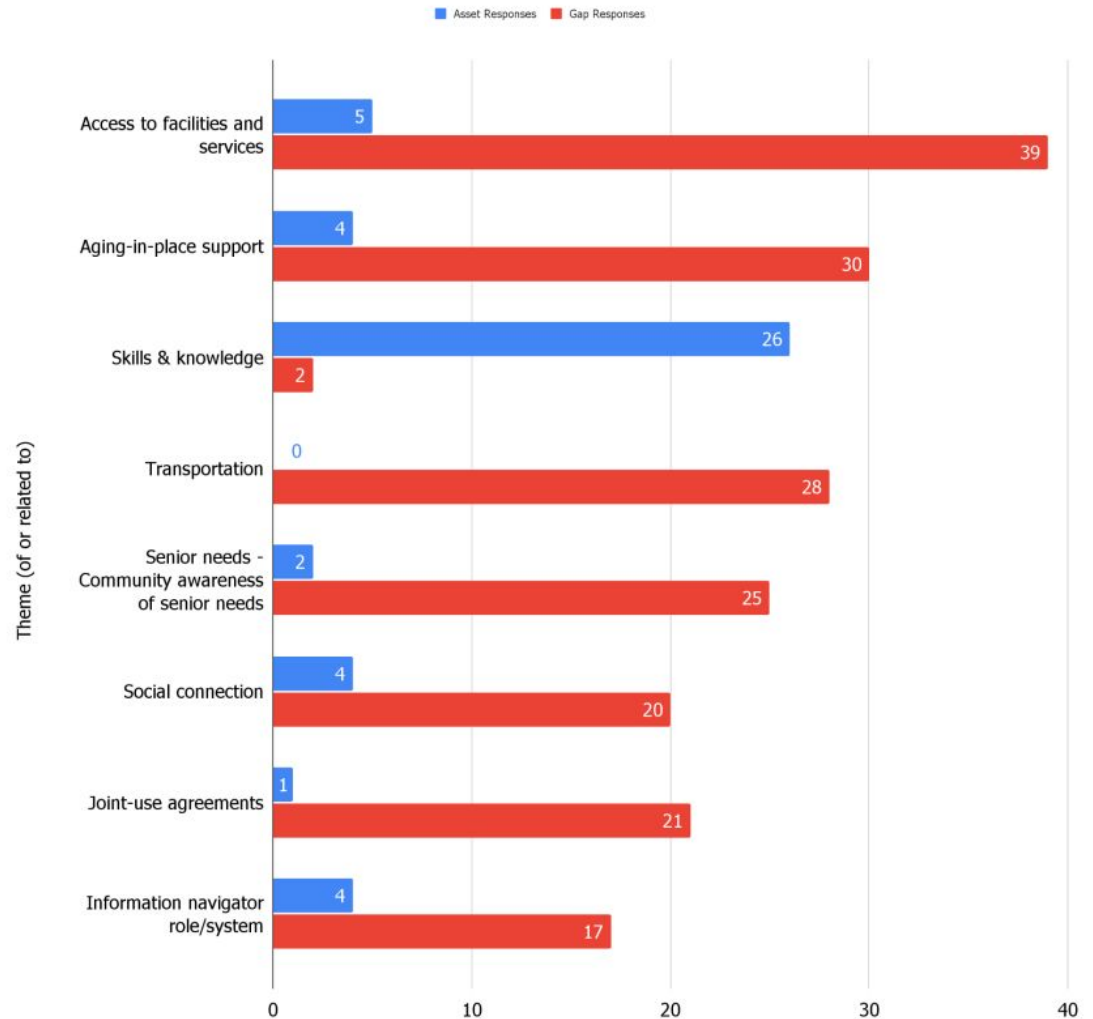


Figure 2 from the Leverett report:

Topics related to AARP domains that showed up most frequently in the 24 key informant interviews.

Figure 3 from the Leverett report:

Topics grouped by needs assessment study themes that showed up most frequently in the 24 key informant interviews.



Focus Groups

October through December 2022

Outreach methods:

- Direct mail to all town residents aged 50+ with valid local mailing addresses
- Leverett Connects
- Flyers at Town Hall, Leverett Library, Leverett Coop, and the Leverett Transfer Station.

TCR hosted 2 focus group meetings with 13 total participants:

- Focus Group #1: **Better Support for Aging-In-Place**
- Focus Group #2: **A Town Service and Information Navigator**

Data Analysis: Focus Groups

Focus group findings:

- **Aging-in-place is very important**, with as much independence as possible. Senior stigma and the fear of losing independence are serious issues.
- **Top priority:** A person working as a **town services navigator** to help seniors access information, resources, and services.
- Elders need more help with technology, transportation, social connection, intergenerational events.
- We need to focus on the feasibility of the solutions we pursue. **We must not try to address too many issues at once.**
- Curiosity and a sense of urgency about Leverett elders who are not well-represented in the current data, including:
 - Those who were not reached by LifePath and TCR outreach
 - Those who lack resources
 - An imperative to raise awareness about the needs of BIPOC seniors in Leverett

Recommendation

With the themes discovered by this needs assessment, and honoring the preference for feasible, actionable solutions...

TCR recommends developing capacity and creating a position to hire a town Service Navigator.

This would be a strategic first step in a longer program to address the needs and priorities of Leverett's elder population.

Rationale for a Navigator

A skilled person working in a dedicated Navigator role would:

1. Creating and maintaining a database of resources
2. leveraging and learning from existing systems managed by town government, Leverett Connects, and other parties
3. Connecting people to services they may not be aware of or have trouble accessing
4. Develop first-hand relationships and knowledge of the community and service providers
5. Use first-hand knowledge and relationships to design program and service improvements capable of addressing other needs identified by this assessment or subsequent research.
6. A Navigator could also monitor and assess key performance indicators to track progress towards Aging-Friendly goals or other goals of interest to the elder community.

Navigator Activities

For example, a dedicated Navigator could:

1. Establish a Leverett Aging-in-Place support program.
2. Leverage and expand ride share programs and outreach
3. Join LifePath Age-Friendly work groups to represent Leverett in regional initiatives.
4. Coordinate elder-focused and intergenerational social events.
5. Evaluate feasibility of a joint-use agreement with LES for senior center services.

Ongoing monitoring and assessment:

Key Performance Indicators could include:

1. Community satisfaction surveys.
2. Metrics tracking senior engagement with program activities and events.
3. Funding development targets.
4. Improved AARP Livability Index scores for Leverett

Thank You! Questions?

Need to get in touch?

hello@towncr.com

413-682-5544
