

Healthy Aging Community Collaborative Shared Definition & Core Elements

Definition

Healthy Aging Community Collaboratives are groups of local agencies and programs that work together in an ongoing, intentional way to strengthen support for older adults in their community. It goes beyond informal networking insofar as these collaboratives are expected to meet regularly, set shared goals, and foster accountability for achieving meaningful community impact.

Why It Matters

Healthy Aging Community Collaboratives strengthen capacity across the community-based seniors' services (CBSS) sector. By working together rather than in isolation, local organizations reduce redundancies, share resources, and build collective expertise. This collaborative approach fosters innovation, enhances efficiency, and ensures more seniors benefit from coordinated supports. Grounded in the principles of collective impact, these collaboratives create a cohesive network where programs are aligned around shared goals and accountability. As a result, older adults experience seamless navigation, timely referrals, and stronger social connections, reflecting a community that works together to help people age well at home and stay connected to their community.

Essential Components

- **Social Prescribing Community Connector**
A dedicated role that helps older adults connect to both health and community resources, ensuring referrals flow seamlessly between health and community-based services. In addition to this bridging function, the Connector serves as a convenor and is instrumental in bringing partners together within the Community Collaborative to strengthen coordination and collective impact.
- **Better at Home**
Every collaborative must include the local Better at Home program providing essential non-medical support (light housekeeping, friendly visiting, transportation, grocery services, navigation & peer support, etc.).
- **Other Community Partners**
Other local organizations supporting older adults e.g., other Healthy Aging funded programs, seniors in the community, seniors' centres, cultural organizations, health authorities, housing and food security groups, caregiver supports, libraries, paramedics, pharmacies, or municipalities.

Core Functions

- **Regular Convening**
Collaboratives meet frequently (e.g., quarterly) to share updates, troubleshoot challenges, and set joint priorities.
- **Cross-Referrals**
Members actively refer older adults between programs and track where cross referrals are made.

- **Collaboration & Shared Problem-Solving**

Identify gaps, align on priorities, and coordinate services (e.g., ensuring transportation needs are addressed through Better at Home, an AIM grant, or another community agency).

- **Community Voice**

Provide a platform for local partners to shape seniors' services.

Creating Spaces for Connection

While a Gathering Place is not a formal requirement, every community benefits from having accessible and welcoming spaces where older adults can gather, connect, and participate. These spaces, whether hosted by a seniors' centre, library, faith-based group, or other organization, serve as hubs for belonging and engagement. They provide opportunities for social connection, access to supports, and collaboration among local partners. Such spaces strengthen the community and embody the spirit of the collaborative: helping people age well, stay active, and remain connected to one another.

How This Fits Within Broader Community Collaboration

Collaboration is deeply embedded in the way community organizations work, and we recognize that many forms of partnership naturally occur across the CBSS sector every day. This definition is not meant to replace or diminish those existing relationships. Instead, it clarifies what *United Way BC* means specifically when we refer to a **Healthy Aging Community Collaborative**. We continue to encourage and value all types of collaboration in community, formal, informal, long-standing, and emerging, while offering this definition to describe the particular structure and purpose of collaboratives supported through the Healthy Aging portfolio.

Core Elements – At a Glance



A Community Connector who convenes partners and guides the work



Better at Home included as a key program



Meaningful engagement of additional partners



Regular collaborative meetings



A shared purpose that drives collective action



A coordinated cross-referral process that links older adults to the right supports



Integration of community voices in planning, feedback, and decision-making



A shared gathering place (optional, but enhances impact)

A Healthy Aging Community Collaborative Is:

- A working structure with shared goals
- A collective approach to problem-solving
- A structure that exists beyond program operations

A Healthy Aging Community Collaborative Is Not:

- A partner list
- A drop-in site
- An informal network without shared priorities
- A one-to-one partnership
- A table that only shares updates