



United Way  
British Columbia

# Healthy Aging Framework



January 2026



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## Acknowledgements

### Land Acknowledgement

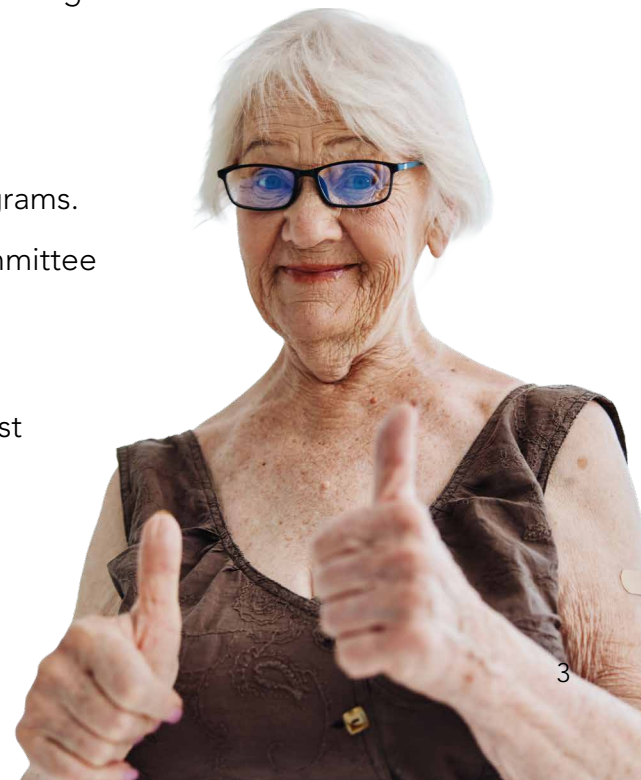
United Way British Columbia (United Way BC) acknowledges the homelands of the Indigenous peoples of this place we now call British Columbia (BC) and honours the many territorial keepers of the lands on which we work. We are indebted to the Indigenous Elders who have shared their informative experience and expertise about what it means to grow old in communities across BC, and how United Way BC can best support them as they age.

We are grateful to the many individuals and groups who shaped this Healthy Aging Framework. It was primarily written by Laura Kadowaki (United Way BC), Bobbi Symes (United Way BC), and Elayne McIvor (Catalyst Consulting).

Special thanks to:

- The many seniors and Elders across BC who participate in and guide healthy aging programs.
- The Community-Based Seniors' Services (CBSS) Leadership Council.
- Community-based organizations funded to deliver programs.
- The Healthy Aging Learning & Evaluation Advisory Committee and Task Force.
- The BC Ministry of Health.
- United Way BC's Healthy Aging leadership and staff, past and present.

We also gratefully acknowledge that our Healthy Aging programs are funded by the Province of BC.



## Process

This document reflects years of collective effort, including consultations, co-creation sessions, communities of practice, and input from seniors and funded agencies. The Healthy Aging Framework and its accompanying Theory of Change (TOC) were developed through the Learning & Evaluation Advisory Committee, with guidance from the CBSS Leadership Council. This process will continue to evolve, guided by community wisdom and responsive to new research and changing environments.

We also acknowledge insights from Healthy Aging Alberta, whose framework informed our own. The graphic design of our Healthy Aging Framework and TOC was done by Tom Norman of KAPOW Creative.

## Contact Information

For questions, feedback, or to report errors in this document, please contact the United Way BC Healthy Aging team at [healthyaging@uwbc.ca](mailto:healthyaging@uwbc.ca). We welcome your input to help shape future updates and companion tools for use in communities.



## History of United Way BC Healthy Aging

### What is the Community-Based Seniors' Services (CBSS) Sector?

The CBSS sector is made up of local not-for-profit and municipal organizations that support seniors through low-barrier, strength-based, and prevention-focused programs. These include seniors' centres, community centres, neighbourhood houses, ethno-cultural services, multi-service agencies, and municipalities. Funding comes from multiple sources: all levels of government, community foundations, donors, local businesses, and participant fees.

### The Road to Now

United Way BC's partnership with the Province of BC (Ministry of Health) began in 2012 with the launch of Better at Home, following a successful pilot. Designed to help seniors manage daily tasks and stay connected to their communities, the program has since expanded to 97 communities. Its success established United Way BC and the CBSS sector as trusted partners in supporting seniors to remain healthy, resilient, and engaged.

The Raising the Profile Project (2016–17) further highlighted the CBSS sector's value. A legacy of this effort, the CBSS Leadership Council, continues to advise United Way BC on sector strengthening, as well as advocates for resources to meet the needs of BC's aging population.

In recent years, the Ministry of Health has expanded its investment through United Way BC, supporting programs that complement Better at Home such as Social Prescribing, Therapeutic Activation Program for Seniors (TAPS), Family & Friend Caregiver Supports (FFCS), Navigation & Peer Supports, Volunteer Coordination & Support, Aging in Motion (AIM): Transportation Supports & Innovations, Social Meals, and Emergency Preparedness & Response. Please see [Appendix A](#) for full descriptions of these programs.

With these investments, the CBSS sector is at a pivotal moment, able to expand programming that improves seniors' health and resilience, while also moving toward more collaborative, cross-community approaches.

# About the Healthy Aging Framework and Theory of Change

United Way BC Healthy Aging programs are designed to help seniors age in place while staying healthy, resilient, and engaged. Achieving this vision requires collaboration across community-based organizations, health services, and government partners.

This Framework and the accompanying Theory of Change (TOC) provide a unified vision for advancing Healthy Aging programs across BC. They document:

- Our purpose, expected outcomes, and focus on the Determinants of Healthy Aging.
- The guiding principles that shape our work.
- The central role of collaboration in amplifying collective impact.

This Framework builds on decades of learning and emphasizes:

- Listening to and learning from seniors, caregivers, and community-based agencies.
- Developing program models rooted in what works in BC communities and beyond.
- Strengthening partnerships within communities and with larger institutions.

Through this shared approach, United Way BC and its partners align efforts across sectors, build community capacity, and support programs that are evidence-based and locally relevant. As a living document, the Framework will continue to evolve through ongoing learning, collaboration, and input from the CBSS sector, seniors, and key partners.

The Framework will be used to help:

- Build a shared understanding amongst the CBSS sector and partners about the goals, scope, and intended outcomes of Healthy Aging programs.
- Inform Healthy Aging program design and implementation.
- Guide learning and evaluation planning.

Together, we are committed to helping seniors in BC live healthy, resilient, and engaged lives in the communities they call home.

## How to Read the Healthy Aging Theory of Change

Through our programs, we aim to help seniors age in place while remaining healthy, resilient, and engaged in their communities. The narrative that follows provides context for the TOC, outlining how the model works and our strategic approach to creating positive change for seniors.

The Healthy Aging TOC ([page 9](#)) illustrates how programs and partners address key determinants of healthy aging to improve outcomes for seniors and caregivers. The TOC provides a roadmap for how United Way BC and its partners strengthen healthy aging across the province to create positive, lasting change so that more seniors can age well in their homes and communities. The model has five key elements:

### 1. **The Opportunity**

All seniors in BC deserve the chance to age in place and live healthy, resilient, and engaged lives. Healthy Aging programs are targeted towards the seniors<sup>1</sup> in our communities who would benefit most from CBSS sector supports: low to modest income seniors; seniors who are socially isolated/lonely; seniors with low to moderate frailty; and seniors from underserved populations (see [Appendix B: Priority Populations](#) for more details). The CBSS sector recognizes that prevention and early intervention are essential as the population ages.

### 2. **Guiding Principles**

Our work is rooted in values that guide how we design, deliver, and improve programming (see [Appendix C: Guiding Principles](#)):

- Person-centred
- Responsive & flexible
- Evidence-based
- Community development
- Collaborative & connected
- Innovative & sustainable
- Learning, growth, and accountability

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1 While seniors are commonly defined as aged 65 years and older in BC, some CBSS organizations may define a senior as a person aged 55+ or 60+ depending on their local community context.

### 3. **Determinants of Healthy Aging**

Healthy Aging programs provide person-centered supports that address key factors shaping seniors' ability to age well, known as the Determinants of Healthy Aging. We focus on seven determinants where our programs can make the greatest impact: Social Connection, Healthy Eating, Physical Activity, Mental Wellness, Transportation, Navigation & Access to Supports, and Safety & Security (see [Table 1. Determinants of Healthy Aging for the CBSS Sector](#) and [Appendix D: Research on Determinants of Healthy Aging for the CBSS Sector](#)).

### 4. **Collaboration**

Achieving impact requires strong partnerships among community-based agencies, health systems, and government. Healthy Aging Community Collaboratives are being formed across the province to enhance collaboration (see [Appendix E: Healthy Aging Community Collaboratives](#)). Collaboration ensures referral pathways, program alignment, and collective resources strengthen outcomes across BC.

### 5. **Outcomes and Impacts**

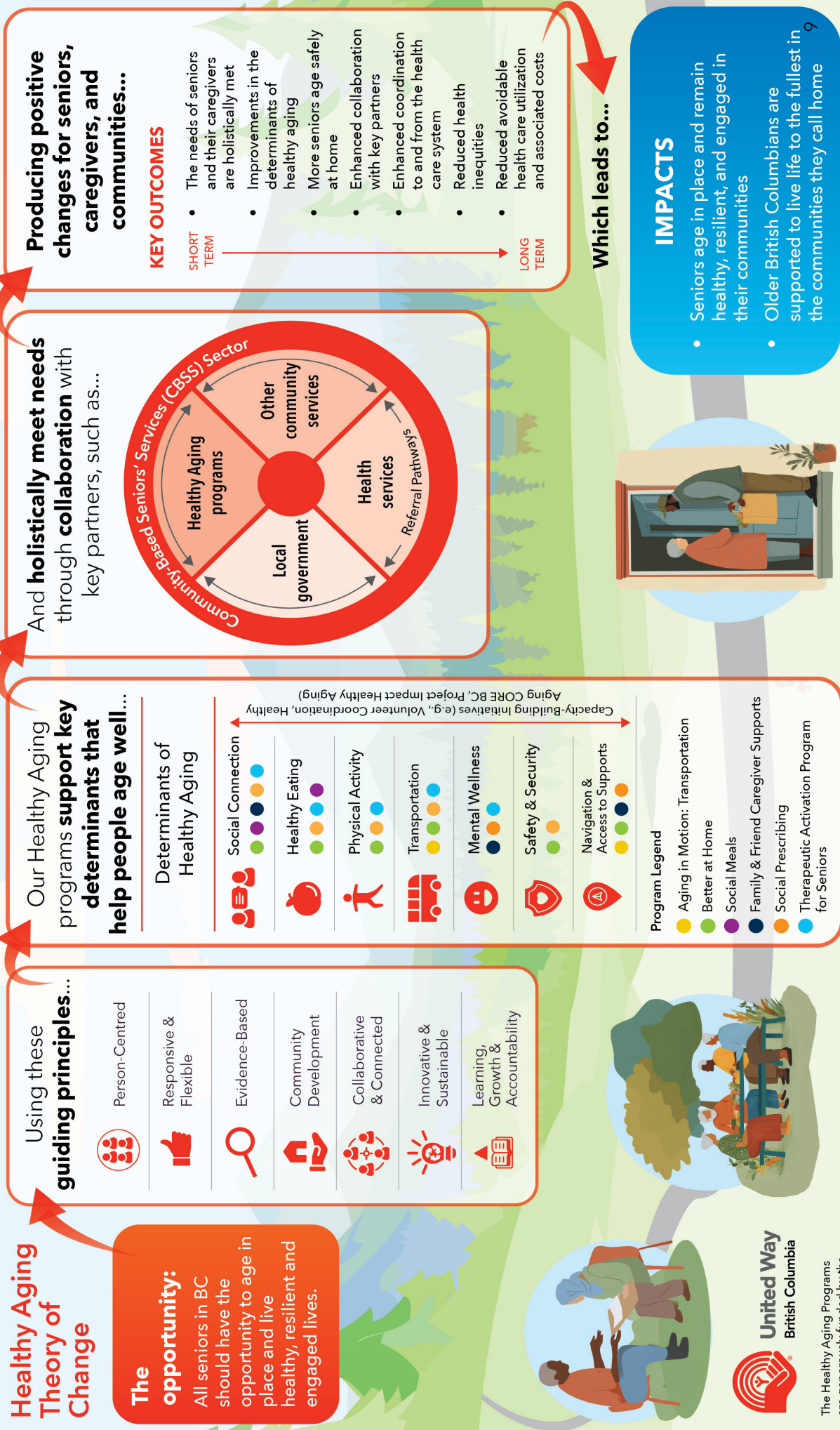
The Healthy Aging programs create positive change for seniors, caregivers, and communities over time. These outcomes are mapped in the TOC and can be understood at three levels:

- **Short term:** Seniors' immediate needs are better met, especially for those with vulnerabilities and barriers.
- **Medium term:** Determinants of Healthy Aging improve, programs become more coordinated, and communities strengthen their ability to respond.
- **Long term:** More seniors age safely and independently at home, health inequities are reduced, and communities and systems become more resilient and sustainable.

**Impact:** With these positive changes taking place, our intended impacts will be achieved:

- Seniors age in place and remain healthy, resilient, and engaged in their communities.
- Older British Columbians are supported to live life to the fullest in the communities they call home.

Figure 1: UNITED WAY BC HEALTHY AGING FRAMEWORK



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British Columbia

The Healthy Aging Programs are generously funded by the Province of British Columbia

## Determinants of Healthy Aging

As described above, in this Framework and TOC, we focus on seven determinants where our programs can make the greatest impact: **Social Connection, Healthy Eating, Physical Activity, Mental Wellness, Transportation, Navigation & Access to Supports, and Safety & Security.** These determinants strongly influence wellbeing as we grow older.

The selected determinants are informed by research evidence and established healthy aging frameworks (see [Appendix D](#)). They build on the broader Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), which highlight how social and economic factors shape health. The Determinants of Healthy Aging translate this evidence into concepts that are more practical for our work. For example, while income and housing are core SDOH, our programs do not provide direct income or housing supports, but we do play a vital role in helping seniors navigate systems to access these resources.

The table on the next page summarizes the Determinants of Healthy Aging, with examples of related services and program streams (see [Appendix A: Healthy Aging Program Descriptions](#)).



Table 1. Determinants of Healthy Aging for the CBSS Sector

<div>  <div> <b>Social Connection</b> <p>Having relationships with family, friends, and community that provide a sense of belonging, support, and care. Lack of connection can lead to isolation and loneliness.</p> </div> </div>			
Services or Activities		Healthy Aging Program Streams*	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendly visiting</li> <li>• Support groups</li> <li>• Social meals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group activities</li> <li>• One-on-one support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better at Home</li> <li>• FFCS</li> <li>• TAPS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Meals</li> <li>• Social Prescribing</li> </ul>
Participant Example			
<div>  <div> <b>Ridge Meadows Seniors Society, FFCS</b> <p>Patty cares for her husband, who lives with dementia. Through the Caregiver Support Group, she found a safe space to share her struggles and connect with others. With encouragement, she accessed respite services and joined the Purple Angels group for meaningful activities. Patty now feels supported and less alone on her caregiving journey.</p> </div> </div>			
<div>  <div> <b>Healthy Eating</b> <p>Eating foods that support health and wellbeing. Influenced by both personal choices and external factors like affordability, access, and opportunities for shared meals.</p> </div> </div>			
Services or Activities		Healthy Aging Program Streams*	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meals in social settings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meal and grocery delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Meals</li> <li>• Better at Home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TAPS</li> <li>• Social Prescribing</li> </ul>
Participant Example			
<div>  <div> <b>Whitevalley Community Resource Centre, Social Meals</b> <p>In Lumby, food security for homebound seniors is scarce. The Social Meals program provides nutritious, home-cooked meals for those most at risk, especially after hospital stays. Beyond nourishment, the program offers connection, for both recipients and volunteers, turning meals into a source of strength and community.</p> </div> </div>			



## Physical Activity

Engaging in movement supports strength, balance, and mobility. Regular activity helps maintain independence and overall wellbeing.

Services or Activities	Healthy Aging Program Streams*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercise</li> <li>• Recreational activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sports</li> <li>• TAPS</li> <li>• Better at Home</li> <li>• Social Prescribing</li> </ul>

### Participant Example



#### Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, TAPS

After years of isolation from a back injury, Linda joined the TAPS program. She now takes part in line dancing, walking, Qi Gong, and painting classes. These activities have boosted her health, confidence, and creativity, while also giving her lasting friendships and a renewed sense of belonging.



## Safety & Security

Feeling safe at home and in the community, with supports in place to reduce risks, enhance ability to age in place, and protect wellbeing as people age.

Services or Activities	Healthy Aging Program Streams*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light housekeeping</li> <li>• Yardwork</li> <li>• Minor home repairs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snow shovelling</li> <li>• Emergency preparedness</li> <li>• Elder abuse prevention</li> <li>• Better at Home</li> <li>• Social Prescribing</li> </ul>

### Participant Example



#### Tansi Friendship Centre Society, Better at Home

At 94, George lives alone in Chetwynd with family far away. Through Better at Home, he now receives regular help with groceries, housekeeping, and wellness check-ins. This support allows him to remain safe in his home while giving his family peace of mind.



## Mental Wellness

Supporting emotional, psychological, and spiritual health. Includes reducing stress, accessing support, and building resilience.

Services or Activities	Healthy Aging Program Streams*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group support and activities</li> <li>• Peer support</li> <li>• One-on-one support and capacity-building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FFCS</li> <li>• TAPS</li> <li>• Social Prescribing</li> </ul>

### Participant Example



#### Beacon Community Services, Social Prescribing

When Ivan was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, his partner Joyce felt overwhelmed. A Community Connector linked them to supports like: housekeeping, meal delivery, pharmacy services, counselling, and peer groups. With these resources, the couple has regained stability, resilience, and hope as they navigate the illness together.



## Transportation

Having safe, reliable, and affordable ways to get to essential services, social activities, and community programs. Transportation is key to independence and participation.

Services or Activities	Healthy Aging Program Streams*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation to attend program activities, medical and non-medical appointments, and access basic needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better at Home</li> <li>• TAPS</li> <li>• AIM: Transportation</li> <li>• Social Prescribing</li> </ul>

### Participant Example



#### Eagle Valley Community Support Society, Better at Home

Wendy, widowed and living alone, faced isolation and chronic pain without transportation. Better at Home matched her with a volunteer who provides rides, cleaning, and companionship, plus the program also provides her with weekly gas cards and community support. Today, Wendy feels safe and connected, and gives back by baking treats for her community.



Navigation & Access to Supports

Being able to find and use the right information and right services at the right time. Navigation helps connect people to health, government, and community resources.

Services or Activities		Healthy Aging Program Streams*	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One-on-one support to navigate and access services</li><li>• Peer support</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Digital literacy and access</li><li>• Information and referral</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social Prescribing</li><li>• FFCS</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Better at Home</li><li>• AIM: Transportation</li></ul>

Participant Example



Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives, Social Prescribing

Cindy, a grandmother managing diabetes, felt isolated and overwhelmed. A Community Connector linked her to health programs, transportation, financial supports, and digital literacy training. Now she participates in social groups, feels healthier, and shares books and games with her grandchildren—more confident and connected than before.

*\* We have highlighted the Healthy Aging programs that primarily support each determinant but recognize that other programs may also address these determinants in some ways. United Way BC also offers grants and support through the Food Security, Emergency Preparedness and Response, and Indigenous Priorities Teams, that complement the grants of the Healthy Aging Team and can support fulfilling the Determinants of Healthy Aging and the work of the CBSS sector.*

### How does United Way BC support this work?

As the backbone organization for Healthy Aging programs, United Way BC leads the development, delivery, and evaluation of programs and Healthy Aging Community Collaboratives. Beyond program management, United Way BC strengthens the CBSS sector by building capacity and fostering collaboration, working closely with the CBSS Leadership Council and community leaders across the province.

Our sector-strengthening efforts focus on four areas:

1. **Knowledge Sharing:** Managing Healthy Aging CORE, BC's knowledge hub for learning, sharing, and collaboration.
2. **Advocacy and Partnerships:** Supporting the CBSS Leadership Council and its Working Groups, and hosting biennial Provincial Summits on Aging to advance sector priorities.
3. **Sector Development:** Engaging agencies through regional consultations, promoting volunteerism and emergency preparedness, and enhancing capacity to recruit, train, and retain volunteers.
4. **Learning and Evaluation:** Strengthening programs through communities of practice, co-creation sessions, and Project Impact Healthy Aging.

## Learning and Evaluation: How Do We Measure the Impact of Our Programs?

United Way BC Healthy Aging is developing a comprehensive Learning and Evaluation Plan to track progress, strengthen programs, and measure our impact. This approach helps us remain accountable to seniors, communities, partners, and funders, while fostering continuous learning and improvement across the CBSS sector. Importantly, it is directly aligned with the outcomes and impacts outlined in the TOC, ensuring that what we measure assesses whether the changes we aim to create are being realized. Progress is tracked at the **participant, community, and system levels**. Table 2 below provides examples of focus areas in the Learning and Evaluation Plan and sample evaluation questions.

Table 2. Examples of Learning and Evaluation Focus Areas

Focus Area	Evaluation Questions
<b>Reach, Accessibility &amp; Equity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent are Healthy Aging programs reaching seniors and caregivers across BC, and what services are being accessed?</li> <li>• To what extent are Healthy Aging programs accessible and inclusive, and are priority populations being reached?</li> </ul>
<b>Availability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent are Healthy Aging programs available when needed? Are programs available where and when they are needed, and where are there gaps in coverage or capacity?</li> </ul>
<b>Performance Optimization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent are program streams and funded agencies meeting established benchmarks for service reach and delivery? Where are adjustments or supports needed to optimize performance over time?</li> </ul>
<b>Affordability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent are Healthy Aging programs affordable for participants, and are financial barriers being minimized to support access for priority populations?</li> </ul>
<b>Acceptability &amp; Participant Satisfaction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are participants' experiences with Healthy Aging programs? To what extent do services meet their needs, and what improvements do they suggest?</li> </ul>

# UNITED WAY BC HEALTHY AGING FRAMEWORK

Focus Area	Evaluation Questions
<b>Partnerships &amp; Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What partnerships and collaborations exist to support Healthy Aging programs? What work is being accomplished through these collaborations, and what challenges them?</li></ul>
<b>Impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To what extent are Healthy Aging programs achieving their intended outcomes and impacts for participants, partner organizations, and broader community and health systems?</li></ul>
<b>Program Enablers, Barriers, and Supports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What factors are enabling or hindering effective delivery of Healthy Aging programs?</li><li>• How effective and helpful are United Way BC's implementation and capacity-building supports for funded agencies?</li><li>• What additional supports would strengthen program delivery and outcomes?</li></ul>



## The Way Forward

The Healthy Aging Framework, together with its TOC, mark an important milestone, providing a shared roadmap for advancing healthy aging in BC. Our next steps build on this foundation, focusing on sharing, embedding, adapting, and collaborating.

- **Sharing the Framework and TOC:** United Way BC Healthy Aging, in partnership with the CBSS Leadership Council, will introduce the TOC across the CBSS sector through both virtual and in-person engagement.
- **Embedding in Practice:** Programs and partners will use the Framework and TOC to guide planning, align priorities, and strengthen collaboration at community and provincial levels.
- **Continuous Learning and Adaptation:** As the sector evolves, the Framework and TOC will be revisited and updated to reflect new evidence, community wisdom, and emerging needs.
- **Strengthening Collaboration:** Ongoing co-creation with seniors, caregivers, funded agencies, and system partners will ensure the Framework remains relevant and impactful.

The Healthy Aging Framework is more than a document; it reflects the voices, wisdom, and strengths of communities across BC. It is our shared commitment to ensuring that seniors across BC can live healthy, resilient, and fulfilling lives in the communities they call home. Grounded in collaboration, evidence, and community wisdom, it is both a guide for today and a living document that will continue to evolve as we learn and grow together. It is also a testament to the voices of seniors, caregivers, and community partners who remind us every day what it means to age well.

