



Starting an Aging in Place (AIP) Program Step-by-Step Guide

_____1. Have a vision. Imagine a community of neighbors-helping-neighbors; enriching social activities; a central point of access for information and referrals; transportation options for when you can't or don't want to drive; engaging volunteer opportunities that make a difference. You can make it happen!

_____2. Recruit two or more friends/neighbors to bring your vision to life. As you meet other people, talk enthusiastically about the concept of an aging in place community and try to recruit additional people to help in the organizing work.

_____3. Form subcommittees. Once you have recruited six or more people you can form subcommittees around tasks listed below (#3 to #6) so that each person or committee assumes responsibility for one or more action items. Assign tasks to each person with a deadline for completion.

_____4. Meet regularly. The leadership group should meet at least every two weeks to keep momentum going. Record and distribute meeting minutes that describe action taken at the meetings so that newcomers can review the minutes to understand how the group decisions were made. Copies of the minutes should be sent to all involved.

_____5. Develop a short written handout about aging in place that you can e mail or leave with people you meet for their consideration.

_____6. Educate yourself and your colleagues about the various aging in place (AIP) models. Google "aging in place" or "villages" and read through the websites of programs already underway.

_____7. Join the Center for Aging in Place and attend one of its Village Council meetings to network with leaders of other AIP programs in Westchester County.

_____8. Recognize that there are many ways for community groups to structure an AIP organization. Each interpretation of the AIP model may be different and is only limited by the imagination and resources of the communities. Learn the pros and cons of each type of model. You may consider one type in the beginning and migrate to a different type as your group evolves. For example, if you do not have any money and cannot access free legal services, you may need to begin as an unincorporated association and find a fiscal sponsor for your activities.

_____9. Learn more about your community. Develop a more detailed understanding of the demographics and resources/services in your community. For example, what is the average age of residents in your town, where and with whom do they live; are they generally healthy or frail? What other resources and programs are available in your community that might complement or compete with your AIP program?

_____10. Identify the perceived and real needs of older residents in your community. Document informal discussions with friends and peers, distribute a survey or conduct a focus group to learn this information.

_____11. Define the services your AIP program will offer. Assess the results of the survey/focus group to define the needs in your community. Prioritize the services you will offer to keep it manageable.

_____12. Develop a Board of Directors/Steering Committee. Identify community leaders – people who roll up their sleeves and work and who have funding contacts. It's good to have members with diverse skills and backgrounds. Look for people with business, marketing, financial, legal, administrative, fundraising and community experience.

_____13. Decide the type of business model you will use to develop your AIP program.

- Unincorporated association
- Incorporated non-profit
- Incorporated tax exempt non profit

In making this decision, you need to consider who will have decision making authority in managing the AIP; the level of service needed in the community; and the legal structure of your AIP program. Many groups start out as an unincorporated association because their resources are limited and evolve over time to an incorporated, tax exempt non-profit.

_____ 14. Develop a basic, 6-month business plan that includes:

- Mission
- Name
- Organizational structure
- Service offerings (membership benefits, services provided by volunteers, services provided by vendors, social)
- Projected budget and fundraising plan (to include membership fees, vendor discounts, grant opportunities, donations and special fundraising events) based on a projected annual budget
- Marketing approach including the development of membership materials
- Timeline for completion

_____ 15. Raise seed money. Regardless of which model you choose for your AIP program, you will need some money. The amount varies depending on whether you will be incorporating, whether you envision hiring professional staff or will recruit volunteers to deliver your services.

_____ 16. Implement your business plan

- Recruit volunteers: most AIP programs launch with an enthusiastic, engaged group of volunteers who respond to requests for information and referrals, help with neighborhood errands, organize social activities and respond to requests local transportation.
- Affirm volunteer roles and responsibilities
- Host an “open house” at your local library or community center. Invite residents, local press, community leaders and community groups to learn about your exciting new AIP program!
- Create a flyer or brochure about your program and distribute it throughout your community - libraries, post offices, pharmacies, hair salons.

_____ 17. LAUNCH!! Have fun, publicize it, and take pride.

_____ 18. After one month, and every three months thereafter during the first year, evaluate your progress against the business plan. Modify as needed. At the six month point, develop another business plan that envisions your activities for the next two years.

Remember that The Center for Aging in Place can help you with each and every step along the way. Just call or email us for an individual appointment. **Good luck!**