

KC – Framework for Sr. Mobility

*A Case Study in Philanthropy seeking social change
in the Greater Kansas City Region*



Photo courtesy of the Johnson County (KS) Sight Impaired Fellowship @ 2010

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Overview

‘Framework’ is a significant choice of words because the *KC – Framework for Sr. Mobility (Framework)* planning grant’s goal is to enhance existing public policy efforts by providing critical information on a significant and growing social need - senior mobility. The *Framework* provides validated data and ideas that may be incorporated into existing public policy efforts like strategic plans, budgets and codes. The unique approach of actively seeking to enhance existing public policy efforts created extensive participation and outcomes. The *Framework* was funded by the Jewish Heritage Foundation – Kansas City and Mr. Goodcents Foundation; and facilitated by the Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership (MCNL), University of Missouri – Kansas City.

Framework Effort

The *Framework* effort established defined activities and roles:

Framework Management Team consisted of MCNL and Mr. Goodcents Foundation personnel who identified keys for a successful *Framework*:

- *Framework* must be an instrument designed to enhance existing public policy efforts by providing validated data, vision, goals and objectives for senior mobility.
- Effort should include seeking acceptance and incorporation of the *Framework* into regional and local public policy efforts creating a ‘movement’ for senior mobility.
- MCNL Staff would perform focus group studies minimizing bias or predetermined answers to what seniors want or need. The effort was designed to see mobility and mobility barriers through the eyes of seniors.
- An Advisory Committee of civic and community leaders would guide the effort and ensure results were valid; representative of the needs of seniors; and determine if additional research was needed.

Advisory Committee – A key step in the effort was to engage leaders representing government, nonprofits, economic/cultural diversity and service providers in five counties, two states comprising the most populous portion of the Kansas City Region. Leaders were asked to commit to several roles:

- Guide the project.
- Clarify and validate results.
- Promote the project.
- Champion the effort for incorporation into existing regional and local public policy efforts.

Promising Practices Research – MCNL Staff performed research to identify and understand specific senior mobility efforts and programs within the KC Region and across the U.S. The research identified examples and models to help guide local community actions addressing senior mobility and to capitalize on existing knowledge and resources. The research identified services (programs); public/private partnering efforts (collaboration); and funding efforts to create sustainable, community-based senior mobility solutions.

Focus Groups – With the assistance of the Advisory Committee, focus groups representing culturally, geographically and economically diverse seniors from the five-county region were held. Focus groups expanded the effort’s scope from transportation (a ride) to include mobility throughout community. Specifically, seniors shared:

- **Mobility barriers** – Safe driving requires proper signage and lighting. Public transportation requires the ability to access entry/exit points. Volunteer driver programs are growing but demand may exceed volunteer capacity. Walking, biking, slow moving vehicles all require safe lanes or paths that support alternative forms of mobility. Family and friends are important but come with the stigma of being a ‘burden.’
- **Shopping barriers** – carrying packages, identifying products, narrow aisles, high shelves, large parking lots, curbs and lack of rest areas for some seniors are barriers.
- **Codes and policies** – cities and other governmental agencies can improve codes and policies to make land use, urban design and building codes more senior mobility friendly.
- **Education** – most seniors only know their current mode of mobility. When a crisis occurs there is a significant period of time when mobility is severely impaired until a new form of mobility is mastered.
- **Governmental Boundaries** – Seniors do not recognize governmental boundaries (cities, counties, states) in their definition of community. The senior often sees adjoining governmental entities as his/her community that provides health care, shopping, entertainment, social activities, family and faith based connections.



Developing vision, goals, and objectives - The goal to expand and enhance existing public policy efforts lead to common vision, goals, and objectives for senior mobility through specific steps:

- **Research** – Reviews of existing transportation/mobility plans within the KC Region coupled with input from seniors and experts provided templates for senior mobility language.
- **Advisory Committee** – Reviewed, clarified and validated vision, goals and objectives for senior mobility to ensure language represented the needs of seniors; and were consistent with/complementary to existing public policy efforts in the KC Region.
- **Verification** – Reviewed the preliminary results with community planners from the Region to confirm value and complementary nature of results.

Advocacy – Critical to the Framework’s success is advocacy – creating the public and political will to act. The Advisory Council plays a critical role supporting and promoting the *Framework* to be recognized as important, valid and worthy of being incorporated into existing public policy efforts throughout the Kansas City Region.

Building support and opening doors through relationships – The Mr. Goodcents Foundation played several roles during the effort but none more vital to successful outcomes than building support and expanding participation (‘bridge building’). The Mr. Goodcents Foundation is a trusted and known supporter of senior mobility and transportation which opened a large network of potential public and private participants representing mobility and transportation at the Kansas City region, state and federal levels. The contributions of participants in terms of energy, knowledge, time and resources were critical to the successful outcomes of the *Framework*.

Outcomes

KC – Framework for Sr. Mobility outcomes are significant and growing:

- The open and transparent process with key leaders from government, nonprofit and service providers created trust and commitment to meet a current and growing social need – senior mobility.
- The Framework has been incorporated into two significant regional plans –
 - OUTLOOK 2040 – the KC Region’s long-range transportation plan.
 - Coordinated Public Transportation – Human Services Plan – the KC Region’s plan to comply with Federal Surface Transportation Bill requirements.
- Local communities are incorporating results into local plans, codes and policies to be more senior mobility friendly. NOTE: The five county Region includes approximately 100 cities and two states.
- The work in senior mobility is opening efforts to improve mobility for all ages.
- The Framework process provides a ‘guide’ for other aging initiatives to follow.

Significant Learning Points

Creating social change through enhancing and expanding existing public policy efforts requires:

- The social need must be identifiable and important to the community.
- Civic leaders, community leaders and key staff must be engaged early and remain engaged in the effort providing guidance and input which creates commitment.
- ‘Bridge building’ plays a pivotal role in reaching out to stakeholders and keeping stakeholders actively engaged in the effort.
- Creating a learning community where mutual sharing and cooperation are encouraged providing significant insights and opportunities for new collaborative efforts.
- Identifying and understanding existing public policy efforts that can be enhanced and leveraged creates ‘win-win’ opportunities with community leaders and staff.
- Having open, transparent research with seniors without predetermination and validating the research with civic and community leaders expands understanding.
- Accepting the inclusive nature of integrating research, guidance and input from many stakeholders will expand the parameters of the effort beyond the original scope.
- Philanthropy playing a significant facilitating role creating opportunities for innovation and collaboration on a large scale to address a common social need.
- Advocacy to build awareness, commitment and political will to enhance, modify and/or change public policy efforts impacting infrastructure decisions, funding decisions, codes, policies and actions at community, county and region levels.

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Exhibit A

For additional information visit:

The Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership

<http://bloch.umkc.edu/mwcnl/SeniorMobility/SeniorMobility.htm>

The Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership is a community resource which provided facilitation, leadership, research and education for the *Framework* effort. The reports found on the site include:

- Kansas City – Framework for Sr. Mobility (PDF) – Full Report including a listing of the many contributors to the project.
- Kansas City – Framework for Sr. Mobility (PDF) – Executive Summary which provides a brief overview of the significant findings of the project.

The Mr. Goodcents Foundation

www.mrgoodcentsfoundation.org

The Mr. Goodcents Foundation actively engages in initiating and seeking sustainable, community-based efforts to help seniors live independently for as long as humanly possible. The Mr. Goodcents Foundation sees senior mobility as a national issue that will be solved through local efforts because mobility is not a single solution but a network of options that provides mobility access that adapts to local demands.

Jewish Heritage Foundation

www.jhf-kc.org

The Jewish Heritage Foundation is a leader on aging issues for the KC Region. Jewish Heritage Foundation has provided funding to support the development of the KC – Framework for Sr. Mobility, KC4 Aging in Community, Next Chapter, Coming of Age, KC EngAGEment, demographic research, and other programs that promote ‘aging in community.’

KC4 Aging in Community

www.kc4aic.org

The KC Region has undertaken a major initiative to help Kansas City become an aging friendly region with broad community support lead by the Center for Practical Bioethics. Transportation and Mobility are one of six primary work areas with the *Framework* an integral component of the larger effort.

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