



Washington State Council on Aging

Meeting Title: 2025 April Washington State Council on Aging Meeting

Date: 4/22/2025

Location: Zoom

	Members Present	Appointment		Members Present	Appointment
	Jean Kindem	At-Large East		Vacant	Association of Counties
	Gavin Carmichael	AAADSW WA Advisory Council	✓	Susan Conniry	O3A Advisory Council
✓	Suone Cotner	At-Large West	✓	Dennis Wheeler	Snohomish County AAA
✓	Georgiann Dustin	NWRC Advisory Council		Vacant	Kitsap AAA Advisory Council
	Vacant	Central AAA		Vacant	Yakama Golden Eagle Advisory Council
✓	Glen Harper (acting)	Lewis Mason Thurston AAA Advisory Council		Guests Present	
✓	Ron Vivion	At-Large West	✓	Cathy Knight	W4A
✓	Dolores Wiens (acting)	ADS King County Advisory Council	✓	Walt Bowen	Senior Lobby
✓	Bob Scarfo	Aging & Long-Term Care Eastern Washington Advisory Council	✓	Mary-Anne Grafton	WA Assoc. of Senior Centers
✓	Michele Blythe	Association of Cities	✓	Melanie McGuire	ALTSA
✓	Stephanie Carpenter	Southeast WA Aging and Long-Term Care	✓	Cameron Akita	ALTSA
	Rep. Tarra Simmons	WA House of Representatives	✓	Jim Firman, Nicole Leone	BetterAge
✓	Bruce Dougherty	Pierce County Aging & Disability Resources Advisory Board	✓	Susan Engels	ALTSA
✓	Martha Raske	At-Large East			



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Topic	Key Points and/or Decisions Made
Welcome/Introductions Review/Approve Minutes and Agenda	<p>Chairperson Michele Blythe called the meeting to order at 9:00am and welcomed members and guests.</p> <p>Council members passed a motion to approve the March meeting minutes and April's agenda.</p>
Nutrition Discussion	<p>Dennis Wheeler discussed advocacy around nutrition supports and how to monitor this progress moving forward. Nutrition remains a key focus this session. Dennis has met with 19 legislative officials and recently attended a townhall meeting in Snohomish County in which he followed up with email outreach to request support for nutrition funding.</p> <p>Dennis noted that nutrition funding is still under the budget approval process. Rep. Peterson spoke with food banks on the issue. The Everett Herald highlighted food bank challenges in a recent article. The USDA program, TEFAP, recently saw food order cancellations while state funding remains at risk. The SFMNP remains a popular program, as well.</p> <p>Dennis encouraged the Council to continue its support for food security.</p> <p>Dennis clarified a question from Georgiann regarding the delivery cancelled in WA for the TEFAP program, which was a \$4.7M food order.</p>
Partner Updates	<p>Cathy Knight, W4A State Director Cathy updated the Council on several issues W4A is following.</p> <p>Federal-level concerns: the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) leaked a document showing its potential reorganization. This draft would remove the ACL, originally expected to move under Administration for Children and Families, but OAA services are now proposed to shift under CMS, with Nutrition under Administration for Children and Families.</p> <p>Potential program changes: Cathy spoke to concerns about how services will be prioritized. Some programs may be eliminated, including LTCOP and SHIP (SHIBA in WA). Cathy encouraged outreach to congressional delegation to highlight the importance of OAA/Aging network programs.</p>



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	<p>Susan Conniry and Suone Cotner expressed shared concerns and requested a report out at the following meeting from members' advocacy.</p> <p>Walt Bowen, Senior Lobby President</p> <p>Walt shared that it was the 100th Day of the Legislative Session. The legislature is working to address numerous federally created challenges with a large portion of budget dependent on federal matching funds.</p> <p>Walt shared recent presentations from the Senior Lobby meetings with the Council, including one covering the State Department of Financial Institutions.</p>
Nominating Committee	<p>Dennis Wheeler updated the Council on behalf of the committee, including Georgiann Dustin and Bob Scarfo. The committee will meet in May. Dennis noted that he will email the Council requesting nominations for three positions: Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. Information will include a snippet from the Bylaws on these positions.</p>
BetterAge Presentation	<p>Michele Blythe introduced Jim Firman, CEO of BetterAge to the Council.</p> <p>Jim shared about his experience as the former CEO of the National Council on Aging (NCOA) and his passion to develop services and programs.</p> <p>During his 25 years at NCOA, Jim identified gaps in healthcare improvement—traditional healthcare was not measuring key outcomes (e.g., saving Medicare dollars/reducing hospitalizations). Helping people live healthier lives through holistic wellness was the true priority.</p> <p>BetterAge Formation & Approach: BetterAge was founded during early COVID months and based on four core principles of holistic health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The initial focus COVID-related solutions, developed in collaboration with ALTSA and the State of New York with moderate success.</p>



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BetterAge's core service was to provide organizations with clear, actionable insights based on consumer data.

Data & Insights:

- Partnered with multiple groups over 10 months to co-create and extensively consumer-test a national report.
- National Data Sample: 4,500 consumer responses.
- Community wellbeing scores compared senior center participants vs. homebound clients.
- Barrier Identification: Key obstacles include SDOH (Social Determinants of Health), health limitations, and other barriers.
- Importance of Personalization: Cannot effectively help individuals without first understanding their barriers.
- 1 in 5 older adults are reluctant to ask for help, significantly impacting their overall wellbeing.

Project Background & Funding:

- Bainbridge Island was the first WA site, sparking momentum for a broader initiative.
- Supported by NIH grant & USAging funding with partnerships in NY, WA, and CT.
- Jim acknowledged contributions from Susan Engels, Bea Rector, and Cathy Knight.

Senior Center Pilot Project:

- Funded by DSHS & BetterAge, with support from WSASC and Mary-Anne Grafton.
- 10 Innovation Partners (9 are senior centers).
- Goal: Strengthen Senior Centers' ability to measure and enhance older adult and caregiver wellbeing across WA.
- Objective: Each site conducts 100–300 assessments over 4 months.

Current Data:

- 283 assessments completed
- 63 caregivers assessed
- 22% have 3+ chronic conditions
- 29% experiencing loneliness/non-thriving



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	<p>Jim shared that SCOA can play a role to help spread awareness of this project and improve data collection.</p> <p>Council members thanked Jim for his presentation and discussed his personal experiences that led him to where he is today. The council inquired about sites participating in the project and the steps ahead. Jim noted he would be happy to share a follow up report when available.</p>		
Legislative/Outreach/Advocacy Committee	Suone Cotner emphasized continued engagement with legislators outside of session to maintain priorities. She recognized the need to build relationships with the Governor, likely after the session concludes. Michele discussed her continued outreach to schedule state leaders in upcoming meetings.		
Open Discussion/New Business/Public Comment	<p>Walt Bowen shared that May is Older Americans Month. Michele added information about a local proclamation to support OAM.</p> <p>The meeting adjourned at 10:21AM.</p>		
ACTION ITEMS		Assignee	Due Date