



# Washington State Council on Aging

**Meeting Title:** 2025 May Washington State Council on Aging Meeting

**Date:** 5/27/2025

**Location:** Zoom

	Members Present	Appointment		Members Present	Appointment
✓	Jean Kindem	At-Large East		Vacant	Association of Counties
	Gavin Carmichael	AAADSW WA Advisory Council		Vacant	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		<b>Guests Present</b>	
	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	✓	Grace Huang	Office of the Governor
✓	Michele Blythe	Association of Cities	✓	Melanie McGuire	HCLA
✓	Stephanie Carpenter	Southeast WA Aging and Long-Term Care	✓	Cameron Akita	HCLA
	Rep. Tarra Simmons	WA House of Representatives	✓	Leah Dobey	Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office
✓	David Friscia	Pierce County Aging & Disability Resources Advisory Board	✓	Kathy Morgan	ALTSA
✓	Martha Raske	At-Large East	✓	Bruce Dougherty	Guest
✓	Bob Bandarra	At-Large West	✓	Ken Lund	Guest



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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. Michele provided a brief update on two council members whose time with SCOA had come to an end—Bruce Dougherty and Susan Conniry.</p> <p>Council members passed a motion to approve the April meeting minutes and May's agenda.</p> <p>Georgiann Dustin updated the Council on the Dementia Action Collaborative (DAC), as the appointee to the DAC. Washington state currently has two pilot sites for building Dementia Capable Communities. This year, funding remained flat while a third pilot site was added to support programming across all sites -- the Olympic AAA, Northwest Regional Council, and Aging and Long-Term Care of Eastern WA. Georgiann also noted that new legislation requires memory care facilities in WA to obtain certification.</p>
Older Americans Month Discussion	<p>Bob Scarfo discussed an article he had written 20 years ago and how it relates today to the Older Americans Month theme, "Flip the Script on Aging".</p> <p>Bob shared that his article was in response to the Senior Resources section of his local newspaper. In it, advertisements were solely targeting death and dying resources, all the while older adults possess tremendous skills and knowledge which is underutilized. Bob requested help from SCOA to explore connections through AAAs or Senior Centers to generate employment opportunities for older adults.</p> <p>David Friscia recommended AmeriCorps' Senior Volunteer Program, which Cathy Knight explained had recently been defunded (RSVP program). Bob added that his idea expands on volunteerism, building more employment opportunities as the scope of retirement has vastly changed.</p> <p>Council members discussed further options that would offer retired adults the opportunity to contribute while earning income. Suone discussed <a href="#">an article AARP</a> had written about their partnership with Indeed. Bob also shared about his outreach to a local company that may support in the development of an app for people with dementia. Bob would like to develop a one-pager to build ideas and coordinate this work.</p>



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<b>HCLA Update</b>	<p><b>Kathy Morgan, Interim Deputy Assistant Secretary, HCLA</b> Kathy introduced herself to the Council and provided an update on DSHS's re-organization. As of May 1<sup>st</sup>, ALTSA, now the Home and Community Living Administration (HCLA) consists of DDCL (formerly Developmental Disabilities Administration) and divisions previously under ALTSA.</p> <p>Budget shortfall – statewide impacts. HCLA is addressing staffing efficiencies, some through position cuts and some through existing position vacancies. Discussions with staff started this week.</p> <p>Legislative – HCLA has looked at the challenges and successes of the 2025 session and is beginning to look at proposals for the 2026 session. The pending federal cuts add uncertainties and challenges.</p> <p>Cathy Knight congratulated Kathy on her new position and commended the change to include DDCL under HCLA. Kathy shared that this would help support clients who move across administrations.</p> <p>Jean Kindem asked about national organizations that help address the challenges posed by the federal cuts. Kathy shared there are many, including Advancing States, AARP, and National Adult Protective Services Association, among others.</p>
<b>Accessibility in Recreation Capital Projects</b>	<p><b>Leah Dobey, WA State Recreation and Conservation Office</b> Leah introduced herself to the Council and thanked them for the opportunity to speak. As a Policy Specialist exploring the intersection of aging and disabilities in outdoor recreation, Leah noted 3 goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduce RCO and its accessibility efforts.</li><li>• Gather input on outdoor priorities for older adults.</li><li>• Identify potential partners and collaborators.</li></ul> <p><i>About RCO (Recreation and Conservation Office):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Small agency with ~90 employees; founded in the 1960s via voter initiative.</li><li>• Manages the 6th largest capital budget in Washington State.</li><li>• Focuses on funding and policy—not a land management agency.</li><li>• Mission: Lead through policy and funding to protect Washington's natural and outdoor spaces.</li></ul>



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	<p><i>Grant Focus Areas:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Recreation</li><li>2. Conservation</li><li>3. Outdoor Programs &amp; Education</li><li>4. Salmon &amp; Orca Recovery</li></ol> <p><i>Key Initiatives in Recreation Grants:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluate and improve grant accessibility.</li><li>• Fund ADA upgrades, universal access elements/sites, and sensory gardens.</li><li>• Explore a new grant program by setting aside existing funds to support accessibility-focused projects.</li></ul> <p><i>Evaluation Updates:</i> Adjusted criteria by phasing out some requirements to better support competitive accessibility projects.</p> <p><i>Support &amp; Representation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expand technical assistance offerings.</li><li>• Increase representation of aging and disability communities on advisory committees.</li></ul> <p><i>Timeline:</i> Spring 2025- research/stakeholder input, June 2025 – Board input/public comment, October 2025 – Board decision. Even years, take applications.</p> <p>Bob Scarfo shared about his work with Karen Kiessling to get funding to develop a memory garden in Pullman, as well as his past work to catalogue accessibility of parks with the US Parks Service. Leah noted that this latter effort is tailored for land management agencies while being very important.</p>
Member Updates	<p>Bruce Dougherty expressed appreciation for his time on the Council, noting it was a valuable learning experience. He will stay engaged via W4A updates and continue volunteering with LTCOP. Bruce expressed interest in rejoining if a seat becomes available. Council members shared their many thanks with Bruce and encouraged him to stay connected.</p>



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	<p>Bob Bandarra introduced himself to the Council, with experience as former Mayor and City Council member of Bothell; retired utility director with 40 years of engineering experience in water/waste management. Currently active with RPEC, AARP, and union groups. Resides in Puyallup and is eager to contribute to SCOA.</p> <p>David Friscia also introduced himself from the Pierce County ADR and LTCOP. He serves on the Pierce Co. Advisory Board and is focused on how the state aging plan affects local services.</p> <p>Martha Raske re-introduced herself as a retired social worker with an interest in sociological research around service delivery and unmet needs. She serves on the regional council for ALTCEW in Spokane.</p> <p>Cameron Akita introduced himself to new members as staff/policy support to SCOA, and Program Manager for the State Unit on Aging. He supports SCOA and oversees Senior Nutrition Programs, Volunteer Services, the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and the OAA State Plan on Aging.</p>
Partner Updates	<p><b>Cathy Knight, W4A State Director</b> <i>Age/Dementia Friendly Advisory Council:</i> Cathy encouraged Bob and others to bring aging-related perspectives to the group for deeper engagement.</p> <p><i>Caregiver Workforce Challenges:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HCLA prioritizing support for paid caregivers amid a shrinking workforce.</li><li>• Remote Caregiver pilot led by Bea Rector underway.</li><li>• Ongoing concern about the growing gap in caregiver availability.</li></ul> <p><i>WA Cares Implementation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Begins July 2026 for eligible recipients.</li><li>• W4A and AARP advocating for flexibility in hiring family caregivers through direct employment—already in use by some AAAs.</li><li>• Awaiting Governor’s decision on incorporating this third option; will be discussed at upcoming LTSS Commission meeting.</li></ul> <p><i>Advocacy &amp; Legislative Wins:</i></p>



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- Senior Nutrition Funding secured (not ongoing but prevents major service gaps).
- Health Home Program nearly cut—advocates and AAAs successfully preserved it. Program is evidence-based and saves state funds by supporting high-risk individuals.

## *Dementia Action Catalyst (Building Better Dementia Communities):*

- Program includes 3 pilot sites, but no expansion funding was added.
- Each site retains a Project Manager, but other staff support may be limited due to funding constraints.

## *Case Management Impacts:*

- Minor reductions in funding for HCS offices and AAAs. Potential for increased caseload ratios, though full implications are unclear.

## *Federal Policy Concerns:*

- Dennis raised concerns over federal reductions to SNAP and other benefits, which may increase pressure on states.
- Cathy noted that major cuts to SNAP/Medicaid could prompt the Governor to call a special session.

## **Walt Bowen, Senior Lobby President**

*Food Security:* Highlighted in a recent Seattle Times article about the closure of food warehouses, signaling immediate concern for food access.

*Older Americans Month (OAM):* In its final days, emphasized continued focus on senior issues.

## *WA Cares Fund:*

- Ballot measure expected this fall.
- A Senate Joint Resolution would include WA Cares in the state's pension investment program.

## *Federal Program Cuts:*

- Funding cuts to broadband access grants may hinder telehealth services critical to older adults.



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	<p><i>Joint Legislative Executive Committee (JLEC):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Successful in supporting the WA Cares Act but not funded for continuation. It served as an effective forum for aging policy discussions.</li></ul> <p><i>Medicaid Concerns:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Proposed House cuts to Medicaid met with widespread opposition.</li><li>• Washington's 4th Congressional District (Rep. Newhouse) is the 5th highest Medicaid recipient in the U.S.</li><li>• Discussions continue about adding work requirements—to be addressed at the next Senior Lobby meeting.</li><li>• Potential impact on HCA, DSHS, and DOH.</li><li>• Advocacy campaign underway to clarify that Apple Health is Washington's Medicaid program.</li></ul> <p><i>Firefighting &amp; Emergency Preparedness:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Simultaneous state and federal budget cuts threaten emergency response capacity.</li><li>• Washington has ~1,500 Adult Family Homes (AFHs) and many Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs), many in high-risk zones, raising concerns about firefighting resource reductions.</li></ul>
Nominating Committee	Dennis Wheeler updated the Council on behalf of the committee, including Georgiann Dustin and Bob Scarfo. The committee met earlier in May. Dennis noted the current nominations as: Chair- Dennis Wheeler, Vice-Chair- Suone Cotner, and Secretary- Michele Blythe. Nominations are open until September's meeting.
State Plan on Aging Amendment	Cameron Akita provided an update and review of the draft State Plan on Aging (OAA) amendment. The draft includes seven topic areas to address coming into compliance with the OAA Final Rule. This update was published via Gov Delivery and is <a href="#">posted online</a> for a 30-day comment period.
Legislative/Outreach/Advocacy Committee	Suone Cotner reviewed the current work of the committee, including continued outreach with the Governor's Office. Suone is drafting outreach materials to Legislators, with plans to recap efforts in June. She emphasized engaging directly with legislators—through town halls, coffee chats, and public meetings. With JLEC going unfunded, it makes personal engagement even more critical.





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	Legislative Priorities will be developed in September and October for the 2026 session. Suone noted that the Governor is traveling around the state which provides Council members the opportunity to attend visits.		
Open Discussion/New Business/Public Comment	Mike Anbesse, Interim Assistant Secretary, HCLA – provided a brief recap of the reorganization efforts at DSHS. These aim to invest in streamlining programs and administrations to better serve clients.  Public comment – none.		
ACTION ITEMS		Assignee	Due Date