

# AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES: CREATING A CUSTOM NEEDS ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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**Date:** Wednesday December 9th, 2015

**Presenters:** Arlene Groh (Waterloo) & Dr. John Lewis (Waterloo)

**Host:** Age-Friendly Community (AFC) Planning Outreach Initiative

## TOPICS COVERED

### General Questions

1. [Recent book launch](#)
2. [Involvement of sub-groups](#)
3. [Relationship between newcomers and long-term residents](#)
4. [Assessing knowledge of programs and services](#)
5. [Ethical consent](#)
6. [Recruitment of older adults](#)
7. [Comparing survey results with other communities](#)
8. [Language and cultural barriers](#)
9. [Analyzing and reporting data](#)
10. [Accessibility](#)
11. [Service level expectations](#)
12. [Expectations of newcomers versus long-term residents](#)
13. [Reusing past survey](#)

## QUESTIONS

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### **01. Who is the publisher of the book? Who do we contact for more information?**

The publisher is Springer (New York). Contact John Lewis for more information:

[j7lewis@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:j7lewis@uwaterloo.ca)

### **02. Were other groups involved in addition to older adults (e.g. disability community, parents with strollers, etc.)? Were folks with dementia consulted?**

The four forums were open to all community members, but not specifically targeting parents with strollers. The Mayors Forum this year included students of all ages – a very intergenerational event. For the surveys and interviews, we spoke to a number of organizations that provide services to older adults, including health care providers, managers etc. There was a geographic and age-spectrum cross section

### **03. In Simcoe County we are faced with a situation where we have people who are aging from within (i.e. people who are long-term residents of the county), and people who aged somewhere else and are moving into Simcoe County from (e.g. GTA). Is it worth asking about the relationship between these two communities within Simcoe County?**

It is very important. In my (Dr. Lewis) work with Huron East, they talked about long term residents from Huron East who had lived there for multiple generations (i.e. established residents). However, residents are also moving to Huron East from elsewhere. As is the case in smaller communities, newcomers don't immediately become part of the established network of residents. One issue that arises is how to reach out to newcomers to bridge some of the communication issues regarding programs, events and services. Traditionally Huron East has relied on communication via word of mouth, but this is more difficult with newcomers who aren't part of same networks.

**TIP** It is important to talk to established residents as well as to those just moving in and finding difficulties connecting and embedding themselves in the social networks

Another part is connecting to our diverse multicultural communities. This is a goal for Waterloo in the next year – to more actively engage with our diverse community

### **04. In our initial assessment we found that most people have no idea about the programs that are available. When we ask "is there a program..." the answer is almost always no, even though these programs do exist. Is it still worth asking the question?**

Yes; this then points to issues with communication and effectiveness of communication strategies.

We were finding that the municipality is doing a good job creating programs and services, but not getting the message out in an age-friendly matter. Sometimes there is an overreliance on web media. You can expect though that some older residents will be online, but it is also important to rely on more traditional means of communication (newspaper, flyer, radio).

### **05. What are some issues regarding ethical consent to providing information?**

The overriding ethical concern with any research involving human subjects is respecting confidentiality.

With our paper survey we get informed consent and assured anonymity. Any data is reviewed by only 2 people's eyes from our project team and we are then under protocol to destroy data after 5 years. For the online tool, any data is kept in a secure database.

**TIP:** Anonymity and confidentiality are very important- important to ensure that any information provided will remain confidential and be destroyed after a period of time

#### **06. For the City of Waterloo, how many older adults were included in the data collection and how were they recruited?**

This is a grass roots effort. We started with putting out flyers and inviting people to the Mayors Forum. They then signed up at the end of the forum, eager to participate. This was our initial recruitment. The annual Mayor's Forum is key to bringing community together, reporting back and recruiting more volunteers.

We also have linkages with the city through a seniors' manager who links us to others.

In early days (2010) we were more proactive in reaching out, but now we also have people coming to us. Once you've established the base you can snowball. For example, when talking to the 55+ group we asked *"Is there anyone not here who we should speak to?"*

#### **07. Were parts of the survey consistent with other cities in the world? Was Waterloo able to compare their data with other cities in Ontario or other counties?**

Presumably if they used similar or the same questions we could compare, but I would be reluctant to make point by point comparison if the two cities had not used similar instruments.

In a big picture you can point to findings and identify common issues that bubble to the surface, regardless of survey used.

The ethos in the Guide is that surveys reflect your community's particular need. If communities want to compare to others, it would be fantastic if they are all using the same instrument.

#### **08. How were the seniors with language and cultural barriers involved and their needs assessed?**

This is a problem still to be addressed. We've had diverse seniors and language has not been a barrier for those that have attended, but this is an issue we have on deck to attend to next year. We've had representatives on the advisory committee but have a ways to go.

When you are creating your committee, ensure you are representing a cross section of the age spectrum, but also cultural representation through organizations that speak to or for multicultural communities within their borders.

Northern communities also need to include first nations and Metis representation.

**09. How did you analyze the information from the various assessment tools? What level of detail (e.g. percent of responses, number of comments) did you include in your reports?**

Some questions were more quantitative in nature and geographic specific so we can talk about clusters of areas in a community that need attention

With interview transcripts, you will need to pick out the most meaningful information. There are lots of content analysis methods that are available. We picked out content that was relevant to the issues we were dealing with, but only provided comments to council that were most representation of those issues needed to be addressed.

Information collected was reviewed by 5 sub committees, who made recommendations to the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee ranked these recommendations for the community to then respond to and prioritize from there. That was foundational to the Mayor's report

**10. Have you considered accessibility for those with visual, hearing or cognitive disabilities? Do you have representation from CNIB or CHS?**

Absolutely. We did have CNIB representation, but the person had to resign.

**11. Is there an expectation of service level that differs from the two communities' perspectives?**

We hadn't discussed this at length, but yes rural and urban have varying expectation for service delivery. In a rural community there is often a greater reliance on family and personal networks; in an urban community they rely more extensively on services provided by the municipality.

**12. In a smaller community where information about the environment is largely available from other sources, what are the advantages to person-environment pairing of the questions vs. focusing the survey on person-centred and fit questions?**

You still need data to address person questions. Whether you ask them environment question or know the answer, you need to have the paired response. Either way is appropriate. In Waterloo we wanted to talk to residents in Waterloo about their opinions, but also those responsible for planning for these needs. So if you have that data available, great, as long as you pair with what people think about that data/ services.

**13. In our rural community we have both long term and incoming seniors. The two groups have different expectations. Newcomers expect service levels normal to an urban setting, whereas long-term residents want taxes to remain low and things to remain the same. Any comments about how this can be resolved in the context of age friendliness.**

At the Mayor's Forum, the Mayor pointed out that in Waterloo the funding is our taxes and someone said *'I'm willing to have taxes increased to have low income housing in the centre of the city.'*

You could bring people together (i.e. service provider, municipality, long-term and newcomer residents) for a community dialogue to talk about what is possible for delivery and to inform residents about what it is like to live in a rural community.

**TIP:** Ongoing community engagement has been key here.

**14. Have you been using the same survey over the last five years or have you made modifications?**

Housing is the dominant issue in the city of Waterloo, so we are carrying on with the original survey but also launched subsequent surveys to tap into that issue in more depth