



COMMISSION ON SENIORS RECOMMENDATION 2020429-03B (i)
FY 2021 Budget Recommendations

Date: April 29, 2020

Subject: FY2021 Budget Recommendations

Motioned By: Garcia-Pittman

Seconded By: Angel

Recommendation

The Commission on Seniors submits the attached recommendations on the FY 2021 budget, using the “Root Cause Analysis” format requested by the Equity Office.

Description of Recommendation to Council

See each attached recommendation

Rationale:

See each attached recommendation

Vote

For: Briesemeister, Varteressian, Angel, Bordie, Cage, Garcia-Pittman, Grampp, Hauser, Kareithi, Nicol, Temperley, Van Sickle, Spain

Against: none

Abstain: None

Absent: Jackson, Lugo

Attest:

Janee Briesemeister, Chair

2021 Budget Recommendation Outreach to Older Adults

Root Cause Analysis

Story: What did you hear from the community?

One of the most prevalent comments from Commission on Seniors community outreach** is that older adults say they are often unaware of activities and services available to them from the city and city-funded providers. Respondents requested more promotion of services and activities (such as on TV, radio and utility bills), and some suggested having community navigators to help older adults who seek information.

**The Commission on Seniors conducted extensive community outreach to inform our budget recommendations. More than 50 people attended the Commission's February 4th Community Budget Engagement session at the Gus Garcia Recreation Center. In addition, the Commission drafted an Age Friendly Austin Community Feedback Survey that was provided online and in person to approximately 80 attendees at the AARP South Austin Chapter meeting at the South Austin Senior Center. The survey was available in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. More than 300 online responses were received.

Problem: What is the problem you identify?

Older adults are not always aware of the services and programs available to them in Austin. Promotion through online and social media are not reaching many older adults. Older adults also seek more information and assistance in determining which services and programs are appropriate to their needs.

How does the problem show up in your community? Who is most impacted by the problem?

Without extensive survey research it is difficult to know who is not being served. It is striking that older adults who attended Commission-sponsored community engagement meetings or responded to our surveys consistently make similar comments about wanting more communication, more outreach, and more help. We can only assume that there are many, many older adults who feel the same way, but did not receive our survey or attend an engagement meeting. We also note that 75% of the participants in our community engagement (in person and online) were white and therefore we believe even our current communication and outreach tools are not reaching communities of color.

Addressing this problem supports SD 2023 strategic outcomes: Government That Works For All, Health and Environment, Culture and Lifelong Learning.

Considering all of the information you have or have not collected above, how do we solve for this problem?

The Commission on Seniors recommends Austin Public Health provide support to the Age Friendly Action Plan Coordinator to conduct a needs analysis and make recommendations on community outreach and engagement to older adults in Austin, with an emphasis on reaching communities of color. Support could include a consultant, dedicated graduate student intern, or VISTA volunteer. The analysis should discover how older adults in various communities (communities of color, LGBTQ, disability) seek and receive information and how to effectively communicate with those groups. In addition, determine how to engage all city departments in effectively communicating with older adults. The Joint Inclusion Committee and other quality of life commissions should be engaged in this discussion as well.

After question three, which questions from the flowchart are you prepared to answer?

___Is there funding? Possibly available within existing funding

___Which department holds the funding? Austin Public Health, Parks and Recreation, potentially others

___How much funding is there?

___Which orgs receive it?

___How is success measured?

The Commission on Seniors intends to field the Age Friendly Austin Community Feedback Survey annually. The survey and in person community engagement are ones means of measuring success. Engagement by persons of color, the LGBTQ community and persons with disabilities should be noted.

2021 Budget Recommendation Access to Food

Root Cause Analysis

Story: What did you hear from the community?

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission on Seniors heard from the community about difficulties in accessing food for older adults. Comments included the desire for free food delivery. Since the stay at home orders were issued Austin has risen to the challenge of ensuring older adults have access to food. Efforts include meal delivery by nonprofits and churches; Parks and Recreation shifting its congregate meal program to pick up; and expanded operations at providers such as Meals on Wheels and the Capital Area Food Bank. HEB is offering delivery to older adults at no extra charge while other businesses are offering special shopping hours for seniors. Meals on Wheels has added clients during this time. The pandemic has further underscored the need for healthy food for older adults in Austin.

Problem: What is the problem you identify?

Many older adults lack access to healthy food. Barriers include living in “food deserts” and lack of transportation to grocery stores.

How does the problem show up in your community? Who is most impacted by the problem?

Older adults with the lowest incomes and those with mobility barriers and/or limited transportation options are the most impacted.

Considering all of the information you have or have not collected above, how do we solve for this problem?

The Commission on Seniors supports adding \$40,000 to the budget of the Parks and Recreation Department to expand the congregate meal program to two additional sites: Dove Springs and Turner Roberts Recreation Center. Additional funding for the expansion comes from the Area Agency on Aging.

The Commission on Seniors recommends Austin Public Health and/or other appropriate city departments determine how to provide free or very low cost home delivery of groceries to older adults and person with disabilities who are homebound and/or have significant transportation challenges preventing them from visiting grocery stores. This could include funding through social services contracts and/or partnerships (such as with Metro Access).

Addressing this problem supports SD 2023 strategic outcomes: Government That Works For All, Health and Environment, Economic Opportunity and Affordability.

After question three, which questions from the flowchart are you prepared to answer?

___Is there funding? Adding congregate meal sites requires additional funding; free or low cost grocery delivery may require additional funding or could be done with reallocation of current funding.

___Which department holds the funding? Austin Public Health and Parks and Recreation Department, and potentially other departments.

___How much funding is there?

___Which orgs receive it?

___How is success measured? A successful program will add to the number of older adults receiving congregate meals and delivery of groceries.

2021 Budget Recommendation Pedestrian Safety

Root Cause Analysis

Story: What did you hear from the community?

Through our community engagement meeting and survey tool the Commission on Seniors heard numerous comments about safety relating directly to city infrastructure. Comments included frustrations with lack of sidewalks, uneven sidewalks, lack of lighting, and the need for safer street crossings, including audible pedestrian signals and “leading pedestrian interval” crossing signals. Similar comments were made at the community engagement meeting held by the Mayor’s Committee for People with Disabilities. Community members noted that these deficiencies made them feel less safe and thus less likely to use nearby businesses and amenities such as parks, recreation and cultural centers.

Problem: What is the problem you identify?

Improvements in city infrastructure are necessary to allow older adults and persons with disabilities to feel safe as pedestrians.

How does the problem show up in your community? Who is most impacted by the problem?

The people most impacted are older adults and people with disabilities, including those who are blind or have limited vision and people using walkers and wheelchairs.

Considering all of the information you have or have not collected above, how do we solve for this problem?

The Commission on Seniors recommends the Austin Transportation Department prioritize the construction and repair of sidewalks, audible crossing signals, leading pedestrian interval crossing signals and lighting in the following areas:

- In and around parks, recreation and cultural centers
- Near senior centers and senior housing
- Near medical offices, hospitals and senior care facilities
- Near grocery stores and other essential retail stores
- In areas of the city with older populations

Addressing this problem supports SD 2023 outcomes: Mobility and Safety. This recommendation is also consistent with the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan.

After question three, which questions from the flowchart are you prepared to answer?

___Is there funding? Available within existing funding.

__Which department holds the funding? Austin Transportation Department

__How much funding is there?

__Which orgs receive it?

__How is success measured?