



**JOINT INCLUSION COMMITTEE (JIC)
FY23-2024 BUDGET RECOMMENDATION 20230322-022
PUBLIC SAFETY PRIORITY – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH TO
IMPROVE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, EQUITY, & AGE-FRIENDLINESS OF
CITY SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS**

Date: March 22, 2023

Subject: Joint Endorsement of the Commission on Aging’s FY23-24 Budget Recommendation 20230308-7v: Community Engagement and Outreach to Improve Emergency Preparedness, Equity, and Age-Friendliness of City Services for Older Adults (JIC Public Safety Priority)

Motioned by: Commissioner Richard Bondi Seconded By: Commissioner Rebecca Austen

COMMISSION ON AGING RECOMMENDATION 20230308-7v:

JOINTLY ENDORSED RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL ON FY23-2024 BUDGET

The Joint Inclusion Committee collectively endorses the Commission on Aging’s recommendation that Council and the City Manager allocate \$200,000 in funding to support community engagement and outreach efforts to improve emergency preparedness and equity and age-friendliness of city services for older adults in Austin. The funding would be allocated to Austin Public Health and used primarily by the Age Friendly Public Health Community Engagement Specialist.

Description of Recommendation to Council

The findings of the recent Audit Report ([City Services for Older Adults: To Improve Age-Friendliness, City Needs to Measure Progress, Improve Outreach and Evaluate Resources](#)) identified both outreach and resources as areas where the city needs improvement in serving older adults. This recommendation would provide funding to support outreach efforts to older adults and their caregivers with a specific focus on increasing reach to People of Color, LGBTQIA+ persons, low-income communities and other underrepresented or vulnerable older adults. Outreach efforts would include education and resources regarding City services, supports and activities that improve the lives of older adults and their caregivers. Funding would additionally support the development of educational materials and resource tools.

Outreach would include information about emergency preparedness and about the city's [Age-Friendly Plan](#) and services for older adults. Funding would be allocated to Austin Public Health, the department which houses the Age Friendly Program and staff. Funding would be coordinated with other city departments as appropriate (for example, on outreach around emergency preparedness).

Background and Rationale:

Austin has one of the fastest growing populations of both “seniors (aged 65 and older) and “pre-seniors” (aged 50-64). Beginning in 2015, Austin’s Commission on Aging partnered with AARP, AustinUP, regional aging-related service organizations and community members to develop the Austin Age-Friendly Action Plan, a requirement of retaining the Age Friendly designation. The Age-Friendly Program aims to improve the health and well-being of older adults by implementing and advocating for Age-Friendly programs, policies, and practices across the City of Austin. The recent city audit on older adult services as well as feedback from town halls and the Commission’s community survey shows that a high percentage of older adults in Austin are unaware of the programs and services available to support them. The Commission frequently hears from older adults who are frustrated with trying to find information about programs and services. This is especially true for older adults in communities of color.

From the 2022 City Audit: “The City does not have clear outreach about programs and services for older adults. As a result, older adults may not be able to find what they need...Clear and consistent communication is crucial for older adults to be aware of what programs and services the city provides. We found that the City communicates about programs and services for older adults inconsistently across departments, and the City does not provide information about programs and services for older adults in one Central place. Both issues create barriers for older adults in accessing City programs and services.” *City Services for Older Adults*.

Further, during both the pandemic and the recent winter storms Austin has failed to get timely information to older adults. Older adult populations, living on fixed incomes, often without access or working knowledge of social media are often the most vulnerable during these events. The City and utilities struggled to provide timely information to residents during these outages in a format residents can access during an outage, particularly to older residents. Relying on social media is insufficient for outreach to older adults. Information and outreach have to be available through multiple sources and in a variety of formats. In addition to providing information online, resources should be made available by other means such as by phone, in community centers, at community meetings, and promotion through traditional media (print, TV, and radio).

For example, respondents to the Commission’s annual survey told us the Austin American Statesman, Community Impact and Austin Chronicle are their top choices for getting information. Material should be available in large print and in multiple languages. Call Center operators should be trained to respond to questions about the needs of older adults. All of these means of communication cost money.

In 2023, the City funded a Public Health Community Engagement Specialist position to help improve equity and effectiveness of programs for older adults; however, funds were not allocated for these outreach and engagement efforts. The Commission on Aging prioritizes equitable access to resources for older adults across the community and we believe this goal will be accomplished with funding provided dedicated to community outreach and education.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 – 0

For: African American Resource Advisory Commission: Gregory Smith
Asian American Quality-of-Life Advisory Commission: Hanna Huang
Commission for Women: Rebecca Austen
Commission on Aging: Amy Temperley
Early Childhood Council: Raul Alvarez
Hispanic/Latino Quality-of-Life-Resource Advisory Commission: Amanda Afifi
LGBTQ+ Quality-of-Life Advisory Commission: Charles Curry
Mayor’s Committee for People with Disabilities: Jennifer Powell

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

Absent: Commission on Immigrant Affairs: Juan Vences-Benitez
Human Rights Commission: Idonna Griffith

Attest: Jeremy Garza, Staff Liaison, Equity Office:

x Jeremy Garza