National Center to Reframe Aging®

LED BY THE GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

# **Reframing Aging through Storytelling:** Putting Beneficiaries at the Center

2026 OHIC National Conference
Washington, DC
August 3-6, 2026

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# Session Goals

- Demonstrate a strong understanding of the evidence-based communication strategies of reframing aging.
- Recognize the framing decisions inherent in sharing lived experience narratives.
- Use examples to apply tools from the National Center to Reframe Aging to current work to change attitudes towards aging.

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# Speakers



## Trish D'Antonio

Executive Director, NCRA

VP Policy and Professional Affairs,
Gerontological Society of America



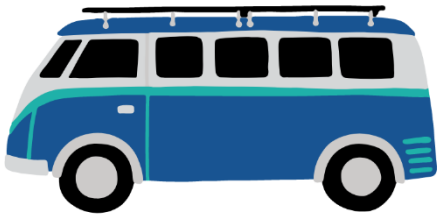
## Hannah Albers

Director of Program Development

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# National Center to Reframe Aging

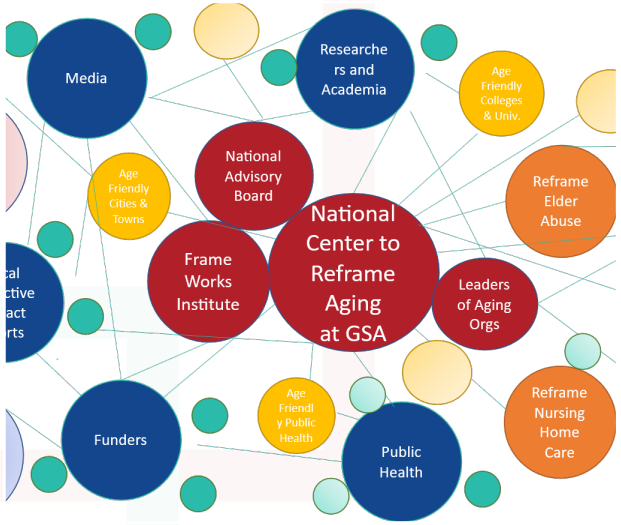


Climb aboard the caravan!
#ReframeAging

Dedicated to reshaping the conversation about aging

## Core Elements of Reframing Aging Workshop

Trusted source for proven communication strategies




Cultivating a movement

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# Leaders of Aging Organizations

National Center to Reframe Aging®

AARP℠ afar american federation for aging research AGS Geriatrics Healthcare Professionals Leading Change. Improving Care for Older Adults.

American Society on Aging GSA Gerontological Society of America® Grantmakers in Aging

LeadingAge® nco national council on aging NHCOA National Hispanic Council on Aging USAging

# Funders

The John A. Hartford Foundation

RRF Foundation for Aging

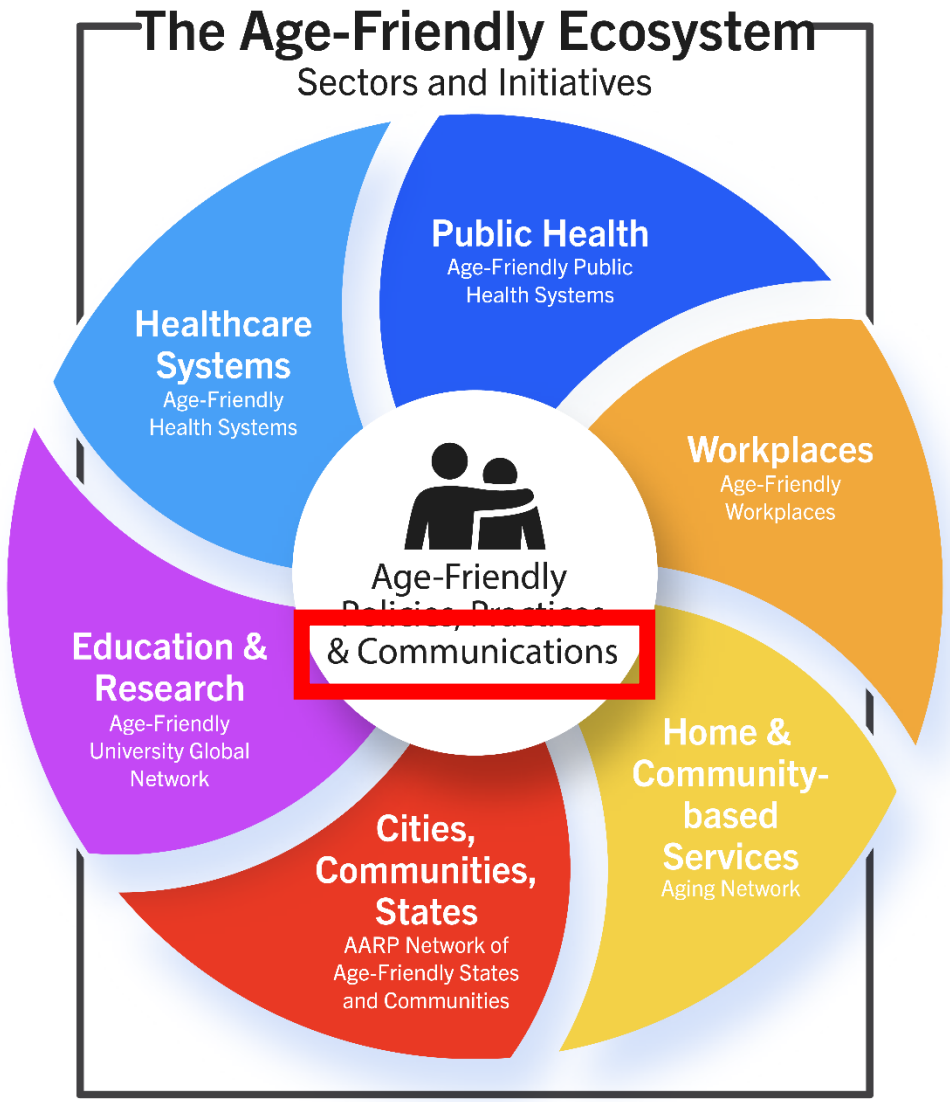
THE scan FOUNDATION®

ARCHSTONE FOUNDATION

# Research Partner

FRAME WORKS

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# We **all** have a role!

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# Framing is About Choices!



**What to emphasize**



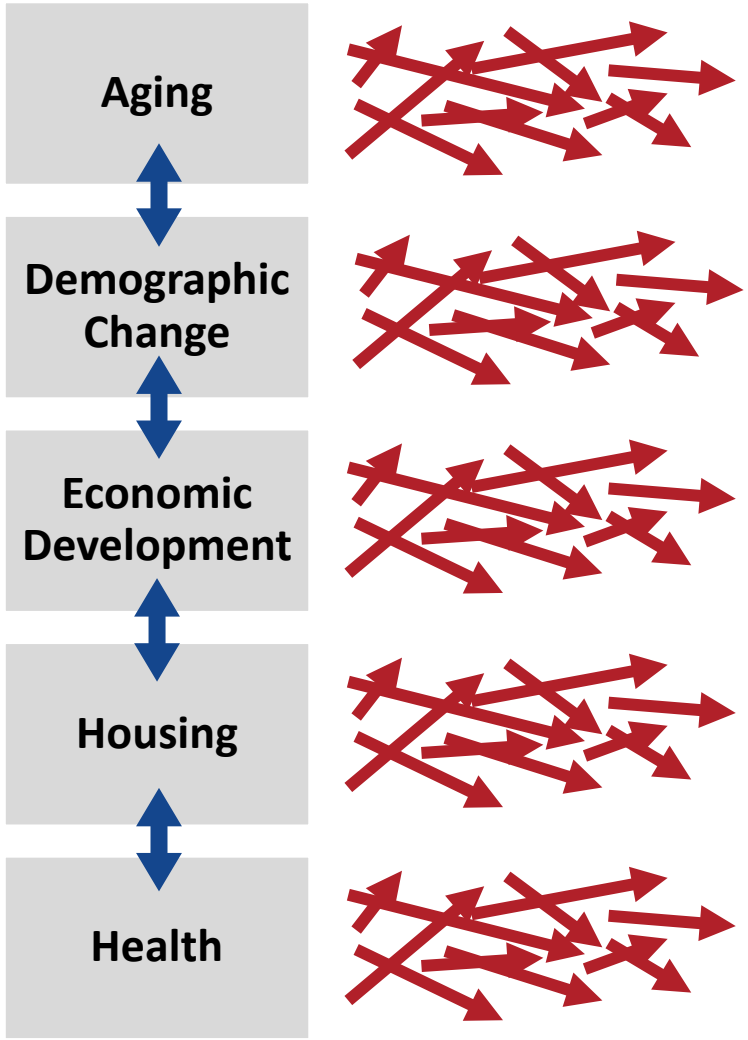
**How to explain it**



**What to leave unsaid**

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# Diffusion is Frame-Dependent







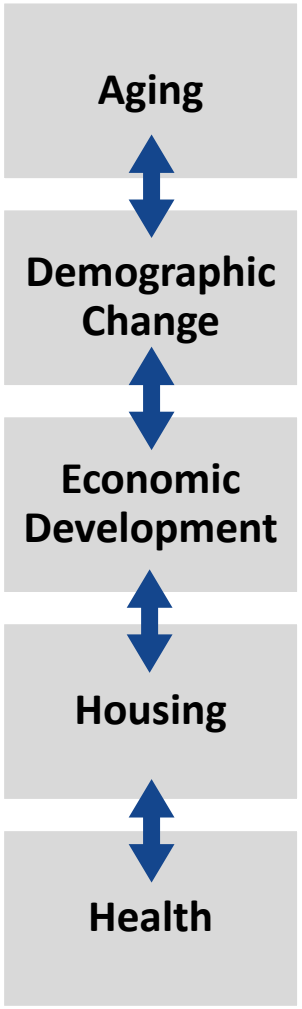
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# Diffusion is Frame-Dependent

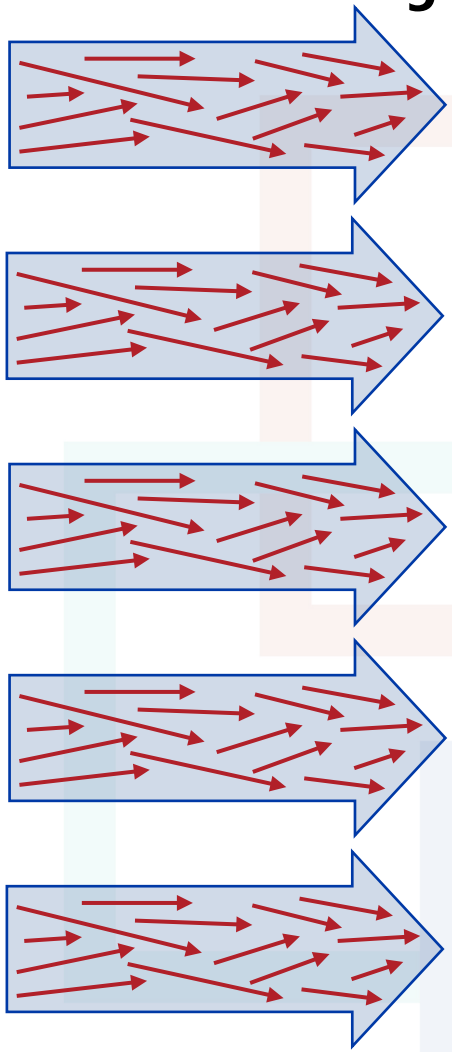
Effectively Framed Core Story

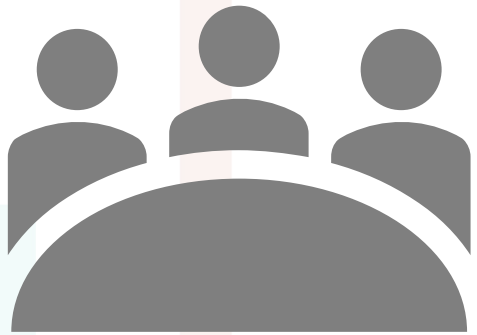
Sticky

Plausible




**Effective Framing**



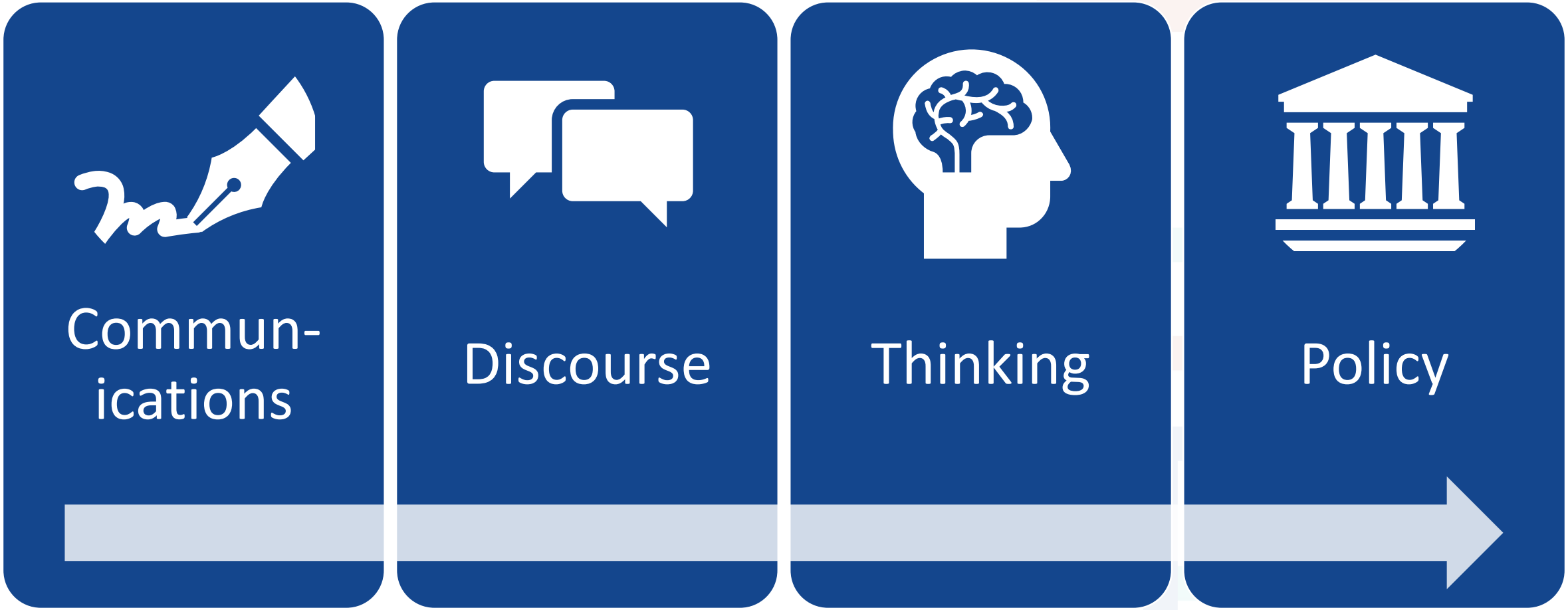


- ✓ Changed Public Understanding
- ✓ Demand for Better Public Policy

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# Shared Communications Lead to Systems Change

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# Multiple Cultural Models Available

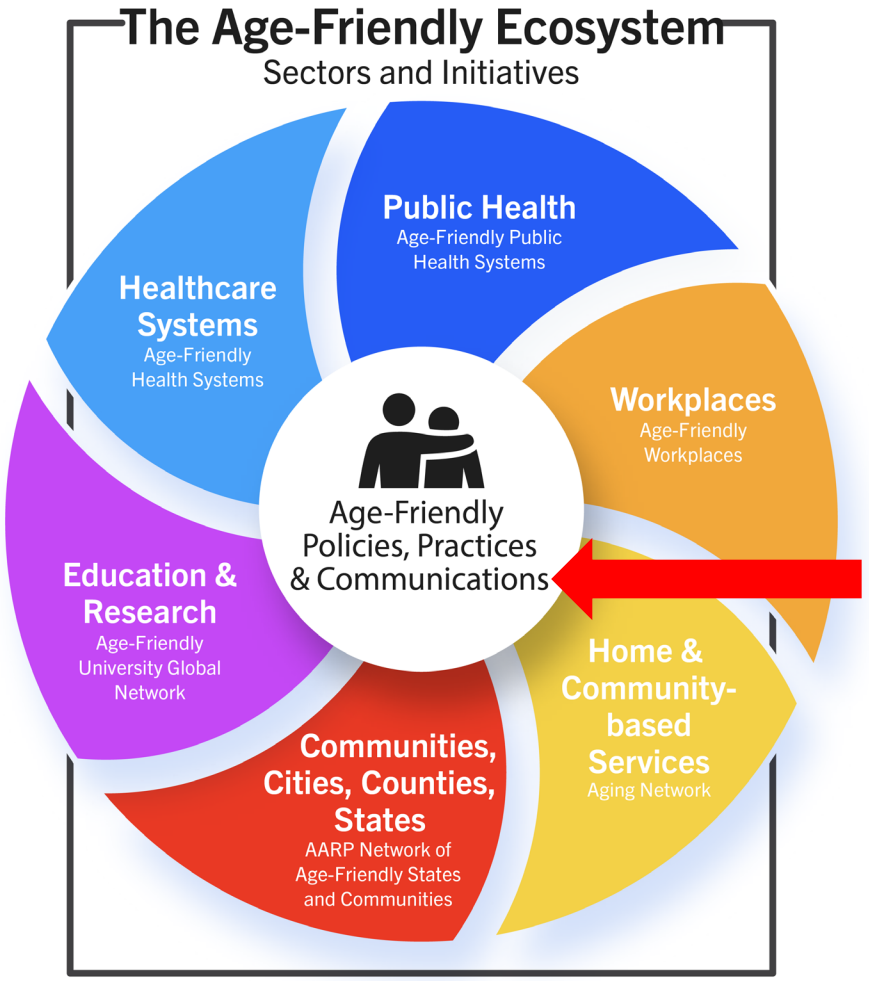



## Choose the Cues that Activate Productive Models

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# Our strategies are working!



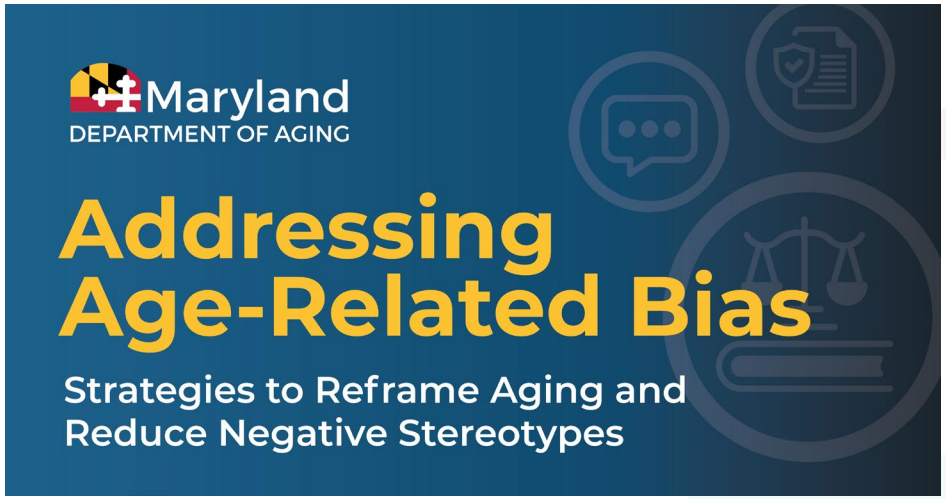


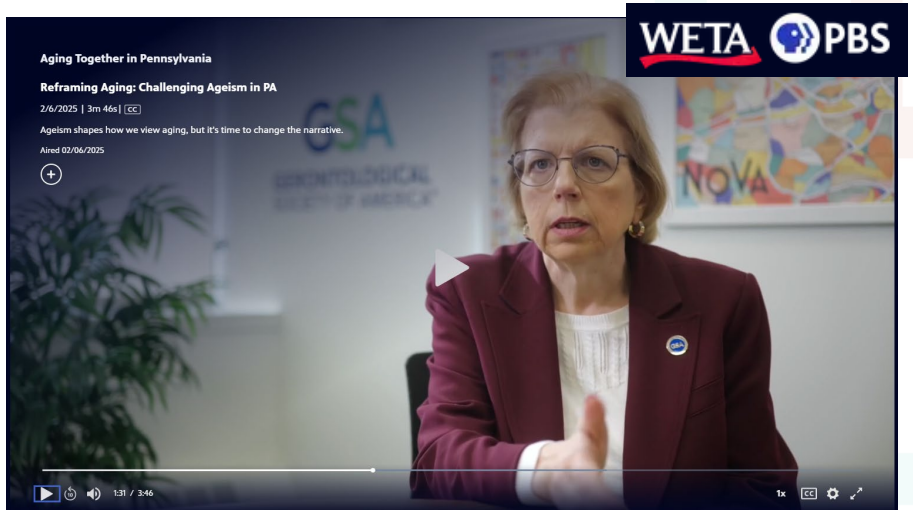


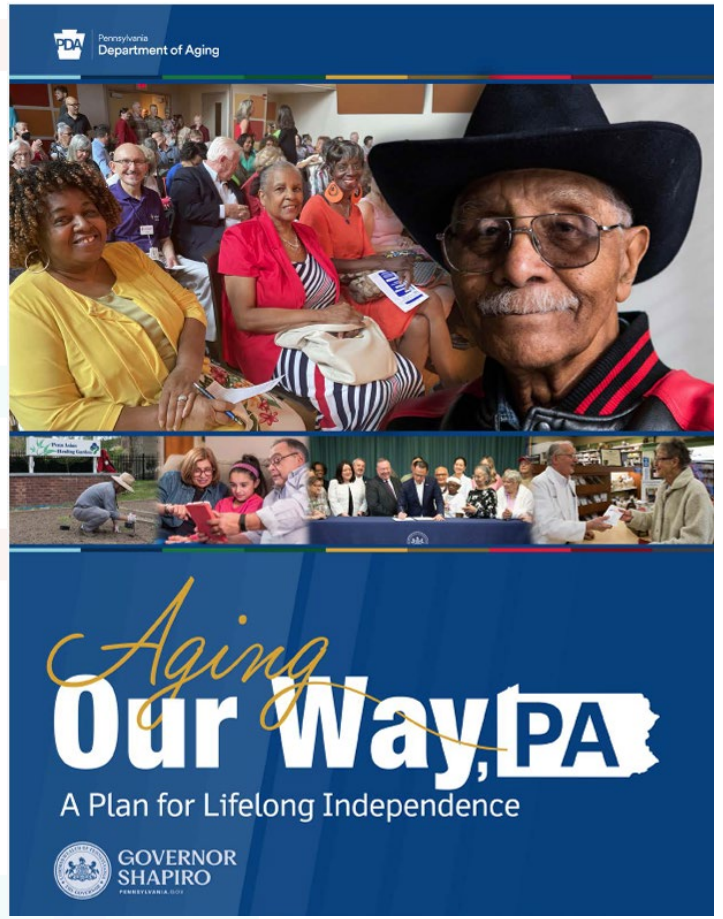
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# Influencing MPAs



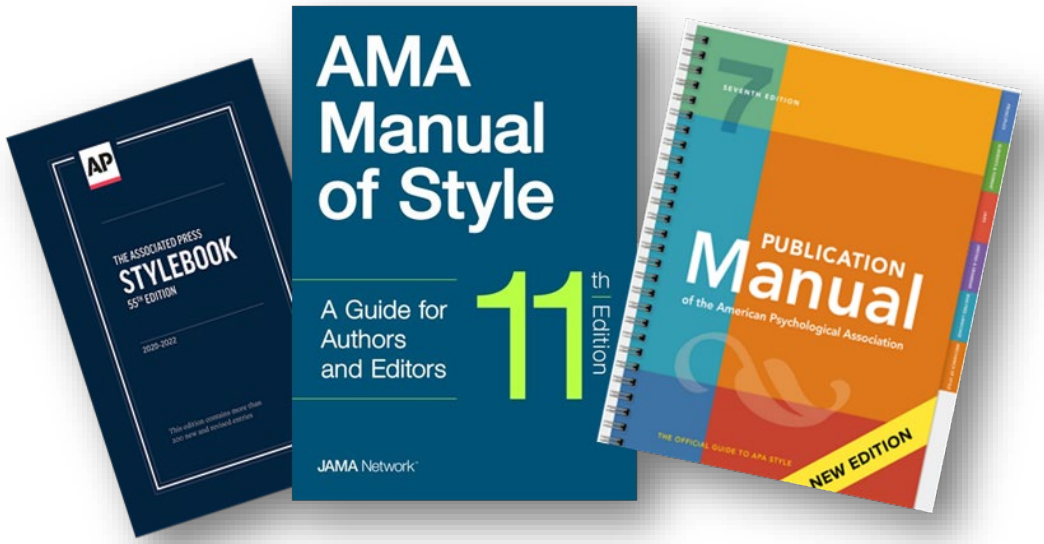




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# Systemic Change is Implemented




398 organizations and individuals sign on to a letter to redefine ageism




*"Prejudice or discrimination against a particular age group and especially the elderly."*

***Update: "prejudice or discrimination against a particular age-group, especially older people."***

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# Modeling & Innovation is Happening!

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**POWER IN AGING**

BUILDING AN AGE-POSITIVE MAINE THROUGH CONVERSATION & ACTION

**OLDER AMERICANS MONTH**

FLIP THE SCRIPT ON AGING: MAY 2025

**AGEISM AWARENESS DAY**

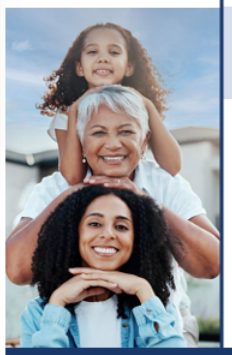
OCT. 9 2024

American Society on Aging

Division of Aging | AARP Indiana

**AGE FORWARD TOGETHER**

A UNITED VISION OF AGING FOR ALL OF INDIANA



**Age Forward Together** is a vehicle for bringing public and private stakeholders together to build a more vibrant and inclusive future for all Hoosiers as they age. The Division of Aging leads Indiana's efforts to develop and implement a comprehensive, leading-edge Multi-Sector Plan on Aging.

**A Multisector Plan on Aging:**

- Is a state-led, multi-year planning process that convenes cross-sector stakeholders
- Is a collaborative effort to address the needs of an aging population, including older adults and peo[illegible]ith disabilities
- [illegible]estructuring of state an[illegible]y and programs
- Connects the public, private and independent sectors in modernizing and creating systems-based solutions in healthcare, human services, housing, transportation, consumer affairs, employment and income security across the life continuum.

» We must act *now* to ensure aging-f[illegible]pportunities for all Hoosiers! »

The framework's goals align with broader s[illegible]ties for all Hoosiers, including:

**Age-friendly economies**
Build and sustain age-friendly state and local economies so that all ages and abilities can thrive where they choose

**Reframe aging**
Create stronger and more lasting bonds across all generations of Hoosier families and communities by reframing how we value aging as a state

**Reduce barriers**
Reduce barriers to access for care, services, housing and other supports at all points across the lifespan

**Each journey supported**
Build roadmaps for increased employment, volunteerism and engagement for Hoosiers across the lifespan so enduring paths are built with each journey supported.

» This is a statewide partnership. We can't do it alone! »

Visit www.in.gov/fssa/da or email ageforward@fssa.in.gov

*The Center for Healthy Aging and Innovation and Minnesota Leadership Council on Aging present*

**REFRAME AGING MINNESOTA**

*Help us champion a Minnesota free of ageism*

AHRQ Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION:**

**The Impact of Ageism in Healthcare**

Submit Comments by March 15

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# Frame of Mind Video: Starting Strong, Avoiding Traps

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# Navigating Understanding

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## Traps to Avoid

### Individualism

- Lifestyle choices
- Financial Planning

### Us vs. Them

- Older as "other"
- Zero Sum thinking
- Digital incompetence

### Ideal vs. Perceived Real

- **Ideal:**
  - Accumulated wisdom
  - Self-sufficiency
  - Staying active
  - Earned leisure
- **Real:**
  - Deterioration
  - Loss of control
  - Dependency
  - Determinism

### Nostalgia & Threat of Modernity

- Family dispersal
- Economic challenges
- Social Security is doomed

### Fatalism

- Fatalism/Crisis—nothing can be done
- Better individual choices and planning
- More education and information

## Strategies to Advance

### What Surrounds Us Shapes Us

- Our environments shape our lives

### Collective Responsibility

- We are interconnected
- We can all help improve our communities

### Problems can be Solved

- We know how to effect positive change
- We can do it in on a large scale

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# Strategies to Advance

**Talk about the process of aging as building momentum**

**Explain the supports we need to live meaningful lives as we age**

**Always include & highlight innovative and creative solutions**

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To spark a more accurate and complete conversation about aging, **advance** these communication strategies.

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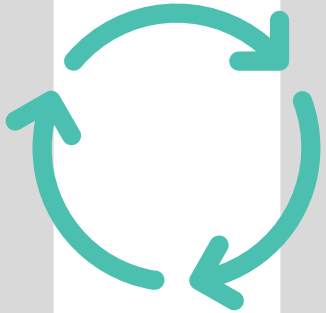
# Application in our Storytelling

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# Two Terms, One Continuum

**Lived Experience**

Firsthand the firsthand knowledge that comes from navigating systems, facing barriers, and surviving circumstances that others only study from the outside.



**Lived Expertise:**

Develops over time and emerges when lived experience is recognized, cultivated, and applied.

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# Framing Tip:

We are always making framing decisions about how to tell our stories.

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# Who do you share your stories with?

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# Who do you share your stories with?

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- Friends and Family
- Policymakers
- Therapists
- Journalists
- Mentors/ Mentees
- Fundraisers

Think about how you tell your own story in different contexts and the framing choices you make.

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# **Framing Tip:**

Personal storytelling for advocacy requires different framing choices.

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## Tip: Even in a crisis situation, “crisis” is not the most effective frame.

- Personal stories should offer solutions.
- Stories should point to a pathway toward change.
- Emphasize individual agency in the face of harm.
- Unmask the sources of harm by naming specific policies.

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# Tip: Point to shared humanity rather than the storytellers' worthiness.

- Explain how action is needed because of who people are, not what they do.
- Avoid gatekeeping language about who deserves support.
- Use language that emphasizes shared connection.

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# Tip: Move from sympathy stories to stories about lived expertise.

- Highlight how personal experiences have cultivated deep expertise and unique insights.
- Connect firsthand perspectives to concrete and systemic solutions.
- Use personal stories to disrupt assumptions.

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## Instead of this
(relying on poor framing)

I worked with a client recently, Mr. Delgado. He is a veteran, still works, and does what he can for the community. He was recently diagnosed with Parkinsons but hadn't been taking his prescribed medications because the co-pays were unaffordable. He'd navigated Medicare on his own for years but didn't know where to turn. He called his local Area Agency on Aging, and when he came in, he was desperate for help. We connected him with the Low Income Subsidy program, which brought his co-pay down to a level he could manage and he's now taking the medication he needs. We need this program to continue; there are so many elderly neighbors like him who have worked hard and just need a little extra boost to make ends meet.

## Try this
(rely on framing strategies)

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We all deserve to live in communities that support our health and wellbeing, and none of us should have to navigate a complicated system alone. I worked with a client recently, Mr. Delgado. He was recently diagnosed with Parkinson's and had stopped taking his prescribed medications because the co-pays were unaffordable. He'd been navigating Medicare on his own for years, and when he called his local Area Agency on Aging, he came in knowing something wasn't working, and he just needed someone who could help him find what was missing. We connected him with the Low Income Subsidy program, and he's now taking the medication he needs. Every day, 10,000 people become eligible for Medicare, our neighbors, people like Mr. Delgado. This program ensures that our community is a place where everyone has access to the care and services we need as we age.

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(rely on framing strategies)

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Every day, 10,000 people become eligible for Medicare, our neighbors, people like Mr. Delgado. This program ensures that our community is a place where everyone has access to the care and services we need as we age.

Start with value statement

Active participant & highlight agency

Connect to the larger context

Use we and us language

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ReframingAging.org

# When a Frame "works," It Shifts Thinking in Multiple Ways



**Knowledge Increases**



**Attitudes Improve**



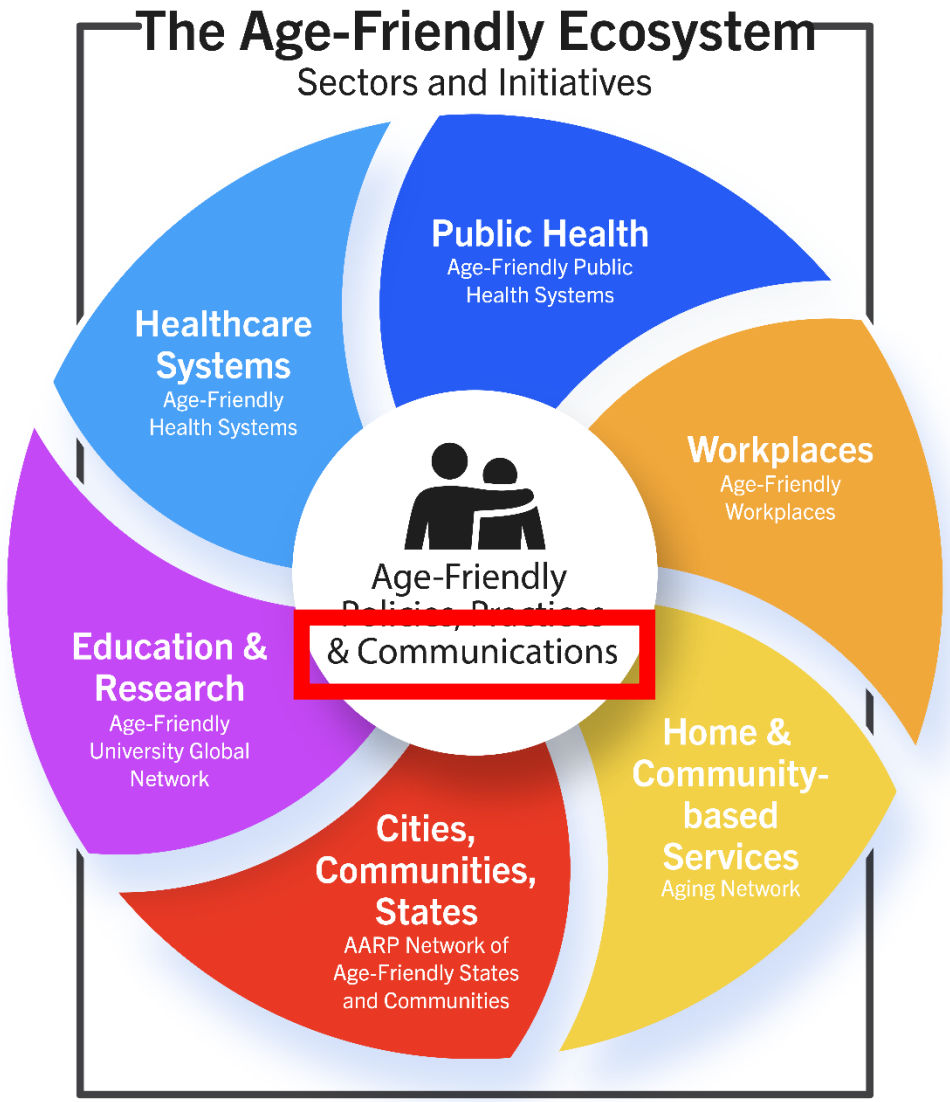
**Policy Support Grows**

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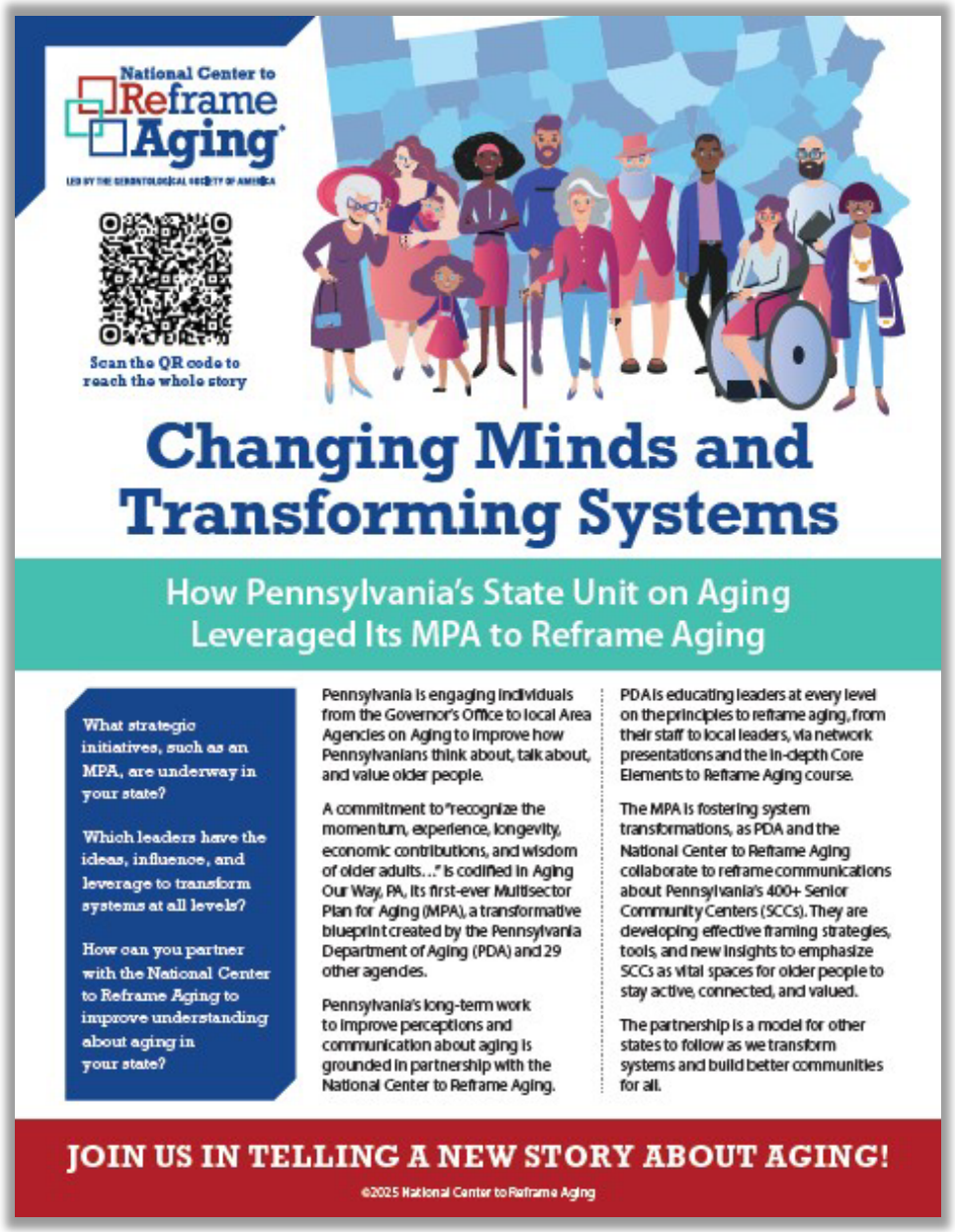



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# We **all** have a role!

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# We're Creating Change!




reframingaging.org/about-us/impact

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# Reframing Communications About **Senior Community Centers** in Pennsylvania

## Access Project Details, Reports, and Webinars

learning.reframingaging.org/seniorcenters

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# Webinars Available On Demand

**Connecting the Dots: Reframing Aging Across the Age-Friendly Ecosystem**

**Available On Demand for Free**

**Champion Your Health: Communications Strategies for Older Americans Month**

**Available On Demand for Free**

**Beyond the Pledge: Turning Age-Friendly Commitments into Institutional Change**

**Available On Demand for Free**

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