

# Age-Friendly Advocacy in Two Canadian Cities: Measuring Capacity for Success



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## Background

- The age-friendly communities (AFC) movement arose in response to simultaneous trends of population aging and increasing urbanization.
- The World Health Organization's age-friendly communities movement has had extensive uptake in Canada, with over 800 cities implementing age-friendly principles that alter physical and social aspects of cities.

## Objective

- The objective of this research was to evaluate which characteristics of age-friendly advocacy groups will be the most important for influencing policy change

## Methods

- Municipal advocacy of two Canadian cities (Calgary & Ottawa) was compared using the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF; Weible, et al., 2011).
- This comparison helps to understand how coalitions use resources to perform at organizational and system levels.
- Analysis focused on whether the group with more capacity for success contained more top-down or bottom-up characteristics.
- Available reports and documentation was structured using checklists of: success indicators, as well as "top-down" and "bottom-up" factors.

## Policy Analytical Capacity Framework: How do resources affect advocacy?



## Results

| Measure                      | Calgary Elder Friendly Communities | Council on Aging Ottawa: Age-Friendly Ottawa |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Implementation               | 2000-2007                          | 2012-2014                                    |
| Size                         | 58                                 | 34   |
| Resources                    | \$180 000/year                     | \$500 000/year                               |
| Local government endorsement | ✗                                  | ✓  |
| Local government support     | ✗                                  | ✓  |
| Start-up grant               | ✓                                  | ✓  |
| Local media coverage         | ✗                                  | ✓  |
| Provincial support           | ✗                                  | ✓  |
| Partnerships                 | 3                                  | 5  |
| Seniors' involvement         | ✓                                  | ✓  |
| Seniors' integrated          | ✗                                  | ✗  |
| Community champion           | ✗                                  | ✓  |
| Small projects first         | ✓                                  | ✓  |
| In-kind provincial support   | ✗                                  | ✗  |
| Profit: non-profit ratio     | 0 : 18                             | 1: 13  |
| Non-Profit partnerships      | ✓                                  | ✓  |
| Seniors' integrated          | ✓                                  | ✗  |
| Partnerships                 | 3                                  | 5  |

Light orange box = Top-Down Characteristics

Dark orange box = Bottom-up Characteristics

## Discussion

- The ideal combination of characteristics is a mix of top down and bottom up characteristics. This research measures how these two cities may diverge from the ideal.
- Findings suggest top-down resources of an advocacy group have a stronger influence on capacity for success than bottom-up resources.
- For age-friendly communities to achieve the desired policy result, advocacy efforts will require institutional support from the provincial government.
- This model offers insight on how other cities can implement age-friendly initiatives, providing prescriptive information as opposed to descriptive information about AFC outcomes in a location.

## Implications

- This study outlines the strengths and weaknesses of each initiative and offers suggestions on how to improve the capacity of each organization to achieve age-friendly outcomes.
- Institutional support contributed to Ottawa's age-friendly success, but depending too heavily on government funding could be a detriment to sustainability.
- This research suggests that the role of the federal government (through the New Horizons for Seniors Program) was a contributing factor achieving success in Ottawa.
- Further empirical investigation is recommended on the contributors to, and impacts of, age-friendly communities

## References

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