

# n4a's Draft Ideas for the 2011 Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act

July 16, 2010

## **1. Flexibility**

***Overall Idea 1:*** Make no change to the Act that unnecessarily restricts the local flexibility and inherent person-centered nature of the OAA's core philosophy and history.

***Background:*** Of top importance to AAAs and Title VI programs is increasing local flexibility in order to provide more customized care for the consumers that they serve. The reauthorization should provide opportunities to determine if strategic reduction of unnecessary restrictions on local flexibility would ultimately provide a more person-centered and successful experience for the older adults and their caregivers, and should be careful not to impose new restrictions that reduce the ability of AAAs/Title VI programs to meet their clients where they are and get them the services and supports they need.

***Idea 1-A:*** Merge Title C-1 and C-2 into one nutrition subtitle C that preserves the infrastructure of these vital programs while allowing for local flexibility in funding distributions. Make room for innovation in reducing hunger among older adults that is not necessarily a home-delivered or congregate site meal.

***Idea 1-B:*** Enhance local transfer authority within the Act, specifically between all Title III subtitles. At the very least, maintain the transfer authority limit of 30 percent between Titles III B and III C.

***Idea 1-C:*** Expand the ability for AAAs and the service providers they contract with to offer cost-sharing for selected OAA programs and services. While some services must remain exempted from cost-sharing (e.g., information and assistance; elder abuse prevention; outreach; and ombudsman), there is a longer list of OAA services that would benefit from enhanced and more formal cost-sharing. Thoughtful re-working of the cost-sharing rules would ideally increase the number of older adults that could be served, provide additional funds to the programs, and strengthen the long-term services and supports delivery system envisioned in the Act.

**Idea 1-D:** Simplify the Title III E National Family Caregiver Support Program by lifting unnecessary data collection burdens, restrictions on how funds may be spent at the local level, and restrictions on how funds may be used by the caregivers. Increase authorization levels to meet the tremendous need for these services.

## **2. Long-Term Services and Supports**

**Overall Idea 2: Strengthen the role of the Aging Network to integrate medical and human services–based long-term services and supports (LTSS), particularly in order to promote the Aging Network’s role in health, wellness (both physical and behavioral health) and care management.**

**Background:** With the passage of health care reform (The Affordable Care Act, or ACA), there are new opportunities for AAAs and Title VI programs to play a stronger and more enhanced role in promoting Medicare preventive services, transitional care, medical home model, options counseling and community-based/evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention programs. It is imperative that the OAA reflect that new reality and continue to promote the development of comprehensive long-term services and supports systems in every state and community.

**Idea 2-A:** Reflect the key elements of *Project 2020* (S. 1257/H.R. 2852)—single entry point models, evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention activities, and enhanced nursing home diversion/community living programs.

**Background:** In 2008, n4a and the National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities jointly developed *Project 2020*, a legislative proposal which would take three AoA/CMS tested and proven approaches from the Aging Network to scale nationally. *Project 2020* has been introduced in Congress as S. 1257/H.R. 2852. This strategy of providing long-term services and supports will generate savings to Medicaid and Medicare at the federal and state levels, while simultaneously enabling older adults and individuals with disabilities to age in their homes and communities.

While the OAA reauthorization does not offer the funding opportunities that *Project 2020* requires to bring efforts to scale nationally, it will be important to ensure that the Act is updated to reflect the capacity and potential of the Aging Network in these areas.

**Idea 2-A-1:** Include language in OAA that clarifies the relationship of AAAs and Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs). Include language and funding authorization that reinforces and supports the role of AAAs/Title VI programs in person-centered access to information, assistance and public education so that older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers have ready access to information on long-term care planning; are connected to community-based long-term services and supports; and have access to options and benefits counseling and case management.

**Idea 2-A-2:** Strengthen OAA Title III-D Preventive Health programs to incorporate best practices learned through AoA's evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention demonstrations (previously funded through Titles II and IV as well as by CMS), as well as authorized funding levels sufficient to meet the need for these cost-saving and health-boosting programs.

**Idea 2-A-3:** Build upon the successes of AoA's Community Living demonstration programs by establishing a permanent structure and authorized funding levels for enhanced nursing home diversion programs in the Act.

### **3. Authorization Levels**

**Overall Idea 3: Raise or create authorization levels for all of the titles of the OAA to ensure the Aging Network has the necessary resources to adequately serve the projected growth in the numbers of older adults, particularly the increasing ranks of individuals age 85 and older, who are the most frail, vulnerable and in the greatest need for aging supportive services.**

**Background:** The OAA is the major federal categorical social services program for older adults in the United States. For 45 years, it has provided an ideal, well-established, trusted, community-based infrastructure of services responsive to the needs of older people and their caregivers. OAA programs' budgets have eroded over the last several years as federal funding has not kept pace with inflation or the growing population of individuals in need of services. As a result, services funded by these programs have lost considerable service capacity, causing many families to be placed on waiting lists for supportive services, adding to their emotional, physical and financial hardships. A larger federal investment in core OAA services and supports is needed to ensure the Aging Network has the necessary resources in the years ahead to adequately serve the projected growth in the numbers of older adults.

## **4. Building the Capacity of the National Aging Network**

***Overall Idea 4: Raise the bar on OAA performance by creating capacity-building initiatives to strengthen and enhance the National Aging Network.***

***Background:*** We must focus on building the capacity of the National Aging Network infrastructure to meet the challenges ahead. Creating the infrastructure needed to support the aging of the population requires investment in the Aging Network's capacity. Building capacity requires investments on multiple fronts, including developing core competencies, establishing performance standards, performing evaluations, and consistently attending to staff/volunteer development, training and retention. There is a tremendous opportunity in the reauthorization of the OAA to attend to this national priority.

***Idea 4-A:*** Add to the existing Title II evaluation provisions under Section 206 to enhance the capacity of the Administration on Aging (AoA) to perform program evaluations for current OAA and emerging programs. This enhanced capacity would allow AoA to further develop its involvement in evidence-based programming and evaluate the Aging Network's role in providing long-term services and supports and related system change efforts. The enhanced capacity would also enable AoA to adequately evaluate new opportunities associated with the Affordable Care Act. These include the role of state agencies and AAAs in single-point-of-entry systems, options counseling, care coordination, case management services, prevention and wellness programs, and other core competencies of the network. The evaluation activities would be funded through their own authorization under Title II.

***Idea 4-B:*** Create a new training and professional development program under Title III to boost employment efforts in the field of aging services that we as a nation have a strategic interest in growing:<sup>1</sup> jobs in the provision of aging services and long-term services and supports. This new program would have its own funding authorization so it would not be dependent on other Title III funds or take away from services. The program would include new initiatives aimed at developing students' interest in working in the field of aging; preparing aging professionals already in the Network to become leaders; and enhanced staff and volunteer training through peer-level exchanges in effective leadership skills and management practices.

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<sup>1</sup> The need for this investment has been well documented in reports such as the Institute of Medicine, "Retooling for an Aging America: Building the Health Care Workforce," April 14, 2008.

## **5. Senior Mobility Options**

***Overall Idea 5:*** Explore ways to strengthen the Aging Network’s role in the coordinated planning activities through greater collaborative efforts between transit, planning and aging agencies and enhancing the role of the network in the growing field of mobility management services.

***Background:*** The OAA reauthorization presents a tremendous opportunity to strengthen the Network’s role in meeting the transportation needs of an expanding older population over the next decade, and to build on current efforts the Network has started in the areas of coordinated planning and mobility management services. In addition to the significant amount of transportation the Aging Network has provided as a core service of the OAA, the Network has also become key participants in the development of the coordinated public transit–human services transportation planning process established under the 2005 surface transportation authorization. Given the Network’s extensive role in coordinating and providing transportation to older adults and persons with disabilities through the OAA, other human service programs such as Medicaid, and federal transportation programs, we must evaluate how we can best enable the Network to meet the challenges of increased service demands over the next OAA reauthorization period and beyond.

***Idea 5-A:*** Formalize the role of the Aging Network, in particular AAAs, in the coordinated public transit–human services transportation planning process and authorize funding support and technical assistance to support these efforts. Include complementary provisions that reinforce and build upon this role under the pending surface transportation reauthorization.

***Idea 5-B:*** Build on existing provisions in the OAA in Title III to encourage greater collaboration between AoA and the DOT and FTA-funded programs that will help break down funding silos. The Aging Network needs to maximize limited resources through the OAA by working more frequently with local transit agencies and providers. By developing effective partnerships, AAAs will be able to serve more individuals with additional funding available through the FTA’s specialized transportation programs.

***Idea 5-C:*** Add new language to the OAA to expand the description of transportation services to include mobility management activities. Providing a broad enough definition of mobility management to include the different facets of this burgeoning approach to providing transportation resources promises to improve both program effectiveness and the responsiveness of services they offer to consumers’ needs.

**Idea 5-D:** Authorize dedicated funding to implement the Technical Assistance and Innovation to Improve Transportation for Older Americans program under Section 416 of the OAA. This provision, added in the 2006 amendments, authorizes grants to non-profit organizations for demonstration projects or technical assistance to assist local transit providers, AAAs and other groups to encourage and facilitate coordinated transportation services and resources.

## **6. Title VI Native American Programs**

**Overall Idea 6: Build the capacity of and funding for Title VI programs to strengthen their ability to serve the complex and urgent needs of elders in Indian country.**

**Background:** Title VI Native American aging programs are especially overdue for an increase in authorized funding. OAA provides the primary authority for funding services to elders in Indian country. Older American Indians are the most economically disadvantaged elders in the nation. Current Title VI funding levels are woefully inadequate to meet the needs of Indian elders; there has long been a lack of proper investment in these programs, which further exacerbates the challenges Indian elders face. Inadequate funding has made it impossible for many tribes to meet the five-days-a-week home-delivered meal requirement and has forced them to serve congregate meals only two or three days a week. Other service delivery needs among Native Americans have also developed that deserve increased attention, in particular transportation which is critical to connecting the Indian elders with other essential services especially in rural areas of the country.

**Idea 6-A:** Similar to the recommendation for Title III agencies, create a new training, professional development, and technical assistance program under Title VI to boost employment efforts in the field of aging services for Title VI grantees. Current training and technical assistance support to Title VI programs is less than 1 percent of Title VI funding while other Title II and IV training and technical assistance provisions have been unfunded. We propose that this new program would have its own authorized funding to promote a range of capacity building activities including training, professional development, and technology enhancements.

**Idea 6-B:** Specify authorization amounts for Part A and B of Title VI at a level that reflects the significant underfunding of the program and the need in Indian country for these vital services. Provide a comparable increase in authorization levels in Section 643 for the Part C Caregiver Support Program over the same period.

**Idea 6-C:** Establish a new subsection under Title VI to focus on addressing the transportation needs of Native American elders. This new subsection would include its own authorized funding amounts for a range of mobility services including: transportation planning and coordination efforts; collaboration with other transportation programs focused on the Native American population; mobility management services, efforts to address unmet transportation needs; and to develop new and innovative programs to serve elders' transportation needs in rural and frontier communities

## **7. Promoting Livable Communities for All Ages**

**Overall Idea 7: Broaden, strengthen and support the unique role of AAAs and Title VI aging programs in strategic community planning to promote the ability of older adults to live successfully and independently at home and in the community for as long as possible.**

**Background:** The country is facing the aging of the largest demographic cohort in its history. The aging of the baby boomers over the course of the next three decades will have a direct and dramatic impact on every community in the nation. The rise in the numbers of aging citizens will impact the social, physical and fiscal fabric of our nation's cities and counties; directly and dramatically affecting local aging, health, human services, land use, housing, transportation, public safety, workforce development, economic development, recreation, education/lifelong learning, volunteerism/civic engagement policies and programs.

Despite the impending demographic forecast, few communities have begun to prepare to address the aging of their population. Given their existing mandated role under the OAA to create multi-year plans for the development of comprehensive, community-based services which meet the needs of older adults, AAAs and Title VI programs are in a unique position to expand their support to communities to assess and assist in coordinating with local agencies to address the challenges and opportunities posed by the growing numbers of older adults.

**Idea 7-A:** Establish new provisions with dedicated funding authorizations to support AAAs and Title VI programs to assist county, city, and tribal governments across the nation to proactively prepare for the aging of their communities. The provisions would authorize funding and outline the role and activities to be performed by a full-time planner/community organizer position. This new planner/community organizer would take a leading role in working with other agencies and stakeholder organizations in developing a comprehensive livability plan and implementation strategy factoring the range of community policies, programs, and services.

The authorized funding would be non-formula based, with a minimum level of funding and additional formula-based funding to increase subsidies to more heavily populated service areas and have a 25 percent match requirement. The new provision would include non-formula based funding to State Units on Aging to coordinate state-level planning. The provision would also establish a National Resource Center on Livable Communities for all Ages to provide the necessary guidance, training and technical assistance to AAAs and Title VI programs in their comprehensive planning efforts. Efforts funded under the provision would be evaluated after two years before the next reauthorization.

## **8. Make the Connection Between Affordable Housing & Services**

***Overall Idea 8: Expand the Aging Network's role in access to housing that meets the needs of older adults and the coordination of long-term services and supports in housing, in order to maximize older adults' quality of life and to promote livable communities for all ages.***

***Background:*** There is a need for increased attention and resources for connecting low-income individuals in subsidized housing facilities with needed supportive services that will allow them to more effectively age in place.

***Idea 8-A:*** Add a new subsection under Title III aimed at connecting supportive services with congregate housing settings, including federally-assisted rental housing and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Rental Housing. This new subsection would include its own authorized funding amounts for a range of services, including all service categories currently outlined under Title III B and planned for under the Section 305 and 306 planning provisions of the OAA. The new subsection would include provisions focusing on how the programs would coordinate with other Title III programs; interact with HUD Section 202 housing service coordinators; grant allocation; technical assistance; quality assurance; and oversight. In addition, the subsection would also include language encouraging grantees to coordinate with broader initiatives such as the HHS Money Follows the Person Demonstration and the Partnership for Sustainable Communities through HUD, DOT and EPA.

## **9. Title V and Older Workers**

***Overall Idea 9: Improve the Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program while enhancing coordination with the Workforce Investment Act system, which is also up for reauthorization.***

***Background:*** Currently, there are two federally supported programs that provide assistance to older workers. The Senior Community Service Employment Program under Title V of the OAA provides low-income job seekers age 55 and older with job training and paid temporary work assignments with non-profit organizations, as well as placement assistance with local employers. This program is invaluable to low-income older adults who want or need to enter or return to the workforce. It also helps prevent the isolation of older adults by allowing them to engage in their communities through community service assignments. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) contains provisions to assist in older worker job retraining and placement, but in recent years most of the focus for WIA programs has been on finding employment for younger workers. There are a number of provisions both in the OAA and the WIA that encourage coordination between the two systems, however, these provisions unfortunately do not go far enough to spur the necessary linkages and collaboration between the two programs.

***Idea 9-A:*** Expand the Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program to include a greater number of older workers in need of assistance and training who are interested in working for community service organizations. Increase the income eligibility guidelines for the program from 125 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) up to 175 percent of FPL. This change will increase the ability of local Title V programs in serving older workers in search of employment who are not adequately served by the broader WIA one-stop system. Additionally, consider providing an exemption from these guidelines for higher income older workers, up to 200 percent of FPL, who have been out of work for a consistent period of time during the previous several months and have not been able to gain employment. These changes in eligibility guidelines would be accompanied by a new source of resources through the WIA system to serve the broader population of older workers (see Idea 9-D).

***Idea 9-B:*** Raise the current cap on participation of an average of 27 months in the aggregate to at least 36 months. This change will allow greater time for older workers to gain necessary training and skills from community service positions that will provide them with the experience needed for unsubsidized employment in the future.

**Idea 9-C:** Currently, grantees under Title V are required to consult with AAAs in the areas where they will be conducting a project and are required to submit to the state agency and AAAs, in the planning and service area, a description of the project for review and comment in order to ensure coordination with other aging programs under the OAA. However, this provision has not spurred enough collaboration between local Title V projects and AAAs to ensure effective coordination. Therefore, we propose that Title V projects be required to enter into memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with their local AAAs (if the project is not administered by the AAAs), outlining the steps the agencies will take to effectively coordinate their programs, similar to provisions under Section 511 requiring coordination with the WIA system.

**Idea 9-D:** Consider new provisions to both the OAA and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to build on current provisions that require Title V projects to be required partners in local WIA one-stop delivery systems and that require them to be signatories of MOUs outlined in the Section 121 of the WIA. Add provisions to each authorizing bill requiring that state agencies and AAAs have regular representatives on both state and local WIA boards. In addition, include a requirement that the WIA one-stop centers set-aside a portion of their authorized funding under Title I for serving older workers. This change would reinstate a set-aside provision under the Job Training Partnership Act that was dropped from the WIA, which has led to a decline in the number of older workers being served through WIA. This percentage of authorized WIA funding would be used to serve older individuals referred from the local WIA one-stop systems to Title V projects. This increased collaboration and pooling of resources would allow local Title V projects to better serve the growing number of older workers in need of assistance being referred to them from their WIA system partners.

## **10. Emergency Preparedness**

**Overall Idea 10: To ensure that older adults' needs are addressed in federal, state and local emergency preparedness efforts.**

**Background:** There are specific steps that can be taken at the federal level that would help to promote coordination between agencies and allow them to better serve the needs of older adults during disasters. The demographic shift resulting from the aging of the baby boomers reinforces the need for communities of all sizes to begin to address a range of emergency preparedness issues that will have a direct impact on the aging population.

**Idea 10-A:** Promote federal, state, and local information sharing by establishing a consistent policy to ensure that FEMA registration information for the age 60 and older population is shared with state agencies and AAAs in federally declared disaster areas.

In addition, federal grant funding should be established through AoA to support community-level work by AAAs to implement emergency preparedness registry systems for older adults and special needs populations that utilize geographic mapping technology.

**Idea 10-B:** Reinforce existing federal policy to formalize coordination plans. Build on the emergency preparedness provisions added to the Older Americans Act in 2006 by requiring that FEMA and local emergency preparedness agencies formalize coordination plans with the Aging Network, and specifically state agencies and AAAs. In addition, direct AoA and the Department of Homeland Security to establish an interagency program that would facilitate cross-agency training opportunities and provide on-the-ground orientation to both networks on how they can more effectively work together and better utilize each others resources during disaster planning, response and recovery efforts.

**Idea 10-C:** Fulfill the promise of the OAA emergency planning provisions by authorizing dedicated funding to AAAs to support the critical endeavors described under Section 306(a)(17). Reassess the OAA disaster assistance program under Section 310 and consider changes that will allow AoA to provide more substantive and timely aid to the Aging Network in times of disaster. As an example, raise the cap on the amount of total payments during any fiscal year to states, AAAs, and tribal organizations to provide supportive services during disasters, which is currently based on a percentage of total Title IV appropriations.

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