



UTAH BROADBAND CENTER CONNECTING UTAH

UTAH COMMISSION ON AGING DIGITAL ACCESS PLAN





Note: *This document is intended to serve as an organizational tool that supports each community/organization in capturing notes and developing its Digital Access Plan. Each community/organization should review the Utah Digital Access Planning Guidebook and reference it while drafting its plan.*





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Utah Commission on Aging (UCOA) sponsors and manages UtahAging.org as Utah's official statewide virtual resource center for older adults. UCOA convenes expert stakeholders to share resources and best practices from our community service providers, public policy makers, educators, and researchers, to help Utahns navigate the opportunities and challenges of the aging experience. UCOA contracted with Utah State University in 2021 to survey technology usage among older adults. The findings indicated a high level of technology engagement with at least one device and limited by factors including affordable access, reliable connectivity, device availability, and usage literacy and safety. UCOA's plan improves digital equity among older adults includes by expanding and promoting the digital one-stop shop for all public resources relevant to older adults, provides a trusted and vetted listing of local resources in aging for professionals and the public, manages a statewide custom public events calendar for evidence based programming, and hosts a trained volunteer network of digital navigators to provide technical and critical content mentoring to assure resources are accessed and all Utahns are empowered to make informed choices.

VISION	Older adults in Utah access and understand trusted information, resources, and services through affordable and usable technology.
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KEY BARRIERS	Access	Limited Resources	Software Tools
	Device affordability and technical literacy.	Program costs to manage a well-trained digital navigation team and increase virtual assets.	License cost for specific software solutions to drive program management.

COVERED POPULATIONS	Older adults 50+ of all capacities including rural, less mobile, low income.
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GOALS

Establish a well-trained and managed volunteer team of digital navigators, specialized mentors on older adult issues.

KEY STRATEGIES

Continue to build on existing virtual resource center at UtahAging.org

Implement unique and specialized call center and volunteer management software solution.

Recruit and train digital navigator specialist volunteers to triage and mentor on essential literacy topics.



1 COMMUNITY OR ORGANIZATION PROFILE

1.1 GENERAL COMMUNITY OR ORGANIZATION PROFILE

The Utah Commission on Aging is a Governor-appointed Commission established by statute to prepare Utahns, businesses, and policy makers to address the changing demographics of our population and the impact of a growing older adult segment. The Commission was established in 2005 and has been renewed through 2027. There are twenty-four core statutory members representing diverse stakeholder groups and more than 200 community partner individuals and organizations that engage in educational and collaborative efforts in Utah. The statutory requirements, meeting archives, and current roster of contributors can be found here: <https://ucoa.utah.edu/ucoa/index.php>.

Annual reports are filed with the legislature and executive branch and in 2023, a comprehensive multi-sector strategic plan on aging will be delivered to the legislature and executive branch.

1.2 COVERED POPULATION PROFILE

The Utah Commission on Aging (UCOA) covers the spectrum of aging throughout adulthood with a specific lens on older adults throughout the state. The statutory stakeholders represent finance, health, housing, transportation, elder law, ethnic groups, business, and general public, service organizations, municipal and county leaders, etc. UCOA is charged with coordinating the collaborate efforts on outreach, services, research, academic endeavors, professional development, and policy input efficiently and effectively. Collectively, the aggregate impact is to benefit and inform all Utahns wherever they live and whatever their health or financial circumstance.



2 DIGITAL ACCESS VISION AND GOAL(S)

2.1 VISION

Utah's virtual community has no rural, suburban, or urban boundary designation. As broadband infrastructure continues to roll out, digital access to resources can be a lifeline. Technology needs to be accessible, affordable, and safe to use. Technology is a leveraging equalizer as resources of human and financial capital will always be limited. It provides an opportunity for greater scale and impact in the delivery of vital information and resources.

2.2 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

UCOA launched and expanded the state's unique virtual resource center, UtahAging.org in the shadow of COVID-19. The pandemic rattled the aging network and provided the imperative that would forge a strong and on-going collaboration to bring awareness and connectivity of resources for older adults through technology. This experience created a paradigm shift in the way we communicate and share resources. The UtahAging.org collaborative will continue to grow and provide vital impact with the following goals:

1. To develop, maintain, and promote the virtual resource center, UtahAging.org.
2. To launch the toll-free resource call center utilizing a piloted software and management system to assist Utahns in triaging their needs and providing mentoring, resource referral, and navigation assistance on the depth of older adult issues beyond any current service offerings.
3. To staff the call center with volunteer management, training, and support to recruit volunteer specialists that will assist in navigating the virtual resource center, refer to agencies as appropriate. Volunteers may be experienced adults combined with college students from social work, nursing, pre-med, accounting, law, etc.
4. To provide mentoring expertise to improve literacy on:
 - a. Digital access
 - b. Safe device usage
 - c. Health
 - d. Financial
 - e. Legal
 - f. Other



Current State of Digital Access

2.3 DIGITAL INCLUSION ASSETS

2.3.1 Affordable High-Speed Internet Assets

Existing high-speed internet assets include all the programs and activities that relate to affordable internet access Utah Commission on Aging currently performs or has performed in the past.

Program Name	Description
UtahAging.org	Utah’s unique virtual resource center that is free for all Utahns, focuses on older adult issues, and provides unconflicted information that helps older adults navigate the opportunities and challenges of the aging experience.
Partnering Organizations and/or Programs Many contributors to the content across the spectrum of Commission partner, statutory members, community contributors, etc.	
Covered Population(s) Served	Available to all Utahns, all populations. Some translation services are available.

2.3.2 Useful Device Assets

Existing useful device assets include all the programs and activities that relate to providing access to useful devices that UCOA currently performs or has performed in the past.

Program Name	Description
Device acquisition referral service as available.	Provide training on devices and can help source organizations that provide device acquisition assistance. UCOA does not provide devices.
Partnering Organizations and/or Programs Generally, Area Agencies on Aging through short term grants.	
Covered Population(s) Served	Populations by financial eligibility.



2.3.3 Skill-Building Tool Assets

Existing skill-building tool assets include all the programs and activities that relate to providing digital skills, training and tools that UCOA currently performs or has performed in the past.

Program Name	Description
Digital Navigator Specialist Program	Piloted a volunteer management system that schedules, tracks, reports engagements. Utilized college students in the trial for call center and scheduling software. Future plans, if funded, would cover program software and recruitment, training of specialists to mentor on technology and other essential literacy categories, e.g., health, finance, legal, reassurance calls, etc.
Partnering Organizations and/or Programs	
Full commission partnership network; academic institutions as recruiting base for volunteer specialists.	
Covered Population(s) Served	Would be available to all Utahns and their care partners.

2.4 EXISTING DIGITAL ACCESS PLANS

UCOA has only piloted its educational mentoring program and intends to take it to full scale.

2.5 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2.5.1 Digital Equity Barriers (Covered Populations)

Covered Population	Barrier(s)
All older adults in Utah	Affordable and reliable access to service, current devices, and ability to use safely.
Assessment Data	Need(s)
Survey tells us high percentage of users where access is affordable, need for better devices, and training to use for services and safety	Affordable pricing and devices. Trusted mentoring.



2.5.2 Digital Equity Barriers (General Population)

The barriers to the general population are the same as the UCOA's covered population as described herein. Reliable, affordable, accessible services, affordable and current devices. UCOA role is designed to help in the training and use of devices and to help mentor through technological access to services and information to empower Utahns.

Gaps and barriers to be addressed by UCOA are related to multicultural practices and customs engaging technology and accessing services. The ability to provide information with reliable translation in several languages including ASL, and adaptive devices to assist with other limitations such as loss or severe impairment of eyesight.



3 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

3.1 PLANNED ACTIVITIES

UCOA will recruit a volunteer coordinator, recruit, and train volunteers for the call center and topics of essential mentoring expertise.

UCOA will activate its tested call center and volunteer management system.

3.2 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

UCOA has created a workplan to build out the digital navigator program.

3.2.1 Stakeholder Engagement Process

UCOA has been developing this idea since the onset of the pandemic and piloted all phases. Lack of funding has limited implementation. Stakeholders from the existing UCOA network have been shaping this effort during the past several months.

3.2.2 Program Evaluation and Assessment

The UCOA program software tracks all engagements, hours of service, outcomes, monitoring of calls and referrals, and data analysis. Systems are in place or will be in place for measuring meaningful outcomes consistent with the program goals and master plan on aging expectations.

3.3 TIMELINE

UCOA is ready to launch all phases of the program upon available funding. The volunteer and call center infrastructure are in place and has been tested – requires funding to support the software license and program costs. The position requirements and operations plan are still being refined for the trainer/recruiter and the curriculum for the training would be developed within the first quarter of available funding.

3.4 ESTIMATED IMPLEMENTATION COST

The UCOA digital navigator mentoring/call center/volunteer management tracking program estimated costs on an annual basis would be about \$350,000 used as follows:

1. Call center, volunteer and event management software licenses = \$250,000
2. Program trainer, coordinator, scheduler = \$50,000
3. Promotion and outreach = \$50,000



3.5 ALIGNMENT

UCOA is preparing a comprehensive strategic multi-sector plan for aging in Utah. The plan will be built around these core issues aggregated as determined through multiple work group session with multiple stakeholders:

- Social Isolation
- Financial Security
- Health, Wellness, Nutrition
- Caregiving and Care Coordination
- Advance Care Planning

In addition, universal themes that will be interwoven through the priority topics:

- Ageism
- Age-Friendly Communities
- Digital Equity, Technology, and Innovation

Technology is a fundamental piece of service and resource delivery to our citizens at any stage of life, and increasingly vital to our older adults.

3.6 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND OTHER SUPPORT REQUIRED

UCOA has already imbedded in its core group of partner experts from topical fields and service delivery, technology partners (UETN), data specialists (Gardner Institute), and a programming partner (Mon Ami) that has created an innovative event, volunteer, resource referral, case management system, and call center software programming.



4 PLANNING PROCESS REPORT

The planning team took several steps to determine the current state of digital access in Utah through the lens of the Utah Commission on Aging. The planning team included all the key statutory stakeholders.

4.1 COLLABORATION AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The activities performed include private conversation, UCOA leadership planning sessions, contractor sessions and conference presentations over the past two years, and a full workshop exercise with commission partners as part of the state plan project, and a portal on the website for stakeholder and public review and feedback.

4.2 COORDINATION AND ALIGNMENT WITH INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING EFFORTS

Infrastructure is the arena of our broadband coalition partners; UCOA seeks to ensure that those systems are utilized through training, mentoring, education, etc.

4.3 COORDINATION AND ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER DIGITAL INCLUSION EFFORTS

UCOA is an active part of the Utah Broadband Advisory Council, collaborates with many partners including area agencies on aging, healthcare industry, academic institutions, policy makers, citizen volunteers, etc. UCOA is committed to partner wherever it makes sense to bring about optimal access and usage to all Utahns.

4.4 RESEARCH AND DATA FINDINGS

UCOA submitted the results of its Technology Usage by Older Adults from June 2021 to the group.



Appendix A: Not applicable