



WHO Global Network  
for Age-friendly Cities  
and Communities



International  
Federation on  
Ageing



# Age-Friendly Environments ECHO Program (AFE ECHO): Second English Edition

*An initiative under the WHO Age-friendly Environments Mentoring Programme (MENTOR-AFE)*

Program Curriculum

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## Context

As a response to global population ageing and rapid urbanisation, city and community leaders around the world are acting to create age-friendly environments that foster the full participation of older people in community life while at the same time promoting healthy and active ageing.

The WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC) was established in 2010 to connect cities, communities and organizations worldwide with the common vision of making their community a great place to grow older in. The mission of the [Network](#) is to stimulate and enable cities and communities around the world to become increasingly age-friendly. The Network seeks to do this by:

- Inspiring change by showing what can be done and how it can be done;
- Connecting cities and communities worldwide to facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge and experience; and
- Supporting cities and communities to find appropriate innovative and evidence-based solutions.

Through the Network's on-line platform "[Age-friendly World](#)", members access tools and resources that can guide and support their age-friendly work and exchange and learn from each other. Network members are also supported by 18 Affiliates that play an essential role in promoting the creation of age-friendly environments and facilitating information exchange and learning between communities.

Over 1,530 cities and communities in 51 countries representing over 300 million people are members of the Network. The cities and communities are diverse in terms of their size, capacity, and stage of implementing the age-friendly model – some are in preparatory stages while others have mature programs.

A survey of community leaders in 2018 identified challenges faced in developing age-friendly programs such as implementing a baseline assessment, building community engagement, developing action plans, and monitoring and evaluation.

### MENTOR-AFE

Given the extensive experience of Network Affiliates and members, there is an opportunity for more experienced leaders to mentor those that are new to this work. Recognizing the invaluable benefits that Mentorship programmes provide, the World Health Organization set up, with support from International Federation on Ageing, the Age-friendly Environments Mentoring Programme (MENTOR-AFE) to help develop and strengthen skills and competencies of individuals through one-to-one mentor-mentee relationships. The programme generated a high number of requests which could not be fully met through the mentor -mentee programme. To respond to the demand, WHO and IFA developed another initiative under this programme: *Age-Friendly Environments (AFE) ECHO* - a multi-session learning cycle, developed and guided by the needs of mentee applicants and aligned to approaches and guidance from WHO on Age-friendly cities and communities.

# Introducing the Age-Friendly Environments ECHO Mentorship

## Program

The AFE ECHO aims to help build the competences to lead, influence, and implement the development of age-friendly environments. AFE ECHO, leveraging the ECHO Model established at the University of New Mexico, creates a forum where participants learn from one another by refining and testing knowledge through local experiences.

AFE ECHO uses a multi-session learning cycle, developed and guided by the needs identified by community members themselves and aligned to approaches and guidance from WHO on Age-friendly environments with a focus on 4 key areas;

1. Engage and Understand,
2. Plan Strategically,
3. Act and Implement, and
4. Monitor and Evaluate Progress.

A safe environment that shares knowledge and contributes to an online learning community involving guided practice, peer learning, and collaborative problem-solving embodies and is fundamental to the model.

## Anatomy of the AFE ECHO

Drawing on a proven standard format and process for learning and building knowledge during each AFE ECHO session a didactic from a subject matter expert sets the specific context which is followed by a learner presenting a case to the other experts and learners for discussion and recommendations. Participants learn from one another, as knowledge is tested and refined through a local lens.

This continuous loop of learning, mentoring and peer support is what makes AFE ECHO unique, with a long-lasting impact far beyond that of a webinar or an e-learning course.

## The ECHO Model

The ECHO Model™ has been leveraged across many fields including education and social justice. There are more than 860 ECHO networks in 44 countries that have trained more than 148,000 learners from 30,000 organizations,

Project ECHO is a hub-and-spoke model which connects organizations (the “spokes”) with a group of experts (the “hub”). Each learning session involves a didactic component, or lecture, from subject matter experts followed by case presentations from learners to facilitate practice, mastering complexity and sharing best practices.

1	<b><i>Lecture from subject matter expert</i></b>
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	Respected experts on the WHO Age-friendly cities and communities' approach will open each ECHO session with a 15min lecture that forms the basis on which to build knowledge and understanding on the specific topic.
2	<b>Case-presentation from learner</b> There will be one 5 minute case presentation per session delivered by a learner (e.g city leader), which connects the session topic to practical challenges.
3	<b>Clarifying questions</b> All participants are invited to ask questions of the learner about the particular case to clarify details and provide recommendations.
4	<b>Discussion and case recommendations</b> Participants as a collective discuss key lessons and make recommendations on how to proceed or overcome challenges in the context of case and more broadly like-situation in age-friendly environments.
5	<b>Summary of session learnings, discussion and recommendations</b>
6	<b>Post-session sharing of knowledge assets</b> Knowledge assets developed include summary of recommendations, key learnings and relevant resources.

#### First Edition of the AFE ECHO

In the first edition of the AFE ECHO the WHO and IFA were thrilled to welcome 340 registrants from over 55 countries across all WHO regions. The AFE-ECHO program built upon and responded to the needs expressed during the recruitment stage of the abovementioned Mentor AFE program. As such the inclusion criteria for the Hub Team closely mirrored and further built upon the criteria identified for original Mentor AFE applicants including:

- At least five years of, or other significant experience and expertise in relevant age-friendly related activities and skills
- Training and/or experience in capacity building or adult education such as mentoring
- An understanding of the qualities of a good mentor.

Additionally, and reflective of the highly specialized nature of ECHO Hub Teams and the need to maximize skills and impacts across a diverse array of learners, members of the Hub Team were also recruited based upon their:

- Knowledge and use of WHO Frameworks and guidance as it relates to the development of age-friendly environments
- Involvement in informing and contributing towards the development of key guidance for age-friendly environments
- Experience in leading and developing national age-friendly networks
- Experience and expertise across all staged of the age-friendly journey
- Commitment to and active engagement across the entire AFE ECHO education cycle

Hub Members were a valuable source of knowledge which supported learners in reflecting on their own practices. Based on learner feedback in a requested additional informal session at the end of the

inaugural AFE ECHO program it was understood that case studies strengthened learnings. Learner feedback has been incorporated into the second edition of the AFE ECHO program.

### Second Edition of the AFE ECHO

Recognizing that there are nuances between the needs of WHO regions, the AFE ECHO Hub Team has designed the second edition to address developing and implementing age-friendly programming in low- and middle-income countries. This edition of the program will target emerging age-friendly leaders who hold positions in cities and communities around the world that can influence policies, programmes and services relevant to older persons across a range of sectors including: transport, housing, social protection and insurance, urban development, information and communication, education and labour, health, and long-term care.

### The Age-Friendly Environments ECHO Participants

	<b>The Hub</b>	<b>The Spokes (learners)</b>	<b>Session facilitator</b>
<b>Who?</b>	Experts / thought leaders on the development and implementation of age-friendly environments	Individuals from cities and communities looking to become more age-friendly	International Federation on Ageing (IFA) representative
<b>Roles and Responsibilities</b>	Subject matter experts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise on session topics and case presentations</li> <li>• Present a lecture on the session topic</li> <li>• Provide recommendations related to the case presentation</li> </ul>	<b>If invited to present a case presentation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete case presentation template prior to the session</li> <li>• Attend session, share case and questions with peers and experts</li> </ul> <b>If not presenting a case:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend session</li> <li>• Offer comments and questions</li> </ul>	Session facilitator: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate the session</li> <li>• Share and connect resources with learners</li> <li>• Synthesize learnings and key messages</li> </ul>

### Program Logistics

This multi-session learning cycle comprises 5, 1-hour sessions, taking place once bi-weekly over a 3-month period. In accordance with the standards of the ECHO model, participants are expected to attend all sessions, as the experience and knowledge is cumulative.

Using Zoom™ video conferencing participants are welcome from around the world, with this second learning cycle to be held in English with sessions in Eastern Time Zone (EST).

## Program Curriculum

### Overview

Participants have the opportunity to share knowledge and learn from experts and other learners through collaborative problem-solving. Through AFE ECHO there is an opportunity to gain knowledge and skills necessary to advocate and implement the age-friendly model within their own cities and communities.

Upon completion of this learning cycle, participants will have gained knowledge on how to:

- Manage a cycle of continual improvement to develop age-friendly environments
- Conduct a baseline assessment
- Develop an action plan
- Implement and manage an age-friendly project or programme of work
- Conduct monitoring and evaluation

	Session Description
1	<p><b><i>The Age-Friendly Journey: An Introduction</i></b></p> <p>Globally populations are ageing and increasingly in towns and cities rather than rural and remote areas. The experience of older age and the opportunities it affords are strongly influenced by the physical and social environments in which we are born, live, play, work and age. By creating supportive and inclusive places with the right policies and services, communities can create environments that empower older people to be and do what they have reason to value.</p> <p>Key principles for creating age-friendly cities and communities around the world include the participation of older people, equity, intersectoral collaboration, life-course approach and multilevel governance. These will all be explored in the first session.</p> <p><b>Learning objectives:</b></p> <p>Participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve understanding of the importance of age-friendly environments in the context of a life-course approach to healthy ageing and in response to key megatrends – urbanization and demographic change</li><li>• Understand the history and key features of the WHO Age-friendly Communities Framework and programme cycle</li><li>• Understand what an age-friendly community can achieve.</li></ul>
2	<p><b><i>Engage and Understand</i></b></p> <p>The engage and understand phase is critical to the needs and experiences of older people and other communities' members in order to gain political commitment and generate ownership among all stakeholders.</p> <p>Knowing how to start this process, who to engage and what tools are available to support this process notably to do a context analysis and an age-friendly assessment are the subject of this session.</p> <p><b>Learning objectives:</b></p> <p>Participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Describe mechanisms to build a network of stakeholders</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe steps to identify the needs of the older population</li> <li>• Understand steps needed to analyze the challenges and opportunities in a community and define priorities for action</li> <li>• Describe strategies used to influence and inform the political commitment for age-friendly initiatives.</li> <li>• Describe what successful engagement looks like and the anticipated outputs</li> </ul>
3	<p><b><i>Plan Strategically</i></b></p> <p>Developing and implementing a comprehensive age-friendly strategy, that aligns with the needs and assets of older people requires local stakeholders across sectors to agree on a common vision, identify priorities, and develop a plan that leverages the strengths of various stakeholders.</p> <p>How to create a shared vision and develop a strategy and action plan informed by the findings of the context analysis and age-friendly assessment and ongoing deliberations with stakeholders is the focus of this session.</p> <p><b>Learning objectives:</b></p> <p>Participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the purpose, process, and key success factors in delivering an age-friendly strategy and action plan.</li> <li>• Describe the steps needed to develop a comprehensive strategic plan</li> <li>• Understand the importance of defining common objectives, aims, targets and stakeholder responsibilities</li> <li>• Identify strategies for securing support and resources;</li> </ul>
4	<p><b><i>Act and Implement</i></b></p> <p>Taking action is at the heart of efforts to create an age-friendly city or community. After the assessment, consultation, and strategic planning stages, concrete actions need to be taken.</p> <p>There are a large number of actions that can be taken to impact the lives of older people. Considering scientific evidence on effectiveness, estimates of costs of investment, stakeholders' experiences of implementing similar interventions, outcomes and impact can inform the action plan. Action planning and coordinating different stakeholders, while keeping older people meaningfully engaged in the process, are all key to bringing about transformative change are the focus of this session.</p> <p><b>Learning objectives:</b></p> <p>Participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the importance of consulting on the action plan and involving older people at all stages</li> <li>• Describe the process for designing a successful action plan</li> <li>• Understand the steps needed to implement an action plan; and scale up successful action</li> <li>• Understand the importance of learning from successful action in local, national and international networks</li> </ul>
5	<p><b><i>Monitor and Evaluate Progress</i></b></p>



	<p>The success and sustainability of an age-friendly action plan is measured by its ability to show achievements but also to evolve in response to local changes in context and needs. This depends on robust monitoring and evaluation.</p> <p>Understanding whether a community has become more age-friendly (outcome and impact assessment) and how a community has become more age-friendly (process evaluation) can demonstrate the benefits of the actions but also help to sustain political commitment and ensure future funding for age-friendly initiatives.</p> <p><b>Learning objectives:</b></p> <p>Participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the steps needed to monitor processes continually</li> <li>• Understand the principles needed to undertake both outcome and impact evaluations</li> <li>• Describe strategies for sustaining and improving action informed by evidence</li> </ul>
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## Conclusion

The AFE ECHO is a ground-breaking initiative designed to help increase competencies to lead, influence and implement the development of age-friendly environments.

Through this initiative a collaborative and safe space is created for peers to learn from one another and subject matter experts. Participating in this program is opportunity to be part of a growing network of individuals and organizations that are all working to develop and implement age-friendly environments around the world. The AFE ECHO aims to build and grow a community of age-friendly champions and world of healthy older people whose environments allow them to do what they have reason to value.