

CONTINUING TO SERVE SENIORS DURING THE PANDEMIC COMMUNITY CONVERSATION AND SURVEY 2021

Report to the Community Executive Summary

In November 2021, **Healthy Aging Alberta** hosted a community conversation and survey to connect with the Community-Based Seniors Serving (CBSS) sector to discuss **ongoing concerns** and **innovative practices** that have emerged during the pandemic.

To capture the current sentiment of service providers, participants were asked to describe their experience in supporting seniors during this time.

Top responses revealed that this work has been **complex** and **challenging**.

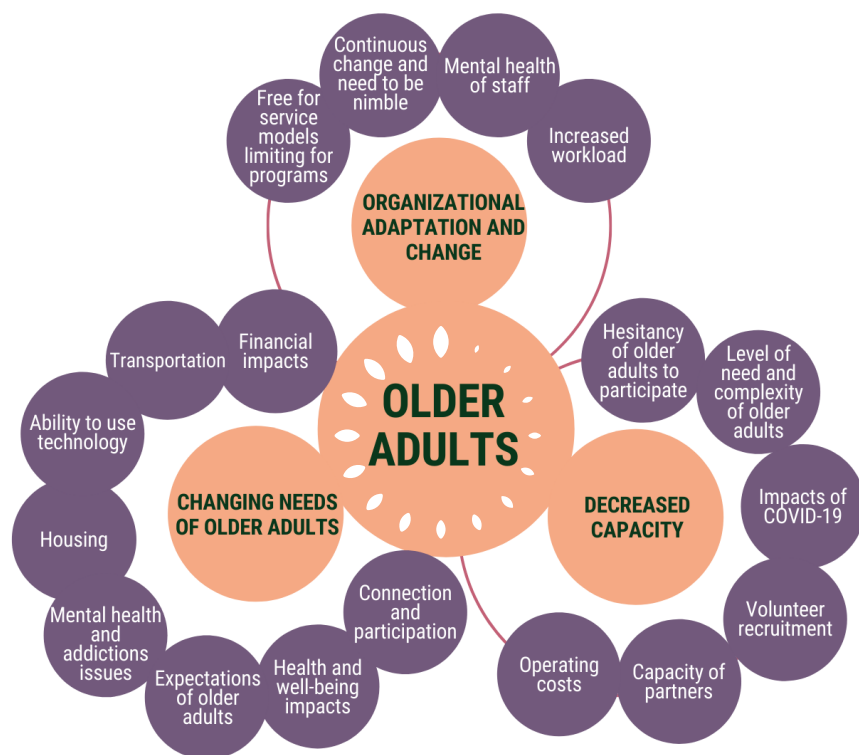
What does complexity mean when it comes to working with older adults?

The pandemic has increased the complexity of serving older adults, **layering in multiple challenges** to providing ongoing services and programs.



Following presentations from sector experts on **pandemic trends** and **organizational outlooks**, participants answered these questions:

1. *Have you been experiencing or do you expect to experience organizational capacity issues?*
2. *How has the prolonged pandemic been affecting the older adults you serve?*
3. *What solutions/adaptations have you made to respond to needs of older adults and the capacity challenges you are experiencing during the pandemic?*



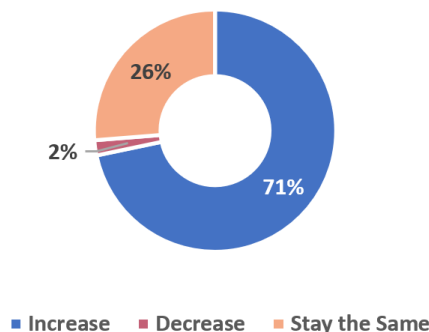
Through the conversation and survey results, **Healthy Aging Alberta** gleaned what issues the CBSS sector has been facing and how organizations have adapted their services.

Read on to discover what CBSS organizations shared.



HAVE YOU BEEN EXPERIENCING OR DO YOU EXPECT TO EXPERIENCE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY ISSUES?

Anticipated Demand for programming and services



Organizational capacity has been **stretched** and **challenged** with many changes.

We will continue to offer the same scope of services, but we will have **fewer outreach staff** as of January 2022. There will be delays and triaging for access to services.

Survey results show **significant anticipated demand** alongside a **decreased ability** to provide programming and services for older adults throughout the senior serving sector.

What Has Increased

- Service demand
- Client needs
- Staff trauma
- Inflation and procurement costs

What Has Decreased

- Available services
- Programming range
- Volunteer service and recruitment
- Staff morale and retention
- Government funding

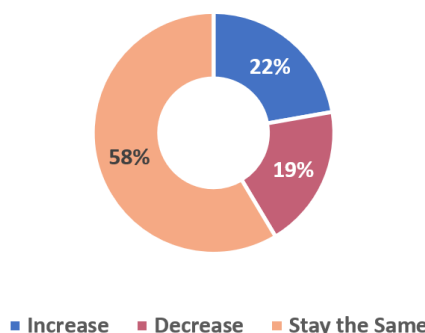
What Has Moved Backwards

- Partner capacity
- Client participation
- Mental health disconnect
- Risk-taking due to uncertainty

What Has Moved Forward

- Assistance from 211/811
- New service delivery models
- Prioritized programming
- Client support and outreach

Anticipated Capacity in programming and services



The loss of earned revenue, lack of casino funds, [and] decreased government subsidies could **break our organization** before we have the chance to recover.

HOW HAS THE PROLONGED PANDEMIC BEEN AFFECTING THE OLDER ADULTS YOU SERVE?

Organizations identified that the older adults they served primarily faced an issue in **ten** areas.

ISSUES affecting older adults

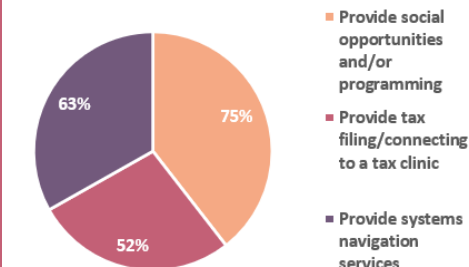
- Complexities of Aging
- Health and Well Being
- Mental Health
- Addictions
- Connection and Participation
- Service Navigation
- Housing
- Transportation
- Finances
- Technology

Among these issues, needs have been **amplified** and **further exacerbated** by the pandemic.

Additionally, the **decline of older adults' physical, mental, and social health** as listed in the first five issues resulted in complications in the next five issues, especially around its **interconnectivity**.

What is an issue is other agencies that have decreased their services... **we rely on other agencies** to provide support services. It is challenging to support seniors when other systems are not operational.

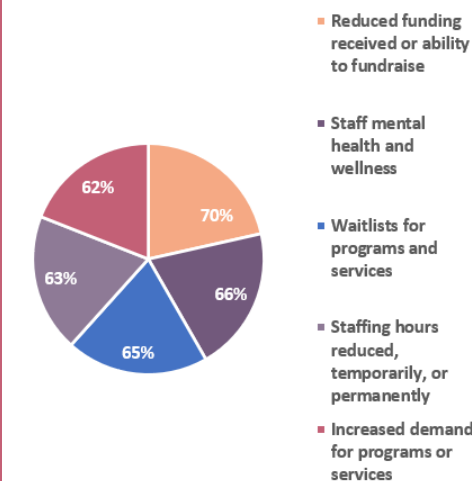
Top 3 Services Offered by CBSS Organizations



The top three services of CBSS organizations all have a **tangible impact** on the issues affecting older adults.

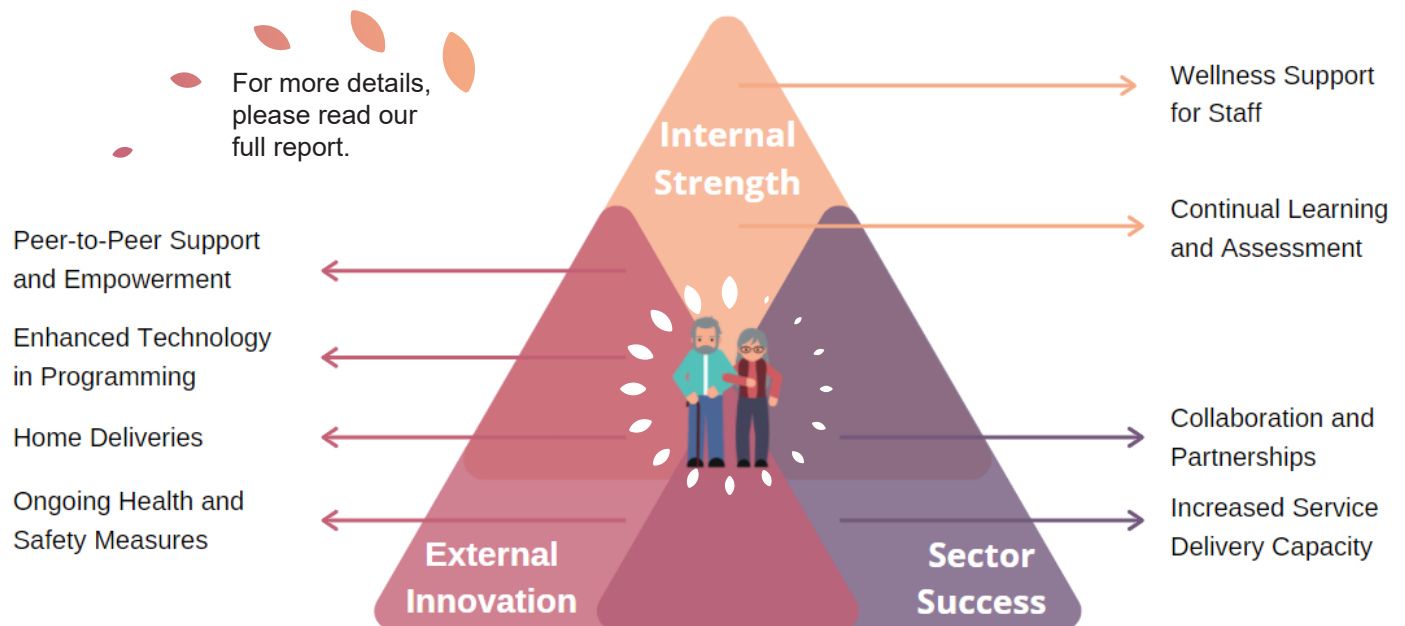
Significant challenges that staff are managing now and into the immediate future include **barriers to reducing these impacts**.

Current or Anticipated Top 5 Challenges for CBSS Organizations



WHAT SOLUTIONS/ADAPTATIONS HAVE YOU MADE TO RESPOND TO NEEDS OF OLDER ADULTS AND THE CAPACITY CHALLENGES YOU ARE EXPERIENCING DURING THE PANDEMIC?

Throughout the pandemic, the CBSS sector has demonstrated **resiliency** and **adaptability** by shifting service delivery and organizational structures to meet the needs of older adults. In asking for examples of both, participants shared what has worked for their organizations.



[Solutions have been] networking and engagement so others know about our programs and can refer.

Our vision is to expand beyond serving one community as many of our members are coming from adjacent communities.

Some community associations offer programs for seniors and others do not.

We aim to create a network of seniors' programs and services.

[We are seeking] funding for Chromebooks or other technology for adults in classes.



May this snapshot *encourage sector workers* and spur organizations toward *ongoing improvement*.
Thank you to the conversation and survey participants!



A network of community allies for older adults.

We are especially grateful to [Alberta Nonprofit Network](#) (ABNN) for their support providing raw data and permission to use survey questions from their pulse surveys as the starting point for the CBSS Sector Service Delivery Capacity Survey.

For the full report and more resources, please visit [CORE Alberta](#) or email healthyaging@calgaryunitedway.org.