

# **Area Agency on Aging of the Panhandle Area Plan**

**FFY 2027 - 2029**

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**As Required by the Older Americans Act, As  
Amended in 2020: Section 306, Area Plans**

**Pending Approval by HHSC  
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A program of the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission  
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## Executive Summary

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) of the Panhandle serves as the regional leader and advocate for older adults and individuals with disabilities across the 26-county Planning and Service Area (PSA) of the Texas Panhandle. Covering approximately 26,000 square miles, the region is largely rural, with Amarillo—located in Potter and Randall counties—serving as the only metropolitan area.

The geographic size and rural nature of the region create unique challenges for service delivery, including transportation barriers, limited healthcare access in some communities, and long distances between population centers. In this environment, the AAA plays a vital role in coordinating resources, supporting community partners, and connecting older adults and caregivers with services that promote independence and quality of life.

Demographic projections indicate that while overall population growth in the Panhandle will remain relatively moderate, the number of residents aged 85 and older is expected to increase significantly over the coming decade. This shift will increase demand for long-term services and supports, caregiver assistance, and programs that support aging in place. In addition, increasing rates of chronic health conditions and cognitive impairment highlight the importance of strengthening regional systems that support healthy aging, dementia care, and caregiver resilience.

Collaboration is essential to addressing the evolving needs of older adults in the Panhandle. The AAA partners with local governments, state agencies, healthcare providers, nonprofit organizations, and community partners to strengthen the region's aging services network and ensure older adults have access to the supports they need.

Recent initiatives demonstrate this collaborative approach in action, expanding service reach and community engagement. These include technology and wellness education through Senior Planet (AARP), dementia caregiver training via AGE-ucate's Dementia Live program, Medicare education through Pharmacy Friends and Destination Medicare, and nutritional research partnerships with the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University.

To meet the diverse needs of older adults, the AAA provides a comprehensive range of core programs, including care coordination, information and assistance, transportation, nutrition services (congregate and home-delivered meals), caregiver support, in-home services, evidence-based programs, health maintenance, long-term care ombudsman services, and residential repair. These programs

demonstrate the AAA's commitment to fostering a connected community that empowers older adults to live independently and thrive.

Together, these initiatives and programs illustrate the AAA's commitment to fostering a supportive, connected community that empower older adults to live independently and thrive.

Like many aging service organizations nationwide, the AAA continues to face challenges related to funding stability, workforce capacity, and increasing service demand. The expiration of pandemic-related relief funding in September 2024 resulted in a budget reduction of approximately 25 percent moving into the FY25 budget cycle. Despite these constraints, the AAA has maintained its core service array and continues to work with the community partners to sustain essential programs and services.

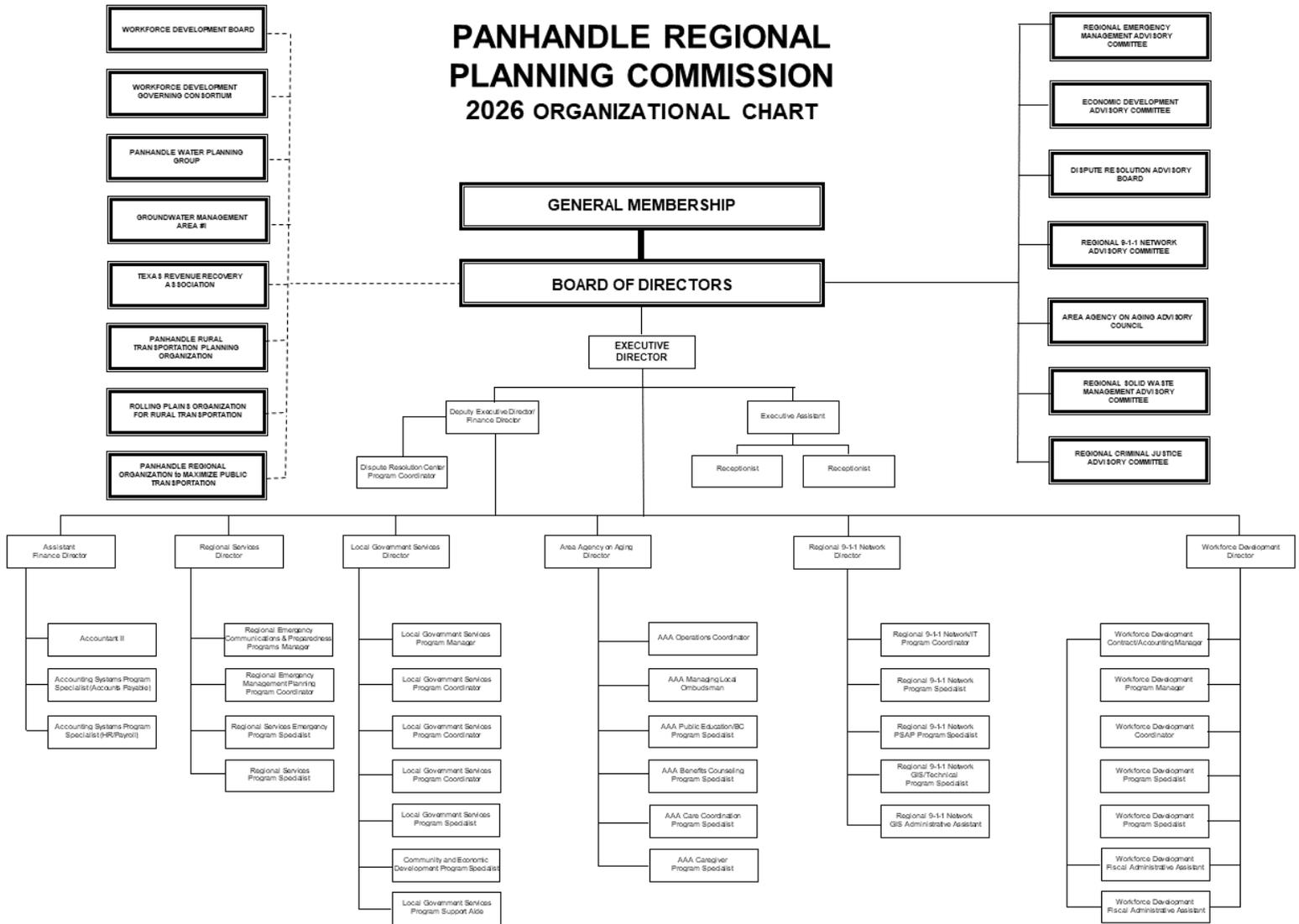
Through these efforts, the Area Agency on Aging of the Panhandle will continue working to enhance the independence, well-being, and quality of life of older adults throughout the Texas Panhandle. During the FY27–29 Area Plan period, the AAA will focus on strengthening regional systems that support older adults and caregivers, with priorities that include expanding outreach to increase awareness of services across rural communities, strengthening coordination between direct and contracted services, leveraging technology and innovative service delivery approaches to broaden program reach, enhancing support systems and education for family caregivers, advancing regional capacity for dementia care, and strengthening partnerships that connect healthcare with long-term services and supports.

## **Organizational Profile**

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) of the Panhandle operates within the administrative structure of the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC), a voluntary association of local governments that provides regional planning, coordination, and technical assistance to communities across the Texas Panhandle. Governance and oversight for agency programs, including those funded through the Older Americans Act, are provided by the PRPC Executive Director and Executive Board.

Within this structure, the AAA staff team administers programs, coordinates care, provides benefits counseling, supports caregivers, manages data, oversees public information, and ensures program compliance. Staff work collaboratively with PRPC administrative departments—including finance, human resources, procurement, and compliance—to maintain effective program management and fiscal accountability, supporting the AAA’s mission to enhance the independence, well-being, and quality of life of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and family caregivers throughout the region.

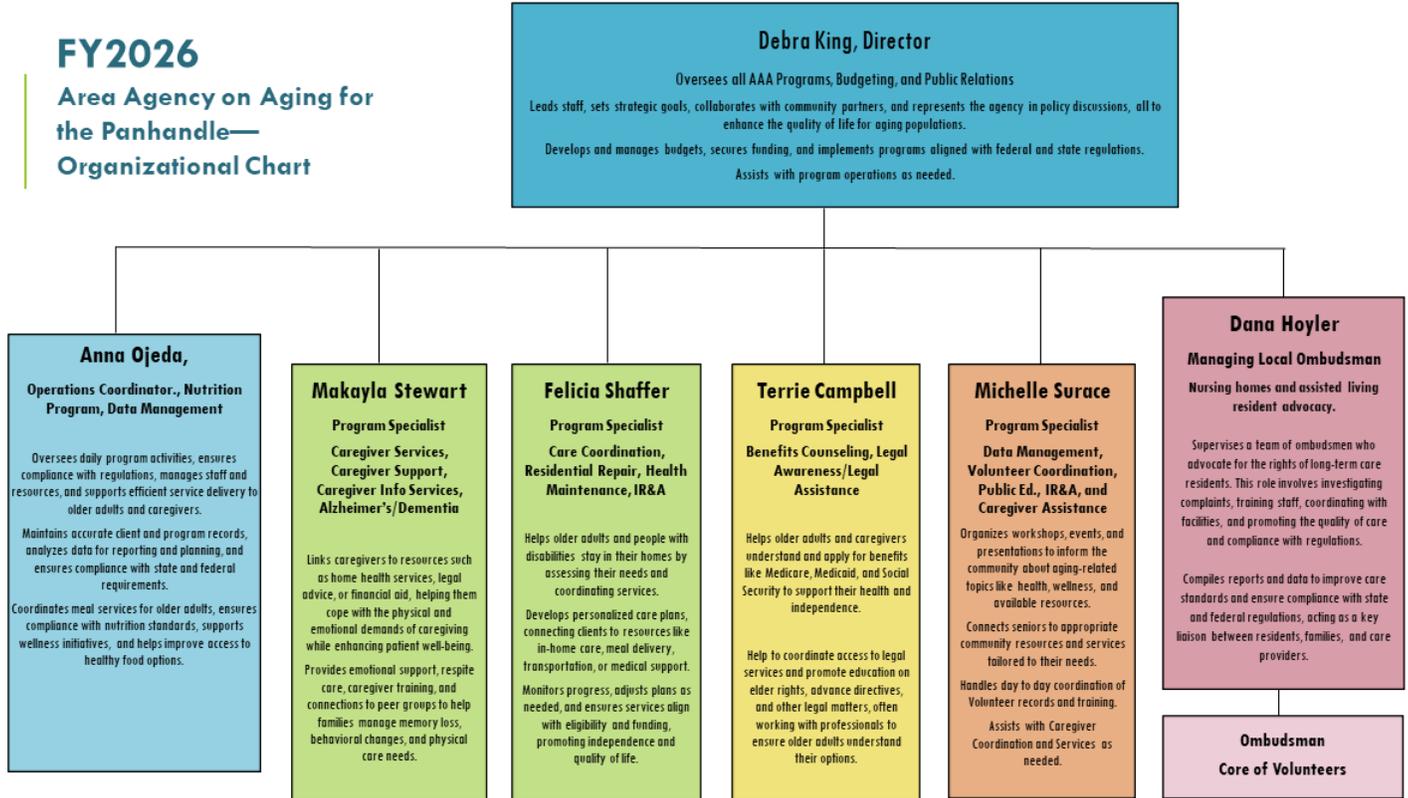
The organizational chart of the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC) is shown below:



The organizational chart of the Area Agency on Aging of the Panhandle (AAP) is shown below:

**FY2026**

**Area Agency on Aging for the Panhandle—  
Organizational Chart**



## High Level Narrative Summary of the Planning and Service Area

As of the most recent population estimates (Vintage 2024), the 26 counties served by the Area Agency on Aging of the Panhandle have a combined population of approximately 438,443 persons. Of this total, 92,529 residents are age 60 or older, representing approximately 21 percent of the region’s population. Older adults are concentrated in the region’s largest population centers, including Potter and Randall counties, while smaller rural counties such as Oldham and Roberts have fewer residents overall but still maintain notable proportions of older adults. Given the largely rural nature of the Texas Panhandle and the significant distances between communities, maintaining accessible services and a strong regional network of supports is essential to helping older adults remain independent in their homes and communities.

DALLAM 917 / 7,298 13%	SHERMAN 1,488 / 6,937 21%	HANSFORD 1,018 / 5,119 20%	OCHILTREE 1,687 / 9,786 17%	LIPSCOMB 719 / 2,918 24%	
HARTLEY 1,143 / 5,215 22%	MOORE 3,340 / 21,373 16%	HUTCHINSON 4,925 / 20,184 24%	ROBERTS 199 / 832 24%	HEMPHILL 932 / 3,234 29%	
OLDHAM 394 / 2,249 16%	POTTER 23,091 / 114,649 20%	CARSON 1,658 / 5,801 29%	GRAY 4,730 / 21,045 22%	WHEELER 1,403 / 4,862 29%	Older Adult Population
DEAF SMITH 3,186 / 18,460 17%	RANDALL 31,964 / 150,547 21%	ARMSTRONG 635 / 1,822 35%	DONLEY 1,077 / 3,257 33%	COLLINGSWORTH 812 / 2,588 31%	Total Population
PARMER 2,230 / 9,731 23%	CASTRO 1,717 / 7,377 23%	SWISHER 1,488 / 6,937 21%	BRISCOE 432 / 1,301 33%	HALL 861 / 2,820 31%	CHILDRESS 1,341 / 6,743 20%

**Source:** Texas Demographic Center, *Vintage 2024 Population Estimates*; U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey 2024 5-Year Estimates, Table S0101 (Age and Sex)*.

## Populations with Greatest Economic and Social Need

Consistent with the priorities outlined in the Older Americans Act, the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) prioritizes services for older individuals with the greatest economic and social need within the Texas Panhandle Planning and Service Area (PSA). For planning purposes, **greatest economic need** refers to need resulting from an income level at or below the federal poverty level or from other financial circumstances that limit an individual's ability to obtain adequate housing, nutrition, healthcare, or other basic necessities. **Greatest social need** refers to need caused by non-economic factors that restrict an individual's ability to perform normal daily activities or threaten the capacity to live independently. These factors may include physical or cognitive disabilities, language barriers, cultural or social isolation, geographic isolation, or limited access to transportation.

Within the Texas Panhandle PSA, rural geography and the distance between communities contribute significantly to social need. Many communities are located in sparsely populated areas where access to healthcare providers, transportation services, and community-based programs may be limited. As a result, older adults in these areas may experience barriers to obtaining necessary services and supports.

Low-income older adults represent another population of significant need within the PSA. Individuals living at or near the federal poverty level may experience challenges related to housing affordability, food security, healthcare access, and the ability to remain safely in their homes. Data from the United States Census Bureau 2019–2023 American Community Survey indicate that approximately 12.8 percent of adults age 60 and over in the Texas Panhandle live below the federal poverty level. County-level variation in poverty rates among older adults within the PSA is illustrated in Figure I.

**Figure I. Poverty Rate Among Adults Age 60 and Over in Texas Panhandle Counties (2019–2023)**

	Population/Percent Population Age 60 and Over for Whom Poverty Income Status Was Determined	
	Below 100% of Poverty	
Texas	629,931	11.6%
Panhandle	11,263	12.8%
Armstrong	41	6.8%
Briscoe	111	25.4%
Carson	124	7.2%
Castro	278	17.1%
Childress	125	10.1%
Collingsworth	59	8.3%
Dallam	33	3.8%
Deaf Smith	496	15.5%
Donley	99	9.3%
Gray	510	11.9%
Hall	75	8.9%
Hansford	55	5.5%
Hartley	41	4.2%
Hemphill	35	4.7%
Hutchinson	712	15.2%
Lipscomb	104	14.4%
Moore	708	21.4%
Ochiltree	206	12.9%
Oldham	61	16.7%
Parmer	171	8.1%
Potter	3,544	16.6%
Randall	3,270	10.6%
Roberts	15	7.6%
Sherman	50	8.5%
Swisher	232	15.2%
Wheeler	108	8.2%

Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey Data - Facilitated by U.S. Administration for Community Living's AGID - Compilation of U.S. Census Bureau and Texas Demographic Center Data Prepared By: Texas Health and Human Services, Office of Data, Analytics and Performance. January 17, 2023.

**Source:** Author’s chart based on data from the United States Census Bureau, 2019–2023 American Community Survey, Table S1701.

Additional populations experiencing increased social need include older adults living

alone, individuals with disabilities or chronic health conditions, minority populations, older adults with limited English proficiency, and individuals affected by Alzheimer’s disease or other forms of dementia, as well as their caregivers. These demographic and economic conditions highlight the importance of prioritizing services that support older adults experiencing economic hardship, social isolation, and barriers to accessing community resources.

## **Economic and Social Resources within the PSA**

The Texas Panhandle benefits from a range of economic and social resources that support residents throughout the region. Regional collaboration among local governments, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, healthcare providers, and private-sector partners helps maintain access to services for older adults and their families across the Texas Panhandle Planning and Service Area (PSA).

Healthcare services are concentrated primarily in Amarillo, which serves as the regional medical hub. Major healthcare systems, specialty providers, and a Veterans Affairs medical facility provide advanced care for residents across the region. Community hospitals and rural health clinics located in several smaller communities provide access to basic healthcare services, although residents in more remote areas may travel significant distances to obtain specialized care.

Educational institutions also contribute to workforce development and regional economic stability. West Texas A&M University in Canyon serves as a regional center for higher education, while community colleges throughout the Panhandle provide workforce training and continuing education programs that support healthcare and service professions.

Transportation infrastructure supports regional connectivity through major highways such as Interstate 40 and Interstate 27, as well as rail service and a regional airport located in Amarillo. However, public transportation options remain limited in many rural communities, which can create challenges for older adults who no longer drive.

Broadband access continues to expand but remains limited in some rural areas, affecting access to telehealth services and online resources. Housing availability also presents challenges in parts of the PSA, as much of the region’s housing stock was constructed decades ago and may require repair or accessibility modifications to support aging in place.

Community organizations, senior centers, and volunteer networks play an important role in supporting older adults by providing opportunities for social

engagement, nutrition services, and access to community-based programs. These organizations work in coordination with the Area Agency on Aging and local service providers to deliver programs such as congregate and home-delivered meals, caregiver support, benefits counseling, and transportation assistance.

Together, this network of community partners and regional resources helps ensure that older adults throughout the Texas Panhandle PSA have access to programs and services that support health, independence, and quality of life.

## Population Trends and Aging Demographics

Population trends across the Texas Panhandle reflect patterns seen in many rural areas of the United States. While Amarillo and several surrounding communities have experienced modest growth, many smaller counties have experienced stable or declining populations over the past decade. Figure II shows the population trends for all 26 Panhandle counties from 2010 to 2022, illustrating which counties have grown and which have declined.

At the same time, the proportion of older adults continues to increase across the PSA. Data from the United States Census Bureau indicate that individuals aged 60 and older represent a growing share of the population. In several rural counties, older adults account for a higher percentage of residents than the statewide average, highlighting the need for services that support an aging population.

This trend is influenced in part by younger residents relocating to metropolitan areas for education and employment opportunities. As a result, many rural communities are experiencing an increasing concentration of older adults who may require expanded access to healthcare, transportation, and community-based services. Workforce shortages in healthcare, direct-care services, and transportation programs further challenge the ability to meet the needs of this growing population.

The large geographic size of the region also complicates service delivery, as many older adults must travel considerable distances to access specialized care or social services. These demographic patterns underscore the importance of targeted planning and resource allocation to support the health, independence, and well-being of older adults throughout the Texas Panhandle.

Figure II. Population Trends in Texas Panhandle Counties (2010-2022)

[INSERT CHART HERE]

**Source:** USAFacts.org, Our Changing Population: County Profiles (Census Bureau PEP data), accessed 2026.

## **Advisory Council Composition**

The Panhandle Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council (PAAAC) was established on October 23, 1974, to advise the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC) on matters related to the needs of older adults and family caregivers within the 26-county Planning and Service Area (PSA). The Council operates under the authority of the Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended, and in accordance with 45 CFR §1321.63(a). It supports the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the Area Plan, ensuring that programs and services remain responsive to the region's aging population.

In alignment with federal requirements, the Advisory Council advises the AAA by assisting in the development and administration of the Area Plan; ensuring the Plan is accessible to older individuals, family caregivers, service providers, and the general public; participating in public hearings and community input opportunities; representing the interests of older adults and caregivers throughout the PSA; and reviewing and commenting on community policies, programs, and actions to promote coordination and responsiveness. Council members also contribute to community outreach and provide feedback regarding emerging needs, service gaps, and opportunities to strengthen the aging services network.

The Council is structured to ensure representation from both rural communities and the more densely populated Amarillo metropolitan area (Potter and Randall counties). Membership consists of 12–20 individuals, ideally 18 when fully appointed, with at least 50 percent being older adults (age 60 or older). Additional membership categories include clients of Title III services, minority older adults, family caregivers, local elected officials, health care and supportive service providers, business and voluntary sector leaders, veterans' health care providers, and members of the general public. Representatives of the Texas Silver-Haired Legislature serve as Ex-Officio members during their elected term(s), with at least one representative regularly participating in Council meetings.

Members are appointed to three-year staggered terms to ensure continuity of leadership and balanced representation. Nominations are solicited through community outreach, recommendations from existing Council members, and referrals from local organizations and leaders. The Director of Aging Programs reviews nominations and submits recommended candidates to the PRPC Executive Board, which approves appointments, officer selections, and fills vacancies as needed. Upon appointment, members are screened for potential conflicts of interest and provided orientation regarding their responsibilities and the mission of the AAA. The Director of Aging Programs serves as staff liaison, coordinating meeting agendas, Council activities, and communication between the Council and the AAA.

The Advisory Council selection process is designed to reflect the geographic, demographic, and service diversity of the Texas Panhandle PSA. While representation from every county may not always be feasible due to the region’s size and rural population distribution, the AAA actively recruits to ensure broad regional participation and to address gaps in county representation. This approach provides a diverse and informed perspective on the needs of older adults and caregivers across the PSA.

**Table 1. Advisory Council Membership by Category**

Table 1. Advisory Council Members by Category as of 3/2026

Any member can represent more than one category.

Category	Number of Members
Older Individuals Residing in Rural Areas	3
Clients of Title III Services	1
Older Individuals	7
Minority Older Individuals who Participate or are Eligible to Participate in OAA Programs	2
Local Elected Officials	1
General Public	4
Veterans’ Health Care Providers, if applicable	1
Service Providers	4
Family Caregivers of Older Individuals who are Minority or who Reside in Rural Areas	2
Business Community Representatives	2
Representatives of Older Individuals	4
Representatives of Health Care Provider Organizations	2
People with Leadership Experience in the Private and Voluntary Sector	2
Representatives of Supportive Services Provider Organizations	4

The Advisory Council meets at least twice per federal fiscal year, with additional meetings scheduled as necessary to address matters related to the Area Plan, program development, and other issues affecting older adults and family caregivers throughout the Planning and Service Area.

## **Stewardship & Oversight**

The Panhandle Area Agency on Aging (PAAA), operating within the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC), maintains a comprehensive system of program management, fiscal oversight, and continuous quality improvement practices designed to ensure responsible stewardship of Older Americans Act (OAA) funds. These practices align with federal requirements outlined in the OAA, implementing regulations under 45 CFR §1321.59, and guidance from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). Through established policies, procedures, and monitoring activities, the PAAA ensures that services funded through the OAA are delivered in compliance with applicable federal and state regulations while meeting the needs of older adults and caregivers across the Planning and Service Area (PSA).

### **Program Management and Administrative Oversight**

The PAAA maintains written policies and procedures guiding program operations, fiscal management, data reporting, training, and service delivery. Policies are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in federal or state guidance, including the Older Americans Act, Texas Administrative Code, and HHSC program requirements. All staff are trained to maintain familiarity with applicable regulations to ensure consistent, standards-compliant service delivery. Program management practices include coordination between program and fiscal staff to align service delivery, reporting, and reimbursement processes with grant requirements and performance expectations.

### **Fiscal Stewardship and Financial Oversight**

Financial oversight is provided through the PRPC Finance Department, which manages budget development, reimbursement requests, financial reporting, and fiscal monitoring of service providers. Key personnel include:

- Trent Taylor, Financial Director – Supervises the finance team, reviews and approves budgets and reimbursement requests, oversees rate-setting for contracted providers, and tests contractor expenses for accuracy
- Cristy Henderson, Assistant Financial Director – Collaborates with the PAAA Director on budget development, reimbursement preparation, and proper allocation of expenditures.

Administrative support from PRPC staff covers accounts payable, human resources, and general administrative functions, funded through direct cost allocation or PRPC's approved indirect cost rate. The PRPC Human Resources Specialist manages recruitment, training, and professional development activities for PAAA staff.

## **Contractor Oversight and Risk Management**

PAAA services are currently delivered through contractors rather than subrecipients. Established policies guide oversight of contractors and potential future subrecipients. Before agreements are executed, the PAAA conducts risk assessments and implements mitigating controls such as technical assistance, monitoring, and training. Ongoing monitoring ensures compliance with programmatic and fiscal requirements. Non-compliance may require corrective action plans or, if unresolved, termination of the contract.

## **Governance and Accountability**

The PAAA operates within the PRPC governance structure, promoting transparency and accountability. The PRPC Executive Board oversees agency operations, including approval of contracts, budgets, and major initiatives. Regular independent financial audits are conducted in accordance with federal and state requirements to verify internal controls, financial management practices, and reporting compliance.

## **Data Integrity and Program Monitoring**

A dedicated database specialist ensures the accuracy and integrity of program data, including:

- Entering client information into statewide systems for providers without direct access
- Conducting case file audits for Care Coordination and Caregiver Support Coordination
- Running reports to identify missing data or eligibility concerns
- Reconciling program data with fiscal reports to ensure consistency between service delivery and expenditures

These activities support regulatory compliance and data accuracy for program evaluation and state reporting.

## **Continuous Quality Improvement**

The PAAA maintains a continuous quality improvement process incorporating client feedback, monitoring, and program evaluation. Consumer satisfaction surveys are conducted for 100% of participants in Care Coordination, Caregiver Support Coordination, Evidence-Based Intervention programs, and Caregiver Information Services. Random sampling is used for other services. Results guide service improvements, address concerns, and provide feedback to contracted providers.

## **Consumer Rights and Protections**

All participants receiving registered services—including Home-Delivered Meals, Congregate Meals, Transportation, Care Coordination, Caregiver Support Coordination, and Legal Assistance—receive written notification of their Participant and Consumer Rights. Clients are informed of complaint procedures, with issues directed to the PAAA Director or designee for investigation and reporting to HHSC when required. Direct service staff receive training on elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and are informed of their responsibilities as mandatory reporters under Texas Human Resources Code §510.46.

Through these programmatic, fiscal, governance, and data integrity practices, the Panhandle Area Agency on Aging ensures responsible stewardship of OAA resources, compliance with federal and state requirements, and effective delivery of services to older adults and caregivers throughout the Texas Panhandle PSA.

## Key Topic Areas

The Panhandle Area Agency on Aging (PAAA) invests Older Americans Act (OAA) and Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) funds in a coordinated system of services intended to help older adults and family caregivers remain independent, safe, and engaged in their homes and communities. Consistent with the Older Americans Act, the PAAA prioritizes services for older adults with the greatest economic need, the greatest social need, and those at risk of institutional placement. Within the Texas Panhandle's large and predominantly rural Planning and Service Area (PSA), these services are delivered through a combination of direct service, contracted providers, community partnerships, and referral coordination.

### **Core Program Area 1: Supportive Services**

Supportive Services, funded primarily through Title III-B of the Older Americans Act, are designed to help older adults maintain independence and avoid unnecessary institutional care. Within the PAAA, this program area includes Information, Referral, and Assistance; Public Information Services; Care Coordination; Transportation; Homemaker Services; Personal Assistance; Health Maintenance; Income Support; and Residential Repair.

All supportive services are administered consistent with Title III-B of the Older Americans Act (45 CFR §1321.65).

The PAAA serves as the focal point for aging services in the Panhandle by identifying regional needs, assessing service gaps, coordinating resources, developing and implementing the Area Plan, and monitoring service quality and provider performance. Through this work, the PAAA supports a responsive network of home and community-based services for older adults and family caregivers across the 26-county PSA.

Information, Referral, and Assistance services help older adults, caregivers, and community members identify available resources and connect with programs that best meet their needs. Public Information Services complements this function by increasing awareness of services through outreach, community events, educational presentations, publications, and media-based communication.

Care Coordination is a person-centered service that helps older adults assess needs, develop service plans, and access short-term supports that stabilize immediate challenges while identifying longer-term resources. Through this process, the PAAA helps older adults navigate complex service systems and connect with supports that promote continued independence. When demand exceeds

available resources, the PAAA applies screening and prioritization practices consistent with agency policy to direct services to those with the most urgent needs.

Additional supportive services strengthen the ability of older adults to remain in the least restrictive setting possible. Homemaker and Personal Assistance services provide in-home support with daily tasks and activities of daily living. Health Maintenance and Income Support services help address health- and safety-related needs and essential basic expenses. Residential Repair services support accessibility and safety improvements within the home. Transportation services provide access to medical care, pharmacies, groceries, and other essential community destinations, particularly for older adults who no longer drive or who face mobility barriers.

## **Core Program Area 2: Nutrition Services**

Nutrition Services, funded through Title III-C, are designed to reduce hunger, food insecurity, malnutrition, and social isolation among older adults. Within the PAAA, this program area includes Congregate Meals, Home-Delivered Meals, and Nutrition Education.

Nutrition Services follow Title III-C requirements (45 CFR §1321.65(b)(2)).

Congregate Meals provide nutritious meals in group settings that also support socialization, volunteerism, and access to community resources. Home-Delivered Meals serve older adults who are homebound or otherwise unable to attend congregate meal sites, helping them maintain nutritional well-being while remaining in their homes. Nutrition Education is incorporated into the nutrition program to promote healthy eating habits, support chronic disease management, and delay the onset of diet-related health conditions.

Together, these services improve nutritional status, promote health and safety, and provide important opportunities for social connection. Within the Panhandle PSA, nutrition services are especially important due to rural access barriers, transportation limitations, and the risk of isolation experienced by many older adults. The PAAA prioritizes nutrition services for older adults with the greatest economic and social need, including low-income older adults, rural residents, minority older adults, and individuals with limited English proficiency.

The PAAA does not currently provide Grab & Go Meals during the FY27–29 planning period. The agency will continue to evaluate the potential role of Grab & Go Meals in enhancing nutrition service delivery, particularly in addressing access barriers, reducing social isolation, and supporting older adults with the greatest economic and social need. Any future implementation will be carefully monitored to ensure it

complements, rather than diminishes, the existing congregate meal program and aligns with community needs.

### **Core Program Area 3: Evidence-Based Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Services**

Evidence-Based Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Services, funded through Title III-D, are intended to help older adults improve health, reduce risk factors, and maintain independence. These services support prevention and self-management efforts related to chronic disease, falls, mobility, nutrition, and other health concerns that commonly affect older adults.

Evidence-Based Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Services follow Title III-D requirements (45 CFR §1321.65(b)(5)).

Programs supported by the PAAA must meet the Administration for Community Living's standards for evidence-based interventions. Current and planned program models include A Matter of Balance and Bingocize, which help older adults build confidence, improve mobility, and reduce fall risk while promoting social engagement and physical activity.

Although direct delivery of evidence-based programs was reduced during recent staffing transitions, the PAAA anticipates re-establishing and expanding this service area during the FY27–29 period through direct programming and contracted partnerships. Outreach will continue to focus on older adults with the greatest economic and social need, particularly those living in rural communities or experiencing barriers related to health, disability, income, or language access.

### **Core Program Area 4: Family Caregiver Support Services**

Family Caregiver Support Services, funded through Title III-E, are designed to assist caregivers in managing the emotional, physical, and practical demands of caregiving. Within the PAAA, this program area includes Caregiver Information Services, Caregiver Support Coordination, Respite Services, and access to supportive services that help stabilize caregiving situations.

Family Caregiver Support Services comply with Title III-E provisions (45 CFR §1321.65(c)).

Caregiver Information Services provide timely and relevant information to family caregivers through outreach, presentations, educational activities, and other public information efforts. Caregiver Support Coordination is a person-centered service that assesses caregiver needs, develops care plans, and arranges short-term supports designed to reduce caregiver burden and help sustain caregiving relationships in the community.

Respite services may be authorized in-home, out-of-home, or overnight, depending on the needs of the caregiver and care recipient. Additional supportive services, including Health Maintenance, Income Support, Residential Repair, and Information, Referral, and Assistance, may also be authorized when appropriate through the caregiver support system.

The PAAA prioritizes Family Caregiver Support Services for caregivers with the greatest need, including those who are the sole source of support, those caring for individuals with significant physical or cognitive impairments, those living with the care recipient, and those experiencing financial hardship or limited support systems. During the FY27–29 planning period, the PAAA will continue working to enhance services and supports for caregivers through outreach, respite access, dementia-related education, and stronger coordination of available community resources.

### **Core Program Area 5: Legal Assistance**

Legal Assistance services help older adults protect their rights, access benefits, and make informed decisions related to health care coverage, financial security, and long-term planning. Within the PAAA, this core area includes HICAP Assistance, HICAP Outreach, Legal Assistance, and Legal Awareness.

Legal Assistance services follow Title III-B and Title III-D guidance as applicable (45 CFR §1321.65).

Through these services, PAAA staff and trained volunteers provide Medicare counseling, benefits screening, application assistance, education, and other forms of guidance to older adults and caregivers. These efforts help individuals understand Medicare options, identify cost-saving programs, access public benefits, navigate appeals, and strengthen informed decision-making related to legal and financial matters.

Legal Assistance services are particularly important in a large rural region where older adults may have limited access to in-person benefits counseling or legal guidance. The PAAA works to ensure that these services remain accessible to underserved populations, including Spanish-speaking beneficiaries and individuals living in remote communities across the Panhandle.

### **Core Program Area 6: Ombudsman Services**

Ombudsman Services protect the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents of nursing facilities and assisted living facilities. The PAAA Ombudsman Program

investigates and resolves complaints made by or on behalf of residents and conducts regular visits to long-term care facilities throughout the PSA.

Ombudsman Services follow Title III-B and Title VII requirements (45 CFR §1321.65).

The Panhandle's large geographic size presents unique challenges for Ombudsman service delivery, including long travel distances and significant staff time required to maintain regular facility contact across the region. Despite these challenges, the PAAA remains committed to protecting resident rights, addressing complaints, supporting volunteer involvement, and promoting accountability in long-term care settings.

The Ombudsman Program serves as a critical safeguard for vulnerable older adults and plays an essential role in improving quality of care and quality of life for residents of long-term care facilities throughout the Panhandle.

### **Greatest Economic Need and Greatest Social Need**

Consistent with the Older Americans Act, the Panhandle Area Agency on Aging (PAAA) prioritizes services for older adults and caregivers with the greatest economic need (GEN) and greatest social need (GSN) within the Planning and Service Area (PSA). All efforts related to identifying and prioritizing GEN and GSN populations are conducted in alignment with OAA Title III-B, III-C, and III-E requirements (45 CFR §1321.65).

For purposes of planning and service delivery, the PAAA defines greatest economic need as a situation in which an older adult or caregiver has income at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level or experiences financial hardship that makes it difficult to meet essential living expenses. This may include individuals whose income appears modest but whose necessary costs—such as housing, utilities, transportation, medications, or caregiving-related expenses—exceed available resources.

Within the Texas Panhandle PSA, older adults experiencing the greatest economic need often include individuals living on fixed incomes, those facing rising healthcare or housing costs, and those experiencing unexpected financial hardship. Economic vulnerability may occur in both urban and rural communities and is frequently compounded by disability, caregiving responsibilities, transportation barriers, and limited access to community resources.

The PAAA defines the greatest social need as a need caused by non-economic factors that limit an individual's ability to perform normal daily tasks or threaten the capacity to live independently. In the Panhandle region, the greatest social need is

frequently associated with social isolation, limited informal support networks, disability, cognitive impairment, language barriers, transportation challenges, and the geographic isolation common in rural communities.

Older adults at greatest social need may include those who live alone, are widowed, divorced, or never married; experience physical or cognitive limitations; lack family or community support; have limited English proficiency; or reside in rural or frontier areas where services may be less accessible.

To ensure that older adults and caregivers with the greatest economic and social needs receive priority access to services, the PAAA employs several strategies across its programs and provider network. These include prioritizing individuals with low income or demonstrated financial hardship within applicable programs; giving preference in Care Coordination and Caregiver Support Coordination services to individuals with limited or absent support systems; maintaining screening and waitlist procedures that consider factors such as social isolation, frailty, and lack of informal support; and requiring providers to implement outreach strategies that identify and engage underserved populations.

The PAAA also promotes access to programs that support financial stability and independence, including Medicare Savings Programs and Low-Income Subsidy outreach, and collaborates with community partners such as food pantries, charitable organizations, and social service providers that assist low-income older adults. Additionally, services such as transportation, congregate meals, home-delivered meals, evidence-based health programs, caregiver support services, and public information activities help reduce isolation and strengthen connections to community resources.

Through these coordinated strategies, the PAAA works to ensure that limited resources are directed toward older adults and caregivers who face the greatest barriers to maintaining independence, safety, and quality of life within the Panhandle region.

### **Collaboration with Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS)**

The Panhandle Area Agency on Aging (PAAA) plays an important role in connecting older adults and caregivers with Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) that support independent living and delay or prevent institutional placement. These coordination and referral activities comply with OAA Title III-B and III-E provisions for supportive and caregiver services (45 CFR §1321.65).

Through Information, Referral, and Assistance services and through person-centered Care Coordination and Caregiver Support Coordination, PAAA staff routinely assess whether an individual's needs may be more appropriately

addressed through Medicaid or other HCBS programs. When appropriate, staff provide education about available options and assist individuals in connecting with programs that provide long-term supports.

These referral efforts commonly include programs such as:

- STAR+PLUS Personal Assistance Services (PAS), which provides in-home assistance with activities of daily living for eligible Medicaid recipients;
- STAR+PLUS Waiver services, which offer long-term services and supports to individuals who meet medical eligibility for nursing facility care; and
- Community Attendant Services (CAS), which provides in-home assistance to individuals with low income who require support with activities of daily living.

PAAA staff receive ongoing training regarding HCBS eligibility criteria and referral procedures to ensure that older adults and caregivers receive accurate and timely information about available long-term service options. When a client appears potentially eligible for HCBS programs, staff make referrals and assist individuals in understanding the application process and program requirements.

To ensure responsible stewardship of Older Americans Act funds, the PAAA does not authorize OAA-funded services when the need can be met through Medicare, Medicaid, Title XX Social Services Block Grant, or Veterans Administration programs. Instead, staff prioritizes connecting individuals to these resources whenever available.

In addition to referral activities, the PAAA strengthens the HCBS system through its own OAA-funded services, including in-home supports, transportation, nutrition services, caregiver support, health maintenance assistance, and residential repair. These services complement Medicaid HCBS programs and help older adults remain safely in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

Through coordinated referral practices, partnerships with healthcare and community providers, and the strategic use of OAA-funded services, the PAAA works to expand access to home and community-based supports across the Texas Panhandle.

### **Practices and Strategies to Serve Older Adults with Physical and Mental Health Conditions**

The PAAA recognizes that many older adults experience physical, cognitive, and behavioral health conditions that affect daily functioning, independence, and access to services. To address these needs, the agency uses a combination of care coordination, targeted outreach, education, and community partnerships to connect

older adults and caregivers with appropriate supports. All services are delivered consistent with the Older Americans Act provisions for supportive, caregiver, and nutrition services (Titles III-B, III-C, and III-E; 45 CFR §1321.65).

For older adults with physical health conditions or functional impairments, the PAAA provides or coordinates services such as Homemaker, Personal Assistance, Respite, Residential Repair, Health Maintenance, Transportation, and Evidence-Based Health Promotion programs. These services help individuals manage chronic conditions, reduce fall risk, improve safety, and maintain independence in the home and community.

For older adults and caregivers affected by mental health concerns, dementia, grief, stress, or social isolation, the PAAA collaborates with organizations such as Texas Panhandle Centers, Family Support Services, the Panhandle Behavioral Health Alliance, and other community partners that offer counseling, education, support groups, and referral resources. The PAAA also promotes caregiver education and dementia-related training opportunities, including AGE-u-cate and similar initiatives that strengthen understanding of cognitive impairment and caregiver stress.

Additional coordination with organizations that provide assistive technology, independent living supports, and disability-related services further strengthens the regional network of care. Through these combined efforts, the PAAA works to ensure that older adults with physical and mental health conditions have access to services and supports that promote dignity, independence, safety, and quality of life.

## Needs Assessment Activities

In preparation for the 2027–2029 Area Plan, the Area Agency on Aging (PAAA) conducted a comprehensive needs assessment to evaluate the service needs of older adults, caregivers, and service providers within the Planning and Service Area (PSA). The needs assessment process incorporated community input through a **Community Needs Assessment Survey**, review of program utilization data from the previous Area Plan cycle, and evaluation of local service capacity.

Information gathered through the survey and review of program data was analyzed to identify service priorities, community concerns, and potential service gaps affecting older adults and caregivers in the PSA. These findings helped inform the development of priorities and strategies for the 2027-2029 Area Plan.

### Population Trends and Issues Impacting Older Adults

Analysis of survey responses and program data identified several emerging trends impacting older adults in the region:

- Increasing need for **transportation services**, particularly in rural areas where public transportation options are limited.
- Continued reliance on **nutrition programs**, including both congregate and home-delivered meals.
- Increased demand for **caregiver support services**, including respite care and caregiver education.
- Growing need for **in-home support services** such as personal assistance and homemaker services.
- Demand for **home modifications and minor home repair** to improve safety and accessibility.
- Ongoing need for **information and assistance services** to help individuals navigate available programs.

In addition to service needs, respondents expressed concerns regarding health care costs, financial security, fraud and scams, safe and affordable housing, and social isolation. These concerns reflect broader challenges faced by older adults and underscore the importance of coordinated services and community supports.

## **Analysis of PSA Impact During Previous Area Plan Cycle**

Review of program utilization data from the previous Area Plan cycle demonstrates continued demand for core Older Americans Act services within the PSA. Programs such as nutrition services, caregiver support services, transportation assistance, and in-home services remain essential supports for older adults, particularly those who are low-income, living in rural communities, or experiencing functional limitations.

Service utilization trends indicate that many individuals rely on multiple programs simultaneously to maintain independence and remain in their homes. Nutrition programs and caregiver services continue to serve as critical components of the local aging services network, helping to reduce food insecurity, caregiver stress, and the risk of institutionalization.

Transportation challenges continue to affect service access across the PSA, particularly in geographically large or rural counties where public transit options are limited. These conditions increase the importance of coordinated service delivery and information and assistance programs that help older adults identify available resources.

## **Analysis of How Programs, Services, and Policies Can Improve**

Based on the findings of the needs assessment and program utilization review, several opportunities were identified to strengthen service delivery and better address local needs.

First, expanding caregiver support services, including respite care and caregiver education, can help reduce caregiver burden and support individuals providing unpaid care to older adults.

Second, continued investment in nutrition services, particularly home-delivered meals, can address both food security and social isolation among homebound older adults.

Third, increasing access to in-home services, including personal assistance and homemaker support, can help older adults remain safely in their homes and delay or prevent institutional care.

Fourth, improving access to home repair and modification services can address safety hazards and accessibility challenges that may otherwise limit an individual's ability to age in place.

Finally, strengthening information and assistance services can help individuals better understand available programs and navigate complex service systems.

The PAAA will continue to evaluate program performance, coordinate with community partners, and adjust resources where possible to address identified needs and improve service accessibility throughout the PSA.

### **Needs Assessment Activities Conducted for the PSA**

The Panhandle Area Agency on Aging (PAAA) conducted a Community Needs Assessment Survey as the primary method for gathering input from older adults, caregivers, service providers, and other stakeholders throughout the Planning and Service Area (PSA). The survey was designed to collect information regarding service needs, community concerns, and potential gaps in services that impact older adults and their caregivers.

The survey was distributed through community partners, service providers, and local organizations that serve older adults across the PSA. In addition, the survey was made available through the AAA's website, electronic newsletter, and social media platforms in order to expand outreach and encourage participation from a broader segment of the community. These distribution methods were used to promote broad community participation and capture input from individuals with direct knowledge of the needs of older adults in the region. Participants included older adults, family caregivers, and professionals working in the aging services network.

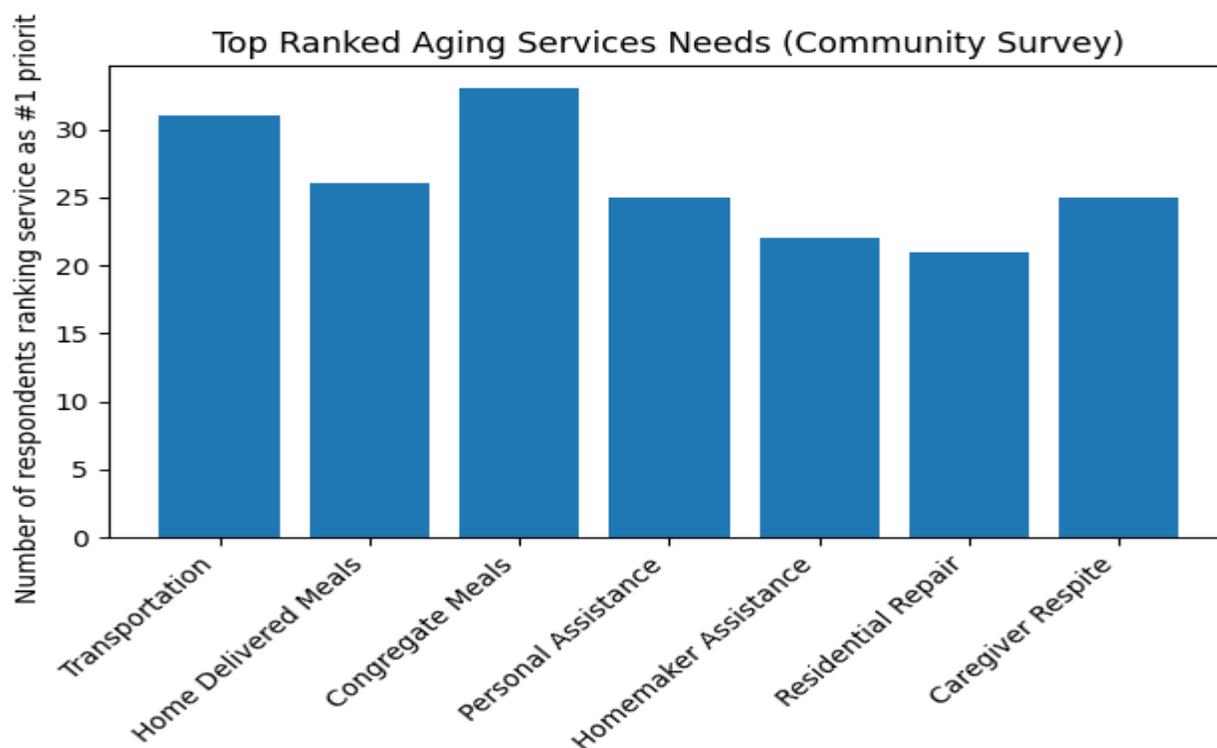
Survey respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of various services including transportation, nutrition programs, caregiver support services, in-home assistance, home repairs and modifications, and information and assistance services. Respondents also identified community concerns affecting older adults, including financial security, health care costs, housing stability, fraud and scams, and social isolation.

A total of 68 responses were collected and analyzed as part of the needs assessment process. Of these responses, 66 were submitted in English and 2 were submitted in Spanish. Providing the survey in both languages supported the PAAA's efforts to engage diverse populations within the PSA and ensure that Spanish-speaking residents had the opportunity to participate in the planning process.

In addition to the survey, the AAA reviewed internal program data from the previous Area Plan cycle to identify service utilization patterns and emerging trends. This review helped identify areas where services are most frequently used, as well as potential service gaps or unmet needs within the PSA.

The combined review of survey responses and program data provided the basis for identifying service priorities and trends impacting older adults and caregivers and informed the development of strategies for the 2027–2029 Area Plan.

**Figure III. Community Needs Assessment Responses**



Survey respondents identified caregiver respite, home-delivered meals, homemaker assistance, and home repair/modification services among the highest priority needs within the Planning and Service Area.

Survey findings were compared with program utilization data from the previous Area Plan cycle in order to identify gaps between service demand and available resources. Particular attention was given to core Older Americans Act services, including nutrition programs, transportation, caregiver support services, and in-home assistance.

Based on the analysis of survey responses and program data, the PAAA identified several priority service areas for the upcoming Area Plan cycle. These priorities will guide program planning, resource allocation, and coordination among service providers.

The results of the needs assessment will inform the development of a comprehensive and coordinated Area Plan designed to strengthen the aging services network and improve access to services that support independence, health, and well-being for older adults and caregivers throughout the PSA.

## **Top Needs and Key Findings**

Analysis of the Community Needs Assessment Survey and review of program data from the previous Area Plan cycle identified several priority needs affecting older adults and caregivers within the Planning and Service Area (PSA). Survey respondents were asked to rank services based on perceived importance. Results indicate that several core Older Americans Act services continue to be critical to supporting the independence, health, and well-being of older adults in the region.

- Congregate Meal Programs
- Transportation Services
- Home-Delivered Meals
- Personal Assistance Services
- Caregiver Respite
- Homemaker Assistance
- Residential Repair and Home Modifications

These services play a critical role in helping older adults maintain independence and remain safely in their homes and communities.

## **Constraints Affecting the Ability to Address Identified Needs**

While the AAA works to address the needs identified through the planning process, several constraints impact the ability to fully meet community demand. These include:

- Limited federal and state funding for Older Americans Act programs
- Increasing demand for services as the older adult population grows
- Rural geographic distances that affect service delivery
- Limited provider capacity in certain communities
- Transportation infrastructure limitations within the PSA

Despite these challenges, the AAA will continue working with community partners and service providers to strengthen the aging services network and maximize available resources to address the needs of older adults and caregivers.

## Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Outcomes

The Panhandle Area Agency on Aging (PAAA) will implement the following goals, objectives, strategies, and outcomes during the 2027–2029 Area Plan cycle. These priorities were developed based on findings from the community needs assessment, analysis of program utilization data, and input from older adults, caregivers, service providers, and community stakeholders.

**Goal 1: Strengthen access to essential supportive services that enable older adults to remain independent and age safely within their homes and communities.**

### **Objective 1.1**

Increase awareness and access to supportive services, including transportation, in-home services, and information and assistance.

### **Strategies**

- Expand outreach and education efforts regarding available AAA services through community partners, media outlets, and public presentations.
- Strengthen coordination between AAA information and assistance services and local providers to improve referral pathways.
- Utilize data from the needs assessment to prioritize services in high-need rural areas.

### **Outcomes**

#### *Short-Term Outcome*

- Increased awareness among older adults and caregivers regarding available supportive services.

#### *Intermediate Outcome*

- Increased number of referrals to supportive services and improved coordination between service providers.

#### *Long-Term Outcome*

- Improved ability of older adults to maintain independence and remain safely in their homes.

**Goal 2: Improve access to nutrition services that support health, food security, and social engagement for older adults.**

### **Objective 2.1**

Maintain and expand access to congregate and home-delivered meal services within the Planning and Service Area.

#### **Strategies**

- Support congregate meal programs that promote socialization and reduce isolation among older adults.
- Increase coordination with community partners to identify individuals experiencing food insecurity.
- Monitor service utilization data to ensure meal services are targeted to areas of highest need.

#### **Outcomes**

##### *Short-Term Outcome*

- Increased knowledge among older adults regarding available nutrition programs.

##### *Intermediate Outcome*

- Increased participation in congregate meal and home-delivered meal programs.

##### *Long-Term Outcome*

- Improved nutritional health and reduced food insecurity among older adults.

### **Goal 3: Strengthen support services for family caregivers assisting older adults.**

#### **Objective 3.1**

Enhance access to caregiver support services, including respite care, education, and supportive resources.

#### **Strategies**

- Expand outreach to caregivers regarding available support programs.
- Provide caregiver education opportunities and training to address caregiving challenges.
- Coordinate with local organizations and healthcare providers to identify and support family caregivers.

#### **Outcomes**

#### *Short-Term Outcome*

- Increased awareness of caregiver support services and available resources.

#### *Intermediate Outcome*

- Increased utilization of caregiver respite services and caregiver support programs.

#### *Long-Term Outcome*

- Reduced caregiver stress and improved the ability of caregivers to continue providing care.

### **Goal 4: Improve access to in-home services and environmental supports that allow older adults to age in place safely.**

#### **Objective 4.1**

Expand access to personal assistance services, homemaker support, and home modification programs.

#### **Strategies**

- Coordinate with service providers to identify individuals who may benefit from in-home support services.
- Promote home repair and modification programs that improve safety and accessibility for older adults.
- Prioritize services for individuals with functional limitations and those at risk of institutionalization.

#### **Outcomes**

##### *Short-Term Outcome*

- Increased awareness of available in-home support services and home safety programs.

##### *Intermediate Outcome*

- Increased number of older adults receiving in-home services and home modifications.

##### *Long-Term Outcome*

- Reduced risk of injury, hospitalization, or premature institutionalization among older adults.

**Goal 5: Strengthen community coordination and access to information that helps older adults and caregivers navigate available services.**

**Objective 5.1**

Enhance the effectiveness of information and assistance services across the Planning and Service Area.

**Strategies**

- Maintain a comprehensive resource database to support referrals and service coordination.
- Strengthen collaboration with community partners, healthcare providers, and local organizations.
- Provide outreach and education regarding fraud prevention, financial security, housing resources, and other issues impacting older adults.

**Outcomes**

*Short-Term Outcome*

- Increased knowledge among older adults and caregivers about available services and resources.

*Intermediate Outcome*

- Increased use of information and assistance services and improved service coordination.

*Long-Term Outcome*

- Improved ability of older adults and caregivers to access services that support health, safety, and independence.

## **Alignment with the 2026–2028 Texas State Plan on Aging**

The Panhandle Area Agency on Aging (PAAA) developed the goals, objectives, strategies, and outcomes for the 2027–2029 Area Plan based on findings from the community needs assessment, analysis of service utilization data, and input from older adults, caregivers, and service providers throughout the Planning and Service Area (PSA). These priorities are aligned with the goals identified in the **2026–2028 Texas State Plan on Aging** and support the coordinated efforts of the Aging Services Network to address the needs of older adults and family caregivers across Texas.

The PAAA’s strategies emphasize expanding access to supportive services, strengthening caregiver supports, enhancing collaboration among community partners, and maintaining a responsive aging services network. Through these efforts, the PAAA contributes to the statewide objectives outlined in the State Plan on Aging while addressing the unique geographic and demographic characteristics of the Texas Panhandle.

### **Alignment with State Goal 1**

#### **Support older adults to age in their community by accessing available resources, including Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS).**

The PAAA’s goals related to supportive services, nutrition programs, transportation, in-home assistance, and home modification services directly support this statewide goal. Needs assessment findings identified transportation access, nutrition services, in-home support, and home repair as priority services necessary to help older adults maintain independence and remain safely in their homes.

Through continued investment in these services and coordination with local providers, the PAAA works to strengthen access to Home and Community-Based Services throughout the PSA. These efforts help older adults avoid unnecessary institutionalization, reduce barriers to accessing services, and support aging in place within their communities.

### **Alignment with State Goal 2**

#### **Increase awareness about caregiving and the support available.**

The PAAA’s caregiver support goals and strategies align with the State Plan’s emphasis on strengthening awareness and availability of caregiver resources. The needs assessment identified increasing demand for caregiver support services, including respite care, education, and assistance navigating available resources.

To address these needs, the PAAA promotes caregiver education, expands outreach efforts to inform caregivers about available services, and coordinates with healthcare providers and community organizations to identify and support individuals providing unpaid care. These activities help improve caregiver awareness of available programs and strengthen support systems for family caregivers throughout the PSA.

### **Alignment with State Goal 3**

#### **Improve communication and collaboration among Texas state agencies, AAAs, providers, and community-based organizations.**

The PAAA works collaboratively with local governments, community organizations, healthcare providers, and other service agencies to ensure older adults and caregivers have access to coordinated services. The strategies identified in the Area Plan emphasize strengthening partnerships, improving referral systems, and increasing information sharing across the Aging Services Network.

Through these collaborative efforts, the PAAA helps ensure that services are delivered efficiently, gaps in services are identified and addressed, and older adults are connected to the resources they need. Coordination with regional and statewide partners also helps improve service planning and enhances the overall effectiveness of the aging services system.

### **Alignment with State Goal 4**

#### **Strengthen Aging Services Network infrastructure.**

The PAAA supports the continued development and sustainability of the Aging Services Network through program coordination, service monitoring, and collaboration with community partners. The Area Plan emphasizes maintaining strong information and assistance services, improving outreach efforts, and ensuring service providers have the capacity to meet the needs of older adults and caregivers within the PSA.

By evaluating program performance, monitoring service utilization trends, and coordinating with local providers, the PAAA works to strengthen the regional aging services infrastructure. These efforts help ensure that services remain accessible, responsive, and adaptable to the changing needs of the older adult population.

### **Summary**

The goals, objectives, strategies, and outcomes identified in the 2027–2029 Area Plan reflect the priorities of the Texas State Plan on Aging while addressing the specific needs identified within the Texas Panhandle Planning and Service Area. Through continued collaboration with state and local partners, the PAAA remains committed to strengthening the Aging Services Network and improving access to

services that support independence, health, and quality of life for older adults and family caregivers.

## **Long Range Planning**

The Panhandle Area Agency on Aging (PAAA) conducts ongoing planning and evaluation to ensure that the regional Aging Services Network remains prepared to meet the evolving needs of older adults and family caregivers throughout the Planning and Service Area (PSA). Long-range planning activities consider demographic trends, service utilization patterns, available resources, and emerging community needs in order to maintain a coordinated system of services that supports the independence, health, and well-being of older adults.

The Aging Services Network within the Panhandle PSA consists of the PAAA, contracted service providers, healthcare partners, community-based organizations, local governments, and volunteer programs. Together, these partners work collaboratively to deliver Older Americans Act (OAA) services and other supportive resources that help older adults remain safely in their homes and communities.

Overall, the regional aging services network is well-positioned to provide essential services; however, demographic changes, increasing demand for services, and financial pressures are expected to create challenges over the next five to ten years. Long-range planning efforts focus on strengthening partnerships, improving service coordination, and maximizing available resources to ensure that the network remains responsive and sustainable.

### **Preparedness of the Local Aging Services Network**

The Aging Services Network within the Panhandle region has developed strong partnerships and service delivery systems that support older adults across a largely rural geographic area. Service providers currently deliver a range of programs including nutrition services, caregiver supports, transportation assistance, in-home services, information and assistance, and benefits counseling.

While the current network provides critical services to thousands of older adults each year, population projections indicate that demand for these services will continue to increase. Growth in the older adult population, combined with rising operational costs and workforce limitations, will require continued collaboration and strategic planning among community partners.

The PAAA works closely with a variety of organizations that contribute to the broader Aging Services Network, including healthcare providers, Medicaid managed care organizations, local intellectual and developmental disability authorities, community service organizations, and federal programs such as the Veterans Administration. Through ongoing collaboration with these partners, the PAAA helps ensure that services remain coordinated and accessible to older adults and caregivers throughout the region.

## **Impact of Population Growth and Changing Demographics**

Population projections indicate that the number of older adults in the Texas Panhandle will increase steadily over the next decade, particularly in Potter and Randall Counties and in communities located along major transportation corridors such as Interstate 40 and Interstate 27. In addition to overall growth in the older adult population, the number of individuals aged 85 and older is expected to increase significantly.

These demographic trends will likely increase demand for key services that support aging in place, including nutrition programs, transportation services, caregiver supports, and in-home assistance. Rural communities may experience additional challenges due to geographic distance, limited public transportation infrastructure, and a smaller provider base.

As the population ages, the prevalence of chronic health conditions and Alzheimer's disease and related dementias is also expected to increase. These trends will place additional demands on caregiver support programs, healthcare systems, and community-based services.

At the same time, federal funding for Older Americans Act services has remained relatively stable and may not increase at a pace that matches projected population growth. As a result, the gap between service demand and available resources may continue to widen, making it increasingly important to prioritize services for individuals with the greatest economic and social need and to strengthen partnerships that expand available resources.

## **Improving Programs, Services, and Policies**

The PAAA continuously evaluates programs and services to ensure that available resources are used effectively and that services respond to changing community needs. While the agency does not anticipate adding new service categories during the FY 2027–2029 planning period due to funding constraints, efforts will focus on strengthening existing services and improving coordination among providers.

Strategies to improve programs and services include:

- **Strengthening Caregiver Supports**  
Expanding outreach and education for family caregivers and promoting greater utilization of respite care and caregiver training programs.
- **Enhancing Service Coordination**  
Improving referral systems and collaboration among healthcare providers, community organizations, and aging services programs to ensure individuals are connected to appropriate resources.

- **Supporting Aging in Place**  
Promoting services that allow older adults to remain safely in their homes, including in-home assistance, home modifications, transportation, and nutrition services.
- **Utilizing Data and Outcome Measurement**  
Continuing to evaluate program outcomes and service utilization data to identify trends, measure program effectiveness, and guide resource allocation decisions.
- **Promoting Dementia-Capable Communities**  
Encouraging collaboration among healthcare providers, community organizations, and caregiver support programs to strengthen regional responses to Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias.

Through these strategies, the PAAA aims to improve service accessibility, strengthen the Aging Services Network, and ensure programs remain responsive to the needs of older adults and caregivers.

## **Recommendations to the State Unit on Aging**

As part of the long-range planning process, the PAAA provides the following recommendations to the State Unit on Aging to strengthen the statewide Aging Services Network and improve service delivery for older adults and caregivers.

### **Housing**

Encourage continued collaboration between aging services and housing programs to expand access to affordable and accessible housing options for older adults.

### **Transportation**

Support initiatives that strengthen rural transportation systems and improve coordination between public transit providers and community transportation programs.

### **Public Safety**

Promote education and community awareness programs that help older adults avoid fraud, scams, and financial exploitation.

### **Workforce and Economic Development**

Support workforce development initiatives that expand the pool of trained professionals in aging services, healthcare, and caregiving fields.

### **Recreation and Community Engagement**

Encourage programs that promote social engagement, volunteerism, and community participation among older adults.

### **Education and Training**

Expand training opportunities for AAA staff and service providers on topics such as program compliance, benefits counseling, and case management best practices.

### **Emergency Preparedness**

Strengthen coordination between aging services and emergency management agencies to ensure the needs of older adults are addressed during disasters and emergency situations.

### **Protection from Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation**

Continue supporting collaboration between Adult Protective Services, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations to protect vulnerable older adults.

### **Assistive Technology and Accessibility**

Encourage the development and expansion of programs that provide assistive technology and home modifications that allow older adults to remain safely in their homes.

### **Organizational Sustainability**

Maintaining a strong and sustainable organization is essential to ensuring the continued effectiveness of the Aging Services Network. The PAAA benefits from an experienced staff with extensive knowledge of aging services; however, long-term sustainability requires proactive planning to preserve institutional knowledge and maintain operational continuity.

To support organizational sustainability, the PAAA has implemented several strategies:

#### **Cross-Training Staff**

Staff members are cross-trained to ensure that essential functions can continue uninterrupted during staff absences or transitions.

#### **Documentation of Policies and Procedures**

The agency continues developing written procedures for key operational tasks to maintain consistency and preserve institutional knowledge.

#### **Succession Planning**

When possible, transitions between key positions include overlap and mentoring to allow knowledge transfer between outgoing and incoming staff.

#### **Professional Development**

Staff are encouraged to participate in training and continuing education opportunities that strengthen their expertise in aging services and community resource coordination.

These efforts help ensure that the PAAA remains resilient and capable of continuing to serve older adults and caregivers throughout the Panhandle region.

## **Future Strategic Focus**

Looking beyond the current Area Plan cycle, the PAAA anticipates that long-term planning will increasingly focus on strengthening regional partnerships, expanding dementia-capable community initiatives, and improving service coordination across healthcare and community-based systems. Continued collaboration among federal, state, and local partners will be essential to ensuring that the Aging Services Network remains responsive to demographic changes and capable of supporting older adults and caregivers across the Texas Panhandle.