

A Strong Start for California's Master Plan for Aging

Perspectives on Aging with Dignity • September 2019



Bruce Chernof, MD, President and CEO of The SCAN Foundation, dedicated to creating a society where older adults can access health and supportive services of their choosing to meet their needs. The Perspectives Series provides opinions and observations about transforming the way in which we age. Follow Dr. Bruce on Twitter [@DrBruce_TSF](https://twitter.com/DrBruce_TSF).

Just a few years ago, the idea of crafting a new aging paradigm in California felt elusive – with little potential for the broad-scale redesign needed to address the financing, service delivery, and infrastructure challenges that had plagued the state for many years. Yet, today California has a governor fully committed to older adults, people with disabilities, and the families who care for them. The great news is, under his leadership and with strong support from state legislators and the state treasurer, the work of creating the state's Master Plan for Aging has begun!

To kick off this year-long effort, The SCAN Foundation hosted the *2019 Master Plan for Aging Forum: Designing a System Built Around People and Partnerships*, serving as a launch pad for the state's stakeholder engagement efforts. Together with older adults, people with disabilities, advocates, providers and policymakers, the Forum elevated the Master Plan as an opportunity to redesign the system around the needs of people. The day began with welcome remarks from Deputy Cabinet Secretary Richard Figueroa and California Health and Human Services Agency Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly, calling us to action through the [Together We ENGAGE](#) campaign. State legislators also relayed the importance of the Master Plan, and the Legislature's role in overseeing implementation.

Here are a few highlights of the Forum. First Kim McCoy Wade, Acting Director of the California Department of Aging, led a rich and thoughtful discussion with a diverse panel that emphasized how change is most effective when rooted in people's experiences. Panelists had previously participated in a larger human-centered design project by [Greater Good Studio](#), which catalogued

their experiences and showcased strategies garnered from several community listening sessions. Building on this critical point, the GGS team presented draft findings from their human-centered design project across California exploring the needs, hopes, and desires of older adults and those with disabilities, their families and communities. Finally, GGS engaged all 200+ Forum attendees in prioritizing and adding to these strategies. All of this content will be shared in a report later this fall.

The Foundation presented the [2019 Innovation Award](#) to the City of Berkeley, recognizing their efforts to prepare for the growth of their older adult population. This year's award was delivered in partnership with the [Milken Institute Center for the Future of Aging](#), which recently launched its Age-Forward 2030 initiative focusing on cities as instruments for change.


Afternoon breakout sessions covered key aspects of system planning including learning from other states' efforts (Colorado and Washington), a deeper dive on how cities as knowledge laboratories can improve our aging experience, and the role of the private sector in employing older adults and supporting family caregivers. Wrapping up the day was a philanthropic panel moderated by Marko Mijic, Deputy Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, featuring CEOs Shelley Lyford ([Gary and Mary West Foundation](#)), Chris Langston ([Archstone Foundation](#)), and me.

The following day, Secretary Mark Ghaly and his team convened the first Master Plan for Aging Stakeholder Advisory Committee—a tremendous group of 34 individuals representing older adults, people with disabilities, providers, philanthropy, and academia. State leaders did a great job outlining the process for the work ahead and starting this effort by having the Advisory Group committee weigh in on a framework for the Master Plan's guiding goals and values. What I found most heartening from this first meeting is how these state leaders clearly understand the importance of grounding the Master Plan in a *person-first* (instead of *program-first*) orientation, because it is about how ALL Californians want to age and live. While this initial advisory meeting was underway, aging and disability advocates from around the state simultaneously visited legislative offices sharing values and recommendations for the Master Plan.

These are just the first steps on a long journey ahead, and there is much work to be done prior to the Master Plan's October 2020 due date. However, I am optimistic that the process will be a decisive step forward to building a California where everyone can age with dignity and independence. In the meantime, every Californian should share their thoughts and opinions hopes and desires. The state has created a portal to make that possible: [Together We ENGAGE](#). We all need to speak up since we are writing our own future.



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