

Designing a Master Plan for Aging that Reflects What Matters Most to Californians

Perspectives on Aging with Dignity • June 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).

On June 10, 2019, California Governor Gavin Newsom issued [Executive Order N-14-19](#), calling for a California Master Plan for Aging (Master Plan). In his Executive Order, Governor Newsom outlines the broad framework for a Master Plan process, including state-level input, stakeholder engagement, and a firm deadline of October 1, 2020, for completion.

Its significance cannot be understated: In no time past has a California governor committed leadership and resources to whole scale systems planning to meet the needs of California's aging population. We applaud Governor Newsom for both his visionary leadership and expedient, aggressive goals for creating and implementing this Master Plan. This effort symbolizes a historic milestone to address systems challenges, with an opportunity to decisively meet the needs of older Californians through a thoughtful, comprehensive, and outcome-oriented strategy.

While a major first step, the Master Plan in and of itself is only one step along an important path. California's Master Plan should have a singular focus: to design systems around the needs and experiences of older adults and the families who stand by them, now and in the near future. A successful Master Plan will be crafted to anticipate and respond to needs from a person's perspective, engaging both the public and private sectors in systems-based solutions that touch all major areas of life experience (e.g., health, human services, housing, transportation, others).

Instead of a traditional planning exercise that prioritizes the needs of a currently fragmented system, this new Master Plan can reframe system organization, funding, and service delivery based on what matters most to the people it serves—placing older Californians and their families at the center.

The SCAN Foundation upholds the following four elements as critical to the Master Plan’s success, ensuring that it fully reflects what truly matters to older Californians and their families.

1. Older Adults Thriving = Health, Finances, Self-Worth, Environment, and Community. The ability of Californians to thrive while aging with dignity and independence reflects the following intersection of basic human needs:

- Health (physical, psychological, social well-being);
- Finances (financial well-being);
- Self-worth (purpose and empowerment);
- Environment (supportive services, housing, food, transportation); and
- Community (family and friends).

A successful Master Plan will recognize the interdependence of these needs and develop approaches that recognize and address all of these factors.

2. People First. Older adults should have access to systems that are responsive to the individual as a whole—not idiosyncratic system parts based on their funding source, administering agency, or local oversight entity. A successful Master Plan will outline an approach that ensures individuals can readily access the information and services they need, when they need it—regardless of eligibility distinction, income level, or place of residence.


3. Cross-Sector Collaboration. It is time for aging issues to be addressed beyond the traditional spheres of health and human services, or as solely the responsibility of the state/public sector. Many state agencies – along with a wide range of private entities – contribute greatly to California’s aging experience, including housing, transportation, higher education and veteran’s affairs, among others. All need to be equally engaged with strong leadership from the governor to ensure a holistic solution to California’s infrastructure and care system challenges. A successful Master Plan will establish a framework for engaging new partners and spurring collaborative innovation across the public, private, and independent sectors. It will create equal accountability for all entities to creatively and comprehensively address our aging population’s needs now and in the future through a sound financing structure.

- 4. Aging: It's All of Us.** Negative stereotypes and fears of aging have historically pushed aging issues to the background. This Master Plan has the potential to reimagine aging—impacting how society thinks about, plans for, and responds to life's changes with age. The planning process should initiate a refreshed conversation on aging—as these issues are not limited to individuals over a certain age, but impact young people, families, and communities alike.

The SCAN Foundation stands ready to work with the governor, his Administration, and the Legislature alongside leaders across the public, private, and philanthropic sectors in the development of California's Master Plan for Aging. Thanks to Governor Newsom, the time is now.



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