



About ACL: Mission, Vision, & Priorities

ABOUT ACL

Advancing Independence and Community Living ***Strategic Priorities of the Administration for Community Living***

The Administration for Community Living (ACL) was established to create opportunities for older adults and people with disabilities to live and engage in their communities. ACL strives to remove the obstacles that limit people's choices and ability to participate in community living.

This administration is committed to ensuring that government programs are a safety net of last resort. We affirm that people thrive when they do as much as they can for themselves and when families and communities are equipped to support their efforts and choices. ACL's role is to address genuine needs and to help people overcome barriers that limit their ability to live independently and contribute to society.

ACL works hand-in-hand with more than 20 federal departments and agencies as well as states, tribes, territories, local governments, and the private sector to advance the shared priorities described below. Through these partnerships, ACL leverages the full capacity of the federal government to strengthen community living, expand access to services, and drive innovation across the aging and disability networks.

ACL's priorities advance the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) agenda, including by protecting the health of older Americans and people with disabilities, preserving their independence, supporting their caregivers, promoting their economic mobility, encouraging meaningful engagement, and expanding their opportunities for reasonable choices. We do this by strengthening the networks that serve older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers, scaling effective programs, and ensuring that ACL's investments are accountable and transparent.

Mary Lazare

Principal Deputy Administrator, serving as the senior official performing the duties of the ACL Administrator and Assistant Secretary for Aging Administration for Community Living

Mission

Maximize the independence, well-being, and health of older adults, people with disabilities across their lifespan, and their families and caregivers.

Vision & Values

- For all people, regardless of age and disability, to live with dignity, make their own choices, and participate in society.
- For the people we serve, ACL promotes strategies that enable people to live in their communities.
- For our networks, ACL provides leadership and support.
- For our partners, ACL is a source of collaboration, innovation, and solutions.
- For our employees, ACL supports their contributions, professional growth, and work-life balance.
- For the public, ACL is an effective steward of public resources and a source for information.

ACL's Strategic Priorities

Caregiving

Caregivers are central to independence and community living. ACL will expand and strengthen support for families and caregivers, both paid and unpaid. ACL will:

- Scale programs that are proven to support caregivers, including respite care and family caregiver services.
- Build grant recipient's capacity to deliver sustainable support for caregivers.
- Embed caregiving in health and social systems as a critical prevention strategy against institutionalization.

Connecting People to Services

People must be able to find and navigate services when they need them. ACL will:

- Invest in outreach, marketing, communications, and education to make programs visible and accessible.
- Simplify and modernize systems so that the public knows where to go and how to get the supports they need.
- Expand and strengthen resources made available by aging and disability networks, including Area Agencies on Aging, Centers for Independent Living, Aging and Disability Resource Centers, among others.

Whole-Person health

ACL will prioritize grants that integrate health care and community-based service interventions that enable community living and reduce costs. ACL will:

- Scale evidence-based programs in nutrition, falls prevention, chronic disease self-management, health promotion, medication management, pain management, and dementia care.
- Support interventions proven to maximize independence, health, function, savings, and avoidance of unnecessary clinical and institutional care.
- Position the aging and disability networks of services and supports across the nation as essential partners to health systems.
- Expand the capacity of community care hubs (CCH) to bridge health care entities and networks of community-based providers.

Employment

Employment is fundamental to independence and economic mobility. ACL will prioritize grants and activities that emphasize the value of work, self-sufficiency, and community participation for all. ACL will:

- Create awareness, remove barriers, and expand access to competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities and older adults who wish to work.
- Partner with federal, state, and local agencies to coordinate employment, training, and support services.
- Promote policies that remove barriers to work and strengthen the capacity of ACL's networks of community-based organizations to connect individuals to meaningful jobs.
- Promote awareness among employers about retirement planning and ABLE accounts for persons with disabilities to support long-term self-sufficiency.

Protecting Rights and Preventing Abuse

Protecting rights and preventing abuse are essential to dignity and independence. ACL's leadership affirms that every person, regardless of age or disability, should be able to live safely and free from harm. ACL will:

- Strengthen protection and advocacy systems that safeguard the rights of older adults and people with disabilities.
- Expand elder justice initiatives that prevent, detect, and respond to abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- Enhance collaboration among federal, state, and community partners to improve prevention and accountability.
- Invest in data and research to understand and address systemic risks to individual rights and safety.

Economic Security

Economic security is foundational to independence, dignity, and community living. Older adults and people with disabilities must be able to access affordable nutritious food, essential services, assistive technology, and economic opportunities without unnecessary financial or bureaucratic barriers. ACL will:

- Expand and simplify access to affordable, healthy food and preventive nutrition interventions to prevent and reverse chronic disease, restore health, and reduce costs of care.
- Reduce financial and bureaucratic barriers by making it easier for people to understand and access public benefits, eliminating unnecessary administrative obstacles, and strengthening oversight to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse.
- Promote economic independence and long-term financial stability through financial literacy, asset development strategies—including retirement planning, ABLE accounts, Trump accounts—and other mechanisms that allow individuals to remain in their homes and communities.
- Increase awareness and access to essential programs, supports, and tools that are cost-effective and enable affordable community living.

Operational Drivers: How We Work

To carry out these priorities, ACL and its grant recipients focus on five operational drivers that define how we achieve lasting, measurable impact.

Scaling — Expanding What Works

ACL has a long history of funding demonstrations that test innovative approaches to community living. Through scaling, we move beyond pilots to bring proven, evidence-based interventions to the national level. This means investing in approaches that deliver results across populations and geographies, helping older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers benefit from solutions that have already shown measurable success. Scaling also means modernizing technical assistance and data infrastructure so that community-based organizations can expand their reach, strengthen sustainability, and align their programs with the evolving needs of the people they serve.

Goal: Turn innovation into impact by bringing successful models to scale — reaching more people, faster, with greater effectiveness.

Marketing — Elevating Visibility and Access

ACL's networks are among the most trusted and widespread in the nation, yet too many people still don't know where to go for help. Effective marketing ensures that the public can easily identify, access, and navigate aging and disability services. This includes modernizing communications, using plain language. It also means ensuring that partners, providers, and other federal agencies recognize ACL's role in connecting health and social care systems.

Goal: Strengthen the public's awareness of ACL and its networks so that every person who needs support can find it.

Outcomes — Measuring What Matters

ACL defines success by outcomes that reflect independence, inclusion, and health — not just program activity. We will strengthen monitoring, impact measurement, and data strategy to build outcome-based evaluation frameworks that capture both individual and

community/state-level results. We will focus on measurable improvements such as reduced institutionalization, increased employment, and improved caregiver well-being. Through transparent reporting, data-driven decision-making, and continuous evidence-based learning, ACL ensures that taxpayer investments deliver meaningful, demonstrable results.

Goal: Demonstrate the real-world difference ACL makes in people's lives through data, transparency, evaluation, and continuous improvement.

Speed — Responding to Emerging Needs

In an environment of rapid demographic change, ACL must be flexible and respond quickly. Streamlined processes, faster grant timelines, and responsive program management ensure that services and research investments keep pace with evolving community needs. Whether responding to a public health emergency, addressing workforce shortages, or meeting new demands for caregiver support, ACL's commitment to speed means removing unnecessary barriers and deploying resources when and where they are most needed.

Goal: Increase agility to meet emerging needs and sustain continuity of care for vulnerable populations.

Grantmaking — Investing for Long-Term Impact

ACL's grants are more than funding mechanisms — they are catalysts for systemic change. By aligning funding streams across programs and partners, ACL strengthens networks that deliver sustainable, person-centered services and inspire innovations that can continue beyond federal support. ACL is committed to modernizing and strengthening grant management, expanding awareness of funding opportunities, and enhancing grantee capacity to demonstrate return on investment, positive impact, and long-term outcomes. This includes removing bureaucratic obstacles and preventing fraud to maximize resources for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and those who care for them, while providing clear visibility into funding, operations, and measurable results.

Goal: Ensuring positive impact for people, communities, and return on investment for taxpayers.

The Critical Importance of Addressing Community Living

The United States is entering a historic demographic shift that makes community living essential to the nation's social and economic strength. More than 82 million Americans are now age 60 or older, nearly one in five, and every day for the next twenty years, 10,000 people will turn 65. At the same time, 61 million Americans live with disabilities, and the number of people with disabilities living in the community has grown by nearly 9% in just four years. Coupled with the efforts of 63 million family caregivers providing an estimated \$470 billion in unpaid care annually, these trends underscore the need to build systems that allow all people to live and thrive in the communities they call home.

Community living is about more than location; it is about independence, inclusion, and opportunity. Yet too many older adults and people with disabilities still face barriers that limit their participation in daily life. One in four older adults lives alone, and more than 10 million experience food insecurity each year. People with disabilities continue to face lower employment rates, higher poverty rates, and shorter life expectancy, even though most express the desire to work and contribute. These issues reflect systems that have not yet evolved to support true choice and self-determination.

Through the Older Americans Act and other programs, ACL helps more than 12.8 million older adults each year remain at home through community-based services that promote health, safety, and engagement. Our programs for people with disabilities and their families emphasize employment, education, research, and innovation, creating the conditions that make independence possible. At the same time, ACL is responding to a national direct care workforce crisis in which nearly one million additional workers will be needed by 2029 to sustain access to care. Strengthening these networks is critical to maintaining both community living and the nation's caregiving infrastructure.

For ACL, addressing community living means ensuring that all people, regardless of age or disability, can live with dignity, make their own choices, and participate in society. It means investing in local networks, research, and workforce solutions that turn values into action. By advancing these priorities, ACL helps build communities that are stronger, more inclusive, and better equipped to support every individual's ability to live independently and contribute to the vitality of our nation.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Across all priorities, ACL will:

- **Equip high-impact service delivery** through training, technical assistance, and sustainable business models.
- **Achieve better health**, making clear that the MAHA agenda includes interventions that address health outcomes for older adults and people with disabilities.
- **Maintain community living** through outcome-driven services and supports.

ACL's Role in the MAHA Agenda



Education, Innovation, and Research

ACL funds services and supports provided primarily through trusted networks of community-based organizations, including Area Agencies on Aging, Centers for Independent Living, Aging and Disability Resource Centers, and more than 22,000 service providers with whom they partner.

In addition to funding direct services, ACL invests in research, education, and innovation to strengthen evidence-based practices and expand opportunities for independent living. Through the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), ACL supports the nation's foremost applied research portfolio that advances knowledge, technology, and policy, which dramatically improves everyday life for people with disabilities. ACL in particular is prioritizing research and innovations that further the strategic priority areas outlined above.

Key Outcomes to Track ACL's Impact

ACL will track progress on the following key outcomes.

- Improved access to home and community-based services.
- Improved outcomes for caregivers, including addressing their physical, mental, and economic strain.
- Increased employment opportunities for older adults and people with disabilities.
- Stronger program visibility and faster response to emerging needs.
- Decreased social isolation.
- Expanded protections against fraud, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- Reduced prevalence of falls and malnutrition.

Call to Action

ACL's work is grounded in supporting people to do all they can for themselves while ensuring that essential needs are met. By scaling what works, modernizing how we operate, and measuring what matters, ACL will continue to advance a future where older adults and people with disabilities have meaningful choices, independence, and belonging in the communities they call home. ACL also recognizes that personal growth and fulfillment come from the full spectrum of human experience — from facing challenges and setbacks to celebrating accomplishments. Supporting people means not only meeting their basic needs but also creating opportunities for them to grow, succeed, and find joy in those achievements. Through this lens, ACL's work affirms the dignity of risk, the value of resilience, and the power of shared triumph.

Guiding Principles

Conflicts of interest: the public must know that unbiased science — evaluated through a transparent process and insulated from conflicts of interest — guides the recommendations of human services agencies and ACL-funded programs and activities carried out by federal partners. ACL will prioritize partnering with organizations that do not present conflicts of interest or otherwise compromise their objectivity or integrity in carrying out ACL-funded programs.

Eliminating DEI in funded programs: ACL will ensure, to the extent permitted by law, including any relevant court orders, that its programs and funding align with the administration's commitment to merit, equality, and biological truth.

Ending subsidization of illegal immigration: ACL will ensure that federal public benefits are reserved for American citizens and qualified aliens, in compliance with the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) and other federal laws. ACL funds should not be used to incentivize or subsidize illegal immigration.

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Policy

ACL was created
around the
fundamental
principle that all
people, regardless
of age or
disability, should
be able to live
independently
and participate in
their
communities.

An official website of the Administration for Community Living, an operating division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.