Communication
Fact Sheet

For businesses, nonprofits, government, education, healthcare, and cultural and entertainment venues.

Age Friendly
Broome County
A Community for Everyone

Age-friendly communication ensures that your message is clearly received by residents of all ages and abilities. Keep in mind that not everyone uses the internet and many older people prefer traditional communication such as flyers, newsletters, radio, TV, and being able to speak with someone on the phone.

Use the following tips for optimal communication across different platforms.

Print Communication

- Write clearly, concisely, and avoid technical jargon.
- Introduce key points at the beginning of the text and repeat the main ideas.
- Replace words like "seniors" or "elderly" with more inclusive terms like "older people".
- Be sure to frame information in a positive light and avoid words with negative connotations. For instance, "a tsunami of older adults" versus "as Americans live longer and healthier lives."
- For readability, use at least 12 point or larger font, avoid using all capitals, and don't underline text. Consider offering large print materials.
- Add adequate white space on the page which allows rest for readers' eyes.
- Use high contrast text and background colors for easy reading while avoiding patterned backgrounds.
- Incorporate colors like blues, greens, and reds which research shows older adults prefer.
- When using text colors together, select those which contrast to enhance readability (e.g. using orange and blue together).
- Add positive and colorful pictures to improve the visual experience.
- Provide different language options for readers who do not speak English.
- Review your designs in black and white/grayscale to ensure readability remains.

Verbal Communication

- If feasible, provide an option for callers to speak with a person instead of automated phone messages and systems.
- Ensure that everyone who interacts with the public has active listening skills and is patient with people who require extra time or need to have information repeated.
- Representatives should speak slowly, clearly and offer to repeat key information.
- When possible, offer a TTY line in order to communicate with people who have hearing or speech impairments.

TV/Radio Communication

- The theme of advertisements, programs, or other outreach should relate to daily life and cover aspects of different age groups' needs.
- Using a slow-paced speed of delivery and limiting background noise makes for easier listening.
- Repeat key information, such as phone numbers, several times.
- For TV, use graphics to show the viewer information.
- Even when not required, add close captioning to TV content to reach approximately 17% of American adults who report some degree of hearing loss.

Digital Communication

- Keep websites fresh by updating regularly. This helps users get the most current information and will help them feel more connected.
- Provide high-quality images and videos that harmonize with the text and theme of the web page.
- Avoid hovering menus and use large, static interface elements on navigation bars which are easier targets for clicking by older users.
- Minimize the need for vertical scrolling and organize information visually to make searching more convenient and efficient.
- Use easy-to-read sans serif fonts such as Arial or Verdana in at least size 12.
- Provide adjustable text options to give the user control over their visual experience.
- Add a "read for you" voice function on websites for people with vision impairments.
- Ask your developer/designer to confirm that your website complies with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG): https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/.