

Section B – PLANNING AND SERVICE AREA PROFILE

B-1 TARGET POPULATION PROFILE

We operate in a world that is dynamic; yet, to make order out of chaos, we design systems that work best in a stationary world. The ideal, of course, would be to have systems flexible enough to accommodate the undercurrents of an ever changing world. The existing long term care system is primarily a public system with limited resources. Even private agencies or institutions, such as nursing homes, within the long-term care system are primarily funded by public funds.

The legislative process is the pulse of this system. Provided that long term care services are publicly funded, they are regulated by many laws for the health and safety of the public and to ensure accountability of the public dollar. Thus, its decision making is highly centralized with many hierarchical levels and mechanistic processes primarily created by statute to ensure accountability. For the most part the system responds to change slowly. The problem, however, is that legislation can be proposed and enacted which can dramatically change the long-term care system. Taken in juxtaposition, this makes forecasting for demographic, public, social, and legislative trends even more important. **More accurate projections can ensure well placed advocacy efforts in terms of what becomes legislation in the first place.**

Older Americans Act (OAA) funding is a formula based upon the US Census, American Community Survey and Office of Financial Management (OFM) projections. The formula is weighted and includes the same targeting indicators that drive our discretionary funding formula, i.e., number of square miles, number of people aged sixty and over, number of people aged 60 and over with an income at or below the federal poverty level, etc.

Demographics can assist an organization in designing their service delivery system. For instance, southeast Washington has a rapidly growing Hispanic population age sixty and over. The demographic characteristic assists ALTC in its planning process to design long term care services that emphasize outreach to accommodate this population.

U.S. Census and OFM projections are not the only sources for demographic information. An agency's own statistical information can assist in determining trends and growth which aide in adjusting staffing patterns and focusing efforts that correspond to those trends and growth rates. For instance, ALTC tracks growth in individual programs. This information helps to determine the effectiveness of outreach efforts, decide where staffing should be

increased, and prioritize service and project trends in the future.

What are the demographic trends in Southeast Washington?

ALTC’s service area encompasses 21% of the geographic area in Washington State but only accounts for around 10% of the total state population. Counties served include Kittitas, Yakima, Benton, Franklin, Walla Walla, Columbia, Garfield, and Asotin counties.

ALTC’s Planning and Service Area (PSA) is unique in its immensity. It encompasses four standard metropolitan areas (Yakima, Kennewick, Richland, and Pasco), four cities (Walla Walla, Clarkston, Ellensburg, Sunnyside), and a myriad of small towns (Mabton, Connell, Basin City, Burbank, Dayton, Starbuck, Pomeroy, and Asotin, to name a few) and vast areas of land mass where seniors and adults with disabilities needing services are dispersed throughout remote and isolated parts of the counties. For example, in Yakima County there are individuals receiving in-home services who live such a distance away that it takes three and a half hours round trip for the case manager to conduct a visit. With a winter storm, some of these places are virtually inaccessible.

The geography creates huge service delivery challenges, i.e., finding volunteers to deliver home-delivered meals, recruiting in-home workers willing to drive such a distance without reimbursement and serving individuals with vulnerable health whose nearest service access center is well over an hour and a half away.

SE WA Rural Area by the Numbers

County	**% Rural 2020	Land Area in Square mile	*Population Density	
			2020 Census	2023 OFM Estimate
WA State	16.16%	66,455.1	115.9	119.65
Asotin	7.26%	636.1	35.0	35.61
Benton	12.4%	1,700.1	121.7	126.76
Columbia	100%	868.6	4.5	4.55
Franklin	11.45%	1,241.6	77.9	81.43
Garfield	100%	710.8	3.2	3.24
Kittitas	42.79%	2,297.3	19.3	20.59
Walla W.	20.25%	1,270.0	49.3	49.68
Yakima	30.43%	4,294.5	59.8	60.82

*Population density is a measure of average population per square mile.
[US Census 2020](#) & [2023 OFM](#)

As well, ALTC has service delivery areas that encounter issues attributable to “urban” service delivery, i.e., housing density issues and individuals in need of service where multiple family units reside in housing meant for single family occupancy.

Our next to the lowest populated county, Columbia, has the highest density of older residents. This creates a dynamic of older neighbors with their own vulnerable health issues having to care for the older neighbor with even more vulnerable health. In Columbia County, 37.23% of the population is over the age of 60.

Our most populated county, Yakima, is one of the most economically challenged counties in the State. Only a very small percent of its large land mass is taxable, as much of it is public land or a sovereign nation. Yakima and Kittitas counties rated 6th at 14.7% and 7th at 14.4%, respectively, of the highest poverty rate, by county, in Washington State. Asotin County is 8th at 13.9%. Per the 2021 American Community Survey.

These characteristics are important as they highlight information about our service delivery system. Any examination of our service delivery system must consider the lack of local public funding available to help augment the long term care service delivery system, the tremendous competition for local donor dollars, and the multiple challenges that our service delivery providers face. Extreme poverty, social and economic issues can overwhelm our population base.

THE WASHINGTON ELDER ECONOMIC SECURITY INITIATIVE™

Washington’s low-income elders face financial challenges that threaten their economic security and the health of their communities. They face increasing expenses while their fixed incomes are eroded by weaknesses within the economy. And when income falls short of needs, the potential impact of public support programs is often undermined by underfunding, understaffing, low-income eligibility criteria, and asset eligibility limits which prevent saving. As a result, financial stability eludes many Washington seniors.

The national Elder Economic Security Initiative™ (Initiative) is a multi-year, research-driven campaign to raise awareness of the financial and health challenges facing low-income elders. The Initiative combines coalition building, research, advocacy, education, and outreach at the national, state and community levels to promote the economic well-being of elders, their caregivers, and their families.

MEASURING ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

How much income do Washington’s elders need to meet the real costs of living? How much do public programs -- income, food, medical, transportation, utility, and housing

assistance -- help elders meet rising expenses? To answer these questions, service providers, advocates and policymakers need an accurate measure of elders’ economic security. In response, the Initiative has created a new benchmark—the Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index (Elder Index).

The Elder Index measures the minimum income older adults require to make ends meet, live with dignity, and remain in their own homes. The Elder Index helps workers and retirees plan for the future. It also quantifies the effectiveness of state and national public policy and programs in preserving economic security for older adults.

***The Elder Economic Security Standard Index 2022:** Includes Housing (utilities, taxes, insurance), food, health care (assuming good health), transportation & miscellaneous monthly expenses.

County	Elder Person (age 65+)		
	Owner w/out mortgage	Renter 1 bedroom	Owner with mortgage
Asotin	\$2,056	\$2,290	\$2,893
Benton	\$2,047	\$2,346	\$3,025
Columbia	\$2,016	\$2,276	\$2,853
Franklin	\$2,022	\$2,342	\$2,924
Garfield	\$2,016	\$2,220	\$2,853
Kittitas	\$2,036	\$2,394	\$2,929
Walla Walla	\$2,101	\$2,449	\$3,121
Yakima	\$1,883	\$2,183	\$2,813
<i>WA State Average</i>	<i>\$2,046</i>	<i>\$2,656</i>	<i>\$3,183</i>
<i>National Average</i>	<i>\$1,990</i>	<i>\$2,410</i>	<i>\$3,025</i>

County	Elder Couple (both age 65+)		
	Owner w/out mortgage	Renter 1 bedroom	Owner with mortgage
Asotin	\$3,302	\$3,536	\$4,139
Benton	\$3,244	\$3,543	\$4,222
Columbia	\$3,242	\$3,502	\$4,079
Franklin	\$3,218	\$3,538	\$4,120
Garfield	\$3,242	\$3,446	\$4,079
Kittitas	\$3,263	\$3,621	\$4,156
Walla Walla	\$3,348	\$3,696	\$4,368
Yakima	\$2,984	\$3,284	\$3,914
<i>WA State Average</i>	<i>\$3,112</i>	<i>\$3,722</i>	<i>\$4,249</i>
<i>National Average</i>	<i>\$3,025</i>	<i>\$3,445</i>	<i>\$4,060</i>

*Elder Index. (2022). The Elder Index™ [Public Dataset]. Boston, MA: Gerontology Institute, University of Massachusetts Boston. <https://elderindex.org/>