

# Co-Creating Personas to Understand the Needs of Older Adults in Colorado



To better serve Colorado's aging population, the [Colorado Commission on Aging \(CCOA\)](#), a state-appointed group that advises on the needs and concerns of older adults, wanted to understand the region-specific challenges and opportunities facing this population.

The AgeTech Collaborative™ from AARP Design Thinking team collaborated with the CCOA on a project to uncover key challenges, unmet needs, and lived experiences of older adults through expert interviews, research synthesis, and co-creation. The resulting personas were actionable human-centered tools that can help guide strategy, planning, and services that reflect the real lives of older Coloradans.

## Secondary Research



The Design Thinking team, with the support of the AARP research team, conducted a comprehensive review of existing data to lay the foundation for the personas. This included analyzing **demographic data** and assessing **psychographics** to understand attitudes, motivations, and behaviors. These insights helped determine key attributes, such as income, household makeup, average age, and lifestyle factors that vary across regions and populations.

## Expert Interviews



The team interviewed select local subject matter experts in aging services, healthcare, housing, and transportation to validate research findings and surface lived experience. These conversations focused on perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes, as well as barriers older adults face in accessing services and support. The experts also helped highlight regional differences and emerging needs.

## Persona Workshop



The persona development process was highly collaborative. The Design Thinking team held work sessions with the CCOA's key point person to align on goals and co-create the workshop structure. The main workshop brought together CCOA members and subject matter experts to co-create five personas, each representing a distinct Colorado region. Using insights from interviews and expert input, the Design Thinking team crafted stories that conveyed real, human experiences.

During the session, participants worked in small groups using research-backed profiles as a starting point. Together, they shaped **motivations**, **needs**, **pains**, and **gains** for each persona, specifically designed to map out and identify **opportunities** for practical, strategic solutions to better serve older adults in different regions of Colorado.

## Outcomes

The workshop output was delivered as a set of **five region-specific personas** in the AgeTech Collaborative Design Thinking template. Together, the personas captured emotional and functional needs of older adults across Colorado, offering a holistic view of their diverse experiences, challenges, values, and aspirations.

Grounded in both data and real-world stories, the personas help bring abstract data to life and create a shared language across stakeholders, serving as a tool to support more informed, human-centered decision-making.

The personas now serve as a shared reference point across agencies and initiatives, helping ensure that policies and programs are grounded in empathy, equity, and real-world insights.

DEMOGRAPHICS		MOTIVATIONS	
<b>IRIS: South-East</b>		What are the personas motivations? What do they feel excited about? What would they like to do?	
	Employment: xx	   	
	HH Income: \$\$\$		
	Marital Status: xx		
	Dependents: x		
	Age: xx		
	Sex: xx		
PAINS		NEEDS	
What are their fears, frustrations and anxieties with aging in Colorado?		What are their needs as aging older adults in Colorado?	
   		   	
GAINS			
What are their wants, needs, hopes? What will the consumer get if you do this right?		   	