Building Insights into Age-Friendly Community (AFC) Initiative Impact

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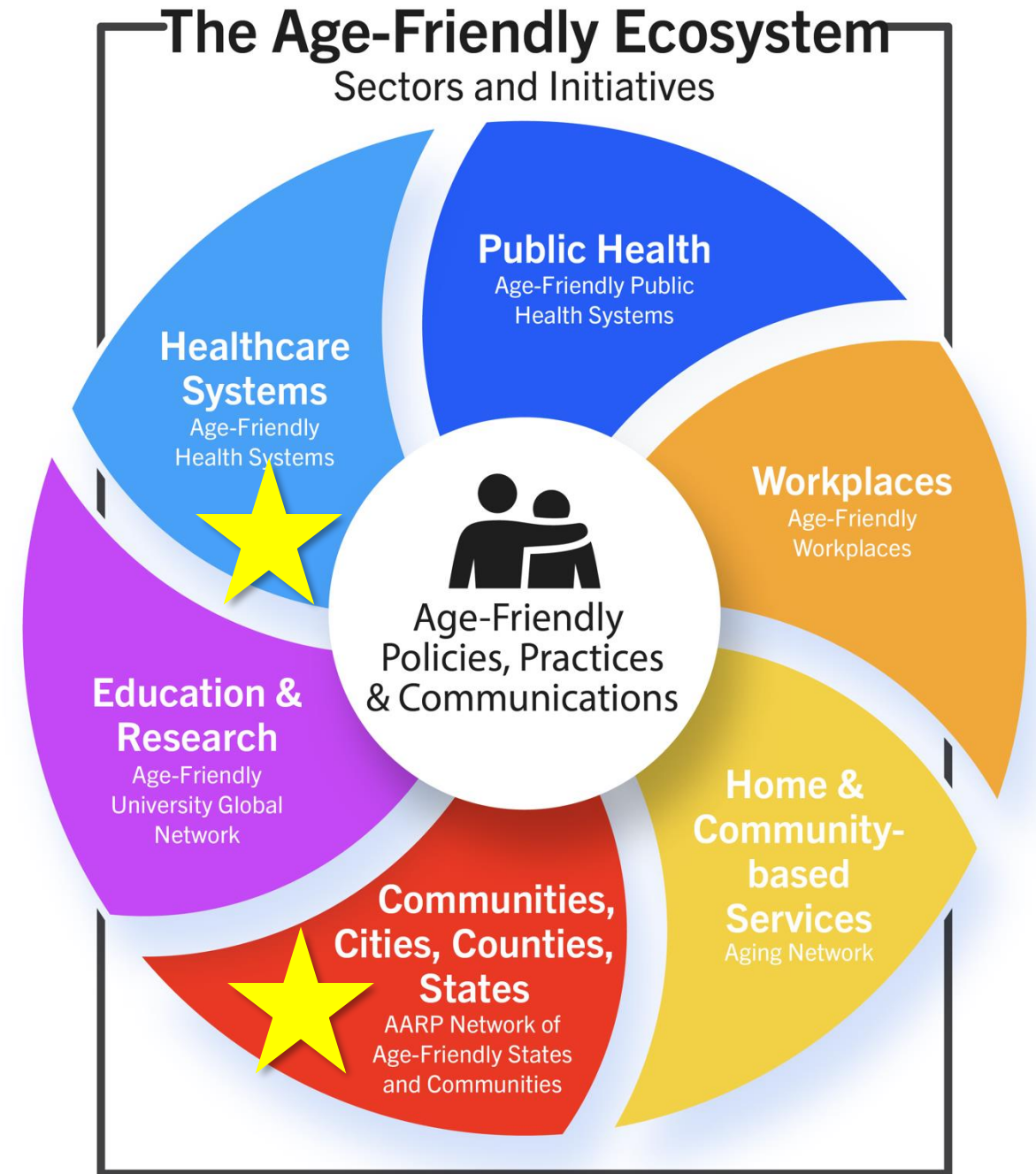
Age-Friendly Research Team

Hub for Aging Collaboration at Rutgers School of Social Work

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School of Social Work

Age-Friendly as Social Innovation

The Age-Friendly Ecosystem
Sectors and Initiatives

Public Health
Age-Friendly Public Health Systems

Healthcare Systems
Age-Friendly Health Systems

Workplaces
Age-Friendly Workplaces

Age-Friendly Policies, Practices & Communications

Education & Research
Age-Friendly University Global Network

Home & Community-based Services
Aging Network

Communities, Cities, Counties, States
AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities

https://www.johnahartford.org/grants-strategy/current-strategies/age-friendly/age-friendly-ecosystem

What Drives Innovation Forward?

Photo Credit Tom Franklin

Project Timeline
2016-2023

2015-2016
Launch of Grant & Evaluation Program

2017-2019
Evaluation of Planning & Implementation

2020
Study of Operations During COVID

2021
Formal Launch of Age-Friendly North Jersey

2022-2023
Evaluation of Sustainability & Outcomes

4 Reports

10+ Articles

- AFC logic models
- Roles of older adults
- Functions of events
- Advancing aging equity
- AFC response to COVID
- Interorganizational interactions
- Outcomes/systems change

go.rutgers.edu/agefriendly

AFC Outcomes within the Waters of Systems Change

Greenfield, E. A., & Pope, N. E. (2025). "It made me change the way I do business": Outcomes from age-friendly community initiatives as systems change. *The Gerontologist*, *65*(1), gnae149. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnae149

Data Collection

When Collected	Winter/Spring 2023
Number of Participants	26 Participants
Interview Duration	1 Hour
Interview Location	Zoom (Individual Interviews)
Software for Analysis	Dedoose
Analytic Modalities	Coding (Structural, Focused), Analytic Memoing
Analysis Process	Two Analysis Phases

Iterative Practice-Based Knowledge Development

PHASE 1:

What was the "yield" of these initiatives? How can we summarize their accomplishments under broader conceptual buckets?

1. Creation and Enhancement of **Programs and Services**

2. Changes to the **Built Environment**

3. Changing the **Social Fabric** on Aging within the Community

4. Expanding Influence **Beyond the Local**

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RESEARCH REPORT

Age-Friendly Community Initiatives in Their Maturity:
Insights from a Multi-Year Grantmaking Program in New Jersey

DECEMBER 2023

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Iterative Practice-Based Knowledge Development

PHASE 2:

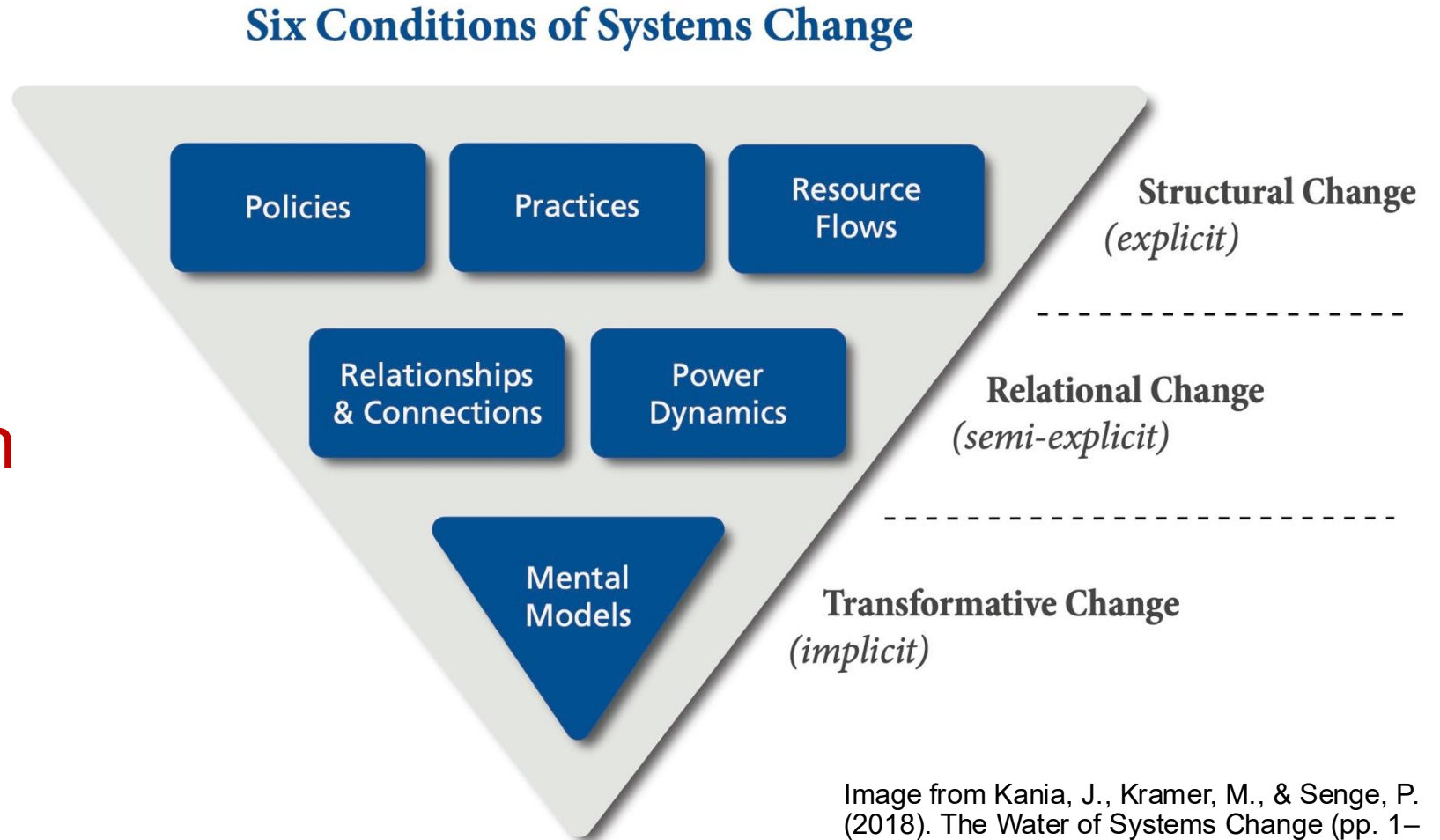In what ways do these accomplishments reflect shifts in systems conditions?

Six Conditions of Systems Change

Policies

Practices

Resource Flows

Relationships & Connections

Power Dynamics

Mental Models

Structural Change (explicit)

Relational Change (semi-explicit)

Transformative Change (implicit)

Image from Kania, J., Kramer, M., & Senge, P. (2018). The Water of Systems Change (pp. 1–18). *Reframing Social Change*. FSG.

https://www.fsg.org/resource/water_of_systems_change/

Iterative Practice-Based Knowledge Development

PHASE 2:

In what ways do these accomplishments reflect shifts in systems conditions?

Category	Manifestations of Change in Systems Conditions From AFC Initiatives

Practices	o Enhanced programs and services within the community
	  • Cultivating aging-focused programs and services within organizations with little prior involvement with older adults
	  • Improving and expanding programs and services within organizations already focused on aging
	o Stronger norms for collaborative practice on aging

Resource Flows	o Altered resource flows concerning the built environment o Altered resource flows concerning the social environment o Improving flow of information within communities
Policy	o Passage of local policies o Improved implementation of local policies o Influence on state policy
Relationships & Connections	o Establishing new and long-term collaborations through community events and programs o Fostering new groups for convening leaders on aging o Creating connections between older residents and key community actors
Power	o Growing influence of AFC core team on municipal administration o Influencing power dynamics through municipal committees on aging
Mental Models	o Understanding of age-friendly lens and its benefits o Recognition of importance of local services for older residents o Viewing community-based organizations as a resource for community leaders on aging

Takeaways from Our Qualitative Approach

Long-Term Contextual Knowledge as Key Strength

Research as Relationship & Trust Building Practice

Integrating Practitioner "Voice" with Theory