LTQA Response on Strategic Framework for a National Plan on Aging

1. What do you like about the Strategic Framework for a National Plan on Aging?

The Long-Term Quality Alliance (LTQA) commends the Strategic Framework for a National Plan on Aging for its comprehensive approach to addressing the diverse needs of the aging population.

LTQA is a 501(c)3 membership organization dedicated to improving outcomes and quality of life for individuals who need long-term services and supports (LTSS), as well as their families. LTQA advances person- and family-centered, integrated LTSS through research, education, and advocacy. By promoting the collaboration of public and private sector leaders, LTQA works to drive improvements in care quality, enhance integration, and ensure that LTSS services meet the needs of individuals and families effectively. Our members consist of a diverse group of organizations, including managed care plans, health systems, provider organizations, and advocacy groups, all united in their commitment to advancing integrated, high-quality long-term services and supports. This broad representation ensures that LTQA's work reflects a wide range of perspectives from across the LTSS continuum, allowing for more effective advocacy and collaboration to improve outcomes for older adults and individuals with disabilities.

LTQA was commissioned to create a report, attached below, that outlines recommendations and key takeaways from stakeholder interviews to inform the National Strategic Framework for Aging. It was funded by The John A. Hartford Foundation, The SCAN Foundation, and the West Health Institute. The purpose was to support the development of a national framework for aging by building on state Multisector Plans for Aging (MPAs). Over 30 interviews with key stakeholders were conducted as part of this effort to gather insights for informing the Interagency Coordinating Committee (ICC) on Healthy Aging and Age-Friendly Communities, and potentially contributing to the next White House Conference on Aging. The report provides key insights from those interviews, including perspectives on the coordination between federal agencies, states, and local governments in addressing aging issues. The National Framework on Aging then utilized this report to adopt recommendations tailored to each domain. In our comment letter, LTQA will be reviewing which recommendations were successfully adopted into the framework and which ones could be more fully integrated.

One of the framework's overall strengths is its emphasis on active stakeholder engagement, which aligns with the LTQA's recommendation to involve consumers and stakeholders in both the development and implementation phases. This ensures that the framework is grounded in the real-world experiences and needs of older adults, making it

more likely to succeed in practical application. The framework also excels in its focus on creating a living, adaptable document that can evolve over time. This flexibility, which LTQA strongly advocates for, is crucial in a rapidly changing landscape where the needs of older adults and the resources available to them are constantly shifting. By ensuring that the framework is not static but instead regularly reviewed and updated, it sets the stage for continuous improvement and relevance.

Within the domain of Age-Friendly Communities, the Strategic Framework recognizes the importance of creating environments that support older adults, including enhancing support for age-friendly communities at a federal level. This aligns with LTQA's recommendation to clearly define and promote age-friendly communities in a way that is comprehensive, addressing both physical and social infrastructure. Additionally, the framework successfully highlights the importance of accessibility, emphasizing the need for inclusive public spaces and services that enable older adults to remain active and engaged in their communities. By acknowledging the role of local governments and community stakeholders in driving age-friendly initiatives, the framework fosters a collaborative approach that encourages the adoption of these principles across diverse regions, ensuring that more communities become equipped to support the aging population.

The Housing and Services Coordination domain is another area where the framework appropriately adopts numerous LTQA recommendations. It rightly focuses on improving access to affordable housing and integrating essential support services, reflecting LTQA's emphasis on broadening the scope of housing discussions to include community-wide access to services that enable older adults to age in place. The framework's efforts to foster stronger collaboration between Medicaid and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are especially noteworthy, as this collaboration could greatly benefit those who utilize LTSS. . By enhancing coordination between healthcare and housing services, this collaboration emphasizes the need for sustainable, long-term solutions to reduce health disparities by ensuring access to stable housing, which is a key social determinant of health.

Within the Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) domain, the Strategic Framework effectively incorporates several of LTQA's key recommendations. The framework's focus on addressing financing challenges is crucial to ensuring the sustainability of LTSS programs, particularly in states where resources are limited. LTQA's advocacy for continuing rebalancing efforts—shifting the focus from institutional care to home- and community-based services (HCBS)—is evident in the framework's emphasis on promoting HCBS access and reducing institutional bias. Furthermore, the prioritization of workforce development and training reflects LTQA's call for solutions to the ongoing workforce challenges in the LTSS sector. By focusing on recruitment, retention, and skills

development, the framework aligns with ARPA-funded state initiatives aimed at strengthening the workforce that delivers these essential services. Incorporating LTQA's recommendations ensures that the LTSS domain remains responsive to the real needs of both service providers and recipients.

In the Aligned Health Care and Supportive Services domain, the Strategic Framework mirrors LTQA's emphasis on removing institutional bias and fostering cross-sector collaboration. The framework's commitment to integrating health care with supportive services addresses a significant gap in care coordination for older adults, particularly those who utilize LTSS. Additionally, by aligning healthcare and supportive services, the framework promotes a holistic approach that connects individuals to necessary resources, reducing service fragmentation. LTQA has long advocated for this type of integration to ensure that older adults can access comprehensive care that addresses both their medical and social needs.

Overall, the Strategic Framework for a National Plan on Aging effectively incorporates several key recommendations from LTQA, particularly in the domains of Age-Friendly Communities and Housing and Services Coordination. Its strengths lie in its inclusive approach, its emphasis on cross-sector collaboration, and its adaptable nature. These elements provide a solid foundation for the framework's success in addressing the complex and evolving needs of the aging population.

2. What is missing from the Strategic Framework for a National Plan on Aging?

The Long-Term Quality Alliance (LTQA) appreciates the Strategic Framework for a National Plan on Aging but notes several critical elements from LTQA's initial recommendations, based on thought leader interviews, which have not been fully addressed. The framework should further strive to balance flexible consistency with innovation, allowing states to address their unique challenges while adhering to unified national standards. Given that aging is a dynamic issue and the framework is designed as a living, adaptable document, this flexibility would enable the framework to respond effectively to new developments in aging and long-term care.

Additionally, the Strategic Framework does not provide dedicated funding and administrative support to implement the Framework's goals. While we recognize that the ICC does not have the authority to dedicate funds to implementation, an acknowledgment that funding and administrative support will be necessary should be noted. Federal support could include grants, technical assistance, and policy guidance that allows states and communities to implement changes. Implementation support can ensure that the

Framework does not become merely a policy document without practical impact. Another critical component is addressing federal funding silos, which could hinder the framework's implementation. Coordinated efforts supported by comprehensive funding would better ensure that the holistic needs of older adults are met.

While ACL, with the support of the Community Engagement Collaborative has conducted several focus groups and listening sessions, LTQA believes the Framework requires more emphasis on the development and implementation of a robust public messaging and communications campaign. While the framework recognizes the importance of engaging with communities and relevant parties, it falls short in ensuring that its strategic goals are communicated and operationalized beyond the publication of the report. To truly drive change, it is essential to expand outreach beyond the usual players and engage key leaders at the highest levels, including the White House, if the framework is to effectively inform the next White House Conference on Aging (WHCOA). A strong public messaging campaign—leveraging state agency partnerships, social platforms, and cross-sector collaborations—is critical to raising awareness, gaining widespread support, and encouraging active participation from all segments of society. This campaign should clearly outline the framework's benefits, define the roles of various stakeholders, and ensure its goals are embraced at every level—from federal agencies to local communities. By doing so, the framework can transition from being an aspirational document to one that drives real, measurable change in how the nation approaches aging.

To enhance nationwide guidance, LTQA recommends the importance of creating a blueprint for state Master Plans for Aging (MPAs). This blueprint would guide states at various stages of MPA development, ensuring increased unification and effectiveness across the country on a National Plan for Aging. The framework should also be careful to avoid contradicting or duplicating existing state efforts, while still accounting for variability across states. Additionally, a focus on economic security is crucial to the well-being of the aging population, and prioritizing LTSS financing, Medicaid, SSI, and addressing food insecurity are key areas to further enhance the framework. By focusing on both economic security and cohesive planning, the blueprint can help ensure a more effective and equitable response to aging across the nation.

Additionally, while the framework appropriately acknowledges the importance of age-friendly communities, it should go further by clearly defining what constitutes such communities to ensure they are inclusive and welcoming to all generations. This definition should encompass not only physical infrastructure, such as accessible transportation and housing, but also the social and economic factors that contribute to the well-being of older adults. A well-defined concept of age-friendly communities would help guide local and

state governments in creating environments where older adults can thrive without feeling isolated or marginalized.

Likewise, as the aging population faces increasingly frequent natural disasters and other emergencies, it is also crucial that communities are equipped to respond effectively. This includes ensuring that older adults have access to essential services during crises, such as cooling and heating centers, reliable communication channels, and emergency preparedness plans tailored to their specific needs. Taking these steps would help build resilient, age-friendly communities that support older adults while fostering intergenerational solidarity.

To further strengthen the framework, LTQA encourages the ICC to establish a robust system of performance metrics and evaluation. While the framework outlines important goals, it lacks sufficient detail on how progress will be measured and how success will be defined. Establishing clear, quantifiable metrics for each objective and domain is essential to track the impact of the framework and ensure that its initiatives lead to meaningful outcomes for older adults. Additionally, integrating a process for regular data collection and evaluation will allow participants to assess the effectiveness of the framework in real time, making adjustments as needed to address emerging challenges. Ongoing evaluation will help ensure the framework responds to evolving needs. By embedding these performance metrics and evaluation mechanisms, the framework can provide accountability, transparency, and the evidence necessary to support continuous improvement in aging services.

In conclusion, LTQA appreciates the comprehensive approach undertaken by the Strategic Framework for a National Plan on Aging to address the challenges faced by our aging population. However, to fully realize its potential, the framework should incorporate the missing elements identified by LTQA, including recognition of the need for dedicated funding and administrative support, flexible consistency that encourages innovation, and the importance of standardized metrics, robust data collection, and evaluation. Additionally, addressing federal funding silos, creating a blueprint for state MPAs, expanding the focus on home and community-based services (HCBS), developing a public campaign, and defining and supporting age-friendly communities are all critical to the framework's success. By including these elements, the framework will be better equipped to meet the evolving needs of older adults and ensure a lasting impact across the nation.

3. What could be added or changed to the Age-Friendly Communities domain in the Strategic Framework for a National Plan on Aging?

To enhance the Age-Friendly Communities domain within the Strategic Framework for a National Plan on Aging, several important elements should be considered. While the framework appropriately acknowledges the significance of age-friendly communities, it could benefit from a more robust and detailed definition of what constitutes an age-friendly community. LTQA's recommendations emphasize that this definition should go beyond physical infrastructure to include social, economic, and healthcare factors that contribute to the well-being of older adults. This broader, flexible approach allows communities to tailor solutions that address specific local challenges while adhering to national goals. Defining these communities clearly would ensure that local and state governments have a comprehensive understanding of what they should be striving to achieve, thus avoiding any ambiguity in implementation. Emphasizing the interconnection between services, such as transportation enabling access to healthcare or social activities, is also key in defining these communities. Additionally, integrating elements like disaster preparedness, mental health support, and multigenerational engagement ensures that communities are truly inclusive and adaptable, addressing both immediate needs and future challenges without a one-size-fits-all approach.

A critical addition should be the integration of dementia-friendly goals as an essential part of age-friendly community efforts. Given the rising prevalence of dementia, it is vital for communities to develop solutions that cater to individuals with cognitive impairments. AARP, an LTQA member, produced a research papers, "Better Together: A Comparative Analysis of Age-Friendly and Dementia Friendly Communities" (https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/IAReport_BetterTogether_v4.pdf) that highlights how dementia-friendly and age-friendly efforts can work in synergy, reinforcing each other to create more comprehensive support systems. This collaboration would involve physical adaptations, such as dementia-friendly design elements, such as clear signage, wayfinding tools, and sensory-friendly environments, as well as the education and training of community members, healthcare providers, and service personnel to better support those living with dementia. The National Framework should embed dementia-specific goals into this domain to ensure that communities not only foster inclusivity but also provide the necessary resources and adaptations for individuals with cognitive impairments to live with dignity and independence.

Additionally, the framework does not adequately address the needs of those living in nursing homes and other institutional settings. While LTQA appreciates the emphasis on Age-Friendly Health Systems contained within the Framework, we strongly encourage the ICC to address the needs of nursing home residents. Nursing homes are often left out of community health initiatives, which can lead to isolation for residents and limited access

to integrated care services overall. While LTQA supports the expansion of HCBS in all states, we recognize a large proportion of older adults and people with disabilities still live in institutional settings. According to CMS data, approximately 1.2 million people lived in over 15,000 certified nursing homes in July 2022. By ensuring nursing homes are part of the framework for national plan on aging, we can promote a more inclusive approach that enhances both the quality of care and the quality of life for older adults residing in these settings. The Moving Forward Coalition, led by LTQA members, The John A. Hartford Foundation and Leading Age, aims to improve quality and accountability in nursing homes, emphasizing the need for innovation and collaboration between nursing homes and other sectors of healthcare to enhance care integration and resident well-being. More information can be found here: https://movingforwardcoalition.org/.

Furthermore, while the framework promotes the concept of age-friendly communities, it could go further by addressing the importance of fostering multi-generational communities. LTQA has underscored the value of intergenerational support in reducing social isolation and strengthening community bonds. Encouraging the development of communities that cater to multiple generations would break down age-related silos, fostering more inclusive and supportive environments. Specifically, multi-generational communities could better meet the needs of families by providing shared resources such as housing, transportation, and communal spaces that accommodate all age groups. This approach would not only enhance social cohesion but also create opportunities for knowledge sharing and caregiving support between generations, ultimately leading to stronger age-friendly communities that adapt to the diverse needs of their residents across the lifespan.

Finally, the framework could place greater emphasis on federal support for age-friendly initiatives. This support could include grants, technical assistance, and policy guidance that empower communities to make necessary changes. While we recognize the ICC does not have the authority to grant funding, it seems important to recognize that the lack of resources hampers the widespread adoption of age-friendly principles nationwide, which would help ensure that all older adults have access to supportive, inclusive communities. Additionally, this federal backing could drive innovation in creating multi-generational spaces that not only meet the needs of older adults but also foster social inclusion across age groups. By prioritizing equity and sustainability, this federal support would ensure that underserved and rural areas have the capacity to implement age-friendly communities, reducing disparities in access to age-friendly services and infrastructure.

In summary, while the Age-Friendly Communities domain of the Strategic Framework for a National Plan on Aging is on the right path, it could be significantly strengthened by incorporating a clearer definition of age-friendly communities, integrating dementia-

friendly and multi-generational goals, improving nursing home inclusion in community-based systems, and enhancing federal support for age-friendly initiatives. These additions would create a more comprehensive and effective strategy for building communities that support the well-being of older adults.

4. What could be added or changed to the Coordinated Housing and Support Services domain in the Strategic Framework on a National Plan on Aging?

To significantly enhance the Coordinated Housing and Support Services domain in the Strategic Framework for a National Plan on Aging, a multifaceted approach is necessary. First, expanding the framework's focus to improve access to housing within broader community settings is vital. Rather than concentrating solely on housing within buildings, the framework should ensure that older adults have access to essential services in the community regardless of where they reside. For example, partnerships with healthcare and HCBS providers, such as PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) providers and other primary care providers, could include offering physical spaces for them to operate within these communities. This integration allows for seamless access to a wide range of services, ensuring that older adults receive comprehensive support and care in their own neighborhoods.

Furthermore, there is a critical need to increase education and integration between housing communities and the healthcare system, particularly LTSS, as these sectors currently operate in silos, missing key opportunities for collaboration and improved care coordination. This broader perspective would support the goal of enabling older adults to age in place, a growing priority as more individuals express a preference to remain in their own homes and communities.

The framework should also prioritize and promote innovative housing solutions, such as multi-generational homes, which offer both social and economic benefits. Housing that accommodates multiple generations can reduce social isolation among older adults and foster intergenerational support networks. Expanding Medicaid's role in providing housing-related services would also ensure greater stability for older adults, helping them maintain their health and well-being. Additionally, local governments should address restrictive local zoning laws that limit alternative housing options, like tiny homes on family properties, providing older adults with greater flexibility in their living arrangements. These changes would expand housing choices and create more supportive environments for older adults.

Likewise, the framework should consider the unique challenges posed by climate change and other environmental factors. Communities must be prepared to respond effectively to

natural disasters and extreme weather events, which disproportionately affect older adults. Ensuring that housing is resilient and that older adults have access to emergency services, such as cooling centers during heatwaves, is essential for protecting their health and safety.

Data collection is another area where the framework could be strengthened. By collecting more nuanced data on housing, including factors like accessibility, Wi-Fi access, and other essential services, policymakers, and collaborators would gain a clearer understanding of the specific needs and challenges faced by older adults. This data could inform more targeted interventions and policies that address the root causes of housing insecurity among older adults.

Lastly, LTQA appreciates the framework's emphasis on enhancing collaboration between Medicaid and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and believes this collaboration could be further strengthened to create a more integrated approach to health and housing services. Enhanced collaboration could make it simpler for older adults to access services that support them in maintaining their independence and quality of life. To improve coordination between HUD and Medicaid, stronger partnerships with Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are crucial. Training these organizations on their potential roles, such as managing voucher systems, would further enhance housing support for older adults. HUD can also play a key role in preventing evictions by integrating Continuum of Care (CoC) program, which aims to end homelessness for housing and services through community commitment, funding, and coordination. By emphasizing the need for stronger partnerships between these agencies, the framework could pave the way for ensuring that older adults receive comprehensive, coordinated care that addresses both their health and housing needs.

Incorporating these recommendations into the Coordinated Housing and Support Services domain would create a more robust, comprehensive strategy that addresses the diverse needs of older adults. By focusing on access, affordability, innovation, and resilience, the framework can help ensure that older adults have the housing and support services they need to live healthy, fulfilling lives in their communities.

5. What could be added or changed to the Increased Access to Long-Term Services and Supports domain in the Strategic Framework for a National Plan on Aging?

LTQA's mission is to advance high-quality, person- and family-centered, integrated long-term services and supports (LTSS).   We appreciate that this is one of the four domains emphasized by the framework and strong believe it is critical issue facing our nation as the

population ages. The Increased Access to LTSS domain in the Strategic Framework for a National Plan on Aging is a critical area that requires further refinement, particularly in addressing LTSS's financing challenges, to ensure it effectively meets the needs of the aging population. One of the key recommendations from LTQA is to focus more on financing strategies, which are currently underemphasized. The framework should explore innovative financing models, such as state-level long-term care insurance programs like Washington's "WA Cares Fund," which provides a state-mandated long-term care benefit funded through payroll deductions, and California's "Long-Term Care at Home" initiative, which seeks to create a home-based alternative to institutional care. Additionally, advocating for federal expansion of programs like PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly), which integrates medical, social, and long-term services to enable older adults to remain in their homes, could significantly improve LTSS access. .

In addition to financing, the framework should incorporate lessons learned from entities and states that have utilized ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds to address workforce challenges in the LTSS sector. Many states have used ARPA funding to implement initiatives aimed at workforce recruitment, retention, and training, along with improving service quality and reducing waiting lists for HCBS. LTQA's work in this area, including our July 2024 webinar on ARPA HCBS spending plans, highlighted key challenges and strategies from state implementations. For example, Colorado's efforts in tracking and managing these initiatives underscored the need for robust administrative support and sustainability planning to ensure long-term success beyond the ARPA funding period. Additionally, as emphasized in the LTQA webinar, one of the challenges states faced was managing large amounts of ARPA funding under tight deadlines, which put additional pressure on implementation efforts. Incorporating these insights could help strengthen both financing and workforce development strategies within the framework.

Moreover, the framework should emphasize the importance of continuing rebalancing efforts to shift the focus from institutional care to home and community-based services. LTQA has long advocated for rebalancing the LTSS system to promote independence and allow older adults to age in place. Managed care organizations (MCOs) play a crucial role in enhancing and supporting LTSS, and the framework should highlight how MCOs can drive innovation in the delivery of LTSS. The framework should include specific goals and actions to accelerate this shift, such as increasing funding for HCBS, providing incentives for states to prioritize these services, and addressing the institutional bias that often leads to a disproportionate emphasis on nursing home care.

Increasing awareness of available community supports and services is another area that should be included within this domain. Many older adults and their families are unaware of the LTSS options available to them, leading to underutilization of services that could

significantly improve their quality of life. The framework should include strategies for increasing public awareness, such as targeted outreach campaigns, informational resources, and partnerships with community organizations that can help connect older adults with the services they need. It is essential to showcase the work being done by states, ADvancing States (an LTQA member) and other entities that have taken steps to enhance their LTSS infrastructure through the use of ARPA funds and other mechanisms.

This awareness should include not only how community supports and services benefit the person accessing care but also their caregivers. Caregivers often play a critical role in managing the health and well-being of individuals receiving LTSS, yet they frequently lack the necessary resources and support. The framework should focus on increasing awareness of how community services can ease the burden on caregivers—through respite care, caregiver training, and mental health support, so that communities can promote better outcomes for everyone. To strengthen caregiver support in the framework, it's important to highlight the initiatives of the Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA) and the National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP). Both of these organizations were instrumental in implementing the Caregiver Action Plan, which aims to integrate LTSS into state and community health policies. These organizations focus on increasing resources such as respite care, caregiver training, and mental health services. By incorporating their work, the framework can ensure that caregivers are better equipped and supported, ultimately enhancing the overall well-being of individuals receiving LTSS and their families. This approach not only reduces caregiver burnout but also fosters improved health outcomes across communities.

Finally, the framework needs stronger support and commitment from CMS and other federal entities. While we recognize that ACL has taken the lead in developing the framework, we strongly encourage all of the HHS agencies to let their priorities be known, especially CMS. Medicare and Medicaid are critically important to the well-being of an aging population.   To ensure sustainable solutions for LTSS, it's crucial to expand the role of Medicare in addressing the needs of older adults. While Medicare provides essential coverage for acute care, it doesn't fully address long-term care needs like home-based services or nursing care. Strengthening the coordination between Medicare and Medicaid within the strategic framework can fill this gap. Additionally, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) plays a pivotal role by testing new care delivery models, such as value-based care, which can enhance access to LTSS. By leveraging CMMI's innovative models and fostering greater collaboration, the strategic framework can scale solutions that meet the growing LTSS demands across states.

Looking ahead, the Increased Access to Long-Term Services and Supports domain has the potential to be strengthened by adopting forward-thinking strategies that tackle persistent challenges in financing, workforce development, and service delivery. Drawing on insights

from ARPA-funded workforce initiatives will be crucial in addressing future workforce shortages and improving care quality. Building a more resilient federal infrastructure and continuing efforts to rebalance care settings will be key to ensuring long-term sustainability. Additionally, expanding public awareness campaigns and increasing awareness of services will help create a more inclusive, person-centered system. By embracing these approaches, the framework can evolve to better meet the diverse needs of older adults and ensure access to high-quality, comprehensive LTSS for generations to come.

6. What could be added or changed to the Aligned Health Care and Supportive Services domain in the Strategic Framework for a National Plan on Aging?

To strengthen the Aligned Health Care and Supportive Services domain in the Strategic Framework for a National Plan on Aging, several key enhancements should be considered, drawing on LTQA's initial recommendations from stakeholder interviews. These enhancements aim to create a more integrated, responsive, and effective healthcare system for older adults.

One of the most critical aspects that the framework should emphasize is the incorporation of preventive healthcare. LTQA's recommendations highlight the need to explore innovative payment models and incentive structures that prioritize preventive services. The framework can expand its focus to include the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) in testing innovative payment models. Currently, such efforts are only happening at the state level. By involving CMMI, the framework could support broader experimentation with new payment structures that promote cost-effective, high-quality care for older adults. CMMI's involvement would be vital in scaling successful state-level models to a national level, ensuring that more older adults benefit from these innovations.

In regards to preventive healthcare, this field not only helps individuals maintain better health outcomes over time but also generates significant cost savings by reducing the need for more intensive treatments later on. The framework should encourage a shift in the healthcare culture from focusing primarily on curative care to one that equally values prevention and wellness. This cultural shift is vital in identifying clinical and social risk factors early, allowing for timely interventions that can mitigate or even prevent the onset of more severe health conditions. Additionally, bolstering secondary prevention efforts—such as managing chronic conditions and cognitive challenges—is crucial in helping older adults maintain a good quality of life as they age. To make preventive care more accessible, it is also important to address consumer protections, ensuring that older adults can access the Medicare and Medicare Advantage services they need without facing barriers like claims denials.

Additionally, the framework should place a stronger emphasis on behavioral health, recognizing its importance in overall well-being for older adults. Older adults face unique behavioral health challenges, often compounded by social isolation, chronic illness, or cognitive decline. The integration of behavioral health into primary care and supportive services is critical to ensuring comprehensive, holistic care. Addressing mental health and substance use issues alongside physical health can lead to better overall outcomes and improve quality of life for older adults. The framework must prioritize these issues, ensuring that older adults receive the necessary mental health support alongside their physical care.

Another crucial area for improvement is enhancing coordination between healthcare and supportive services. The current fragmentation of care often leads to gaps in service delivery, which can be detrimental to the well-being of older adults. To address this, the framework should promote the adoption of shared care plans that facilitate seamless transitions between different care settings and providers. By enhancing communication technologies, healthcare providers, LTSS agencies, and community-based organizations can collaborate more effectively, ensuring that older adults receive continuous and comprehensive care. This collaboration is particularly important in managing complex health conditions that require coordinated efforts across multiple sectors. Integrating healthcare and supportive services will help eliminate redundancies, reduce the risk of errors, and ensure that care is tailored to the individual needs of each older adult.

Likewise, leveraging technology and data interoperability is another critical area the framework must address. Current limitations in data-sharing systems, often restricted by incompatible technologies and regulations such as HIPAA, create significant barriers to coordinated care, leading to further care fragmentation and inefficiencies. Enhancing interoperability between stakeholders is critical for improving communication, reducing redundancies, and lowering costs. By promoting integrated data systems that can securely share patient information across sectors, the framework can facilitate more efficient, personalized, and comprehensive care.

Lastly, the framework should emphasize the importance of public awareness and education in fostering a more informed and engaged older adult population. Educating older adults about their healthcare options, including preventive services, community resources, and the benefits available to them through Medicare and other programs, is crucial for empowering them to make informed decisions about their health. Public awareness campaigns could also help reduce stigma around aging and promote a culture of health and wellness that values preventive care.

By incorporating these recommendations, the Aligned Health Care and Supportive Services domain can be better equipped to meet the evolving needs of older adults. These

changes would create a more integrated, preventive, and person-centered approach to healthcare, ultimately enhancing the quality of life for aging individuals across the nation. The framework's success in this domain will depend on its ability to adapt to the dynamic nature of aging and to foster collaboration across all sectors involved in the care and support of older adults.