



**The Rural Route to Active Aging:
Evaluation Survey Results Final Report**

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1. The Rural Route to Active Aging - Background Information

The purpose of Alberta Centre for Active Living's Rural Route to Active Aging Project was to improve the health of rural Albertans through education, facilitating community action, and promoting lifelong physical activity.

As with many Alberta Centre for Active Living projects, there is potential for this project to influence the work of practitioners and lives of older adults from all provinces in Canada (and beyond). It is the practice of the Centre to make the resources it develops available for others to use through the Centre's well known web site.

The two year Rural Route to Active Aging Project focused on improving the health of rural Albertans through an active lifestyle. The first phase of the project was spent learning

- what physical activity means to rural older adults,
- older adult views of the benefits of being active,
- what older adults do to stay physically active, and
- what the most desirable forms of physical activity are among older adults in rural Alberta.

In order to find out the answers to these questions, focus groups were conducted with older adults from six rural Albertan communities. Using information from these regional focus groups, and considerable input from project's excellent advisory committee, a resource booklet was created for the use of older adults.

The second phase of the project focussed on the promotion of the new booklet, which was titled *The Rural Route to Active Aging: A Guide for People Who Want to Stay Active*. The booklet was positioned as an educational and promotional tool for increasing physical activity among older adults in rural communities. It provides practitioners, community leaders, organizations and older adults with information about the importance of physical activity, how to be physically active in a rural environment, methods of making your community more active and, resources and tools that are available online.

Jennifer Dechaine, Older Adult Coordinator, was responsible for the project and visited 39 communities to introduce and disseminate the booklet. Additionally, she used the community presentations as an opportunity to educate and inform older adults (55 to 75 years old) and practitioners about the online physical activity tracker and to discuss physical activity and aging in rural Alberta.

The presentations provided the following discussion areas for practitioners, community leaders, organizations and older adults:

- Focus group findings
- Related research

- Influences on physical activity
- Local issues and solutions
- Resources
- Rural success stories
- Booklet launch
- Future Rural Route to Active Aging website.

This document provides the final report of the survey findings of the Rural Route for Active Aging presentations that were conducted across the province and the resources disseminated. The information collected to assess these presentations and resources was gathered from an online survey after all the presentations were completed. In some cases, this was three months after the presentation, and in other cases the survey was completed more than three months later as more presentations were scheduled than originally planned

2. Evaluation of the Dissemination of the Resources - Method

The resources developed and disseminated in the Rural Route to Active Aging Project included the community presentations, the online physical activity tracker for older adults, and the booklets.

An online survey was used to evaluate these resources as follows:

- Responders: 150 presentation attendees were sent an email inviting them to participate in a short survey evaluating the presentation, online activity tracker and booklet. Of the 150 presentation attendees contacted 50 people completed the online survey.
- On-line Survey: The online survey consisted of 4 demographic questions, and 10 questions assessing the presentation, booklet and an online physical activity tracker. A copy of the survey questions has been included in Appendix A.

3. Evaluation Survey - Results

a) Description of Responders

The responders to the survey were community practitioners, program coordinators/ managers, decision makers and older adults.

- 82% of the responders attended the presentation for work purposes
- 50% of the responders were from northern Alberta
- 26% were from the central Alberta

- 24% were from southern Alberta

The size of the communities that the responders live in ranged in population from:

- 600-5000 (36%)
- 5100-10000 (26%)
- 110000+ (38%)

b) Evaluation of the Community Presentations

There was strong agreement among responders that the community presentations brought attention to the issues of physical activity (98% agreed), helped the participants see opportunities for active living (90% agreed) and identified barriers to active living for older adults in the community (92% agreed).

90% of the participants that attended the presentation for work purposes applied some of what they learned about supporting active living for older adults in their work.

48% of the responders reported supporting active living of older adults in the community after the presentation.

57% of the responders felt the presentation brought people from the community together to work on issues related to lifelong physical activity, 16% disagreed and 27% were unsure.

c) Evaluation of the Booklet.

The survey responders unanimously agreed (100%) that the booklet brought attention to the issues surrounding physical activity in their community and was a useful resource.

61% have used the booklet to encourage older adults to be physically active.

d) Evaluation of the Activity Tracker

8% of the survey responders have used the online Activity Tracker for older adults.

4. Discussion of Findings

a) Target Group of Project

According to the results from the online survey, the presentation attendees were predominantly practitioners, program coordinators and decision makers concerned about active living among older adults in rural communities. This suggests that the presentations were successful at reaching the Alberta Centre for Active Living's target group for the dissemination and education of the resources.

b) Community Presentations

The survey responders considered the community presentations as an effective method of educating the audience about physical activity among older adults in rural communities.

Only half of the responders supported physical activity participation among older adults in the months following the presentation. This may be due to people not working directly with older adults. Or it may suggest that the Centre needs to focus on educating practitioners on the “how to apply the information learnt from the presentations in there communities”.

Although the presentation was designed to facilitated discussion about the physical activity opportunities and barriers in the participant’s communities and to provide examples of useful tools for assessing communities, a specific step by step plan on creating change in the community may enhance the action in the communities following presentations in future projects.

Just over half the responders felt the presentations brought community members together to work on physical activity issues in their community. To improve on this aspect the Centre would be wise to develop new methods of promoting community connectedness and community engagement in our outreach presentations. Other organizations may be helpful to the Centre for developing these methods, such as ARPA and its Active Creative Communities Project , and InMotion Saskatchewan.

c) The Booklet

The Rural Route to Active Aging: A Guide for People Who Want to Stay Active was found to be an excellent educational tool designed specifically for older adults in rural settings. Two thirds of the respondents had an opportunity to use the booklet to encourage older adults to be physically active within a few months after the presentation.

Between January and May, 2008, 2000 copies of the booklet were printed three times, resulting in a total of 6,000 copies of the booklet being available for the public. The first 4000 were distributed free of charge, and after the third printing, a charge of \$2.50 per booklet was charged for cost recovery. This booklet has been in high demand by all of the target groups.

d) On-line Activity Tracker

The online Activity Tracker for older adults was not a popular tool among the responders. The exact reason for this is unknown. It may be due to the tracker being an online tool, the lack of interest in tracking physical activity participation or that the primary responders to the evaluation survey were practitioners rather than older adults.

In particular, the online nature of this resource may not be appealing to older adults as they may not be comfortable with the technology required to use it. Also, many rural areas do not have high

speed internet service. Although the tracker was deliberately designed for use in dial-up situations, it still was not popular.

The activity tracker was not a major component of the project; although it was under-utilized, it will remain on the web site for those who want to use it.

5. Conclusion

According to the evaluation survey, the presentations and booklets were considered to be successful by responders. These resources were effective at educating practitioners and older adults about physical activity opportunities, directing attention towards possible issues creating resistance to active living in rural communities and provide suggestions to overcome these barriers.

The presentations were satisfactory at promoting immediate action within communities. Further research and promotion focusing on community engagement and community connectiveness may assist the Centre at improving our ability to stimulate change in communities of future projects.

The activity tracker was not reported to have been used by many older adults but will remain on the web site for those who find it useful.

Rural Route to Active Aging Follow Up Survey

1

The approximate population of your community is

2

The location of your community is

- North (of Edmonton)
- Central (between Edmonton and Calgary)
- South (of Calgary)

3

We would like to know a little about your role in the community. Please check all that apply.

- Community practitioner
- Decision-maker
- Older adult
- Other, please specify

4

If you attended the Rural Route to Active Aging presentation for work purposes, what is the title of your position?

For the following questions, please select the answer that you agree with most and provide comments when appropriate.

5

The presentation helped bring attention to the issue of physical activity for older adults in my community.

6

The presentation helped me see new opportunities for active living for older adults in my community.

7

The presentation helped me see the barriers to active living for older adults in my community.

If yes, what are some of the biggest barriers?

8

After the presentation, I applied some of what I learned about supporting active living for older adults in my work.

Yes No Not applicable

9

The presentation helped bring people together in the community to work on the issues affecting lifelong physical activity.

Yes	No	Unsure
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1	2	3

10

After the presentation, I worked to support older adults' participation in regular active living in the community.

YES NO

If yes, please briefly share what you have been working on.

▲
■
▼

11

I have used the new booklet for older adults, [The Rural Route to Active Aging: A Guide for People Who Want to Stay Active as They Age](#), to encourage older adults to be physically active.

YES NO

If no, why not?

▲
■
▼

12

The booklet helped bring attention to the issue of physical activity for older adults in our community.

YES NO

If no, what is the booklet missing?

13

I think that the booklet for older adults is a useful resource.

YES NO

If no, what suggestions do you have to improve it?

14

I have used the online [Activity Tracker](#) for older adults.

YES NO

If yes, what do you think about it?

15

Is there anything else you would like us to know about the Rural Route to Active Aging presentation and booklet?

16

Is there anything else you would like us to know about active living for

older adults in your community?

17

Thank you for completing the survey. To have a chance to win one of 15 prizes, please fill in your contact information below by February 8th. Your responses to the survey remain confidential. Privacy policy: The Alberta Centre for Active Living does not share e-mail addresses with anyone.

Name:	<input type="text"/>
Organization:	<input type="text"/>
Address 1:	<input type="text"/>
City/Town:	<input type="text"/>
Province:	<input type="text"/>
Postal code:	<input type="text"/>
E-mail Address:	<input type="text"/>
Tel.(please include area code):	<input type="text"/>
:	<input type="text"/>



