

AARP Home Assessment Concept

Submitted to Select Board by Age Friendly Committee of Bowdoinham

Purpose

This proposal seeks to design and implement a program that helps residents age safely, comfortably, and confidently in their homes.

Background

The Age Friendly Committee recognizes the central role that *home* plays as people age. Familiar surroundings—home, neighbors, and community—provide stability and support as abilities change and new challenges emerge. Since 2020, the Committee has launched several initiatives to help residents anticipate these changes and adapt their homes accordingly, including:

- A Guide for Universal Design, offering practical strategies to improve safety and accessibility for people of all ages and abilities.
- A Home Checklist, helping residents identify room-by-room safety risks and potential improvements.

While valuable, these efforts have had limited impact. Outreach relied largely on self-selection, in-person assistance was not available to support completion of assessments, and there was no clear pathway to move from assessment to action once needs were identified.

Description of the Proposal

The AARP Challenge Grant provides an opportunity to redesign our approach to helping residents age safely and comfortably at home. The proposed program includes six integrated components:

1. **Improved referrals for home assessments** through trusted community partners likely to encounter residents who could benefit. These include Bowdoinham Community Connections, Fire & Rescue, the Bowdoinham Food Pantry, and the Age Friendly Committee.
2. **Use and adaptation of the AARP Home Fit Guide**, supplemented to address Maine-specific conditions such as winter access, snow management, and oil tank accessibility. The assessment will also include an introductory interview with the resident to identify daily-life challenges and barriers. Existing checklists and fall-prevention tools from other communities and entities will be cross-walked with the Home Fit Guide.
3. **Training for volunteer assessors**, facilitated by professionals with backgrounds in home health and occupational therapy. Training will take place in the home of a resident who agrees to serve as a practice site.
4. **In-home assessments conducted jointly by trained volunteers and homeowners**, resulting in practical, prioritized recommendations. Volunteer participation is intended to reduce overwhelm and offer an additional perspective on achievable improvements.
5. **Referrals for follow-up work**, including the Bowdoinham Handy Brigade for small tasks and assistance connecting residents to contractors or other community resources for larger projects.
6. **Purchase of a limited inventory of commonly needed materials** (e.g., grab bars, anti-slip stair runners, basic lumber) to support timely Handy Brigade repairs.

Budget

We anticipate requesting \$2,500 to support:

- Stipends for consultants assisting with development of assessment tools and facilitation of volunteer training protocols;
- A starter inventory of materials for the Handy Brigade; and
- Outreach and promotion of the program within the community.

Timeline and Deliverables

This rapid-cycle grant spans five months from conception to completion

- Application submission: March 4, 2026
- Notice of award: May 2026
- Funding and project start: June 24, 2026
- Project completion: December 16, 2026
- After-action report: December 31, 2026

Deliverables include:

1. A Maine-specific supplement to the AARP Home Fit Guide, including introductory questions, fall-prevention items, and environmental considerations.
2. A volunteer assessor training protocol.
3. One facilitated training session for at least three volunteer assessors.
4. Completion of at least two in-home assessments with recommendations and referrals.
5. Purchase of a limited inventory of common materials for Handy Brigade use.