

# The Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging (CSDRA)

**FOUNDED:** 2012

**CURRENT ORGANIZATION BUDGET:** \$994,000

**CONTACT:** Caitlin Coyle, *Director*

☎ 617.287.7413

✉ Caitlin.Coyle@umb.edu

🌐 [www.umb.edu/demographyofaging](http://www.umb.edu/demographyofaging)



CENTER FOR SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC  
**RESEARCH ON AGING**

The U.S. population is aging rapidly. In fact, by 2050, the number of older adults will increase by 42%. Too often, older adults, particularly in under-resourced communities, face compounding barriers to aging well: social isolation, ageism, and a built environment that wasn't designed for them.

The Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging (CSDRA) at UMass Boston works to advance aging equity by transferring power to the community. Its naturally occurring multigenerational team drives change through four core strategies:

- **Data & Research:** Providing analysis and data that communities can trust.
- **Lived Experience:** Professionalizing community voices through its paid Citizen Scholars program.
- **Training & Mentorship:** Mentoring the next generation of diverse leaders in aging and municipal services.
- **Convening & Planning:** Leading statewide coalitions to drive collective action and norm change.

CSDRA envisions communities where every resident can age with security, dignity, and connection.

## Two-Year Goals

- Scale the Citizen Scholars program: Triple the roster of paid older adult co-researchers from 6 to 18
- Catalyze community change: Support 15 towns to enact age-friendly actions
- Expand geographic reach: Double the number of under-resourced municipalities served from 4 to 8
- Fortify organizational capacity: Grow core team from 2.0 to 5.0 FTEs

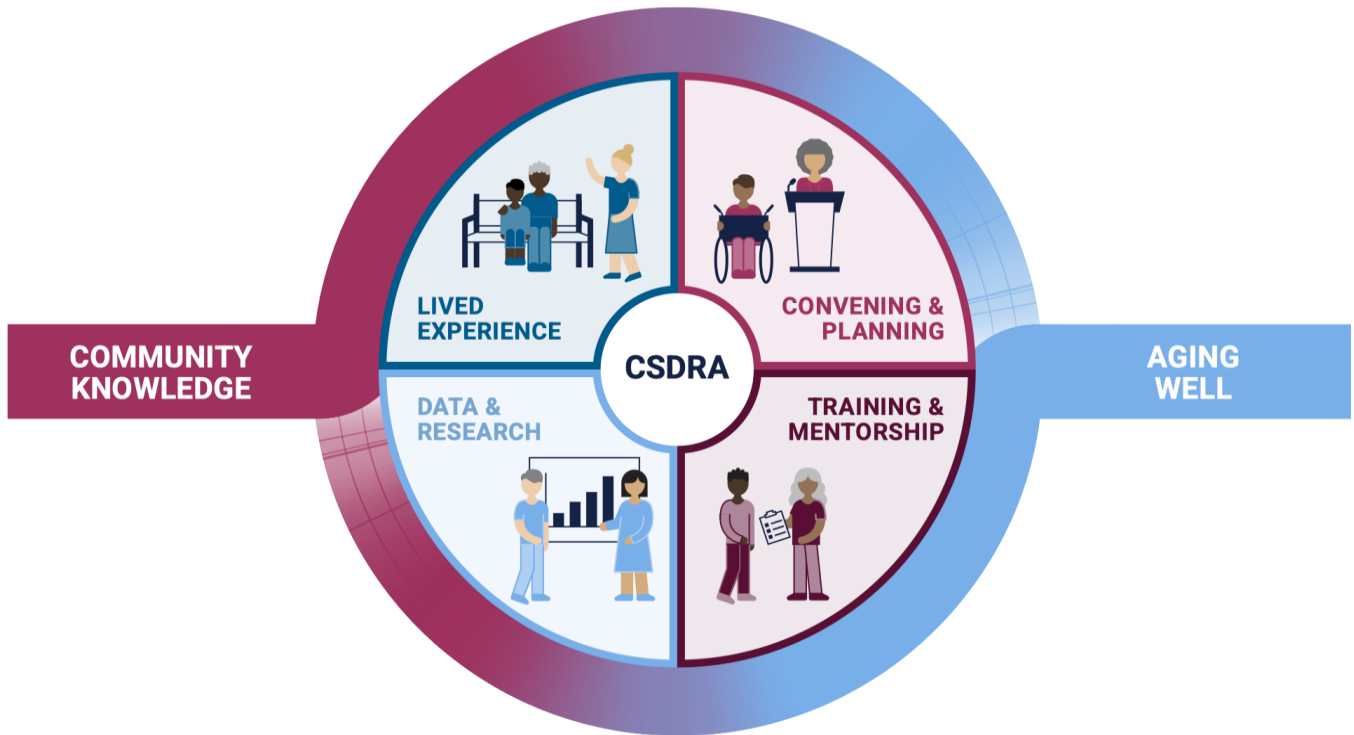
## Investment Opportunity

CSDRA seeks \$1.6 million over two years to intentionally scale while building infrastructure to make the work sustainable. Funding will support three primary priorities: 1) Expand the Citizen Scholars program as a permanent research pipeline for older adults; 2) Increase access for needs assessments to more under-resourced communities across Massachusetts; and 3) Expand core organizational capacity by adding three full-time staff focused on research, implementation, and development.

## Ways to Get Involved

- Ask your town if there is a healthy aging plan
- \$40,000 to sponsor a healthy aging needs assessment for a town
- \$18,000 to support one Citizen Scholar
- Host a Good Neighbor Day event in your community
- Support the Coalition to Build Communities & End Loneliness

## CSDRA's Model



### Supporting Age-Friendly Communities

CSDRA partners with municipalities to conduct needs assessments and evaluations, helping local leaders identify barriers to healthy aging and design solutions grounded in what residents actually say they need. This is especially critical in under-resourced communities, where older adults face systemic barriers but are least likely to be included in decision-making.

CSDRA's structured, community-led process engages residents as active co-researchers who shape questions and interpret findings. Towns gain evidence-based priorities and recommendations that translate directly into local policy and infrastructure. The results are concrete: One town expanded senior center hours, and another installed intergenerational "chat benches" to reduce isolation. By moving beyond reports to support for implementation, CSDRA ensures that research leads to permanent community transformation.

### Lived Experience as Expertise

The Citizen Scholars program professionalizes lived experience by employing older adults as paid research assistants working alongside UMass students. Citizen Scholars contribute decades of cultural and community wisdom, ensuring research remains grounded in real-world context. This model shifts power from the university to the community, paying Citizen Scholars for their intellectual contributions and providing purposeful civic engagement and opportunities for social connection.



## Addressing Social Isolation Through Coalition & Innovation

CSDRA co-founded the Massachusetts Coalition to Build Community & End Loneliness, a statewide network of 200+ organizations addressing social disconnection through norm change and advocacy. The Coalition hosts Good Neighbor Day, orchestrating pop-up events that bridge generational divides. Programming is culturally responsive to reach diverse populations who experience isolation differently due to language or identity.

## Influencing Policy & Discourse on Aging

CSDRA leverages its academic affiliation and research to transform the cultural and legislative landscape of aging. Frequently cited in publications like *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*, CSDRA challenges ageist stereotypes and replaces them with narratives of community resilience. The Center also helps orchestrate an annual Lobby Day at Beacon Hill to drive data-driven legislation, like Governor Healey’s Executive Order on Instituting Age-Friendly Practices.

*“Looking back, the CSDRA report was so on target. It is amazing to see the recommendations now and be able to say, ‘we made that come true!’”*

— Participant in Hingham community planning project

## Leadership & Governance

Dr. Caitlin Coyle has served as the Director of CSDRA since 2022. Dr. Coyle has led applied research projects on aging in more than 80 towns and played an instrumental role in age-friendly initiatives across the Commonwealth. Her work is frequently published and cited in national publications. Dr. Coyle also co-leads the Massachusetts Coalition to Build Community & End Loneliness. CSDRA employs staff and student researchers from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds. The multigenerational team also includes Citizen Scholars older adults paid as co-researchers.

## Financial Stability

CSDRA benefits from the stability and infrastructure of UMass Boston, but also must raise its own operating funds through government contracts, research grants, and Councils on Aging support. At the same time, federal investment in aging research is declining sharply. Building a stronger base of private philanthropic capital is a strategic priority to seed new initiatives, reduce reliance on short-term funding, and sustain this work regardless of shifts in the policy environment.

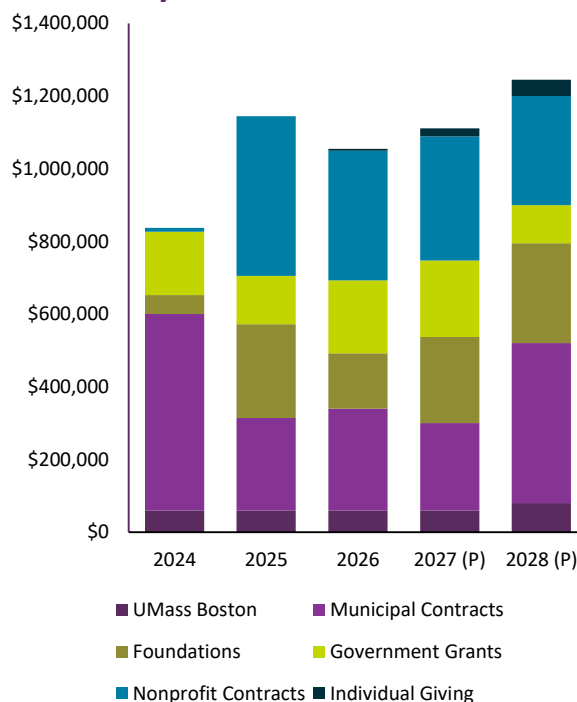
### KEY INVESTORS

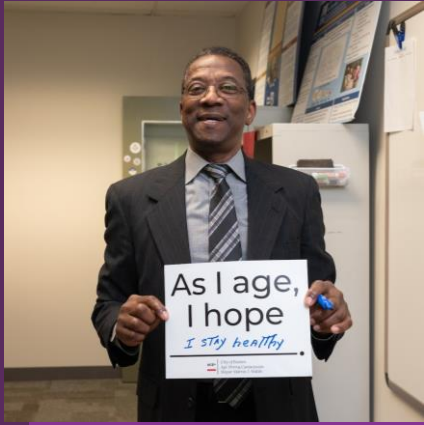
- AgeSpan
- John Hancock Foundation
- Massachusetts Department of Transportation
- Retirement Research Foundation
- Social Security Administration
- Taub Foundation
- Third Sector New England
- West Health

### KEY PARTNERS

- AARP International
- City of Boston
- Massachusetts Councils on Aging
- Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
- UMass Boston

## Revenue by Source





## Success Story

### ARNALDO SOLIS

Arnaldo Solis has spent his life helping communities find their voice. After more than 30 years leading nonprofits in behavioral health and family services, he found renewed purpose as a Citizen Scholar with UMass Boston’s Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging. In this role, Solis makes sure research stays grounded in lived experience. “I’m a strong believer that the community needs to be involved,” he says.

Working 10 hours a week alongside students, Solis helps design recruitment strategies, interpret data through a cultural lens, and amplify older adults’ perspectives for community planning. He has become a trusted bridge between academia and the communities CSDRA serves, receiving research training and a stable income along the way. Now, Solis serves as a mentor to others seeking civic engagement later in life, proof that purposeful engagement can spark new leadership and belonging at any age.

## Program Performance and Organizational Health

The table below outlines CSDRA’s performance measures and organizational metrics, capturing both program outcomes and the internal capacity required to sustain and strengthen the work over time.

	FY 2026	FY 2027 (P)	FY 2028 (P)
<b>Program Performance</b>			
Number of Citizen Scholars (paid older adults)	6	12	18
Percent of towns served that re-engage with CSDRA	10%	15%	20%
<b>Organizational Health/Capacity-Building</b>			
Full-time employees	2	3	5
Percent of total revenue from private/philanthropic sources	30%	35%	40%
Revenue from individual giving	\$5000	\$22,000	\$45,000
Total Revenue	\$994,000	\$1,050,000	\$1,165,000

## Social Impact

CSDRA’s community-engaged approach advances equity by centering voices most often excluded from traditional research, ensuring that innovations reach the full diversity of older adults across Massachusetts. Academic expertise meets real-world implementation: evidence becomes policy, data becomes decisions, and research becomes change.

The multigenerational model trains future practitioners while producing solutions grounded in lived experience. And through the Coalition to Build Community & End Loneliness, CSDRA builds the statewide capacity to create communities where every resident can age with dignity, connection, and choice.

Below is the summary of the social impact that CSDRA aspires to have in the next two years.

Indicator	Current Numbers	2028
Municipal transformations (towns that have taken action as a result of community-engaged research w/CSDRA)	9	15
Current and past student research assistants working in aging/policy fields	50%	75%
Equity reach (partnerships in under-resourced communities)	4	8
National thought leadership (publications, presentations)	5	15