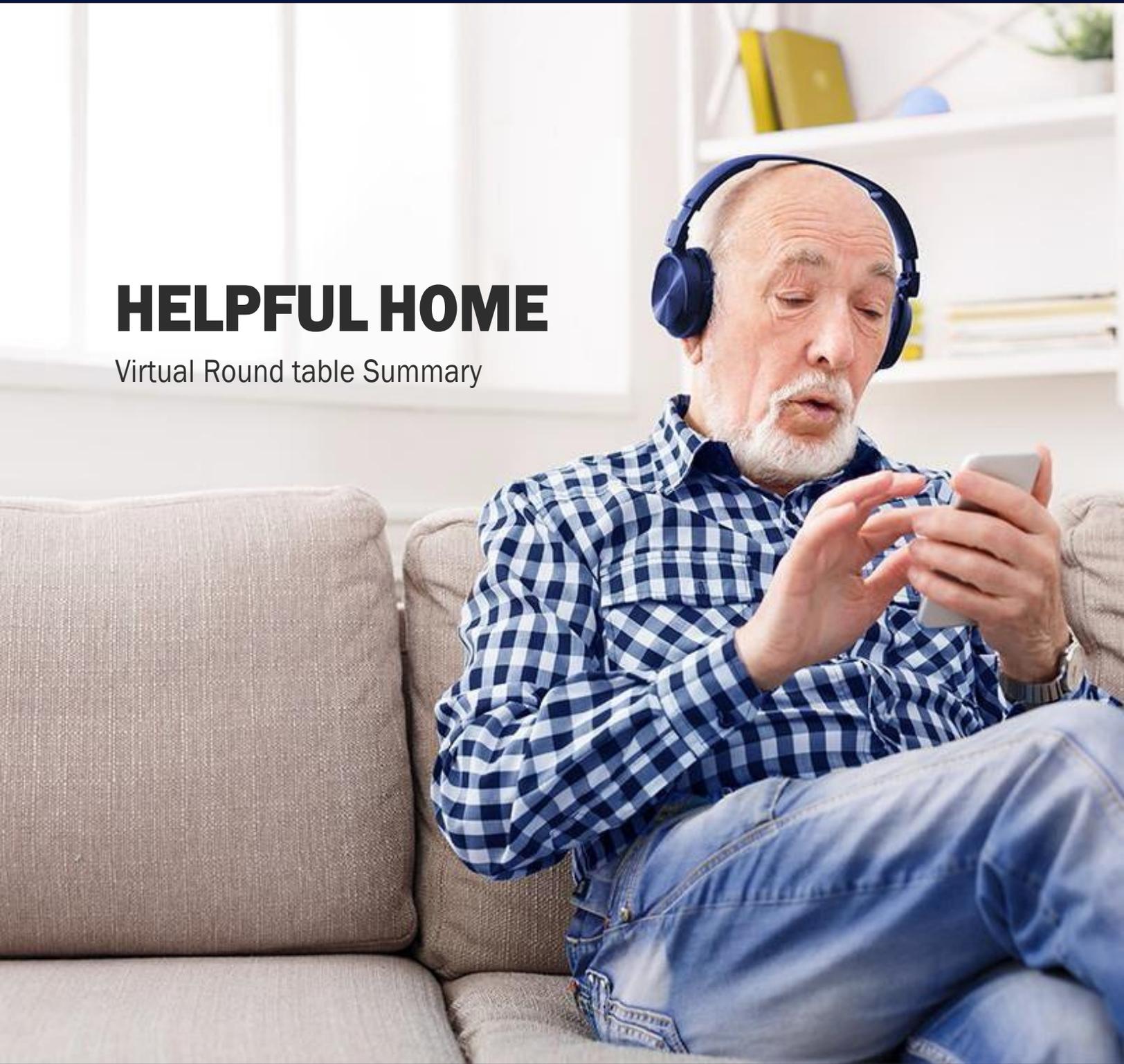


HELPFUL HOME

Virtual Round table Summary



Helpful Home: Supplementing Aging in Place with Technology



Background

Evidence shows that technology can play a meaningful role in helping older adults remain safe, independent, and connected to their communities. In light of decreasing ratio of caregivers, and care spaces to care recipients in supporting older adults, aging at home is a priority for all entities involved. This workshop will host a discussion on creating and implementing a helpful home to support aging in place.

A helpful home should provide convenience, connection, safety, and security. The ultimate

goal is supporting independence and empowerment for older adults to live healthily and safely at home and supplementing the work of care providers and partners.

Introduction

In October 2021, key stakeholders participated in the Helpful Home Virtual Roundtable to help develop a framework that can be used as a model when thinking about how technology can be used to support older adults to age in place. Representatives from various sectors with interest in seniors' wellbeing and aging in place were invited to participate, including government, industry, service providers, and patient groups.

How can a home be helpful?

During the workshop the participants were presented with a draft framework of a helpful home and asked if they agreed with the components and if there were any components missing. These original features included: 1) activities of daily living 2) health of the home 3) safety 4) convenience 5) connectedness 6) getting help and 7) fun. The features of the home presented were generally agreed upon, hence, no changes were made to the wheel. The discussions enriched the definition of the features.

- Home safety (previously labeled as healthy home): to keep the older adult safe and secure at home (e.g., products that be upgraded or installed in the home to keep older adults safe and secure)
- Personal safety (previously labeled as safety): to protect both the wellbeing of older adult from falls, and injuries
- Convenience: to use technology to make the day-to-day tasks easier and/or possible

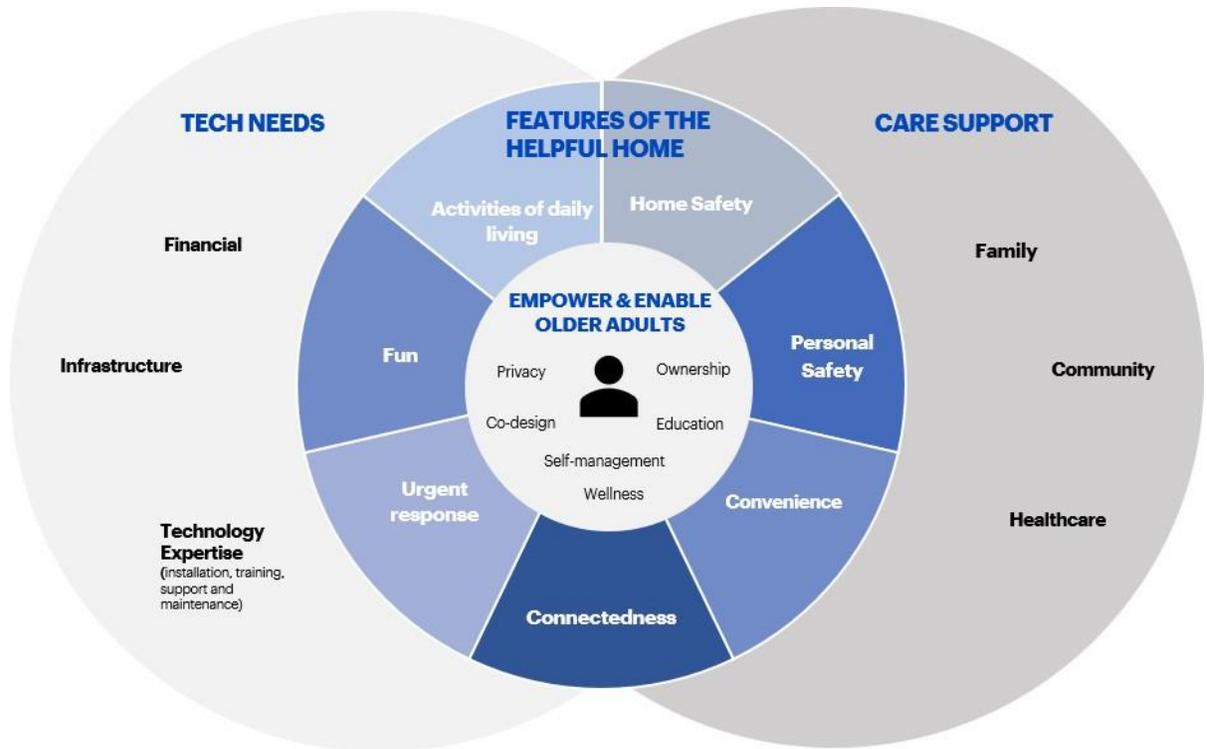
- Connectedness: to actively (socially connecting with family & friends) and/or passively (remote monitoring by care partners or health professionals) connect
- Urgent response (previously labeled as getting help): to contact someone in case of need and for care partners and/or health professionals to respond to incidents
- Fun: to continuously learn and feel empowered in addition to having fun while participating in activities older adults enjoy
- Activities of daily living: to continue with older adults' daily activities both inside and outside of the home and enabling a life to be lived well

Participants discussed the importance of an older adult focused approach throughout the workshop. Additionally, cocreation, understanding of data privacy and data ownership were all mentioned as key components when thinking about the use of technology for older adults.

Overall, there were emphasis on the importance of older adult empowerment and enablement in relation to the helpful home. With this, a new circle was created and placed in the centre as the primary need when developing a technology-powered helpful home for older adults.

The support systems required for a successful creation and implementation of a helpful home were also discussed. There were two themes of support systems: 1) care support 2) support required for tech needs. The care support system included family, community, and healthcare. The support required for tech needs included financial, infrastructure and technology expertise. For care support, those that are in the care circle such as family, community and healthcare are essential as they provide continuous support for older adults' wellbeing and quality of life. When it came to technology, and how technology can support the older adult to live at home, there was a need to identify the role of everyone in the care circle in relation to the technologies in the helpful home and responsibilities of each group when reacting to the data's outcomes.

For the support required to meet tech needs, financial, proper infrastructure (e.g., network, building etc.), and tech expertise, especially for installation, maintenance and also skills training were discussed. Upkeep of ever-changing technology, skills and access was discussed as the key to sustainability.



Graph 1 Revised model for helpful home

Additional considerations from the discussions:

- How do we ensure technology is not creating new challenges that may potentially limit older adults to their home?
- How do we ensure technology can support the lifestyle of an individual inside and outside of the home?
- How do we ensure technology is minimizing social isolation rather than maximizing it?
- What is the role of everyone with technology and who is responsible for what actions?
- What actions should take place once a device registers a health need for the individual?
- How do we prevent the risk of overcontrolling?
- How do we ensure integration readiness for new and innovative platforms and technologies?

What are the challenges?

The challenges discussed fit into four main themes: 1) access, 2) technology 3) implications of population impact, and 4) standards.

Access

Funding that can provide internet and data plans were discussed as a prerequisite before technology can be introduced and installed in the home. The current infrastructure was seen a challenge when providing internet or any modification of the home in the first place in both metropolitan and rural communities. Even when there was access to internet and devices, access to tech support and expertise was important for successful implementation and adoption. Post-implementation, access to digital literacy for older adults, caregivers and partners were discussed as necessary for successful long-term benefit from the technology.

Technology

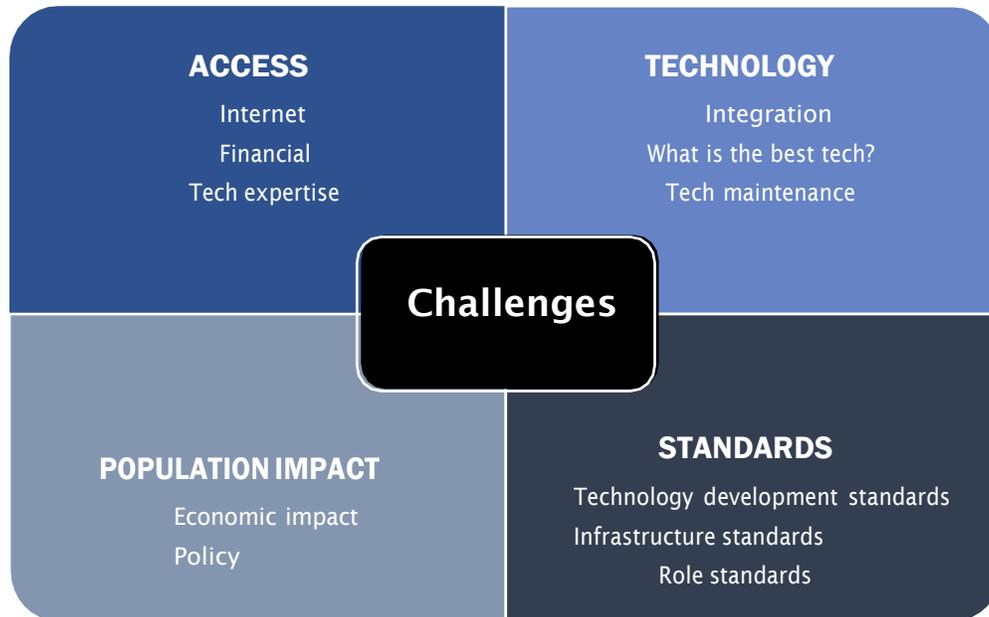
The technology itself was discussed as a challenge, especially the maintenance and sustainability for long-term use. Technology evolves quickly and it is hard to keep up with frequent release of updated or new products and it is a lot of information to keep up with. Technology is also not designed for easy integration, making it difficult to choose the devices with concern that it may not be the best device for the purpose. There were also discussions of a gap in regard to the ability to install, and connect technology, especially at a large scale.

Population Impact

There was discussion of potential decision paralysis due to not knowing what technology services may have the biggest long-term impact. This was also due to the lack of consensus in priorities when it comes to choosing the best technology solution to age in place. There were discussions on the need for future-proof policies to support aging in place and also to understand economic savings of using technology to support older adults to age in place.

Standards

There were many discussions about the lack of regulated standards for technology development (hardware and platforms), data privacy, and also for implementation of technology in existing and new homes. Additionally, there was no clear understanding of who is responsible for the use of technology and data, and also what services or technologies can be recommended to older adults to meet their needs.



Graph 2 Challenge themes

Partners

Graph 3 outlines the partners that are needed to create a technology-enabled helpful home, ultimately to support older adults to age in place. The roles of each group were not discussed extensively but with the discussions that happened, a visual representation has been created to provide a direction in how the groups can work together.

Older adult

- End-user

Family and loved ones

- End-user
- Support from direct family (i.e., son, daughter, grandchildren), friends, neighbours, to age in place

Healthcare

- Homecare, Acute care, Primary care etc. to use data being collected from tech to support care plan

Academic Institutions

- Support research and bringing new knowledge into the world
- Support technology/tech-use case formal education for care providers.
- Students to support older adults through research, practicum, and volunteering

Funders

- To fund internet, data plan, technology, technology support in a sustainable manner

Government

- Funding (e.g., technology implementation, retro fitting / upgrading homes)
- Standard and policy development

Private Industry

- A new form of care provider by providing services that can support with older adults and/or caregivers' daily activities
- Support with ease of use and language behind how technology can support everyday life needs
- Support with the changes related to technology advancement (e.g., procurement, education, support)

Tech Subject matter expert

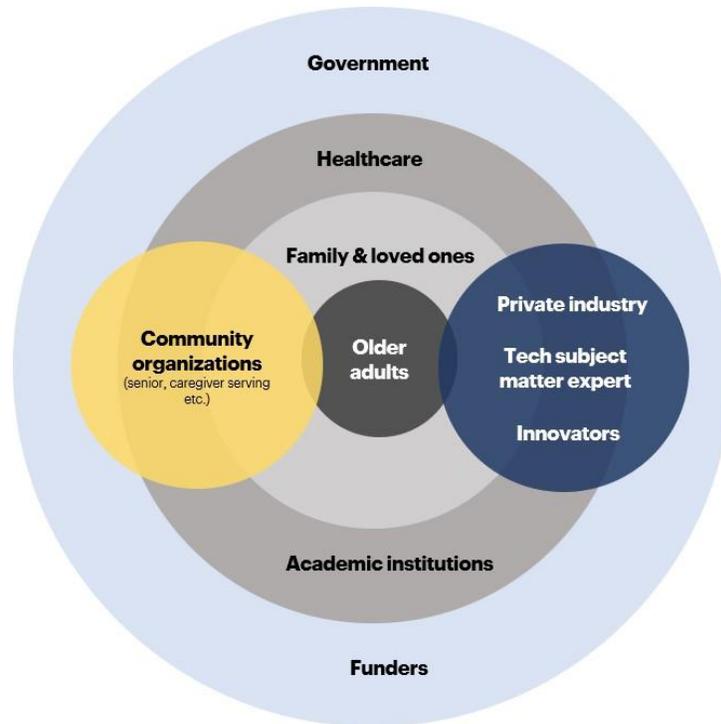
- Support with tech procurement, education, support, installation
- Support with knowledge sharing of what technology is available to meet the needs of the older adult, and caregiver

Innovators

- Bring new ideas and solutions

Community Organization

- Provide technology-related social services (e.g., education, peer support)
 - Support family caregivers on supporting their older adults (support with adoption)
 - Volunteerism
 - Intergenerational volunteerism
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Graph 3 Partners circle

Concluding remarks

Technology can play a role in enabling and supporting older adults to live in their desired environment for as long as possible. There is both a need and opportunity to use technologies to support older adults to age at home. For this to happen, it is important to consider the older adults’ needs, identify the features of the helpful home and determine how the support systems can be deployed with comprehensive and forward-thinking actions from all partners involved.

Acknowledgement

Thank you to Best Buy Canada, Health Cities, and Brenda Strafford Foundation for hosting the workshop and thank you to all the participants for the engaging conversation.

