



Addressing the
Impact of
Social Isolation
and Loneliness

2025-2027 Federal Policy Priorities

Table of Contents

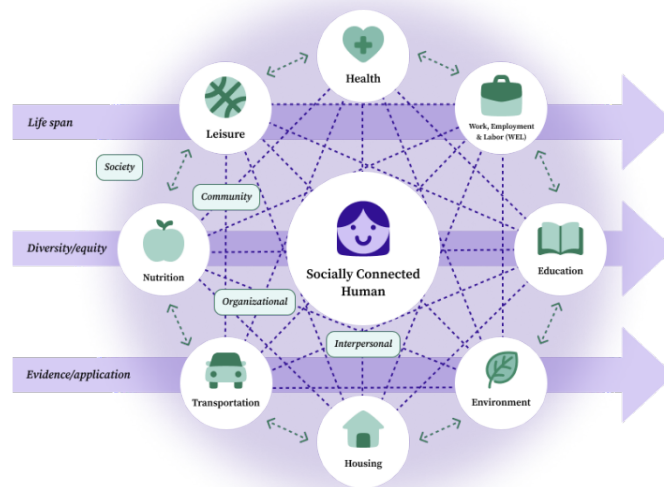
Introduction	2
The Opportunity	3
Health	4
Across the Lifespan	4
Behavioral Health	4
Maternal and Child Health	5
Mortality	5
Physical Health	5
Screening and Surveillance	6
Education	6
K-12	7
Higher Education	7
Digital Literacy	7
Work, Employment, & Labor	8
Economic Mobility	8
Social Cohesion	8
Built Environment	9
Broadband Access	9
Civic and Social Spaces	9
Housing	10
Transportation	11
Arts & Culture	12
Civic Engagement & Volunteerism	12
Faith and Religion	13
Technology	13
Nutrition	14
Accessibility	14
Education	15
Research	15

Introduction

Recognizing the complex and multi-faceted nature of social isolation and loneliness, this policy agenda takes a comprehensive, cross-sector approach to advancing policies that foster social connection. The recommendations outlined in this document are organized into seven key focus areas: Health; Education; Work, Employment, & Labor; Built Environment; Arts & Culture; Nutrition; and Research. By engaging all levels of government and emphasizing the role of communities in strengthening social ties, this agenda seeks to create sustainable, inclusive solutions that promote meaningful connection for all people across the lifespan.

This policy agenda is grounded in the Evidence-Based Policy Framework for Social Connection developed by the Foundation for Social Connection (F4SC) Research and Practice team in collaboration with the F4SC Action Network to link the evidence of the detrimental effects of social isolation and loneliness to promising practices and policies that have the potential to improve public health, economic prosperity, community well-being, and overall quality of life for Americans. Grounded in rigorous scientific research and informed by collaboration with experts and community representatives, this framework highlights the individual, community, and structural factors that shape social connection and provides a foundation for efforts to strengthen it across society.

The development of this framework followed a multi-phase process to ensure its relevance and impact. It began with identifying key areas where action could drive meaningful change. A thorough review of existing research, including Dr. Julianne Holt-Lunstad’s SOCIAL Framework (Systems Approach of Cross-Sector Integration and Action Across the Lifespan), provided a foundation for understanding the broad societal influences on social connection. The F4SC Scientific Leadership Council (SLC) played a key role in refining the framework and integrating the latest research on the far-reaching effects of social disconnection. Input from experts across research, policy, and practice further strengthened its applicability to diverse populations and settings.



Foundation for Social Connection SOCIAL Framework

The framework prioritizes seven key areas for action: Health; Education; Work, Employment & Labor; Built Environment; Arts, Culture, and Leisure; Food & Nutrition; and Research and Measurement. The framework emphasizes the need to increase public awareness of the

importance of social connection and the consequences of isolation and loneliness. It also calls for strengthening connection-enhancing programs and supports that are accessible across all life stages and communities. Importantly, it underscores the importance of advancing health services by integrating social connection into healthcare systems and recognizing its role in mental, emotional, and physical well-being. It promotes leveraging innovation in technology, infrastructure, and community design to create environments that foster connection. Lastly, the framework highlights the need to expand research and data collection to better measure and understand social connection, inform interventions, and track progress over time.

Social isolation and loneliness are not just individual experiences - they are systemic issues with widespread implications for health, safety, prosperity, resilience, and civic engagement. Lacking social connection increases the risk of premature death by 50%, a health risk comparable to smoking up to 15 cigarettes per day.¹ Beyond health, social isolation and loneliness have deep economic and civic consequences. Stress-related absenteeism attributed to loneliness costs employers an estimated \$154 billion annually.² At the community level, fewer social connections contribute to lower civic engagement,³ with Americans who report feeling lonely being more than twice as likely to distrust institutions and disengage from civic participation.⁴ Additionally, a decline in social infrastructure has contributed to economic disparities, as regions with weaker social networks see lower levels of economic mobility and job growth.⁵

The Opportunity

With the increasing spotlight on social isolation and loneliness—and the growing need to implement interventions that foster social connection—the Action Network’s mission is more critical than ever. Grounded in meaningful connection, resiliency, and belonging, the Action Network advocates for a comprehensive policy agenda that emphasizes the opportunity for cross-agency and cross-sector solutions. Alongside members with diverse perspectives and expertise, the Action Network presents the following targeted and evidence-based legislative and regulatory policy recommendations to address the impact of social isolation and loneliness and ensure greater social connection for all populations.

While the challenges are complex, opportunities exist to strengthen social connection at every level of society. This framework provides a foundation for those efforts and serves as a call to action to recognize and prioritize social connection in policies, programs, and everyday life to build a vibrant society where social connection is at the heart of how we live.

¹ Holt-Lunstad, J., Robles, T. F., & Sbarra, D. A. (2017). Advancing social connection as a public health priority in the United States. *American Psychologist*, 72(6), 517–530.

² Bowers, A., Wu, J., Lustig, S., & Nemecek, D. (2022). Loneliness influences avoidable absenteeism and turnover intention reported by adult workers in the United States. *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance*, 9(2), 312–335. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOEPP-03-2021-0076>

³ Ohta, R., Yakabe, T., Adachi, H., & Sano, C. (n.d.-a). The Association Between Community Participation and Loneliness among patients in rural community hospitals: A cross-sectional study - PMC. *Cureus*, 16(3). <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.56501>

⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2023). Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General’s advisory on the healing effects of social connection and community. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>

⁵ Alcaide Manthey, N. (2024). The role of community-led social infrastructure in disadvantaged areas. *Cities*, 147, 104831. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2024.104831>

Health

ADDRESSING SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS AS CRITICAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH, PRIORITIZING INTERVENTIONS THAT MITIGATE THEIR IMPACTS, AND EMBEDDING SOCIAL CONNECTION STRATEGIES INTO HEALTH PROGRAMS ARE CENTRAL TO STRENGTHENING SOCIAL CONNECTION, ENHANCING HEALTH EQUITY ACROSS THE LIFESPAN, AND REDUCING HEALTH CARE COSTS.

Across the Lifespan

- Require Medicare Annual Wellness Visits to include social isolation and loneliness assessments.
- Expand funding for school and community-based health programs that promote social connectedness and intergenerational programs as protective health measures.
- Integrate social connection metrics into school health evaluations under the DOE.
- Provide grants for programs that reduce loneliness and increase access to social services, like Veteran-Directed Care.
- Fund community-based aging interventions addressing social isolation, particularly in rural areas with limited resources.
- Ensure Medicare Advantage plans continue to have access to adequate rebate dollars to offer and craft supplemental benefits that address social isolation and loneliness.
- Expand Medicare and Medicaid coverage to include loneliness interventions, including counseling and peer support services.
- Increase access to Medicaid-funded long-term services and supports to provide formal, paid caregiving and other home- and community-based services and supports.
- Expand Medicaid coverage to include school-based care that bolsters social connection.



Behavioral Health

- Expand state initiatives and Medicaid waivers addressing social determinants of health (SDOH), including peer support groups.
- Increase SAMHSA funding for community-based behavioral health programs that include loneliness mitigation.

- Increase funding for efforts to reintegrate recently incarcerated individuals into society, including peer support.
- Fund initiatives that prioritize interventions targeting loneliness and cognitive decline in older adults.
- Fund initiatives that prioritize intergenerational programs for teens who suffer from anxiety, depression, and loneliness.
- Advocate for funding for the Administration for Community Living (ACL) Commit to Connect initiative to evaluate innovations to address social isolation and loneliness, assess the evidence base to support technological and intergenerational solutions; and develop a methodology for ranking and building the evidence on those solutions.

Maternal and Child Health



- Include loneliness screening in Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program.
- Require social connection strategies to be embedded in federally funded maternal health programs.
- Increase funding for Child Care & Development Block Grant and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative (21st CCLC).

Mortality

- Require federally funded health programs to include loneliness as a determinant in mortality prevention research.
- Encourage medical professionals to include loneliness as a contributing factor to a person's death when relevant.
- Launch a National Public Health Campaign addressing loneliness as a key risk factor for mortality.

Physical Health

- Expand the scope of screening for health-related social needs to include social isolation.
- Require federally funded health systems to assess loneliness as part of cardiovascular, diabetes, and other chronic disease prevention programs.
- Expand access to affordable hearing aids by enhancing private insurance coverage and Medicare benefits.



Screening and Surveillance

- Establish a national working group to build a set of core competencies for streamlined measurement and data collection of social isolation, loneliness, and social connection.
 - Include screening for standardized social isolation and loneliness measures in physician and public health professional education programs
 - Require social isolation and loneliness screening to be part of the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit.
 - Incorporate social isolation assessment and quality measurement into the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) demonstrations.
 - Require standardized measures of social isolation and loneliness be a metric in public and private healthcare reporting systems (e.g., Medicaid, Medicare, VA, etc.) and federally funded Community Investment Programs (CIP).
- Include specific items related to social isolation, loneliness, and social connection in federal screening and surveillance efforts, including the [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System \(BRFSS\) survey](#), the [National Health and Nutrition Examination \(NHANE\) survey](#), [National Health Interview Survey \(NHIS\)](#), and the [Healthy People initiative](#).
- Include reporting on standardized measures of social isolation and loneliness in the Integrated Disbursement and Information System (IDIS) for Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs).
- Implement data sharing requirements across federally funded programs, including social isolation metrics.
- Incentivize sharing health information through technological and in-person care management programs to easily identify social isolation and loneliness risk factors and connect patients to adequate interventions.



Education

ADDRESSING SOCIAL CONNECTION THROUGH EDUCATION IS CRITICAL TO IMPROVING OUTCOMES ACROSS ALL LEVELS AND REQUIRES INTEGRATING EVIDENCE-BASED SOCIAL CONNECTION PRACTICES, EXPANDING SUPPORT FOR UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES, INCREASING ACCESS TO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TRAINING, AND IMPROVING DIGITAL LITERACY.

K-12

- Encourage the use of universal mental health screenings in schools, ensuring that the screenings include social connection measures.
- Expand Title I funding to support initiatives that build social networks and social capital in schools serving low-income communities.
- Direct the DOE to provide recommendations to schools and institutions of higher education on incorporating evidence-based instructional practices on social connection, including cooperative learning.
- Direct the DOE to deploy a pilot program scale that includes evidence-based programs to enhance social capital in K-12 educational settings, including intergenerational approaches.



Higher Education

- Include student support services, such as technical help desks and peer mentoring, in federally funded online higher education programs.
- Mandate federally funded institutions of higher education devote resources to raise awareness of mental health services offered on campus.
- Ensure providers receive cultural competency training to best serve all individuals.
- Allocate federal funding to support institutions in developing peer mentoring and student support programs.
- Increase the amount of federal grants available to students pursuing a career in the behavioral health workforce.
- Remove the 12-month time limit and participation cap on vocational educational training to allow young adults to participate in community college and university education programs as part of their TANF benefit work requirements.

Digital Literacy

- Require federal digital literacy programs to include cybersecurity education, specifically targeting older adults.
- Integrate intergenerational engagement into public health campaigns with a focus on fostering health and technology literacy and reducing social isolation.
- Fund digital literacy training programs in public libraries, schools, senior centers, and congregate meal sites, targeting older adults, non-traditional learners, and low-income populations.

- Create a voucher program for low-income individuals to purchase or loan a connected device (i.e., desktop, laptop, tablet).
- Require DOE to integrate digital literacy programs into all federal education initiatives.

Work, Employment, & Labor

EMPLOYMENT PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE IN ADDRESSING SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS BY FOSTERING SOCIAL CONNECTIONS THROUGH WORKPLACE WELLNESS PROGRAMS, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES, AND POLICIES THAT SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH, MENTORSHIP, AND SOCIAL NETWORKS, HELPING TO STRENGTHEN SOCIAL COHESION AND PROMOTE ECONOMIC MOBILITY FOR ALL.

Economic Mobility

- Establish veteran integration hubs that provide job training, mentorship, and community-building programs.
- Require federally funded human service programs include social capital metrics in performance evaluations.
- Provide states with technical assistance and authority to braid federal funding intended to comprehensively support youth workforce development and training.
- Develop initiatives under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to fund programs geared toward enhancing relationships between individuals of high and low socioeconomic status.
- Provide federal grants for programs that build social capital and promote multi-generational social networks, through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) among other initiatives.



Social Cohesion

- Include screening for loneliness and social isolation within health risk assessments (HRA) offered by employers.
- Mandate the inclusion of workplace social cohesion indicators in national labor data collection (e.g., Bureau of Labor Statistics surveys).
- Develop resources and grants through the Small Business Administration (SBA) to provide affordable employee engagement initiatives, with a focus on remote workers and gig economy employees.

- Require integration of social support resources into Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) to promote peer networks and mental health support for employees.
- Task the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) with developing best-practice guidelines for managing remote work, including strategies for promoting social connection and addressing mental health challenges in hybrid workplaces.
- Fund partnerships through the DOL between labor unions and community organizations to develop workplace wellness programs, focusing on social support and mental health services.
- Establish a Workplace Wellness and Connection Tax Credit through the IRS to incentivize employers to adopt programs promoting mental health, mentorship, and social connection in workplaces.
- Provide tax incentives for businesses that implement Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives aimed at fostering social connections through community service projects and employee engagement activities.
- Strengthen enforcement of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and expand state Paid Family and Medical Leave Programs to cover mental health-related absences.

Built Environment

INTENTIONALLY REDESIGNING AND ENHANCING CIVIC SPACES, TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS, AND HOUSING SUPPORTS FACILITATES INTERACTION, INCLUSIVITY, AND STRENGTHENS SOCIAL CONNECTION.



Broadband Access

- Update the 2010 National Broadband Plan, focusing on low-income, rural, underrepresented, and socially isolated populations.
- Launch a digital access program under the FCC to bridge the digital divide in geographically isolated areas.
- Expand the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, with a particular focus on socially isolated communities.

Civic and Social Spaces

- Enhance funding and incentivize the utilization of shared use agreements to increase access to public spaces like libraries, community art spaces, and green spaces.

- Offer tax credits or grants for projects that demonstrate a commitment to multi-generational use and programming.
- Support federal efforts to improve coordination and braid funding opportunities to support the development of safe, healthy, culturally relevant, multi-generational, and accessible community spaces.
- Establish a grant program within the DOE to provide funding for schools to implement peer mentoring programs, community service projects, and after-school programs that strengthen social bonds and reduce isolation.
- Partner with HUD to create design guidelines for federally funded infrastructure projects, prioritizing mixed-use and multi-generational spaces, shared areas, and inclusive neighborhood planning.
- Direct funding through HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program to support projects that create walkable neighborhoods and increase green spaces, with a focus on pedestrian-friendly street design, parks, and community gathering areas in low-income communities.
- Launch a Green Spaces for Health Initiative under the National Park Service (NPS) to fund the creation and maintenance of parks and green spaces in urban and rural underserved areas.
- Direct funding through DOT's Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Program to fund projects that combine infrastructure improvements with public spaces, such as community plazas or multipurpose trails.
- Expand the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grants to include funding for programming aimed at reducing social isolation and increasing community engagement.



Housing

- Expand Service Coordinator funding to all Section 202 HUD-funded properties, prioritizing service coordinator funding for Public Housing that is targeted to older adults, families, and people with disabilities.
- Expand HUD's Choice Neighborhoods Program to require affordable housing projects to incorporate shared community spaces, green areas, and designs that enhance social interaction, and leverage zoning reforms to incentivize mixed-use developments.
- Integrate social cohesion metrics into HUD's Choice Neighborhoods Program to guide urban planning.

- Prioritize housing investments that incorporate onsite resources and resident support and provide additional basis points in the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program for projects that integrate housing with health and social services.



- Increase funding for the Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities program to enhance supportive services and reduce social isolation among residents.
- Increase funding through the Department of the Interior for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to create and maintain urban parks in underserved neighborhoods, prioritizing areas with limited access to nature.
- Create incentives through the HOME Investment Partnerships Program for developers to build co-housing and co-living projects that include shared community spaces, targeting areas with high housing insecurity.

Transportation

- Incentivize multistate and intercity transit projects through competitive grants under the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program.
- Establish a federal Walkable Communities Initiative to tie funding to urban plans prioritizing social connection and environmental sustainability.
- Require HUD, DOT, and USDA to collaborate on integrated solutions to address rural community development needs.
- Provide an enhanced federal match for the DOT projects that incorporate elements of accessible community placemaking such as traffic calming, walkable areas, recreational facilities, public arts installations, and public gathering spaces.
- Provide tax credits and funding through the DOT for ride-sharing programs, community shuttle buses, and on-demand transit services that connect rural areas to urban hubs.
- Develop a Senior Mobility Program under the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to incentivize cities to improve public transportation options, such as subsidized ride-sharing services and accessible bus routes for older adults.
- Expand funding through the FTA Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) to support the development and modernization of rural public transit systems.
- Improve coverage of non-emergency medical transportation within Medicare and Medicaid.



Arts & Culture

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS TO PARTICIPATE IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND VOLUNTEERISM EFFORTS, CONNECT WITH CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS, AND UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY IN A MEANINGFUL WAY CAN STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY BONDS AND INCREASE SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS.

Civic Engagement & Volunteerism



- Automate voter registration and restoration for formerly incarcerated individuals and newly eligible voters.
- Establish a federal task force to include civic engagement metrics in community development programs under HUD.
- Engage with stakeholders on existing programs within the Corporation for National and Community Service (e.g., AmeriCorps Senior) to provide volunteer services to individuals affected by social isolation and loneliness.
- Provide guidance and technical assistance to local governments and community-based organizations to improve public awareness of accessing civic engagement opportunities, including those that foster intergenerational collaboration.
- Provide federal tax credits to organizations encouraging community-based volunteering efforts through public-private partnerships.
- Increase federal funding for AmeriCorps and other community-based civic programs to improve trust and social bonds in underserved areas, including intergenerational engagement.
- Provide HUD grants to assist local governments in establishing participatory budgeting programs, empowering residents to allocate community resources.
- Direct funding through the DOE, HHS, and Corporation for National and Community Service to support civic bridgebuilding programs that promote respect among diverse communities, strengthen social unity, build shared civic purposes, and address public concerns.

Faith and Religion

- Expand grants through HHS' Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships to support faith-based mental health initiatives.
- Increase funding through AmeriCorps's Volunteer Generation Fund to support faith-based organizations in recruiting volunteers across the lifespan for mentorship, support groups, and community-building activities.
- Provide funding through SAMHSA's Targeted Capacity Expansion Program to fund faith-based addiction recovery programs that emphasize peer-led support groups and community reintegration.



Technology



- Mandate annual transparency reports from social media companies to the FTC.
 - Deploy equitable AI-driven tools for community health and social isolation assessments through federally supported pilot programs
 - Require federally funded AI projects report outcomes related to social isolation, loneliness, and equity under NIST guidelines.
 - Adopt the AI Bill of Rights framework to ensure AI systems deployed in social health programs are ethical and equitable.
 - Regulate social media algorithms and the spread of misinformation.
 - Evaluate the efficacy and safety of information and assistive technologies to understand which technologies, digital tools, or usages promote and facilitate social connection and which exacerbate loneliness across the lifespan.
- Allocate federal funds for technology-driven research to explore scalable, community-level solutions for isolation.

Nutrition

PROVIDING ACCESS TO RESOURCES THAT HELP INDIVIDUALS MEET THEIR BASIC NUTRITION NEEDS SUPPORTS OVERALL WELL-BEING, REDUCES FINANCIAL STRESS FROM FOOD INSECURITY, AND MITIGATES THE LONELINESS ASSOCIATED WITH LACK OF ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD.

Accessibility

- Expand the "Food is Medicine" initiative to allow Medicaid recipients to use benefits for home-delivered meals or food boxes that cater to specific health conditions (e.g., diabetes or hypertension).
- Direct HHS to develop regulations that require nutrition assistance programs like WIC to offer resources for mental health support and social connection.
- Direct the FDA to set regulations requiring supermarkets and stores to offer a certain percentage of healthy, affordable food in areas deemed food deserts.
- Promote and improve benefit coordination to address under-enrollment of older adults in SNAP.
- Support the [Opportunity to Address College Hunger Act](#) and similar legislation to promote awareness and access to social services for individuals enrolled in colleges, universities, and other institutes of higher education.
- Establish or expand community food hubs, local food cooperatives, and farmers markets that not only provide affordable, nutritious food but also act as community gathering spaces, fostering social interaction.
- Implement mobile food pantry services in underserved or rural areas to reduce food deserts and increase access to healthy food, particularly for isolated individuals.
- Provide tax credits to grocery stores and food banks that offer free cooking classes or community meal events
- Increase funding for the Older Americans Act (OAA) nutrition programs that address the impact of social isolation and loneliness.
- Fully implement the SNAP online purchasing program.
- Expand SNAP eligibility to include students at institutes of higher education who are eligible for work studies or have an Expected Family Contribution of 0.
- Expand incentives like SNAP benefits at farmers markets and prioritize the placement of markets in communities that lack sufficient supply of fresh produce.



Education

- Launch a public initiative on nutrition and social connection, targeting social support as a strategy for obesity reduction.
- Mandate healthcare providers, social services, and schools to screen for food insecurity and refer individuals to available nutrition assistance programs.

Research

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND INCREASING FUNDING FOR RESEARCH ON SOCIAL ISOLATION, LONELINESS, AND SOCIAL CONNECTION CAN IMPROVE CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION AND DISCOVER SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS THAT PROMOTE AND STRENGTHEN SOCIAL CONNECTION.

- Request a GAO report to study the impact of social isolation and loneliness, and government efforts currently underway to address them.
- Establish a federally funded cross-agency working group for interdisciplinary research on social isolation and its determinants.
- Institute an Inter-Departmental and Agency National Coordinator of Social Isolation and Loneliness to lead and coordinate administrative efforts, identify, and leverage current federal and state resources, and make recommendations to cabinet officials and the White House.
- Create an open-access platform to house federally funded research on social isolation, loneliness, and social connection.
- Partner with the National Academy of Sciences to investigate the impact of social media and other online platforms on social isolation and loneliness among youth.
- Establish sustainable mechanisms to federally fund longitudinal research and evaluation of programs related to social isolation, loneliness, and social connection.
- Establish sustainable, federally managed research funding streams to explore the economic effects of isolation following a natural disaster.
- Direct funding to organizations and research coalitions to create a knowledge base on the most effective interventions and existing research gaps across key factors identified in the [SOCIAL Framework](#).
- Fund the [Equitable Long-Term Recovery and Resilience \(ELTRR\) Workgroup](#) that provides interagency, cross-collaboration recommendations to strengthen social connection, community and individual resilience, and well-being.