The public health measures implemented to control the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted normal social interactions, exacerbating preexisting concerns about increasing levels of social isolation and loneliness across various age groups. As localities experience shifts in pandemic-related supplemental federal resources, state and local governments, healthcare providers, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders have a timely opportunity and pressing need to address this issue.

COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORTS
Social connectedness can be enhanced by using existing community infrastructure, including schools, primary care settings, and workplaces, and by leveraging the strengths and resources of community service networks. Tailoring these supports involves understanding the specific needs of each group. For example, youth programs might focus on after-school activities and peer support, while older adults might benefit from community health outreach.

Examples of policy approaches include:

- Developing structured after-school programs
- Developing group mentoring programs
- Expanding telehealth services to provide counseling.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP
Partnering with communities to design and deliver services and forging inclusive, action-oriented strategic alliances can enhance social connection and empower communities to identify and sustain community-level solutions. Supporting different community members in taking on leadership roles can facilitate relevant and effective solutions. For example, youth leadership programs can foster a sense of responsibility and connection among young people, while older adults can contribute valuable experience and wisdom to community projects.

Examples of policy approaches include:

- Designing inclusive public spaces that meet specific community needs
- Providing support organizations that work to address local issues
- Providing support intergenerational programs that foster relationships between younger and older community members

DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS
The rise in digital innovations presents opportunities to address loneliness and social isolation through online support groups, social media interactions, information discovery, resource access, and service delivery. The use of digital platforms should be tailored to the target population. Teens and young adults might be more engaged through social media and online gaming.
communities, while older adults might prefer accessible electronic devices to communicate with friends and family, virtual community centers, or health forums that provide a space for social interaction and support.

Examples of programs that utilize digital infrastructures to address social isolation and loneliness include New York’s Emotional Support Line; AARP Foundation’s Senior Planet; and Fairfax County Virtual Center for Active Adults.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE
Inclusive design is crucial for making public spaces accessible and appealing to all age groups. Designing inclusive and multifaceted public infrastructure, including libraries, community gardens, and community centers, and offering diverse local destinations, such as shops, cafes, and restaurants, can promote social connectedness and alleviate loneliness. Mixed-use planning brings diverse amenities nearby, while transportation options enhance access to these facilities.

Policy approaches to provide opportunity for social engagement and intergenerational activities include:

- Urban planning strategies that prioritize diverse neighborhood amenities
- Developing community gardens
- Multi-use community spaces

COMPREHENSIVE POLICY INITIATIVES
Proactive policy making can aid the development of legislation and policies to enhance social connectedness and provide ongoing support for community and social programs, addressing unique challenges faced by different groups. For example, policies aimed at youth might focus on improving mental health services in schools. In contrast, policies targeting the middle-aged population might focus on promoting or modifying leave policies for workers taking care of children and aging parents, and those aimed at older adults might prioritize access to community-based health care and social services.

Examples of existing policies include:

- National Stategy for Social Connection Act
- Older Americans Act
- Minnesota’s Safe and Supportive Schools Act,