



2026 Area Plan Frequently Asked Questions

Updated 6/20/2025

Table of Contents

General Questions.....	3
Content-Related.....	3
<i>Part 1: Background of the Area Agency on Aging.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Part 2: Objectives and Strategies.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Service Pages.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Waivers.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Budget.....</i>	<i>11</i>
Public Input Process.....	12
Technical Questions (PDF Functionality).....	16
Area Plan Trainings/Office Hours.....	18
Annually Required Documents & Emergency Preparedness Documents...	19

*Please look for the **NEW** as this document is updated frequently.

General Questions

1. **Question: Is there is someone we can call if we still have questions?**

Answer: Yes, please reach out to anyone in the DARS New Older Americans Act Regulation Team members and we will be sure to route your questions to the appropriate place. You can also submit a question using the [Microsoft Form](#). We also recommend AAA staff attend the upcoming Area Plan Trainings and Area Plan Office Hours. Office Hours are a great venue for AAA-specific questions. Lastly, DARS will also be issuing an updated FAQ document each Friday in the Provider Portal in the [Area Plan 2026 folder](#).

2. **Question: Where can I find the Area Plan Program Companion Manual?**

Answer: The Area Plan Program Companion Manual can be found in the Provider Portal in the [Area Plan 2026 folder](#).

Content-Related

Part 1: Background of the Area Agency on Aging

No questions have been asked about this content area at this time.

Part 2: Objectives and Strategies

1. **Question:** Are Pages 8-9 (Identification of Populations of Greatest Need) supposed to be data for the total Planning & Service Area (PSA) population demographics or for only those 60+ in the PSA?

Answer: Pages 8-9 are intended to include data on the population of older adults age 60+ in the PSA with Greatest Economic Need (GEN) and Greatest Social Need (GSN) factors. DARS recognizes, however, that some data is not available specifically for 60+. In some cases, AAAs may need to use data sources that identify older adults as 55+ or 65+. In those instances, the AAA should note their data source and the limitation. The Area Plan Program Companion Manual provides additional information on this topic.

2. **Question:** For Page 8 (Identification of Populations of Greatest Need), if we have data on a required topics (for example, HIV Status), but it is only captured for 50+, should we use that data and note the age grouping limitation?

Answer: Yes, we encourage the use of any available data. Please use the narrative section on Page 9 to provide any data limitations.

3. **Question:** Regarding the Unmet Needs Assessment and Evaluation section on Page 10, what is the status of the PeerPlace Unmet Needs Guidance Document?

Answer: The PeerPlace Unmet Needs Guidance Document is still under development at DARS. In the meantime, however, AAAs should still be collecting data on unmet needs and waitlists for services in PeerPlace. For this Area Plan section, the inclusion of PeerPlace unmet needs data should still be considered and included in appropriate. The AAA may also want to review the results of the 2022 Community Assessment Survey of Older Adults (CASOA) for insight into possible unmet needs within the PSA. The Area Plan Program Companion Manual provides additional information.

4. **Question:** Under the *Serving Low-Income Minority Objective* (page 11), is the number of low-income minority individuals in the service area asking for a Census number in our area or is the number the agency has served?

Answer: The first subsection on this page asks the AAA to populate information about the demographics of low-income older minority individuals in the planning and service area (PSA). The AAA can use American Community Survey (ACS) data or Census data for this. The figure used in this subsection will mostly match the figures used in the earlier section "Identification of Populations of Greatest Need."

More information on this topic is provided in the Area Plan Program Companion Manual to help AAAs understand and complete this section. This topic will also be covered on the April 14 training.

5. **Question:** Under the *Serving Low-Income Minority Objective* (page 11), in the box labeled "provide information on the extent to which the AAA met is objective in the previous federal fiscal year..." does this refer to the federal fiscal year (FFY) FFY2024 or FFY2025?

Answer: The second and third subsections on page 11 relate to how the AAAs have met the needs of low-income minority individuals. For this section, DARS recommends that AAA use FFY 2024 due to the timing of completing the FFY 2026 Area Plan. Using FFY 2024 data will provide the AAA with a full/complete year of data to work with.

More information on this topic is provided in the Area Plan Program Companion Manual to help AAAs understand and complete this section. This topic will also be covered on the April 14 training.

6. **Question:** Under the *Emergency Preparedness* (page 15), do we still need to complete this page even though we complete an Emergency Preparedness Plan as a part of the Annually Required Documents?

Answer: Yes, AAAs will still need to complete the *Emergency Preparedness* page. The Older Americans Act requires the AAAs include a **summary** of their Emergency Preparedness Plans in the Area Plans.

More information about what type of content should be included in the summary is detailed in the Area Plan Program Companion Manual. This topic will also be covered on the April 14 training.

7. **Question:** If our AAA administers a respite voucher, would this be considered self-directed?

Answer: Yes, if your AAA administers a respite voucher program modeled after the Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program it would be considered self-direction.

Service Pages

1. **Question:** When completing the Target Populations subsection of the Area Plan Service Pages, is it appropriate to insert the default language that appeared in the AAA's prior Area Plan document and add a response describing how the AAA plans to reach the stated target populations?

Answer: Yes, that could be sufficient. The previous Area Plan Target Populations statement is similar to the example statement provided on page 44-45 in the Area Plan Companion Manual. It is suggested that AAAs include general information about the target population(s), add any program specific requirements (e.g., homebound for home delivered meals, two ADLs for Care Coordination), as appropriate, and then include information detailing the targeting strategies (i.e., outreach methods) the AAA intends to use for the service to reach the target populations. Targeting strategies can be the same, similar, or different across services.

2. **Question:** Do we need to complete multiple service pages for services that may be funded by multiple sources. For example, Care Transitions may be funded by IIIB, CCEVP, or another source.

Answer: In some cases, AAAs may need to complete multiple service pages for a single service if the service is being funded through multiple sources.

Regarding Care Transitions, AAAs should only use Page 120 if the AAA is providing Care Transitions with CCEVP funds only. [The same is true for Person-Centered Options Counseling and Service Coordination Level 2; AAAs will only complete the CCEVP service pages if no Title III funding is budgeted for these services.]

If the AAA is using Title III-B funds only or Title III-B funds and CCEVP funds for Care Transitions, the AAA should instead complete the Title III-B Care Transitions Service Page and note that CCEVP funds are also being used.

If the AAA uses any other funds not related to the OAA to provide Care Transitions, such as funds received through a contract with a healthcare entity, the AAA must also complete an Other Services page in Part 6.

Additional information on the Care Transitions Service Pages (e.g., Title III-B, CCEVP, and Other Services in Part 6) is included in the Companion Manual and will be addressed in upcoming trainings.

3. **Question:** Will there be a Home Delivered Meals-Infrequent Delivery Transition Plan template to use?

Answer: Yes, the HDM-ID Transition Plan is in the Provider Portal in the [Area Plan 2026 folder](#).

4. **Question:** Is Grab and Go required for Congregate Nutrition programs?

Answer: No, Grab and Go is not required to operate a Congregate Meal program, however it is **strongly recommended** that your AAA selects the “yes” box on the *Congregate Nutrition* Service Page and completes the Grab and Go section. The Grab and Go section must be completed in order for the AAA to provide emergency meals in the event of unexpected closure of a congregate site or on an occasional basis to a Congregate Meal Participant who cannot attend the Congregate Meal site as they usually would. A completed and DARS-approved Grab and Go Service Page in the Area Plan will allow the AAA to provide Grab and Go meals in emergency circumstances or for

occasional needs with OAA Title-C(1) funds. Remember: any meals provided to Congregate Meal Participants that are not consumed at a Congregate Meal Site are considered Grab and Go and must be logged accordingly in PeerPlace. Funding spent on these meals cannot exceed 25% of C(1) funding.

5. **Question:** If a Congregate Nutrition Participant is not able to stay and consume their meal on-site and receives a Grab and Go meal instead, how do we record this in PeerPlace?

Answer: Each AAA has a Grab and Go service type already mapped in PeerPlace and units should be captured there.

6. **Question:** Do we need to complete the Grab and Go Service Page if our Grab and Go meals are being provided through donations and **not** funded with Title III-C(1)?

Answer: No, your AAA would not need to complete a Grab and Go Service Page if your Grab and Go program is funded through donations or other non-OAA funding. It is recommended, however, that your AAA select the “yes” box on the *Congregate Nutrition* Service page and complete the section to provide emergency meals in the event of unexpected closure of a Congregate Site or for an occasional need to a Congregate Participant. This will allow the AAA to provide Grab and Go meals in emergency circumstances or on an occasional basis. If the AAA has other, non-OAA funding, that it intends to provide emergency meals with, and it is confident that those funds would be sufficient in the event of an emergency, then the AAA can forgo the Grab and Go section of the Area Plan by indicating “no” on the bottom of page 70. However, mentioning that another funding source is used for emergency meals would be worth noting under the service description on page 71.

7. **Question:** What is considered Direct Service for Home-Delivered Meals (HDM)?

Answer: Determining Direct Service for Home-Delivered Meals (HDM) is multi-faceted. If your AAA provides food preparation services **and/or** delivery services, this would be considered direct service and a Direct Service Waiver Form would be required to be completed. If your AAA contracts out **both** the

food preparation services **and** the delivery of meals, this would **not** be considered direct service. A couple examples:

If the AAA contracts with Mom's Meals, they provide both the food and coordinate the deliveries through a major package carrier (ex. UPS). **Not Direct Service.**

If the AAA contracts with FeedMore to provide the food and utilize FeedMore's volunteer drivers to distribute the meals. **Not Direct Service.**

If the AAA contracts with FeedMore to provide the food, BUT the AAA uses its own drivers and volunteers to distribute the meals. **Direct Service. Waiver Required.**

The AAA has a central kitchen where it prepares its own meals and utilizes agency drivers and volunteers to distribute the meals. **Direct Service. Waiver Required.**

Also, please note that there *may* be some AAAs that utilize a mix of direct and indirect services. A Direct Service Waiver would still need to be completed for the portion of direct service the agency provides.

8. **Question:** For Home Delivered Meals-Infrequent Delivery, if at least 5 meals are delivered ONE time per week does it require a waiver?

Answer: No waiver is needed. That would meet DARS' definition of weekly meal delivery, and AAAs are compliant if at least 5 meals are delivered at least one time within a 7-day period.

9. **Question:** For the Registered Dietitian's Nutrition Counseling session(s), where should the completed UAI sections live in PeerPlace?

Should they be captured under the UAI or as an attachment in the client's profile with a CRIA note?

Answer: Although this information is not directly related to completing the Nutrition Counseling service page of the Area Plan, pg. 6 of the UAI cannot be uploaded as an attachment in PeerPlace. This would create inaccurate data collection reports, if needed. Only the nutrition section of pg. 6 needs to be completed by the RDN. The UAI (including page 6) can be accessed within the CRIA encounter as well as the enrollment where the Nutrition Counseling

service is being provided. DARS is currently updating the resource in PeerPlace titled, "AAA Nutrition Counseling and Nutrition Education Data Entry."

The [Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Services Standard](#), located on the DARS Providers' Portal states "In addition to other service requirements, AAA staff or contractors must also complete page 5 of the Uniform Assessment Instrument (UAI) as part of the RDN referral and maintain this additional documentation in the DARS approved client database. If the individual accepts the referral for nutrition counseling, then the RDN must complete page 6 of the Uniform Assessment Instrument (UAI) and maintain this additional documentation in the DARS approved client database. The RDN may use additional malnutrition screening and assessment tools. If the client refuses individual nutrition counseling, this must be documented within the program notes in the DARS approved client database.

10. **Question:** If we have a Home-Delivered Meal Infrequent Delivery Plan in place, do we need to complete a new form?

Answer: Yes, a new Home-Delivered Meal Infrequent Delivery (HDM-ID) Waiver Request Form and Plan will be needed to renew an existing HDM-ID Plan. Generally, AAAs will only need to submit/resubmit the HDM-ID Waiver Request Form at the beginning of a new Area Plan Cycle (the first year of a four-year cycle). However, for FFY 2026 Area Plans, AAAs must resubmit all existing and approved waivers plus any new waiver requests through the Area Plan.

11. **Question:** For the III-D Funding, how do we find out if a program is eligible for using this funding?

Answer: DARS uses the NCOA List of Evidence-Based Programs: <https://www.ncoa.org/evidence-based-programs/>. This is not an exhaustive list; however, it covers a large number of evidence-based programs. Also, you can use this [search tool](#) to narrow down your search for a new evidence-based program. If you are interested in a program not listed, please reach out to Kelly.wright@dars.virginia.gov for additional information.

12. **Question:** Under Group 7's *Other Supplemental Services*, are AAAs still held to the 20% cap on supplemental services or has that limit been lifted?

Answer: That cap has been lifted. The 20% cap was part of an old OAA Program Instruction, but that requirement is no longer in effect.

13. **Question:** What is the income requirement for Farm Market Fresh (SFMNP)?

Answer: There is an error in the Area Plan Companion Manual. The eligible populations subsection should state: "Eligible Populations: Adults must be 60 years or higher and have a household income at or below 185% of the federal poverty guidelines." Please include this statement on the Service Page. You should disregard this statement in the Area Plan Companion Manual related to the eligible population: "Eligible participants include those with an adjusted gross income at or below 150% of the federal poverty level." This statement is not accurate and should not be used.

14. **NEW: Question:** On page 62, for Outreach/Public Information and Education service, what is the unit type?

Answer: On page 62, for Outreach/Public Information and Education service, the contact type should read *Activities* instead of *Contacts*. This is an error. Please cite your units based on number of activities rather than number of contacts.

15. **Question:** For Virginia Insurance Counseling Assistance Program (VICAP), what unit type should be used?

Answer: The VICAP unit type should be contacts (not hours).

16. **Question:** For the Farm Market Fresh/Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, what proposed expenditure amount should be included (e.g., voucher/books allocations, administration costs, or both)?

Answer: On page 6 (Summary Source of Funds) and in the Other Services Page for Farm Market Fresh, please include the overall allocation (inclusive of voucher and administration costs) the AAA is expected to receive as one total on one line.

17. **Question:** Is it safe to say that the CCEVP part of the Area Plan has not changed a great deal from previous Area Plan document?

Answer: Correct, CCEVP has not changed much from the previous Area Plan document. The biggest change is the guidance around when to fill out the

CCEVP Services Pages versus filling them out earlier in the Area Plan under Group 2 Services.

Waivers

1. **Question:** For the Direct Service Waivers, do we need to submit a separate form for each direct service? In years past, we were able to just check a box for all of our direct services.

Answer: AAAs will need to request a Direct Service Waiver for each service they would like to directly furnish. Each Direct Service Waiver Request will require some kind of justification, however, DARS anticipates that some content in the justification will be replicable across Direct Service Waiver Requests.

Care Coordination, PIE, and CRIA do not need a Direct Service Waiver; AAAs should ensure that the Service Pages for those three services indicate “Yes” for Direct Service Waiver as a default. These services have been categorically pre-approved by DARS for direct service provision.

Additional information on the Direct Service Waiver Requests is included in the Companion Manual and will be addressed on the April 14 training.

2. **Question:** If Cost Sharing is allowable, but we opt not to charge for the service, would this require a waiver?

Answer: Yes, you will need to submit a waiver.

3. **Question:** For the Direct Service Waiver, do we need to submit a new waiver each year?

Answer: Generally, AAAs will only need to submit/resubmit Direct Service Waiver Requests at the beginning of a new Area Plan Cycle (the first year of a four-year cycle). However, for FFY 2026 Area Plans, AAAs must resubmit all existing and approved waivers plus any new waiver requests through the Area Plan.

Budget

1. **Question:** What are the deadlines for requesting transfers in the current year?

Answer: The State General Fund transfer deadline was March 31, 2025, and the Federal Fund transfer deadline is June 30. If your AAA is contemplating Federal

Fund transfers, please reach out to Tanya Brinkley or John Carpenter as soon as possible.

- Question:** Can you please clarify the State General Fund transfer 40% rule? How is this 40% applied? Is it 40% of the total award for all 3 (Community Based Services, Transportation, & Home Delivered Meals) or 40% of each award?

Answer: It is 40% of each award that can be moved across those three funding sources as long as the total of the transfers equal zero. For example, if you want to transfer the maximum amount of funding to Home Delivered Meals (HDM) from Community Based Services (CBS) and Transportation, you would calculate 40% of CBS and then 40% of Transportation and enter those amounts as negative amounts on the transfer row and enter the total of those funds as a positive amount under HDM.

Projected Resources and Spending	OAA General	Community Based	Transportation	Home Delivered Meals
Estimated Unencumbered Cash on Hand on 10/1/25				
FY'26 Obligation (Oct 1, 2025 - Jun 30, 2026)	99,564	71,536	25,906	91,326
FY'26 Transfers (Oct 1, 2025 - Jun 30, 2026)		(28,614)	(10,362)	38,976

	10/1/25-6/30/26
State Transfers (40% or less)	
Community Based Transfers	40.0%
Transportation Transfers	40.0%
Home Delivered Meal Transfers	-42.7%
Total Transfers Equal Zero	

Public Input Process/ Board Approvals

- Question:** Do we need to include the Area Plan Budget in the public comment?

Answer: Yes, the Area Plan Budget does need to be included in the public comment.

The forthcoming Companion Manual and Training on April 14 will provide an overview of the "Core Documents" that will be subject to the public input process.

2. **Question:** Does the governing board need to approve both the Area Plan and the Area Plan Budget?

Answer: Yes. The AAA Governing Board must approve the Area Plan Program and Area Plan Budget. This is a focal point during the On-Site Monitoring Visit, during which DARS reviews the AAA Governing Board's meeting minutes to confirm this action occurred.

3. **Question:** Can we develop a PowerPoint presentation or summary of the Area Plan for our 30-day Public Comment instead of posting the full Area Plan documents?

Answer: No. You must post the full Area Plan document for public inspection during the 30-day public comment period. You may create a PowerPoint or summary in addition to the full Area Plan to highlight any services or significant changes you'd like to draw attention to.

This is included in the Companion Manual and will be addressed on the April 14 training.

4. **Question:** Is the AAA required to use the June 25-July 25 dates for the 30-Day Public Comment Period?

Answer: No, not necessarily. If the AAA is able to complete its Draft Area Plan before June 25, it can start the 30-Day Public Comment Period earlier than the June 25-July 25 suggested dates. These dates were suggested based on two main reasons.

First, these dates seemed to be the absolute latest timeframe that these activities could be completed while still ensuring the AAA has time to secure Governing Board approval and to get the Final Area Plan submitted to DARS by the August 1 deadline.

Second, the potential timing for when DARS will be able to issue AAA allocations for the next federal fiscal year (FFY). DARS doesn't know exactly when the agency will receive our current FFY final allocations from ACL. That information is needed to estimate each AAA's allocation for the next FFY. DARS has tried to suggest dates that account for the timeframe for DARS to receive the information it needs from ACL, process it, get estimated allocations out to the

AAAs, and then for the AAAs to have time to process their allocations and develop their budgets for the next FFY.

As a reminder, we are holding training on the Area Plan Budget on June 9 from 2-3:30 pm and an Office Hours for questions/issues regarding the Area Plan Budget on June 17 from 2-3:30 pm as well. Here's the schedule/links for these and other trainings/office hours:

<https://sharepoint.wwrc.net/VDaproviders/Shared%20Documents/Area%20Plan%202026/Area%20Plan%20Trainings%20Matrix.pdf>.

5. **Question:** Can DARS provide any prompting questions to be shared for the Public Hearings or Advisory Council Consultations?

Answer: Yes, DARS has collected some example prompts or questions that could be used. Prompting questions might be helpful in generating public input and Advisory Council consultation on the Draft Area Plan. The Area Plan can be an unwieldy document, and flagging decision points or items of particular interest can be helpful. The AAA may want to consider asking attendees to respond to these prompts:

- What unmet needs have you experienced or observed in our community?
- The AAA has identified [these unmet needs]. Does that align with what you would expect?
- The AAA has placed [senior center or congregate meal sites] in [these locations]. Do you think they adequately or appropriately placed within the planning and service area?
- Are there parts of the PSA or populations that the AAA could better reach?
- The AAA is adding X new service. What do you think about that?
- The AAA is eliminating Y service. What do you think about that?
- The AAA has increased/decreased funding for Z service(s). What do you think about that?
- The AAA's plan for Grab & Go Meals is [insert]. This [matches/does not match] what the AAA has historically done. What do you think about that?

These are not mandatory or required questions. The AAA can use these, modify them, or come up with other options.

6. **Question:** For Governing Board approval, is the approval done at the time of the Area Plan cycle or every year with every amendment?

Answer: AAAs must receive Governing Board approval each year the Area Plan is submitted. This includes for the first year of the Area Plan Cycle and the subsequent 2nd-4th years with annual updates.

7. **Question:** For the Government-sponsored AAAs, how long do we have to get Board approval following 30-day public comment?

Answer: DARS has created flexibility for Government-Sponsored AAAs to submit the Final Area Plan to DARS without Governing Board approval. These AAAs must still submit their Final Area Plans to DARS by August 1st. They should then work to obtain Governing Board approval in August or early September and notify DARS once the approval has been received. AAAs must secure Governing Board approval before DARS can execute new/modified contracts with them for the next Federal Fiscal Year.

8. **Question:** How should AAAs handle requests for hard copies of the area plan?

Answer: DARS reiterates that each AAA's website must include public input notice information AND a copy of the Draft Area Plan documents or information about how the public can obtain copies of the Draft Area Plan documents (see the Area Plan Companion Manual). In instances when the public may not be able to access electronic copies of the Draft Area Plan documents for the 30-day public comment period, the AAA may notify the public that 1-2 printed copies of the Draft Area Plan documents are available in the AAA's main office location or at congregate meal site(s) locations for the public to come and view (but not necessarily take home). At in-person public hearings, either electronic access or a few printed copies of the Draft Area Plan documents should be available for the public to view.

Generally, AAAs should not charge the public to provide copies of the Draft Area Plan documents. DARS recognizes, however, the Area Plan documents are lengthy and the potential interest in accessing the Area Plan documents may be unknown. If (1) the requests reach a voluminous level that is beyond what the AAA can absorb, and (2) the AAA has explored less costly alternatives with the member of the public to access the documents (e.g., viewing them in the AAA office location or providing only specific sections based on interest), and (3) the AAA thinks it is prudent to charge for copies, DARS recommends the AAAs adhere to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Charges Guide ([link](#)).

9. **Question:** For the public input notice, is there standard contextual language and/or regulatory references that should be used?

Answer: No, there is not any specific contextual language the AAA must use. However, DARS has provided some parameters for the public input process in the [Area Plan Companion Manual](#) on pages 7-13. As a framework, DARS suggests AAAs:

1. Include a brief statement explaining what the Area Plan is:

Example: "The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Area Plan is a comprehensive, multi-year roadmap that guides the AAA's work. The Area Plan is required under Section 306 of the Older Americans Act (42 U.S.C. § 3026) and 45 C.F.R. § 1321.65. The Area Plan identifies the needs of older adults and caregivers within the AAA's service area, outlines the services the AAA intends to provide to meet those needs, and details estimated budgeting for the AAA's operations and services."

2. Include a brief explainer on the purpose of the public input process

Example: "In developing the AAA's Area Plan for October 1, 2025 through September 30, 2027, the AAA is seeking public input through a 30-day public comment period and through [a] public hearing[s]."

3. Identify any significant changes to the Area Plan (e.g., adding or removing a new service) or if you are seeking specific input on a component of the Area Plan (e.g., Grab & Go Meals)
 - a. For Minimum Adequate Proportion (MAP) Waiver Requests, the AAA should ensure that all public notices seeking public input clearly indicate that the AAA is requesting a MAP Waiver and that the AAA is also seeking public input on the MAP Waiver Request.
4. Specify the opportunities and methods the public can provide input during the 30-day public comment period and via the public hearing[s] (e.g., dates, times, locations/modalities, contact information, hyperlinks)
5. Identify an AAA staff member who the public can contact if they have additional questions about the Area Plan or public input process

Technical Questions (PDF Functionality)

1. **Question:** When accessing the 2026 Area Plan documents in the Provider's Portal, the following documents are listed: Area Plan Part A, Area Plan Part B, and Area Plan Parts A & B combined. Which document(s) should be submitted to DARS when submitting the Area Plan?

Answer: DARS has provided the 2026 Area Plan document in a split version (Area Plan Part A and Area Plan Part B) and a single, combined version. We have done this for a couple of reasons: 1) to provide AAAs the option to complete it in two parts, and 2) to provide AAAs an option if the document is too large to open or complete. Your AAA may choose either option to complete.

2. **Question:** Can we work on the Area Plan in our web browser if we do not have an Adobe product downloaded?

Answer: No, this is not recommended. If the Area Plan documents are not opened and completed in an Adobe product (such as Adobe Reader or Adobe Pro) you will not be able to see the full functionality of the document. To download Adobe Reader, please visit the [Adobe site here](#) to download it for free.

3. **Question:** Can the Area Plan be completed directly from the SharePoint Document Submission Portal and notify DARS once we have completed the document?

Answer: No, it is not recommended to use the SharePoint Document Submission Portal to work on your document. For the best functionality, you will need to download the Area Plan documents from the Providers Portal and use an Adobe product (such as Adobe Reader or Adobe Pro) to complete the document. You will then upload the completed version into SharePoint for DARS' review.

4. **Question:** Do you have any recommendations for working collaboratively on the PDF document? Should we just copy and paste into a master document?

Answer: DARS suggests that only one person work in the PDF document at a time. Documents could be placed in a shared drive (local drive or online drive like OneDrive or Google Drive). However, it is recommended that only one person work in the document at a time to ensure there are no work is overwritten. Another best practice is to designate one staff member to compile the full Area Plan on behalf of the agency.

5. **Question:** What is the difference between the Providers' Portal and the SharePoint site, and who do I contact if I cannot access one?

Answer:

Providers' Portal (Download Portal)	DARS-AAA-Document Sharing- External (Upload Portal)
How to access: https://sharepoint.wwrc.net/VDAproviders/SitePages/Home.aspx	How to access: Access is given to AAA staff on an individual basis. If access is needed for an AAA staff

	member, please contact Madeline Burnham.
Modality: SharePoint	Modality: SharePoint
Purpose: AAAs and the public can download documents published by DARS, including the Area Plan Templates, Companion Manuals, and Training Recordings. The Providers' Portal includes blank, fillable documents as well as guidance documents.	Purpose: AAAs can upload documents such as <u>completed</u> Area Plan documents (e.g., Area Plan Program and Area Plan Budget) and Annual Documents (e.g., Emergency Preparedness Documents, AAA Information Forms, and No Wrong Door documents).
Public Access: The Providers' Portal is accessible by the public and is <u>not</u> used by the AAAs to upload or submit completed documents to DARS for review.	Public Access: The DARS-AAA-Document Sharing-External Upload Portal is not publicly accessible.
Contact Person: Tanya Brinkley Tanya.brinkley@dars.virginia.gov	Contact Person: Madeline Burnham Madeline.burnham@dars.virginia.gov

Area Plan Trainings/Office Hours

1. **Question:** Will the Area Plan Training sessions be recorded if we are not able to attend the scheduled time?

Answer: Yes, we will record the Area Plan Training sessions. The recordings will be posted to the [Providers Portal](#).

Please note that the Office Hours sessions will not be recorded as they are drop-in style sessions.

Annually Required Documents & Emergency Preparedness Documents

1. **Question:** Should we submit Annual Documents with staff changes now or wait until next year?

Answer: If you have changes between now and February 1, please submit those. If you do not have any changes, you can wait until February 1, 2026 to submit updated and complete Annual Documents. We have scheduled Training on the Annual and Emergency Preparedness Documents for Monday, July 7, 2025 from 2-3:30pm. You can register for this Zoom Webinar [here](#). In addition, we will host Office Hours on this topic on Tuesday, July 15 from 2-3:30pm. You can access that Zoom Meeting [here](#).

2. **Question:** When will the DARS Emergency Response Plan, Risk Assessment, and Continuity of Operations Plan templates be available?

Answer: These templates will be released in early July. DARS has scheduled Training on the Annual and Emergency Preparedness Documents for Monday, July 7, 2025 from 2-3:30pm. You can register for this Zoom Webinar [here](#). In addition, we'll have Office Hours on this topic on Tuesday, July 15 from 2-3:30pm. You can access that Zoom Meeting [here](#). The Emergency Preparedness Documents are due to DARS on October 1, 2025, and the Annual Documents will be due to DARS on February 1, 2026 (unless the AAA has changes before then).