Access, Belonging, and Community (ABC) Survey Report
April 2025

Introduction:

- Between January 28, 2025 and March 6, 2025, the Cooperative Memorial Society (CMS) conducted a survey focused on Access, Belonging, and Community (ABC). During this period, 352 individuals responded, sharing their experiences, perceptions, and suggestions. The survey included ten questions, four of which were optional and mainly related to demographic information, as well as a space for additional comments.

- Created by a social work practicum student at CMS, the survey was designed to remain entirely anonymous and confidential, with the goal of gathering insights to strengthen the cooperative's engagement and support of its members. This report presents the collected data and features the social work student's recommendations for enhancing accessibility, fostering belonging, and cultivating community within the organization.

Methodology:

- Data for this survey was collected using Google Forms, chosen primarily for its cost-effectiveness and immediate availability. To maximize participation and maintain confidentiality, respondents were not required to be logged in. This decision catered especially to older demographics, for whom account sign-ins can be a barrier. While this approach allowed for the possibility of multiple entries from the same individual, the student deduced that any duplicate submissions would be minimal and unlikely to significantly affect the overall results.

Survey Questions and Responses:

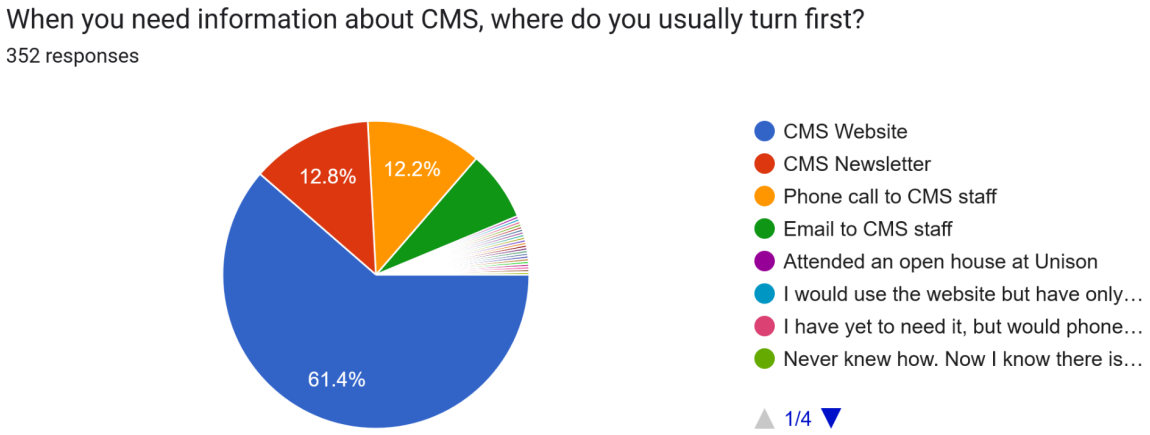
- Below you will find a screenshot of the survey question as it appeared to participants, followed by a chart of the responses, and finally a concise summary of each question's results. The concluding section of this document consolidates the key themes and analysis, presenting practical suggestions and recommendations based on the survey's overall findings.

Clickable Table of Contents:

Question 1.

When you need information about CMS, where do you usually turn first? *

- ○ CMS Website
- ○ CMS Newsletter
- ○ Phone call to CMS staff
- ○ Email to CMS staff
- ○ Other...



Summary of responses:

- Of the 352 total responses to this question, 216 (61.4%) indicated they would first consult the CMS website, making it the most popular source of information. Another 45 (12.8%) rely on the CMS newsletter, while 43 (12.2%) prefer calling staff by phone and 26 (7.4%) typically use email. The remaining 22 (6.2%) chose "Other" for reasons such as not having needed information since joining, relying on funeral homes for arrangements, attending in-person events (like open houses or the AGM), or simply not knowing how to contact CMS. A few respondents also expressed uncertainty about their membership status or how to access information. suggesting that while the website is heavily utilized, some members may benefit from clearer guidance or reminders on ways to reach CMS.

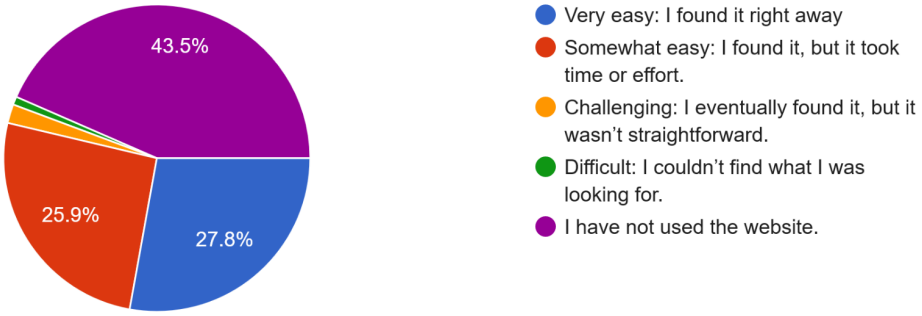
Question 2.

Have you used the CMS website to find information or resources? If **yes**, how easy was it to locate what you needed? *

- ○ Very easy: I found it right away
- ○ Somewhat easy: I found it, but it took time or effort.
- ○ Challenging: I eventually found it, but it wasn't straightforward.
- ○ Difficult: I couldn't find what I was looking for.
- ○ I have not used the website.

Have you used the CMS website to find information or resources? If yes, how easy was it to locate what you needed?

352 responses



Summary of responses:

- Of the 352 total respondents, 153 (43.5%) reported they have not used the CMS website at all. Among the remaining respondents who did use the website, 98 (27.8%) said it was "Very easy" to find the information they needed, and 91 (25.9%) described it as "Somewhat easy." A smaller group of 7 (2.0%) found it "Challenging," while 3 (0.9%) considered it "Difficult." Overall, most who used the site were able to locate information with minimal difficulty.

Question 3.

Have you experienced **any** challenges or barriers in engaging with CMS's services, resources, or service partners? If **yes**, please share any details or examples you're comfortable providing. *

(For example: location, language, scheduling, technology navigation, cultural or religious considerations, or other factors)? **If you're answer is no, simply answer no or N/A.**

Long answer text

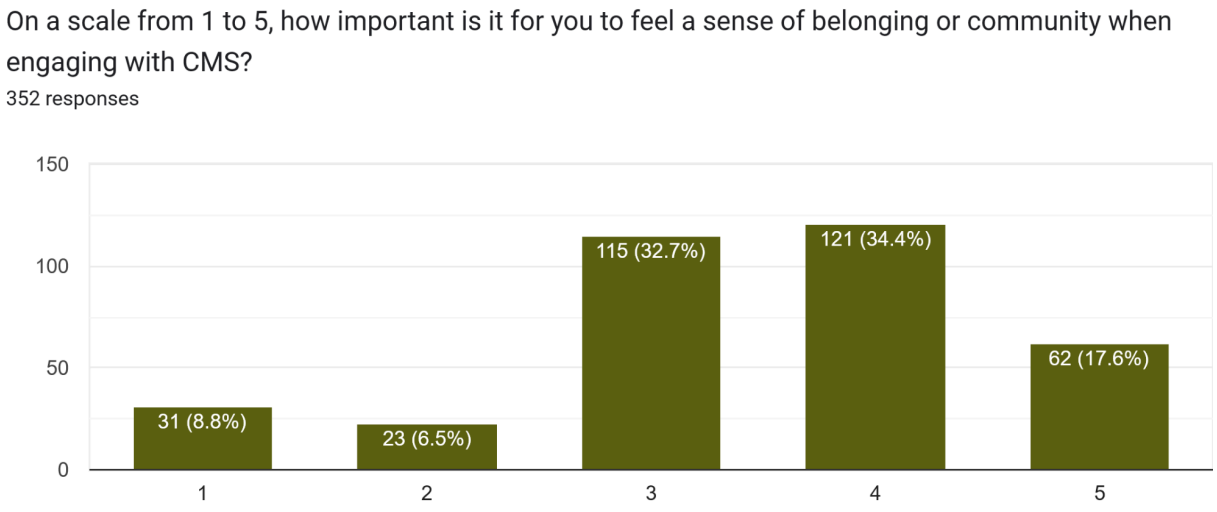
Summary of responses:

- Of the 352 total responses, the vast majority (well over 300) explicitly stated "No" or "N/A," indicating they had encountered no challenges or barriers when engaging with CMS's services or partners. However, approximately 20 to 30 respondents described specific difficulties. These included trouble reaching someone by phone or not receiving a call back, confusion about membership details (especially when updating or adding new members), and technology issues such as needing to create additional accounts (e.g., Zoom) to register for events. A few individuals were also uncertain about bylaw changes, funeral home discounts, or claimed there was no apparent cost difference when using CMS services.

Question 4.

On a scale from 1 to 5, how important is it for **you** to feel a sense of **belonging** or **community** when engaging with CMS? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all.	○	○	○	○	○	Extremely important.



Summary of responses:

- Of the 352 respondents, 31 (8.8%) rated the importance of feeling a sense of belonging or community as "1" on a five-point scale, and 23 (6.5%) rated it "2." A larger group of 115 (32.7%) selected "3," while 121 (34.4%) chose "4," and 62 (17.6%) indicated "5," the highest level of importance. Overall, more than half (52%) rated it "4" or "5," suggesting that many participants do value a sense of belonging and community when engaging with CMS, while others are more neutral or place less emphasis on this aspect.

Optional Question 5.

If you feel belonging or community is important (4 or 5) but **do not currently experience it with CMS**, how could we help foster a greater sense of connection **for you?**

Some examples may be opportunities to share personal stories or experiences, inclusive resource materials such as multiple language options, community-building initiatives like volunteer groups or online get-togethers, and so on.

Short answer text

Summary of responses:

- Of the 258 responses, a substantial number expressed no desire for additional community engagement or simply responded "N/A" or "No." Among those who did offer suggestions, several common themes emerged. Many indicated they would appreciate more frequent or varied communications, such as additional newsletters or email updates, to keep members informed of events and resources. Others emphasized in-person or regional gatherings (e.g., outside of Calgary) or online get-togethers (e.g., webinars, discussion sessions) to foster connection. Personal stories and experiences, particularly around funeral planning or related topics, were also highlighted as a way to build a sense of belonging. Additionally, a few respondents noted technology barriers and desired simpler processes (e.g., fewer online accounts needed), while others saw value in volunteer opportunities or ongoing education (e.g., sessions on advance care, palliative care, or MAID) to feel more connected with CMS.

Question 6.

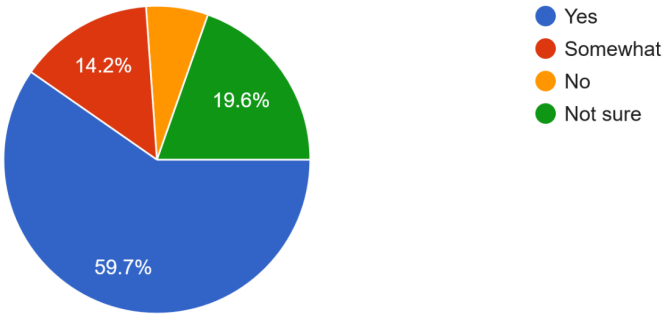
Do you see **your** experiences, culture, or background reflected in CMS materials? *

In other words, do the language, visuals, and examples used feel relevant to who you are?

- ○ Yes
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ No
- ○ Not sure

Do you see your experiences, culture, or background reflected in CMS materials?

352 responses



Summary of responses:

- Of the 352 individuals who responded, 210 (59.7%) indicated "Yes," they see their experiences or background reflected in CMS materials. Another 50 (14.2%) answered "Somewhat," 23 (6.5%) chose "No," and 69 (19.6%) were "Not sure." While a clear majority feel represented to some extent, there remains a notable group who either do not see their experiences reflected or are unsure.

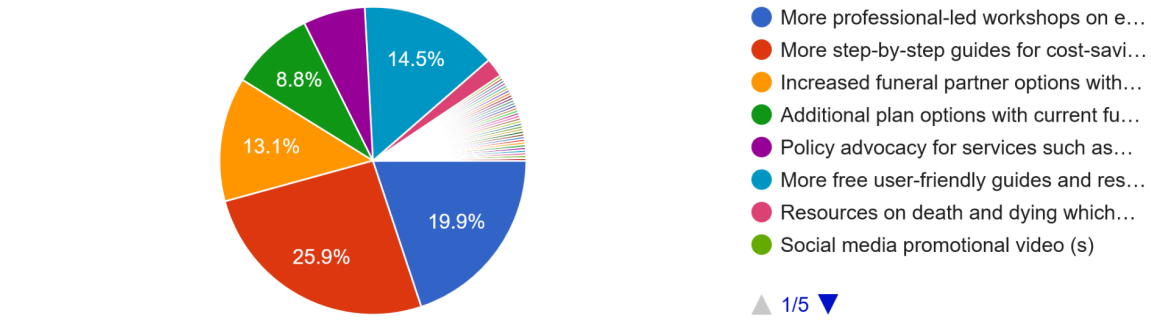
Question 7.

If you could prioritize just **one** new resource or service for CMS to offer, what would it be? *

- ○ More professional-led workshops on end-of-life topics (e.g., death doula, MAID).
- ○ More step-by-step guides for cost-saving funeral planning.
- ○ Increased funeral partner options with other service providers across Alberta.
- ○ Additional plan options with current funeral service partners.
- ○ Policy advocacy for services such as aquamation or terramation.
- ○ More free user-friendly guides and resources for end-of-life planning.
- ○ Resources on death and dying which explore cultural traditions and unique practices.
- ○ Other...

If you could prioritize just one new resource or service for CMS to offer, what would it be?

352 responses



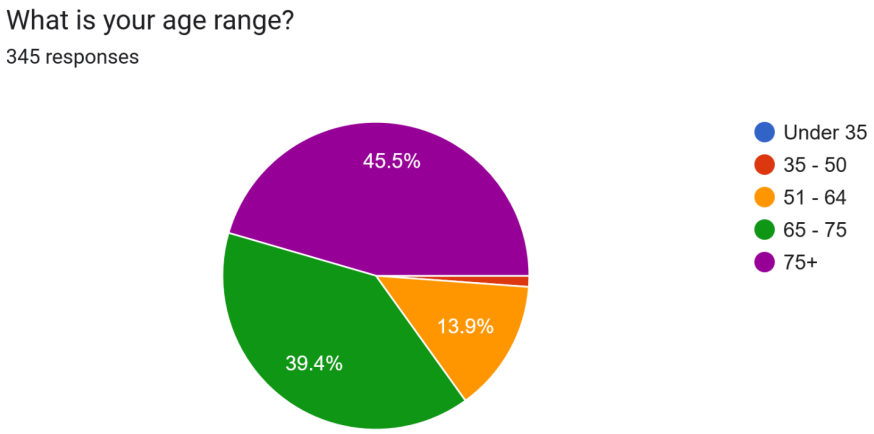
Summary of responses:

- Of the 352 total respondents, the most frequently selected option was "More step-by-step guides for cost-saving funeral planning," chosen by 91 people (25.9%). Followed by "More professional-led workshops on end-of-life topics" (e.g., death doulas, MAID), at 70 (19.9%), and "More free user-friendly guides and resources" at 51 (14.5%). Another 46 (13.1%) wanted "Increased funeral partner options across Alberta," and 31 (8.8%) requested "Additional plan options with current funeral service partners." Policy advocacy (e.g., aquamation, terramation) was selected by 23 respondents (6.5%), while 7 (2%) favored "Resources on death and dying that explore cultural traditions." In addition, 33 people (about 9.4%) chose "Other," suggesting ideas like social media promotions, more regional outreach (e.g., beyond Calgary), and instructions for do-it-yourself options (e.g., Quaker-style cremation). Several mentioned green burials, more education or in-person guidance, or simply having annual information meetings to stay informed.

Optional Question 8.

What is your age range?

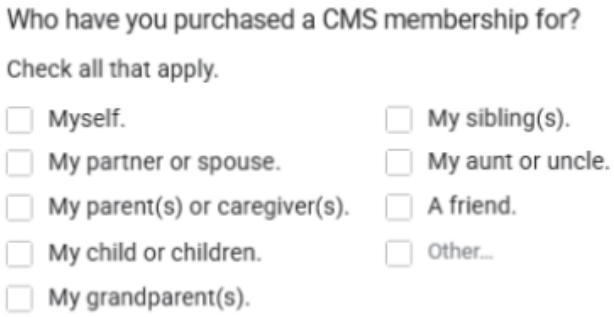
- ○ Under 35
- ○ 35 - 50
- ○ 51 - 64
- ○ 65 - 75
- ○ 75+

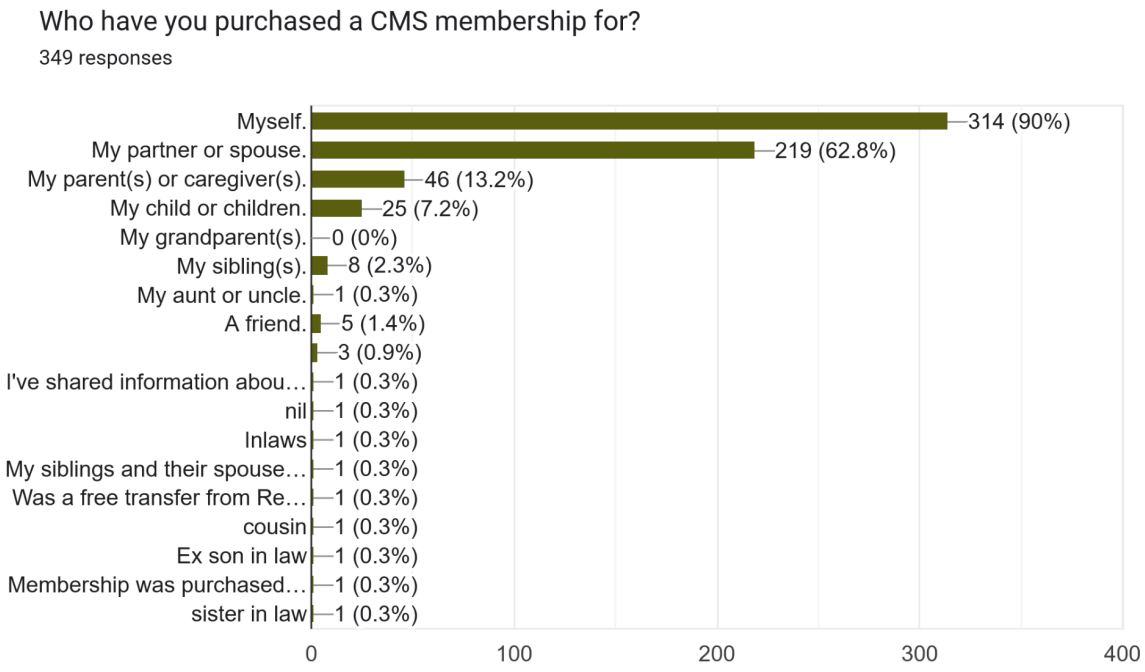


Summary of responses:

- Of the 345 individuals who answered this question, the largest group, 157 people (45.5%), were aged 75 and older, followed by 136 (39.4%) in the 65-75 range. Another 48 (13.9%) were aged 51-64, while just 4 (1.2%) selected 35-50, and none were under 35. - something about retirement age here.

Question 9.





Summary of responses:

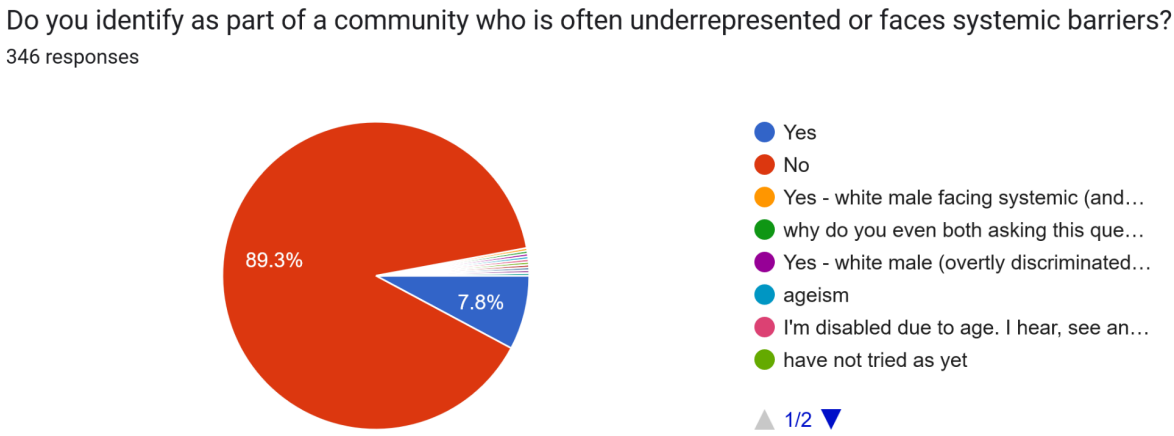
- Out of 349 total responses, the overwhelming majority, 314 (90%), indicated they purchased a CMS membership for themselves. Another 219 (62.8%) acquired a membership for their partner or spouse, reflecting a common practice of joint planning. A smaller group of 46 (13.2%) reported purchasing for their parents or caregivers, and 25 (7.2%) noted doing so for their child or children. Fewer still bought memberships for siblings (2.3%), aunts or uncles (0.3%), or friends (1.4%). Several respondents selected multiple categories, indicating family-wide enrollment or even inclusion of close friends. Overall, this data suggests that most members prioritize securing CMS coverage for themselves and their partners first, while a smaller yet notable number extend memberships to other relatives or friends.

Question 10.

Do you identify as part of a community who is often underrepresented or faces systemic barriers?

(e.g., racialized communities, 2SLGBTQ+, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, people with disabilities, religious minorities, or others)

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Other...



Summary of responses:

- Out of 346 total responses, approximately 27 people (7.8%) answered "Yes," identifying as part of a community often facing systemic barriers, while 309 (89.3%) selected "No." A small remainder (about 10 individuals, or 2.9%) chose "Other," mentioning factors like ageism, disability, and low income, or critiquing (and feeling offended by) the question itself. The data suggests that a modest segment of respondents feel they belong to a minority group, whereas the majority do not perceive themselves as underrepresented.

Additional Comments.

This is your optional opportunity to share any **additional thoughts or information** you feel was left out, or anything you would like CMS to know regarding **access, belonging, and community (ABC).**

Long answer text

Summary of responses:

- Of the 114 additional comments, around 40 expressed gratitude for CMS's services, with at least eight specifically noting how CMS eased the burden during a loved one's funeral. Approximately 25 suggested ways to improve communication and outreach, including more in-person events, additional newsletters, and broader public awareness to attract new members. In roughly 10 comments, respondents highlighted technology barriers, such as difficulty registering for online meetings and the need for simple, step-by-step guides. One individual, for instance, mentioned processing information at a slower pace due to age or disability.
- About eight commenters described challenges with funeral homes honouring CMS discounts, reporting issues like upselling or staff ignoring membership details. Green burials and other eco-friendly end-of-life options appeared in about five responses, reflecting a small but clear interest in alternative approaches. Two respondents criticized the land acknowledgment at a recent meeting, calling it "divisive," while a few others requested more inclusive resources addressing cultural traditions or unique practices. Finally, around six commenters asked for clarity on using CMS services out of province (particularly in British Columbia) or transferring memberships between regions.

Analysis and Recommendations

1. Communication and Access

Analysis:

- A significant majority (61.4%) rely on the CMS website for information, yet roughly 40% have never visited it, indicating a need for continued guidance on online resources.
- Research indicates that clear, simplified layouts, large fonts, and visuals can significantly improve usability and reduce stress for older adults. Accessible site design also supports diversity and inclusion by accommodating varying literacy or comfort levels with technology.
- Studies on funeral service marketing emphasize that transparent, user-friendly interfaces build trust among diverse consumer bases.

Recommendations:

- **Enhance Website Accessibility:** Continue improvements to navigation, font size, and clarity of membership status/log-in processes. Provide "How-To" tutorials or short explainer videos to boost user confidence.
- **Proactive Outreach:** Improve "welcome/information kits" for new members and those who have not engaged recently. Kits could include membership details, contact info, a funeral-planning checklist, and a reminder about CMS's scope of services (e.g., resource discounts, partner funeral homes).

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2. Cultivating Belonging and Inclusivity

Analysis:

- Members appreciate the sense of community CMS offers but need more opportunities, both in-person (locally and regionally) and online, to feel genuinely included.
- Providing culturally and socially varied narratives about funeral planning encourages greater connection, especially for those who feel underrepresented. Research highlights how personal stories, peer-led experiences, and volunteer programs can decrease social isolation and stigma around funeral planning.

- Literature on end-of-life care emphasizes culturally competent communication to ensure underrepresented members feel recognized.

Recommendations:

- **Structured Member Engagement:** Host member "info sessions," local meetups, or short educational workshops (in-person or via Zoom) addressing different aspects of end-of-life planning.
- **Inclusive Storytelling:** Curate a "Member Stories" section on the website or in newsletters featuring diverse voices (e.g., older adults, newcomers to Canada, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals) who describe their experiences with CMS and/or funeral providers.
- **Diverse Imagery and Language:** Where possible, update CMS communications (website, brochures) to reflect cultural and age diversity, varying family structures, and inclusive language.
- **Partnerships for Inclusion:** Explore relationships with culturally specific funeral service providers, grief counseling organizations, or community centers serving Indigenous, immigrant, or 2SLGBTQ+ populations to expand the network of supportive services.

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3. Addressing Barriers and Improving Support

Recommendations:

- **Streamline Administrative Procedures:** Even minor obstacles in communication or unclear membership procedures can undermine trust, especially among older or underrepresented groups that might already face systemic barriers. Simplify membership updating steps (e.g., adding a spouse or parent) and ensure staff can walk members through the process quickly, either over the phone or via email.
- **Tech Assistance:** Provide basic how-to guides for Zoom or other digital platforms. Consider a "tech buddy" or volunteer phone line for older members, assisting them in event registration in the future.
- **Price Transparency and Clarity:** Regularly share updates on partner funeral homes, discount structures, and any bylaw changes in newsletters or email updates. Reinforce that membership, indeed, confers tangible benefits (e.g., discount rates, streamlined life planning) to address any skepticism.

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4. Age Range and Targeted Outreach

Analysis:

- Given this older demographic, marketing through retirement communities, senior centers, and age-friendly organizations could significantly raise CMS's visibility.
- Research indicates that age-friendly communities that address end-of-life services reduce ageism and stigma around death, fostering more compassionate and prepared environments.

Recommendations:

- **Targeted Marketing and Partnerships:** Collaborate with retirement homes, community senior associations, and local health providers to share information on CMS. Continue to provide introductory presentations on CMS and their provided services.
- **Age-Friendly Material:** Ensure that any print or digital resources/communications are highly readable (large fonts, clear contrast, simple language) and that phone-based assistance remains accessible.

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5. Enhanced Resources and Inclusive Formats

Analysis:

- Integrating varied learning formats (e.g., videos, infographics, Q&A sessions) can address different communication needs and help members connect.
- Research on digital marketing communication confirms that simple, visually engaging resources reduce anxiety and promote informed decision-making, particularly in emotionally charged contexts like funeral planning.

Recommendations:

- **Multiformat Resource Library:** Offer printable PDF guides, short educational videos, or recorded webinars covering funeral-cost comparisons, eco-friendly burials, cultural considerations, and volunteering.
- **Story-Based Education:** Encourage members who have successfully navigated funeral planning to share experiences in short video clips, newsletters, or local "lunch & learn" gatherings.

- **Adapt Content for Low Literacy or Visual Learners:** Provide easy-to-understand diagrams, large-type instructions, and minimal jargon. Include closed captions on any video content for hearing impaired folks.

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6. Broadening Access, Belonging, and Community

Recommendations:

- **Increase Diverse 'Safety Signaling' on Website:** Literature shows that underrepresented communities are more likely to trust funeral or memorial organizations who explicitly welcome them (via website language, staff training, outreach programs).
- **Partner with Diverse Funeral Providers:** Seek funeral partners who serve different religious/multicultural communities (e.g., green burial specialists, culturally specific providers). Emphasize affordability and inclusive language in contracts.
- **Cultural Advisory Group:** Form a small committee of members from diverse backgrounds (including older adults, BIPOC, 2SLGBTQ+, disabled, and neurodivergent individuals) to regularly assess CMS materials and funeral partnerships for inclusivity gaps.
- **Continuous Staff Development:** Provide ongoing diversity training for staff and volunteers, covering topics like cultural funeral rites, working with older adults with disabilities, and acknowledging diverse family structures. Research has indicated that strengthening cultural competence directly drives higher consumer satisfaction and loyalty, as well as boosting organization income (e.g., membership sign-ups).
- **Implement an Anonymous Feedback Portal:** Introduce an easily accessible online form where members can share input or concerns without revealing their identity. An optional field can be included for those who wish to provide contact details. This approach ensures underrepresented or hesitant individuals can voice their perspectives without fear of repercussions, ultimately fostering greater transparency and trust in CMS while demonstrating that every member's voice truly matters.
