

Civic Engagement: Engaging Older Adults in Volunteering and Employment

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Center for Best Practices



U.S. Demographic Changes

- 18.4 million workers age 55 and older in 2000; by 2015, there is projected to be 31.9 million
- At the same time, there will be a proportional decrease in the population of workers age 25 to 44
- Employers face challenges as population ages - potential skill and labor shortages

Why Do Older Adults Want to Work?

- Decline in employer-funded retirement benefits
- Rising cost of health care
- Need to supplement traditional sources of retirement income

Barriers to Employment for Older Adults

- Health care policies
- Misperceptions
- Social Security disincentives
- Defined benefit pension plans
- Lack of connections to jobs

Why is Civic Engagement Important?

Benefits for:

- Individuals
- Communities and states
- Businesses

The NGA Civic Engagement Policy Academy

Purpose: To help states improve the health and lives of older adults by substantially increasing the proportion of individuals engaged in employment and meaningful volunteer activities.

The NGA Civic Engagement Policy Academy

- Funder: Atlantic Philanthropies
- Major Activities:
 - On-site strategic planning meetings
 - Policy Academy meeting
 - Customized technical assistance
 - Reaching out to new states

Goals of the NGA Civic Engagement Policy Academy

- Conduct comprehensive reviews of state policies
- Initiate policy changes based on labor market needs
- Develop new tools and improve systems that connect older adults
- Enhance training and educational opportunities
- Position states as models to promote civic engagement

Policy Academy States

- Alabama
- Arkansas
- Colorado
- Florida
- Maine
- New Mexico
- Ohio
- Wyoming

State Goals to Increase Civic Engagement

- Make the state a model employer
- Encourage businesses to become more “older worker friendly”
- Create public awareness campaigns targeted to both employers and individuals
- Expand volunteering opportunities

State Strategies and Activities

- Working across agencies or boards to coordinate strategies
- Seeking new funding sources
- Engaging the governor, legislatures, and other key state policymakers in the design of project
- Hosting statewide conferences or symposiums to promote the issue
- Reaching out to businesses to work cooperatively

Outcomes to Date

- Executive Orders promoting civic engagement and solidifying civic engagement efforts
- Statewide conferences on civic engagement and aging issues
- White paper outlining the need to promote volunteerism and employment among older adults
- Grants to develop and implement website to connect older adults to employment opportunities

NGA Center for Best Practices Contact Information

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