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Connecting You to Community Services

Employment Options:

Tips for Older Job Seekers

Older adults from all walks of life are returning to the workforce—or joining it for the first time. Many employers value older workers' knowledge, maturity and work ethic, but finding a job can be difficult, particularly for adults over age 50. Studies show that entering or re-entering the workforce at later ages is more difficult than at younger ages. Older adults, however, have something that younger workers do not have: experience. Even if you have not been steadily employed, you have picked up transferable skills just by living your life. If you are an older adult who has not applied for a job in many years, this guide provides a framework for you to increase your odds of finding employment.

KNOWING YOURSELF AND YOUR SKILLS

Start by taking an inventory of the skills and experience you have acquired through jobs and activities in your life. Work, parenting, hobbies, part-time and seasonal work, volunteering—all require skills that can be readily applied to the employment you seek. Describe the main duties for each activity and list the skills you used to accomplish them, then think about how these skills could apply to a job that interests you. For example,

If you know how to...	Your transferable skills might include...
develop a budget	basic accounting, office management
care for children or relatives	care giving, customer service
organize a community event	organizational skills, event planning
weatherproof your home	conducting energy audits and other "green services"

FINDING JOB LEADS

The Hidden Job Market

Many job opportunities are never listed online, in the newspaper, or in a job bank. Some experts say 80 percent of openings are never advertised. Many businesses do not need to advertise or prefer to hire someone referred to them. Unadvertised openings make up the hidden job market.

Your best source of leads for these jobs is your network, people you already know— your friends, neighbors, relatives, former co-workers, church members. Tell them about your job search and ask for ideas about organizations that may be hiring or people they know who can offer information about job openings. Consider adding to your existing network by joining organizations, volunteering, or attending meetings related to occupations or industries that interest you.

Make a list of potential employers and learn as much about them as you can. What are their needs and how can you fill them? You can increase your odds at every step in your job search by learning as much as you can about a specific job lead, including the skills and prior experience the job requires. Use your network, newspapers, newsletters and magazines as sources. Once you know about the company and the job, determine the best way to approach it: Send a résumé, complete an application, call the business directly or schedule an informational interview.

PRESENTING YOURSELF TO EMPLOYERS

Potential employers will want to see your skills and experience in writing (in a résumé or job application) and in person (during a job interview). Target your potential employers' needs in your application, résumé and interview.

In Writing

Whether you submit a résumé or complete an application, tailor it to the position—when it comes to résumés, one size does not fit all. Use words from the job description, if there is one. It is important to describe your skills in a way to motivate the employer to interview you. Many companies require applications to be submitted online. If your computer skills are weak, find someone to help you fill out and submit your online application.

Résumé Tips

- Write a summary of your skills and experience targeted to the requirements of the job. Emphasize experience within the last 10 to 15 years. Keep information brief and to the point.
- Mention volunteer work, training and certifications only if pertinent to the position. Avoid including personal information.
- Include your education. If you have a GED, list yourself as a high school graduate. If you have a college degree, it is not necessary to list your high school education.
- Have someone review your résumé for errors.

Application Tips

- Make a list of your work-related information to take with you when you apply, including dates and positions held, employer addresses, salaries, skills and duties.
- Read the entire application before you begin and follow directions carefully. Double-check your answers.
- Type or print neatly and avoid errors. If possible, take the application home, so you can take your time filling it out and seek assistance if necessary.
- Avoid negative information, such as personal, legal or financial problems. Do not volunteer unnecessary information.

In Person

An interview lets you and your potential employer learn about each other. Prepare by learning as much as you can about the company and the position. Practice what you will say, so you feel comfortable and can make a positive impression. Illustrate that age is an asset by discussing your skills and experience in a way that targets the position for which you are applying and shows employers you are adaptable and willing to learn. Keep in mind that the overall goal of the interview is to describe your skills in a way to motivate this particular employer to want to hire you.

Interview Tips

- Anticipate questions; prepare answers for each one. Practice with a friend.
- Review your accomplishments. Anticipate difficult questions about gaps in your employment history, career changes, and so on.
- Where possible, mention your willingness to learn new skills (such as technical skills) and to work with diverse co-workers and customers.
- During the interview, listen. Take your time responding. Don't dwell on topics unrelated to the job.
- Ask questions about the job to show your interest, but avoid asking about benefits or salary until you are offered the job.
- By law, interviewers may not ask your age, marital or family status. Do not discuss race, religion, age, national origin or gender.

RESOURCES

In Your Community

- **The Senior Community Service Employment Program** (SCSEP) places income-eligible workers over age 55 in part-time, temporary community service positions where they can learn job skills. Many **Area Agencies on Aging** (AAAs) are the point of contact for SCSEPs; to find out if there is a program in your area, contact a AAA by calling the **Eldercare Locator** at 1-800-677-1117 or by going online to www.eldercare.gov.
- **One-Stop Career Centers** offer skills' assessments, training referrals, career counseling, help with résumés and interviewing, and job listings. To find one near you, call 1-877-348-0502.
- **Public libraries** often offer career services, including résumé help, job listings, classes and access to computers.
- Many **community colleges'** career service offices assist job seekers, even non-students, with finding job leads, résumé-writing and interviewing skills.

Online

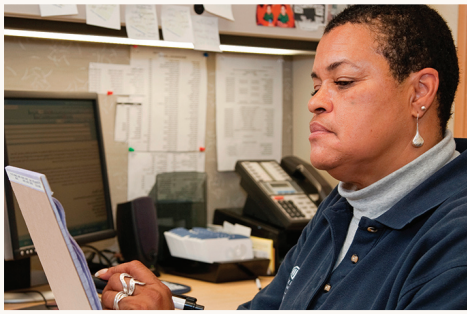
This guide will help you get your job search started, whether or not you use the Internet. The Internet is a vastly useful job-searching tool; numerous job listings, career and company information, and applications are available online. Check for availability of free computer access at libraries, senior centers/AAAs and schools. Librarians at your public library or career counselors at a One-Stop Career Center can get you started.

Useful websites for older job-seekers:

www.careeronestop.org
The One-Stop Career Center website has links to information on job searches, résumés, interviewing, education and training.

www.aarp.org/work/job-hunting
AARP offers advice and information for older job-seekers.

www.doleta.gov/seniors
This website describes the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), a community service and work-based training program for older workers.



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1-800-677-1116
www.eldercare.gov

The first step in finding resources for older adults in any U.S. community and a free national service of the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA). The Eldercare Locator is administered by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a).

SENIOR SERVICE AMERICA

Senior Service America, Inc. (SSAI)

SSAI is a non-profit organization that provides civic engagement and employment opportunities for adults over the age of 55 who wish to re-enter the workforce. SSAI is one of 18 national sponsors and 56 units of state and territorial governments of the Senior Community Service Employment Program nationwide.

n4a

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AoA

Administration on Aging

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