

STRATEGY 2

Increase Employment Opportunities for Older Adults

- a. The Department of Commerce (including the NCWorks Commission), North Carolina Chamber of Commerce, local Chambers of Commerce, North Carolina Community Colleges System, University of North Carolina System (including Schools of Business and lifelong learning programs), and local Workforce Development Boards should collaborate to identify best practices and provide education to business owners and employers about:
 - i. Benefits and methods of attracting and retaining older adult employees, and
 - ii. Opportunities to retool the skills of older adults to meet employment needs.
- b. The North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services and other administrators of the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) should work with partners and organizations where older adults become connected to SCSEP to reach the capacity of the program.
- c. Unite Us should work to develop connections with senior services providers to increase the use of the NCCARE360 statewide resource network to support older North Carolinians in areas like employment and income assistance.

Desired Result - Increase opportunities for older adults wishing to participate in the workforce for financial security and/or to remain engaged in employment.

Why does the task force recommend these strategies? -

There are few organizations that consider age as a dimension of a diverse workforce, yet the pool of traditional working-age individuals is shrinking as birth rates continue to decline.⁴⁷ At the same time, fewer workers are choosing full-time retirement as an immediate transition from working full-time; rather, many workers are transitioning to part-time or becoming self-employed.⁴⁸ The labor force for those who are aged 75 and older is expected to increase more than 96% between 2020 and 2030.⁴⁷ The growth rate of those aged 55 and older is expected to overshadow all other age groups in this same time period.⁴⁷

Retaining older workers instead of losing them to retirement helps employers keep those with valuable skillsets.⁴⁹ Continued employment also allows for necessary social connectedness for older adults, improving feelings of well-being and better health.⁵⁰ Support between coworkers is an effective way to address social isolation and loneliness and strengthen feelings of belonging.⁵⁰

Context -

Older Adults in the Workforce

A 2018 report shared that older adult workers show higher job engagement, can demonstrate stronger organizational behavior, and may provide higher-quality work than younger workers. Flexibility in scheduling, such as part-time or alternative working hours, may provide the incentives necessary to retain older workers and avoid worker shortages. Setting up mentorship programs between older adults and younger workers can also boost morale and help older workers to feel a greater sense of usefulness.⁵¹

The **North Carolina Workforce Development Boards** are made up of community leaders who are responsible for developing local plans for Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act funds and planning workforce programs and services.

The **NC Works Commission** works to build adaptable, skilled employees who have access to education and skills training.

Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP)

SCSEP is the only federally mandated job program that targets low-income older adults.⁵² This program allows for work-based job training for older adults in a variety of community service activities, such as daycare centers and schools. Older adults who participate work an average of 20 hours a week and are paid the highest minimum wage at federal, state, or local levels.⁵³ Participants in SCSEP must be at least age 55, unemployed, and have an income less than 125% of the federal poverty level. Increasing participation in SCSEP helps older adults

gain new skills in a setting that will allow them to acquire work experience and maintain financial stability. In North Carolina, SCSEP works with organizations such as AARP, the National Council on Aging, the Centers for Workforce Inclusion, and the Division of Aging and Adult Services.

Local Workforce Development Boards

Workforce Development Boards are appointed by local officials and are responsible for planning and oversight of workforce programs and services in the community. North Carolina has 20 of these local boards that do the following:⁵⁴

- Develop local plans for the use of federal Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act funds
- Oversee local service delivery
- Coordinate activities with economic development entities and employers in local areas

NCCARE360

NCCARE360 is an online platform designed to bring health care and community-based organizations together through connected care networks that can track outcomes and identify service gaps. Once a network partner identifies the need(s) of an older adult, an electronic referral can be sent to the appropriate community partner to connect someone to needed services.

NCCARE360 allows resource teams to gather information from screenings of non-medical needs for people in North Carolina, such as lack of access to food, employment, income assistance, and transportation. Expanding the connections with community-based organizations on NCCARE360 will increase opportunities to connect older adults with employment and income assistance programs.

How would this impact the health of older adults?



Older adults who are actively working are generally more physically active and less likely to develop the bodily weakness associated with an increased risk of falls.



The increased physical activity associated with working can help older adults to maintain mobility longer and have a reason to do so.



Older adults who maintain an active income are more likely to be able to afford nutritious food.



Working provides opportunities to interact with coworkers, decreasing the chances of loneliness or social isolation.