***Drafting the Burlington Action Plan for Aging Well***

**FINANCIAL SECURITY**

**Goal**

Older Residents should be able to receive an adequate income and maintain assets for a reasonable quality of life as they age. They should be able to seek and maintain employment without fear of discrimination and with any needed accommodations. Mechanisms should be in place to protect from consumer and financial fraud. Older Residents should also be able to retire after a lifetime of work, if they so choose, without fear of poverty and isolation.

**Recommended Objectives:**

1. All residents have knowledge of and easy access to clear, up-to-date, and culturally relevant guidance and resources to make choices about working or retiring with financial security as they approach or age beyond Medicare and Social Security eligibility.

2. Employers have ready access to best practice information on hiring and retaining older workers and increase the number of workers aged 65+, advancing age appropriate work conditions.

3. Present a united front against age discrimination by enlisting 100 employers in the AARP Employer Pledge (Believe in equal opportunity for all workers; Recognize the value of experienced workers; Recruit across diverse age groups and consider all applicants on an equal basis, regardless of age; Believe that 50+ workers should have a level playing field in their ability to compete and obtain jobs) starting with City Government, and then doubling the number of pledges each year for three years.

4. Older residents seeking to work are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to be of high value to employers either continuing their career or opting for an encore career.

**Recommended Strategies:** These may include a mixture of initiatives already underway, easily implementable ideas, and those that would be impactful but would need policy change or funding allocated. Note if the strategy is likely short-term (1-3 years), medium-term (3-6 years) or long-term (7-10 years).

1. Provide staffing support at CEDO, with a position that is an Older Worker Ombudsperson (at lease a significant function of a staff person) to coordinate the efforts of the Aging Council, provide direct service to employers, and work with partners to advance opportunities for training, education, and resources for older workers of all backgrounds.
2. Fund a Marketing Campaign to highlight older worker experiences and employer success stories and narratives. Align campaign with build up to *National Employ Older Workers Week* (September -https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/seniors/national-employ-older-workers-week – with Mayoral Proclamation and events to acknowledge and celebrate).
   1. *National Employ Older Workers Week, held annually the last full week of September, recognizes the vital role of older workers in the workforce. National Employ Older Workers Week aims to increase awareness of this labor segment and develop innovative strategies to tap it. It also showcases the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), which provides on-the-job skills training to individuals 55 or older with limited financial resources.*
3. Create an advisory panel of employers to advise on the marketing campaign, support the AARP Employer Pledge Campaign, and seek out resources to advance best practices in employing older workers. Include resources on practices around employing older workers of cultural minorities, including non-native English speakers.
4. Convene a semi-annual peer group of mature workers (from different fields, cultural backgrounds, experiences, and employers) to share and learn new tricks and techniques and provide support whether one is returning to the workforce, shifting to a new area or field, reducing hours, or negotiating other flexibility. Document the lessons learned into some type of deliverable for other older workers to utilize.
5. Consolidate and promote education, training, and guidance resources in Burlington for older workers. Bring together providers (e.g., Library, Parks and Recreation, Senior Centers, Age Well, Community College, Burlington School System/Tech Center, AALV, A4TD’s Senior Community Service Employment Program and The Vermont Returnship Program; AARP’s Resources for Building An Age-Inclusive and Caregiving-Friendly Workforce; Encore’s work engagement initiatives; and Vermont’s developing Workforce Expansion Team (WET) with regional coordinators; HireAbility Vermont) to devise a focused plan and program.
6. Expand investment in digital literacy resources specific to the needs of older community members. Include alternatives that are culturally-informed and translated into a variety of languages.
7. Support and enhance State initiatives to provide for secure retirement (e.g., VTSaves Retirement Program) through active engagement of state representatives. Promote programs such as VTSaves to all Burlington residents. Include resources for those without access to the internet and those who do speak English to access these programs.

**Summary Chart**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategy** | **Short-term**  **(1-3 years)** | **Medium-term**  **(3-6 years)** | **Long-term**  **(7-10 years)** |
| 1. Provide staffing support at CEDO, with a position that is an Older Worker Ombudsperson | X | ongoing | ongoing |
| 2. Fund a Marketing Campaign to highlight older worker experiences and employer success stories and narratives. | X |  |  |
| 3. Create an Advisory panel of Employers | X |  |  |
| 4. Convene a Semi-annual Peer Group of mature workers | X |  |  |
| 5. Consolidate and promote education, training, and guidance resources in Burlington for older workers | X |  |  |
| 6. Expand investment in digital literacy resources | X |  |  |
| 7. Support and enhance State initiatives to provide for secure retirement | X | ongoing | ongoing |
|  |  |  |  |

**Additional Questions**

How do the above objectives and strategies advance equity and inclusion? Please list any specific groups who are left out of these strategies?

* It is critical that items within the action plan are flexible to the changing needs of different groups, with special attention to historically marginalized groups and minorities.
* Reducing age discrimination in the workplace is critical to a more inclusive and diverse workplace providing opportunity and security for all. The initiative will conduct outreach to the BIPOC and New American communities to determine how best to incorporate outreach to less represented populations, provide education and training opportunities that are culturally appropriate and to offer guidance to employers on how to be inclusive in hiring and retaining of all Burlington residents.

Who are the key partners to accomplish these strategies?

* Employer groups (e.g., Chamber, GBIC, VBSR, BBA, Common Good Vermont, local SHRM-VT); Unions; Advocacy – Service Groups (e.g., AARP, AALV).

What funding or resources will be needed to accomplish these strategies?

* Dedicated funding for at least a half-time CEDO program manager; Marketing Campaign funding; Funds for programs a new education and training programs are recommended.

What legislation or policy change (local or state) will be needed to accomplish these strategies?

* City signing on to AARP Employer Pledge; Mayoral proclamation for *National Employ Older Workers Week*; focused action on the part of the city to follow through with policies that open the door to more older workers in city government (negotiated agreements as necessary with unions); Closer coordination and agenda building with state legislative representatives.

What data could be used to measure the success of these strategies?

* Worker demographics that are inclusive of workers over 65 who reside in Burlington
* Employer data on hiring practices and employment of older workers
* Impact of marketing campaign on awareness levels
* Enrollment and use of skills in employment at all programs offered in Burlington

What existing programs or initiatives support these strategies?

* Align with proposed state goals in new strategic plan.

How do these strategies reflect the input and priorities of Older Vermonters?

* Financial security is a well-documented priority of older Vermonters. How to best achieve and maintain it, and what represents best practice in Burlington will be drawn out from the implementation of Employer and Worker groups as proposed.