



A Global Peer-Learning Network for Positive Ageing

Substantive Comments from the Pass It On Network

Right to Work and Access to the Labor Market

Global Framework

The Pass It On Network is a global peer-learning network of positive ageing advocates who understand that meaningful work, paid or unpaid, contributes to healthy ageing and to a healthy economy. Through liaisons in 60+ countries, we see growing numbers of older adults seeking work that generates income. World economic shifts fuel the trend:

- Public pension systems are facing shortfalls.
- With increased longevity, retirees are likely to outlive their savings.
- Forty-six countries -- including Japan, Russia, and most of Western Europe -- have shrinking populations thus creating workforce shortages and reducing pension payments.ⁱ

Ageist expectations that belittle both the actual and potential productivity of older persons prevail – and to progress, this needs to change.

Practices to Expand Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, and Quality of Work

Factors Extending Employment. Europe's significant increases in labor force participation by older workers since 2000 were initially attributed to raising the pensionable age, but since none of the test countries had raised the retirement age, the International Longevity Center in London conducted the EXTEND to understand what did cause the increases. Findings included:ⁱⁱ

- shifting from a welfare state to a work society where paid employment is the ideal;
- shifting from early exit based on age to signaling that older workers are needed, that early retirement is expensive for society, and that working enhances quality of life;
- a stable economy encouraging employers to hire, retain, and develop older workers;
- improvement in working conditions and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities;
- explicit attention to the wishes and needs of older women often struggling with work and caregiving responsibilities.

Helping Older Workers Succeed. *A Governor's Action Guide to Achieving Good Jobs for All Americans*, published in 2019 by the National Governors Association in the U.S., offers a tool box to help older workers succeed in a changing economy by:

- expanding access to continuous learning (tax credits for example);

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- promoting seamless job transitions (digital badging);
- providing holistic support for mid-career workers (peer coaching, paid family and medical leave, transition planning).

The guide suggests another group of actions for the rural workforce.ⁱⁱⁱ

Building Bridges to Work. In Japan, the only country with more than 25% of the population over the age of 65, Silver Human Resource Centers connect older workers with short-term jobs serving the daily needs of their communities. In the U.S., the federal Senior Community Service Employment Program (C-SEP) has placed older workers in paid assignments with NGOs since 1963.^{iv} More recently, new ways for older workers in transition to explore options in the U.S. include job shadowing (“Hoppin’”), apprenticeships (Techtonic^{vi}) and fellowships matching retired professionals with community service projects.^{vii} Older workers are ideally suited for the flexible, part-time or seasonal job opportunities generated by the “gig” economy.

Older Adult Action Networks. An important part of the win/win approach is encouraging older workers themselves to propose and/or create innovative models for productive aging over the life course. There are examples in Paris, Hawaii, South Africa and Iceland of replicable initiatives developed by older adults who are country liaisons for the Pass It On Network.^{viii} PION connects positive ageing advocates so that they can share « what works » for active ageing.^{ix} Older adults who are seeking employment benefit greatly from just getting together in small groups to share their stories, see the scope of employment opportunities, and define one or two next steps for their individual life/work plans.^x

As shown in this illustration, purposeful productivity lifelong is good for everyone.



Endnotes

ⁱ Sharma, Ruchir. “Let’s Say Goodbye to Growth.” *New York Times*, August 18, 2019.

ⁱⁱ Beach, Dr. Brian, and Geraldine Bedell. *The EXTEND Project: Exploring Pension Reforms, Work, and Inequalities*. London: International Longevity Center, December 2018.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bullock, Steve. Montana governor and NGA Chair, Good Jobs for All Americans Initiative. *A Governor’s Action Guide to Achieving Good Jobs for All Americans*. Washington, D.C.: National Governors Association, July 2019

^{iv} U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. *Senior Community Services Employment Program*. www.doleta.gov/seniors, 2018.

^v Future Proof Newsletter. *The Startup That Lets You Job Hop*. Forbes, May 2019. See: www.gohoppin.com.

^{vi} Working Nation. *College Alternatives: Faster and Cheaper Pathways to Gain Work-Ready Skills for Quality Jobs*. <https://workingnation.com/college-alternatives-faster-cheaper/> 2019.

^{vii} See www.encore.org/fellowships. Conservation Law Foundation. *Senior Fellowships, Pro Bono*. www.clf.org/about/employment-opportunities/senior-fellowships-pro-bono/ 2019.

^{viii} Contact Moira Allan, international coordinator for the Pass It On Network, at moira@passitonnetwork.org, to be introduced to the leaders of these four replicable projects.

^{ix} At www.passitonnetwork.org, click on « Pathways » and then on « Work and Economic Security » to find examples of good practices in relation to older workers.

^x Go to <http://www.shiftonline.org> to see how the SHIFT Network (co-founded by Jan Hively in 2007) organizes both small groups and large forums to support work transitions.