



OHIO ASSOCIATION of GERONTOLOGY and EDUCATION

OAGE Web Site: www.oage.org

“Bringing Ohioans together to make it the best place to age.”

A Summary of Potential Partnership between OAGE and ODA to Make Ohio the Best Place to Age

Executive Summary

Ohio's growing aging population creates great opportunities for employees to work with this population. It also poses challenges in recruiting and retaining employees who wish to work with and on behalf of the aging population. The following report proposes ways in which the Ohio Association of Gerontology and Education (OAGE), Ohio Department of Aging (ODA), and Ohio's Gerontology programs can work together to meet the needs of our aging population and those who work with this population.

- 1) Launch a state-wide campaign to educate Ohioans about the many opportunities associated with aging.
- 2) Prevent the aging “brain drain” caused by closing gerontology programs across the state through a comprehensive education strategy that includes:
 - Sustainability grants for existing gerontology programs.
 - Competitive matching grants for colleges and universities committed to enhancing gerontology education
 - Special programs for K-6, high school, and post-secondary students
 - Cultivate Industry partnerships to include age-related training
- 3) Address the critical shortage in case managers and other long-term care and aging service workers by aligning job requirements with skills and incentivizing age-related careers.
 - Change current case manager restrictions within Ohio's PASSPORT program to be more responsive to worker demand and essential skills needed.
 - Incentivize a wide variety of careers in aging.
 - Create career ladders for the direct care workforce.
 - Explore encore careers as a means to address worker shortages.
 - Loan forgiveness programs for aging-related occupations.
- 4) Increase the profile of the existing Scholars in Aging program.

The partnership with OAGE, ODA, and Ohio's Gerontology programs allows us to leverage our outstanding education, research, and service opportunities to help our aging population and to attract, educate, and retain outstanding workforce talent across Ohio's aging network, businesses, and other employers. This partnership will allow for innovation in Ohio.

President	Kate de Medeiros, Miami University, demedekb@miamiOH.edu
Vice President	Jennifer Kinney, Miami University, kinneyjm@miamiOH.edu
Treasurer	Ken Wilson, Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio, kwilson@help4seniors.org
Secretary	Tiffany Hughes, Youngstown State University, tfhughes@ysu.edu



Introduction

In 2021, there were twice as many Ohioans aged 65 and over (around 18% of the state's population or 2,120,400 people) compared to those under age 5 (around 6% or 706,801 children).¹ While we know much about the health and service needs of older Ohioans, we know less about the broad continuum of people (e.g., employees, family members), institutions (e.g., schools and colleges), and organizations (e.g., companies, public entities) that play important roles in aging across the life course. We do know that aging is often viewed as a problem to be solved rather than a triumph to be celebrated. As such, **there are multiple opportunities for Ohio departments, agencies and organizations to come together to make Ohio the best place to age.**

One major roadblock to addressing age-related issues within the state has been ageism, or the devaluation of someone because of their age. Ageism has been estimated to cost the U.S. economy around \$850 billion annually due to involuntary retirement, termination, or under-employment caused by age bias². Ageist attitudes have also led to the disbandment of many gerontology programs within the state and has contributed to worker shortages within aging services. Yet, people aged 50 and over account for around 56 cents for every dollar spent in the U.S., are key to job sustainability³, and are the largest growing demographic in the state and U.S. In fact, in the U.S., people aged 50+ accounted for over 50% of the working aged population (age 25 and over).⁴

According to AARP's state-specific longevity economy report, the 50-plus population in Ohio in 2018 accounted for 37% of Ohio's population but contributed \$275 billion (41%) of Ohio's total GDP. This population also "supported 3.2 million jobs and generated \$190 billion in wages and salaries."⁵ A state-wide campaign to counter inaccurate and negative stereotypes of aging will help reduce age bias across industries, which will in turn strengthen our aging workforce, help eliminate labor shortages (Ohio has a shortfall of around 220,000 workers)⁶, and encourage high school and post-secondary students to enter aging-related fields. Such messaging can also help to forge important industry partnerships to better inform innovations aimed at aging consumers, and to support those who care for aging individuals.

This paper, in partnership between the Ohio Association of Gerontology Education (OAGE) and the Ohio Department on Aging (ODA), lays out a critical road map designed to make Ohio the best place to age – at any age – through education and training, services, and access. Following is a list of priorities. Components of each priority are detailed in subsequent sections. Estimated investment details are included in Appendix 1.

¹ U.S. Census, Population Estimates, July, 2021. Accessed at: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/OH>

² Terrell, K., January 30, 2020. Age discrimination costs the economy billions. Accessed at: <https://www.aarp.org/politics-society/advocacy/info-2020/age-discrimination-economic-impact.htm>

³ AARP. The longevity economy. Accessed at: <https://doi.org/10.26419/int.00042.001>

⁴ Oxford Economics. The longevity economy: Generating economic growth and new opportunities for business. Accessed at: <https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/resource/the-longevity-economy-244820/#>

⁵ AARP. The longevity economy: State profiles. Accessed at: <https://www.aarp.org/research/topics/economics/info-2020/longevity-economy-outlook-states.html>

⁶ Williams, M. January, 2022. "Ohio has more openings than workers to fill them." Accessed at: <https://www.dispatch.com/story/business/2022/01/16/worker-shortage-ohio-more-job-openings-than-unemployed/9151740002/>



Descriptions and Components of the Four Priority Areas

1) Launch a state-wide campaign to educate Ohioans about the many opportunities associated with aging.

One major roadblock to addressing age-related issues within the state has been ageism, (or the devaluation of or discrimination against someone because of their age.) Ageism has been estimated to cost the U.S. economy around \$850 billion annually due to involuntary retirement, termination, or under-employment caused by age bias.⁷ People aged 50 and over account for around 56 cents for every dollar spent in the U.S., are key to job sustainability,⁸ and are the largest growing demographic in the state and U.S. In fact, in the U.S., people aged 50+ accounted for over 50% of the working aged population (age 25 and over).⁹

According to AARP's state-specific longevity economy report, **the 50-plus population in Ohio in 2018 accounted for 37% of Ohio's population but contributed \$275 billion (41%) of Ohio's total GDP.** This population also "supported 3.2 million jobs and generated \$190 billion in wages and salaries."¹⁰ A state-wide campaign to counter inaccurate and negative stereotypes of aging will help reduce age bias across industries, which will in turn strengthen our aging workforce, help eliminate labor shortages (Ohio has a shortfall of around 220,000 workers)¹¹, and encourage high school and post-secondary students to enter aging-related fields. Such messaging can also help to forge important industry partnerships to better inform innovations aimed at aging consumers, and to support those who care for aging individuals.

Regardless of whether people want to talk about aging, aging is happening. It is therefore incumbent upon the many agencies and organizations in Ohio to educate Ohioans about aging and to rebrand the negative image of aging as a challenge to highlight the many ways that people can continue to grow through their lives. We therefore recommend a series of ad campaigns and press releases be developed, in conjunction with OAGE and the Ohio Department on Aging, to send accurate messages about aging itself. This campaign will also function as a way to make Ohioans aware of various careers in aging as well as provide a platform to potentially announce other initiatives described in this paper.

This initiative would require:

- A full-time Educational Coordinator to be managed by OAGE
- Curriculum and resource development by OAGE in partnership with related

⁷ Terrell, K., January 30, 2020. Age discrimination costs the economy billions. Accessed at: <https://www.aarp.org/politics-society/advocacy/info-2020/age-discrimination-economic-impact.html>

⁸ AARP. The longevity economy. Accessed at: <https://doi.org/10.26419/int.00042.001>

⁹ Oxford Economics. The longevity economy: Generating economic growth and new opportunities for business. Accessed at:

<https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/longevity-eco-in-each-50-states> ¹⁰AARP. The longevity economy: State profiles. Accessed at:

<https://www.aarp.org/research/topics/economics/info-2020/longevity-economy-outlook-states.html>

¹¹ Williams, M. January, 2022. "Ohio has more openings than workers to fill them." Accessed at: <https://www.dispatch.com/story/business/2022/01/16/worker-shortage-ohio-more-job-openings-than-unemployed/9151740002/>



academic institutions and other entities as needed

- In-kind dissemination through ODA, ODJFS, ODHE, ODE, the Ohio Chamber, the Business Roundtable and others
- IT/Website support to build an education platform
- Marketing resources for campaign development and promotional materials
- Evaluation research to monitor the effectiveness of the campaign

2) **Prevent the aging “brain drain” caused by closing gerontology programs** across the state through a comprehensive education strategy that includes competitive matching grants for colleges and universities and aging education and awareness programs for schools, organizations and businesses. There are four subcomponents to this priority: sustainability grants for existing programs, competitive matching grants for colleges and universities committed to enhancing gerontology and/or age-related education; programs for K-6, high school, and post-secondary programs; and cultivating industry partnerships.

A. Sustainability grants for existing gerontology programs.

According to information provided to the Ohio Department of Higher Education, 13 programs offer associate, bachelor or post-baccalaureate certificates or degrees in Ohio. In addition, certificate programs with fewer than 20 credit hours are not required to demonstrate topic area expertise. Considering that there are around 126 colleges and universities in Ohio and given the percentage of Ohioans age 65 and over, this seems woefully inadequate, especially given the fact many programs currently “on the books” are in fact in the process of being disbanded or have announced discontinuation. Reasons cited include lack of interest in gerontology by undergraduate students or absence of jobs that have “gerontology” in the title. This is a missed opportunity and one that will ultimately negatively impact aging in Ohio in the upcoming decades. Many students do not take classes in gerontology simply because they don’t know what it is.

Rather than eliminating programs that are best able to prepare Ohio for its future, we recommend offering five competitive sustainability grants to existing gerontology or age-related programs to prevent their disbandment. Institutions receiving a sustainability grant will be asked to commit to maintaining their existing programs for five years and to develop a plan for continued sustainability.

B. Competitive matching grants for colleges and universities committed to enhancing gerontology and/or age-related education.

Offer five 2-year matching grants to colleges and universities for gerontology and other relevant age-related curriculum and course development. This will raise the profile of aging and potentially reverse the current trend of closing gerontology programs in the state. Awardees will be required to commit to sustaining efforts supported by the grant for an additional two years using matching resources.

C. Programs directed toward K-6, high school and post-secondary students.

K-6. Incorporating lesson plans about aging into curriculum and programming (e.g., reading mentorship programs like Project MORE) can cultivate interest in careers in aging in elementary school aged children. This could be accomplished by expanding programs like Leading Age’s “Careers that Love You Back”



(LeadingAge Ohio)¹² or by developing new curricula in partnership with OAGE. In addition, in a past partnership between ODA, Project More and the Retired Volunteer Senior and Volunteer Program (RSVP), there were discussions about identifying or developing grade appropriate books about aging. This strategy may work with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library¹³ which the First Lady supports.

High school students. To foster interest in careers in aging among high school students, we suggest developing an Age Friendly Certificate through Ohio Means Jobs, making certification a requirement for receiving the OhioMeansJobs readiness seal. This might also be of interest to others seeking career assistance and employment using OhioMeansJobs. OAGE could assemble and/or develop the curriculum in partnership with academic and other age-related organizations.

Post secondary students. Many students find gerontology courses accidentally. An intentional strategy can foster interest earlier in students' educational careers. For example, a recent program at Washington University evaluated a required gerontology class for all incoming first-year students called "When I'm 64" and found that students' explicit biases about aging significantly declined.¹⁴

Developing and implementing a similar class that could be delivered in various educational settings across Ohio will stimulate new interest in gerontology and other age-related careers. In addition, online modules are especially attractive to students in health and human services-related programs and to those from a wide variety of majors for whom knowledge about aging will add value to their portfolio, such as engineering and business. As such, OAGE, in cooperation with the Ohio Department on Aging, can create and implement a series of age-related training modules that can be easily implemented into existing coursework or serve as stand alone modules. Introducing post-secondary students to gerontology can also be addressed through the proposed grants to colleges and universities.

D. Cultivate industry partnerships to include age-related training.

According to AARP (2016), today's workforce has members from 5 generations. Seventy-five percent of companies would like training on unbiased recruiting practices, 72% on purposefully designed mixed-age teams, and 77% on family caregiving.¹⁵ Despite this need, however, fewer than 8% of CEOs reported including "age" as a dimension in their diversity and inclusion programs, which is a troubling oversight. In addition, benefits of age-related training for businesses include tapping into the older consumer market; working with business professionals to recognize and tap into the needs of an aging workforce; and addressing connectedness through technology by designing inclusive, informed

¹² <http://www.careersthatloveyouback.org/aws/LAO/pt/sp/posters>

¹³ <https://ohioimaginationlibrary.org/enroll>

¹⁴ Merz, C. C., Stark, S. L., Morrow-Howell, N. L., & Carpenter, B. D. (2018). When I'm 64: Effects of an interdisciplinary gerontology course on first-year undergraduates' perceptions of aging. *Gerontology & geriatrics education*, 39(1), 35–45.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02701960.2016.1144600>

¹⁵ AARP. (2016). Living, learning and earning longer: How and why modern employers should embrace longevity. Accessed at: <https://www.aarpinternational.org/initiatives/future-of-work/living-learning-and-earning-longer>



products for a variety of end users. A simple and cost effective way to foster industry partnerships is through a speaker series that invites industry professionals to interact with various people in the aging network. Industry partners can also complete age-based training modules to increase their own understanding of aging and related issues. This can be accomplished through existing organizations such as the Ohio Chamber the Business Roundtable as well as through new partnerships and networks.

- 3) **Address the critical shortage in case managers and other long-term care and aging service workers by aligning job requirements with skills and by incentivizing age-related careers.** This includes changing Ohio's PASSPORT case manager restrictions and career ladders, encore careers, and loan forgiveness programs.

A. Change current case manager restrictions within Ohio's PASSPORT program to be more responsive to worker demand and essential skills needed.

Several factors contribute to a critical worker shortage in Ohio. A major issue is the overly-strict oversight criteria specific to Ohio's PASSPORT program. We therefore propose program changes and accompanying research to evaluate effectiveness. Of special consideration are annual turnover rates in PASSPORT case management positions, which have been rising over time and now exceed 20%. This is due, in great part, to the unique and strict requirements in Ohio's PASSPORT and Assisted Living Medicaid Waiver, which restricts case management positions to licensed social workers and registered nurses (regardless of prior training in gerontology), even though other waivers within Ohio, such as the Individual Options Developmental Disability Waiver, do not have this licensing restriction. States that permit more diverse educational backgrounds for their Medicaid Waiver case management programs include Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Indiana – three states that currently attract unlicensed Ohioans as case managers – as well as Tennessee, Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, Alabama, Florida, Virginia, California, and many others. In addition, most other states recognize credentialing by organizations such as the Commission for Case Manager Certification (CCMC), which provides credentials for licensed individuals and those who are not licensed by a baccalaureate or graduate degree in a health or human services field. Other organizations, such as the Aging Life Care Association, which has provided leadership, education, and advocacy in the field of geriatric care management for over 35 years, also recognize the importance of unlicensed professionals who hold associate's, bachelor's, master's or Ph.D. degrees in fields such as gerontology, mental health, and psychology and/or training aging.

Case Manager turnover data from four Area Agencies on Aging were collected. One Ohio AAA reports an annual PASSPORT turnover rate of 22%: 30% in MyCare Programs with one plan and 47% with another. In addition, 60% of the turnover occurs within the first two years of employment – a figure that has doubled from a few years prior. Exit interviews reveal that the cause of 70% of the turnover is due to higher paying jobs elsewhere (e.g., health plans and health systems). In addition, positions are taking longer to fill, and fewer applications are coming in even with a proactive recruiting process. Others reported similar issues in retention and recruitment of Case Managers. Three of the larger AAA's



reported losing Case Managers to Managed Care organizations due to higher pay and benefits. Overall compensation pay and benefits were the most common reasons for turnover.

To address the concerns that licensed individuals within Ohio have expressed with regards to oversight of case managers to prevent exploitation of vulnerable clients, we propose a competitive, **three-year demonstration project** which would allow three Area Agencies on Aging to fill PASSPORT case management positions with individuals who hold a minimum of a bachelor degree in gerontology, psychology, public health, family studies or other related discipline, and who successfully complete approved CCMC and agency-specific training. The current case management vacancy rate in Ohio is around 14.5%, although the number does fluctuate greatly. The unmet need of PASSPORT clients due to case manager vacancy rates along with coupled with the burnout experienced by current case managers makes this an important priority. We stress that the demonstration project be accompanied by evaluation research to monitor quality of services, costs and overall effectiveness

B. Incentivize a wide variety of careers in aging through career ladders, encore careers and loan forgiveness programs.

In pre-pandemic Ohio, 60% of assisted living facilities and nursing homes and 70% of hospice and home care providers reported having no qualified applicants for many open positions.¹⁶ Around 55% of those who are hired leave within a year for better paying or less demanding jobs (e.g., food industry). Nationwide, nursing homes and assisted living facilities have seen an employment drop of 15% since 2021.¹⁷

One Ohio AAA reports an annual PASSPORT turnover rate of 22%: 30% in MyCare Programs with one plan and 47% with another. In addition, 60% of the turnover occurs within the first two years of employment – a figure that has doubled from a few years prior. Exit interviews reveal that the cause of 70% of the turnover is due to higher paying jobs elsewhere (e.g., health plans and health systems). In addition, positions are taking longer to fill, and fewer applications are coming in even with a proactive recruiting process. We therefore propose the following three areas aimed at increasing training and advancement opportunities with reduced financial burden for employees in the direct care workforce.

Create career ladders for the direct care workforce. For many years some hospitals have provided tuition reimbursement for nurse's aides/personal care assistants to become nurses or other allied health professionals. They also assure them a position once they graduate. This could work in the aging network as well. Since aging organizations are not as big as hospitals, the assurance of a position would need to be portable across the organization or network. Several states (e.g., Colorado, Iowa, Tennessee) are exploring career ladders for key

¹⁶ LeadingAge Ohio. (2016). The Long-term care workforce crisis. Caregivers needed. Accessed at: https://www.leadingageohio.org/aws/LAO/asset_manager/get_file/147860?ver=19386

¹⁷ Wager, E., Amin, K., Cox, C. & Hughes-Cromwick, (Dec. 10, 2021.) What impact has the coronavirus pandemic had on health employment? Accessed at: <https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/what-impact-has-the-coronavirus-pandemic-had-on-healthcare-employment/>



groups of long-term care workers (e.g., home health aides, personal care aides, certified nursing assistants) to help them advance from high-demand, low paying jobs to higher paid and skilled positions.¹⁸ Career ladders result in increased opportunities for economic advancement and increased retention and recruitment. Key components of career ladders are supportive services and mentoring and stackable credentials. Ohio's universities and colleges with aging-related expertise are eager to partner to develop stackable credentials for Ohio's long-term care workforce.

Explore encore careers to address workforce shortages. Encore careers describes training one receives to make a career change, typically in midlife. Focusing on encore careers in aging could help reduce the worker shortage in age-related fields while also reducing unemployment in workers age 50 and over. Two general models for encore career training are the University of Minnesota's Advanced Career Initiative and Notre Dame's Inspired Leader Initiative.¹⁹ University of Minnesota houses their Advanced Career Initiative within their life course center, which is focused on intergenerational learning and is tasked with addressing a variety of age-related issues as part of a larger state consortium on aging²⁰. The Notre Dame program features a fellowship model with a personally tailored program for each fellow.²¹ An encore career program could build upon the Ohio Department of Higher Education's Second Chance Grant Program, which is currently restricted to people who have completed some type of college coursework within the last five years and are now returning to a bachelor degree program.

Loan forgiveness for aging-related occupations. The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) offers loan repayment programs to primary care, mental health, and dental providers working in federally designated health professional shortage areas (HPSAs) or state designated health resource shortage areas.²² Given the current and projected workforce shortage of long-term care and aging services workers, a feasibility study of developing a state loan repayment program for these workers should be conducted. Among options to be considered are providing tuition credits or scholarships for students who seek a gerontology certificate or specific training in an age-related area regardless of their primary major or area of focus. We propose a pilot project that forgives 40 loans at \$32,972 (the average loan debt in Ohio in 2021) per loan through 2024 contingent upon a two-year commitment with an approved age-related entity such as an Area Agency on Aging.

¹⁸ Bell Policy Center (2019). Accessed at: <https://www.bellpolicy.org/2019/08/12/long-term-care-workers-career-ladders/>

¹⁹ College programs for encore careers are bubbling up. (Jan 13,2020). Accessed at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2020/01/13/college-programs-for-encore-careers-are-bubbling-up/?sh=3da3b8b54bf8>

²⁰ University of Minnesota's Advanced Career Initiative. (2022). Accessed at: <https://umac.umn.edu/vision>.

²¹ Inspired Leadership Initiative at Notre Dame. (2022). Accessed at: <https://ili.nd.edu/vision/>

²² State Loan Repayment Program Fact Sheet (nd). Accessed at https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/primary-care-office/workforce-programs/pco_oplpr_fact_sheet



4) **Increase the profile of the existing Scholars in Aging program.**

This joint OAGE/ODA program is designed for students from any discipline who are pursuing an associate, baccalaureate or post-baccalaureate degree and are enrolled in an aging-related internship/practicum or supervised project. The overarching goal of the program is to cultivate future decision-makers and designers of aging services in Ohio. Between 2013 and 2022, 128 students completed the semester-long program. The students represented 19 academic institutions, and were hosted by 94 different sites (e.g., AAAs and social service agencies, long-term care facilities, universities, research organizations, and government agencies). We propose expanding the program to include two cohorts of 10 students per year. Additional funding will enable more students to participate in the program, increase the stipend provided to scholars and provide a mentor stipend for each scholar's supervisor.

About OAGE

The Ohio Association of Gerontology and Education, Inc. (OAGE) is a non-profit, 501(c)3 designated membership organization in Ohio. The mission of OAGE is to promote aging education, research, practice and professional development, for students, faculty, practitioners, administrators, professionals and Ohio's aging network. OAGE was an outgrowth of the Ohio Network of Educational Consultants in the Field of Aging (ONECA). In September 1975, a meeting entitled, "Dialogue: Academia and Administration" was held in Ohio. The purpose of the meeting was to develop efforts with post secondary institutions in Ohio, who provide gerontological education and training, the Ohio Department of Aging, who funds the Area Agencies on Aging and oversees the aging services in Ohio, and the Area Agencies on Aging in Ohio, who provide funds for direct services to older adults, to work more cooperatively with one another, and to find ways of sharing their expertise with one another.