



# Older Americans Act Recommendations: How to Increase Opportunities to Work, Serve, Learn, and Lead

After much dialogue and careful analysis, the Age4Action Network will focus its attention and resources on supporting several changes to be incorporated into the OAA reauthorization bill. A summary of Age4Action's OAA recommendations follows:

## Develop a National Strategy

The Administration on Aging and the Corporation for National and Community Service are national leaders in promoting service among adults age 50+. Age4Action seeks ways to support their ongoing efforts and encourage them to work together to share resources with the aging network and create a national strategy for service among adults age 50+. This strategy should include enhancing research and evidence-based practices and calling on community-based agencies to work together in partnership to support the national strategy.

**Recommendation 1:** Integrate into the Administration on Aging's formal charges the currently authorized civic engagement resource center by moving the resource center from Title IV to Title II of the Older Americans Act. Authorize the Administration on Aging, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the federal agency administering the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) to work together to create a national strategy to tap older volunteers as a source of social capital to meet critical community needs.

**Recommendation 2:** Authorize and fund projects for qualified institutions to collect and analyze data on the impact of work, service, learning, and leading on both the clients and communities receiving service, as well as on the adults 50+ providing service.

**Recommendation 3:** Enhance volunteer and SCSEP referral resources at Area Agencies on Aging.

## Strengthen the Capacity of Older Workers

Americans are living longer and healthier lives than ever before. Many need and want to continue to work. They can continue to contribute to American society and the economy but need the training and skills to do so effectively as they adjust to a changing market and new technologies. The lack of sufficient technology skills and shortage of quality programs aimed at teaching adults age 50+ how to use computers in the workforce remains a problem for adults age 50+. Additionally, job training and placement programs should be given the tools to measure effectively their progress and, in turn, to best serve the needs of older workers.

**Recommendation 4:** Enhance quality technology training opportunities for SCSEP participants.

**Recommendation 5:** Allow SCSEP programs to include elder abuse prevention and volunteer support for the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs.

**Recommendation 6:** Modify SCSEP program measures to account for durational exits.

### **Promote Sustainable Volunteering**

Adults age 50+ are active, passionate members of society. They want to make positive, meaningful contributions to their communities. The OAA should support volunteers and community-based organizations by improving the coordination and delivery of services under the Act and maximizing the impact of volunteers. Doing so will better harness the time, talents, and experiences of volunteers age 50+ who strengthen communities and address critical social needs.

**Recommendation 7:** In order to increase the number of volunteers age 50+ and to improve volunteer retention, target resources towards establishing volunteer management programs that will train and place volunteer managers who are age 50+ in Area Agencies on Aging, senior centers, or other community-based organizations.

**Recommendation 8:** Make safety and liability measures such as driver's license checks and criminal background checks an allowable use of funds under Title III.

**Recommendation 9:** Include in the programs overseen by the Administration on Aging a targeted focus on preventing elder abuse, promoting elder justice, and providing services to victims of elder abuse.

### **The Way Forward**

Now is the time to build upon the excitement and ideas generated at the Idea Forums and take action to increase opportunities for adults age 50+ to work, serve, learn, and lead in their communities. We must make the most of the OAA reauthorization as a chance to improve society and strengthen communities through the active engagement of individuals age 50+.

**To view the complete report of our findings and recommendations, please visit [www.age4action.org](http://www.age4action.org).**

### **A message from Kathy Greenlee, U.S. Assistant Secretary for Aging**

With its mandate to serve all older Americans, the OAA has kept millions of older Americans healthy, independent, secure, and able to live at home for as long as possible. And since its enactment, the OAA has grown and adapted to many of our nation's changing needs. The reauthorization of the OAA in 2011 coincides with the first of our nation's baby boomers turning 65. I believe the reauthorization presents a pivotal opportunity for us. We can build the next generation of programs and leaders in order to serve an increasingly healthy, diverse, and aging America. The question before us in 2011 is:

**How can we make the OAA work better—for today's older Americans, for baby boomers, and for the nation?**

*Adapted from NCOA's Innovations Spring 2010: Big Ideas for the OAA*