

Public and Private Strategies for Assisting Older Workers

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Introduction

In 2006, the first wave of the Baby Boom generation will turn 60. By 2011, the oldest Baby Boomers will turn 65, the traditional retirement age. Older workers are now one of the fastest growing segments of the American workforce. As reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), the number of older workers is predicted to grow substantially over the next two decades, and will become an increasingly significant proportion of all workers. The BLS estimates that between 2002 and 2012, the number of workers aged 55 and older is expected to grow by nearly 50%, outpacing any increases in the number of younger workers. By 2012, it is predicted that 42% of workers in the United States will be 45 and older, up from 37% in 2002. During this 10-year period, the number of workers aged 45 and older will grow by nearly 27% compared to a 3% expected growth of workers aged 16 to 44.¹

The aging workforce is likely to have important consequences for the American labor market. First, older workers approaching retirement are not likely to drop out of the workforce entirely in the future. As recent surveys indicate, they are more likely to seek voluntary transitions—from full-time work to part-time work, from one field to another, and/or from work to education or volunteer activities. Many American workers are realizing that work will likely continue to be part of their lives as they get older. In a national *Work Trends* survey conducted by the Heldrich Center, researchers found that nearly 7 in 10 American workers plan to continue to work full or part time for pay following retirement from their main job.²

Second, as the proportion of older workers in the workforce continues to rise, more and more older workers are likely to encounter involuntary job loss. Today, American workers are seeing layoffs as a reality of the job market and, as the number of older Americans in the labor market increases, the number of older Americans who find themselves out of work and/or with reduced work hours and incomes will likely increase as well. While some workers will opt to leave the

¹ Unless otherwise noted, statistics on employment and unemployment are from the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings* (January 2004 and January 2005), and the U.S. General Accountability Office, *Older Workers: Demographic Trends Pose Challenges for Employers and Workers* (November 2001). Displaced worker data are from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Worker Displacement, 2001-2003” News, USDL 04-1381 (July 2004).

² Scott Reynolds, Neil Ridley, and Carl E. Van Horn, *Work Trends, A Work-Filled Retirement: Workers’ Changing Views on Employment and Leisure* (John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, 2005).

labor market voluntarily such as through retirement, they are also likely to be laid off or to have their wages and hours reduced as a result of business mergers, acquisitions, divestitures, and cost cutting.

And third, as Baby Boomers reach retirement age, the pending wave of retirements may lead to industry-specific labor or talent shortages as well as human resources problems in such areas as succession planning, recruitment, and retention (of both knowledge and workers). For example, the electric utilities industry has already identified workforce aging and turnover as a significant business issue, citing that the size of its workforce has declined by 25% in the past 15 years to pre-1975 levels. According to the Utility Business Education Coalition, one of the biggest problems facing the industry are projected gaps for skilled technical/craft labor, and being able to find skilled and well-educated workers. Industry leaders note that the average utility worker is four years older than the national average, and that half of their workforce is eligible for retirement over the next decade, with the greatest impact reported to be on small and mid-sized utility companies.³ Other industries that have identified concerns with the aging workforce and talent shortages have included aerospace, petroleum, and the federal government. In addition, the U.S. Census Bureau, through various State departments, has identified industries where more than one in five workers is 55 years and older and, thus, where shortages are most likely to occur, such as transportation and transit services, real estate, mining and quarrying, educational services, apparel from fabric and membership organizations.⁴

According to recent studies by The Conference Board, the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP), and the Society for Human Resource Managers (SHRM), businesses that are starting to see large waves of retirements are exploring ways to diagnose and remedy the possible impact of lost knowledge, as well as ways to best retain retired employees and to recruit new workers (both younger and older) into the workplace. Other businesses, however, currently see no need to take any action or are slow to prepare for the challenge.⁵

The aging of Americans combined with the realities of today's economic environment present significant challenges for American society and communities, as well as for U.S. public policy and programs. With the anticipation of more Americans working (or looking for work), the nation's public workforce system will likely face enormous pressure to meet the anticipated demand from older workers for more attention, better service, and more access to local, state, and federal resources to help them retain or find employment. While the public system will be faced with policy and operational issues, the prospect of serving an older population can offer an

³ Steve Kussman, *Presentation at the EUCI Conference "Solutions to the Aging Workforce: What's Working—What's Not—The Latest Findings,"* (2005, PowerPoint Presentation).

⁴ Nick Carroll and Cynthia Taeuber, U.S. Census Bureau, *A Profile of Older Workers in California* (May 2004), *Colorado* (January 2005), *Idaho* (November 2004), *Illinois* (June 2004), *Iowa* (April 2004), *Maryland* (August 2004), *Missouri* (May 2004), *New Mexico* (May 2004), *Oregon* (March 2004), *Virginia* (July 2004), and *West Virginia* (July 2004).

⁵ The Conference Board, *Voice of Experience: Mature Workers in the Future Workforce* (Research Report 1319-02-RR, December 2002). Lynne Morton, Laurie Foster, and Jeri Sedlar, *The Conference Board: Managing the Mature Workforce: Implications and Best Practices* (AARP, 2005). AARP, *American Business and Older Employees: A Summary of Findings* (2002 reprint of a 1998 survey). Jessica Collison, *Society for Human Resource Management with the National Older Worker Career Center and the Committee for Economic Development, Older Workers Survey* (2003).

opportunity for policymakers to begin to better assess the needs of older workers with a goal of improving the information, access, and quality of employment-related assistance and service.

Trends in Displacement and Older Worker Displacement

As noted earlier, at the same time that the American population is aging, rapid changes have taken place in the economy that have resulted in tremendous labor market job churning, with key industries eliminating jobs (such as the manufacturing industry), while other industries made employment gains (such as retail, education, and healthcare). According to the BLS, 11.4 million people were displaced between 2001-2003, of which 5.3 million were displaced from jobs they had held for at least three years.⁶ Nearly one-third (1.7 million) of these displaced workers lost jobs in manufacturing. The reality is that technological changes and globalization have had a tremendous impact on the job market, resulting in the generation of job dislocations and making layoffs a reality for many American workers.

Job dislocation has considerable costs. In addition to those costs workers bear by having their careers disrupted and lives upended, they incur other costs equally as significant, including wage losses, isolation, depression, intense stress and despair, and loss of job seniority. They also incur the costs of searching for new jobs.⁷

Older workers are particularly vulnerable to job dislocations. A recent study suggests that since 1980, the rate of job displacement among workers over the age of 50 has risen compared to that among younger workers.⁸ Older workers also tend to have lower reemployment rates and larger earnings losses than their younger colleagues. In data collected by the BLS on worker displacement, workers over the age of 55 have a harder time becoming reemployed than younger workers. The average duration of unemployment in 2004 for older workers looking for work was 25.8 weeks compared to 18.9 weeks for younger job seekers.

In addition to displacement, older workers are also more likely to drop out of the labor market than their younger colleagues. While few older Americans who are not currently working say they wish they were employed (slightly more than 2% of the 40.5 million people in 2004 aged 55 and older who were not in the labor force reported that they wanted a job), as many as 84,000 people aged 55 and older classify themselves as discouraged. Essentially, they have given up looking for work because they do not believe work is available or, for whatever reason, they have simply stopped looking for employment. While a small number of those reported wanting a job (8.7%), they represent an increase of 12% in the number of older discouraged workers. Compared to younger workers, older workers had the highest probability of dropping out of the labor force following displacement.⁹

⁶ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Displaced Workers Summary*, <http://stats.bls.gov/news.release/disp.nr0.htm>.

⁷ Carl E. Van Horn, William M. Rodgers III, Neil Ridley, and Laurie Harrington, *Getting Back to Work: New Public/Private Strategies for Laid-Off American Workers* (John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, 2005). Daniel Rodriguez and Madeline Zavodny, "Are Displaced Workers Now Finished at Age Forty?" *Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta Economic Review* (2000).

⁸ Todd E. Elder, *Reemployment Patterns of Displaced Older Workers* (2004, pp. 1-3).

⁹ Sara Rix, "Update on the Older Worker: 2004," *AARP Public Policy Institute Data Digest* (No. 114, 2, 3).

Public and Private Programs for Displaced Workers—Both Young and Old

In 2005, the Heldrich Center undertook a study of laid-off American workers¹⁰ that focused on the experience of involuntary job loss among all adult workers and employers. The research examined the consequences of job loss among laid-off blue-collar and white-collar workers, the range of workers that are affected by displacement, and the policies and practices of both employers and the government in response to worker layoffs.

As supported by the Heldrich Center's research, employer support to laid-off workers is uneven, uncoordinated, and unavailable to many. Overall, the availability of severance pay and transition services by companies depends on the size of the company and its culture and values. In addition, trends indicate that business support and commitments are diminishing as companies face greater financial pressure to reduce costs. Government support and assistance to displaced workers, too, has been shown to be similarly uneven, as well as cash strapped and out-of-sync with today's labor market realities. The Heldrich Center study revealed that while workers view Unemployment Insurance, job placement assistance, job training, and extended healthcare as important programs and services, these safety nets and the policies that guide them have suffered from diminished funding, outdated eligibility criteria, and a lack of connection to the realities of today's business needs and workforce demographics.

Notwithstanding indications that older workers will be important to the American labor market and will be needed to fill predicted labor and talent shortages, there are other signs that suggest that older workers' employment and reemployment prospects will continue to be difficult.

In a recent GAO study, as well as evidenced through surveys of employers conducted by The Conference Board, AARP, and SHRM, there continues to be a lack of employer interest in hiring older workers and continued negative perceptions regarding the value of older versus younger workers. Although many employers state a public willingness to recruit or retain older workers, most employers are not currently engaged in pro-older worker human resource practices. Fundamentally, a majority of employers today are not recognizing the older worker value proposition and are not making an effort to hire and/or retain older workers, except in some very specific industries where there currently exists a high average age per worker (such as utilities, transportation, aerospace, and the public workforce) or where there is a clear business case and, thus, a labor market need to hire older workers (such as the retail industry).¹¹

Another major barrier for many older workers reentering the workforce is ageism and attitudes toward the job abilities and job prospects of older workers. In the Heldrich Center *Work Trends* study, surveyed workers believe that younger workers are in a much better position to find a new job at the same salary following a layoff, and are suspicious that employers favor younger workers over older workers in the workplace. These views are supported by recent research from

¹⁰ Van Horn, Rodgers, Ridley, and Harrington, *Getting Back to Work*.

¹¹ Lynne Morton, with Lorrie Foster and Jeri Sedlar, *Managing the Mature Workforce: Implications and Best Practices*. (The Conference Board, 2005). The Conference Board, *Valuing Experience: How to Motivate and Retain Mature Workers* (Research Report #R-1329-03-ES, 2002). AARP, *American Business and Older Employees*. Jessica Collison, *Older Workers Survey* (Society for Human Resource Management with the National Older Worker Career Center and the Committee for Economic Development, 2003).

the GAO reporting that retired workers in their study most often cited their own limited skills as well as limited employment options (that is, most jobs available were lower-skilled and lower-paying jobs) and employers' age discrimination as barriers to continued employment. This is also supported by U.S. Department of Labor data that shows that among workers who are able to find reemployment, 56% of workers over the age of 55 took new jobs with lower wages, the highest rate of any age group.¹² And, according to data from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, while age bias lawsuits tend to rise and fall with the economy, the number of workers filing age discrimination complaints has been escalating, with age-related complaints from firings and layoffs reaching one of their highest levels in 2001.¹³

A less obvious obstacle to older workers getting back to work may be the competition they are likely to face when desiring employment services from the public workforce system, which provides services to anyone seeking assistance. While federal public awareness campaigns on the value of working and hiring older workers have begun, most One-Stop Career Centers and the programs designed to help older workers are overwhelmed, under-resourced, and overburdened with serving many other dislocated adults (who may be better candidates for quicker job placement) or other disadvantaged adults. Fundamentally, the public workforce system has historically underserved older workers compared to the proportion in the labor market, and for many senior advocates, older workers are another subgroup competing in the system for attention with other subgroups.¹⁴

Currently, the federal government has only two programs designed to serve older workers looking for employment—the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) and the Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance Program (ATAA).¹⁵ Both are small programs with narrowly defined eligibility criteria (see Table 1).

The U.S. Department of Labor advises older workers who do not qualify for services under the ATAA or SCSEP programs that they may be eligible for services under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Dislocated Worker or Disadvantaged Adult programs or other programs that may be available through a local One-Stop Career Center. At present, state and local workforce development systems (i.e., One-Stop Career Centers and Workforce Investment Boards) are being encouraged to be more responsive to the needs of older workers in general and the needs of older dislocated workers specifically.¹⁶ However, there are few, if any, federal initiatives aimed at expanding workforce programs for older workers or at improving the ability of existing programs to serve older workers.

¹² Ryan Helwig, "Worker Displacement in 1999-2000," *Monthly Labor Review* (2004, pp. 54-68).

¹³ Loring Spolter, *As Layoffs Mount, So Do Age Bias Complaints*, <http://www.careermagazine.com/myc/legal/200020207-spolter.html>.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Division of Older Worker Programs, *Promising Practices in WIA-SCSEP Coordination* (2002, p. 4).

¹⁵ The Senior Community Service Employment Program is currently up for reauthorization next year and Employment and Training Administration will soon release its principles for reauthorization.

¹⁶ Fredrica D. Kramer and Demetra Smith Nightingale, *Aging Baby Boomers in a New Workforce System* (The Urban Institute).

Table 1. Federal Programs Targeting Older Workers Seeking Employment

Program	Eligibility Requirements	Key Services	Origin and Reach
Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Based on age, income, and place of residence - Must be 55 years or older - Reside in a SCSEP-funded area - Have income that is not more than 125% of the federal poverty level - Be unemployed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Orientation - Part-time job training with a nonprofit agency with salary paid by SCSEP - Possible job placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Established under Title V of the Older Americans Act, as amended and administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration - Available in all 50 states and through 10 national sponsor programs
Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance (ATAA)	<p>- Similar to the Trade Adjustment Assistance criteria whereby workers must demonstrate that foreign trade has adversely affected them, except specifically designed for workers aged 50 and older. Workers who are certified as eligible may apply for both TAA and ATAA but may only be enrolled in one or the other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rapid Response Services: Government personnel provide on-site reemployment services to newly laid-off employees - Reemployment Services: Offer workers assistance in finding new jobs. Workers who wish to qualify for benefits under the program may be able to quickly return to work through a combination of services provided through a One-Stop Career Center - Wage Subsidy: Eligible workers aged 50 or older who obtain new, full-time employment at wages of less than \$50,000 within 26 weeks of their separation may receive a wage subsidy of 50% of the difference between the old and new wages, up to \$10,000 paid over a period of up to two years - Health Coverage Tax Credit: Workers who are receiving the wage subsidy under ATAA may be eligible to receive tax credits for 65% of the monthly health insurance premiums they pay 	<p>Established through the Trade Assistance Reform Act of 2002 and is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. States serve as agents to the Labor Department in administering the program</p>

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration

At the same time, a growing number of nonprofits, faith-based organizations, new private sector institutions, and some state and local government agencies have begun to offer innovative programs targeted at unemployed older workers, using one or more of a combination of public and private dollars patched together, including but not limited to WIA dislocated worker funds, private foundation support, United Way grants, other private individual or business donations, or fees for service. Preliminary research currently being conducted by the Heldrich Center shows that grassroots programs in distinct local areas are being established to serve an identified local need (that is, helping unemployed older workers aged 40 and older, of all income levels) to reconnect to employment. Examples of such programs that have emerged include:

- **MaturityWorks in East Orange and Whippany, New Jersey**, funded through a grant from the HealthCare Foundation and other small grants, serves unemployed residents of the Jewish Vocational Service of MetroWest area who are aged 45 and older. Services provided include career counseling, resume writing, skills training, group workshops, and job placement.
- **The Tacoma Experienced Workers Program in Tacoma, Washington**, funded through state WIA Rapid Response funds, serves older dislocated workers aged 50 and older who have been displaced in King, Pierce, and Thurston Counties. Services include job search and resume assistance, workshops, job clubs, and some short-term training. Program services are provided through the Tacoma One-Stop Career Center.
- **Seniors Job Bank in West Hartford, Connecticut**, funded through several corporations, foundations, and individual and business gifts, provides free employment services to job seekers aged 55 and older in the Greater Hartford area, and to provide assistance to employers who wish to hire such workers. Services include employment referral and staff-assisted, Internet-based job search.
- **Senior Employment Source in Dallas, Texas**, funded through private grants and the local United Way, assists older adults aged 50 and older to conduct an effective job search and find employment in the city of Dallas, Dallas County, and adjacent suburban areas. Services include group support meetings on job search and other topics, one-on-one coaching and resume preparation, off-site job search seminars, and marketing of older workers to local employers.

In addition, a wide array of private businesses and institutions provide more immediate help to unemployed and underemployed older workers. Businesses run the gamut from small entrepreneurs (such as individuals who advertise the provision of help—for a fee—with career coaching, resume preparation, personality testing, image makeovers, job search, and job leads) to large outplacement firms that are specifically marketing their services to workers aged 40 and older. Also emerging are numerous local job search and networking clubs, offered free or for a fee by individuals, churches, and faith-based organizations; local civic organizations (such as the chamber of commerce); or universities and colleges through alumni and/or career service offices. This growing private career transitions industry has been explored most recently by Barbara Ehrenreich in *Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Support of the American Dream*. The book, about white-collar employment and job hunting, has brought the plight and vulnerability of older

displaced workers not only to the public's attention, but also to those who want to help reconnect older workers to the labor market.

Conclusion and Recommendations: New Public/Private Strategies for Dislocated Older Workers

There is clear recognition that the American workforce is aging, and that this demographic factor, along with other economic and financial issues, has affected, and will continue to affect, the ability of older American dislocated workers to quickly regain employment after a job loss or in retirement. Overall, there are several trends that affect an older worker's ability to get access to affordable and high-quality employment services, that affect the public workforce systems' ability to deliver same services, and that perhaps demonstrate the current complexity of the career and work transitions landscape that is faced by adults who are old and out of work. These include:

- **Since the number of older workers is going to increase, it can be expected that the number of older laid-off workers will increase as well. The more dislocated older workers, the more likely the need for employment-related services.** According to the Urban Institute, "The aging of the Baby Boom generation as a whole will naturally increase the number of older workers in the labor market...and also likely increase the need for employment-related services to those older workers who are relatively less advantaged."¹⁷ If there is a need for more employment services, then more resources and public attention must be paid to addressing the growing gap between the need for help and the supply of affordable, high-quality assistance.
- **The fewer public resources available for employment-related services, the more likely that older workers—especially those with limited financial resources and those lacking information about the labor market and how to navigate it—will seek help from either the overwhelmed and under-resourced public WIA system, free local programs and community services, or pay for help from private individuals and organizations.** In many areas, the WIA system is not prepared to serve older workers. And SCSEP and ATAA, while important, are relatively small, targeted programs with limited eligibility, limited resources, and narrow program models. In describing the current dilemma with respect to public workforce development services for older workers, a 2002 U.S. Department of Labor study concluded that currently "WIA programs can be described as being too broad to focus attention on the special needs of the rapidly increasing population of older workers, and SCSEP programs can be described as being too narrow to effectively meet those needs."¹⁸

While it is widely believed that the WIA-financed workforce development systems will need to (or be forced to) change to respond to the aging worker population, it is unlikely that One-Stop Career Centers and WIBs will be financially able to seriously step up without an increase in funding and more flexible eligibility criteria to serve a broader older worker

¹⁷ Kramer and Nightingale, *Aging Baby Boomers in a New Workforce System*, p. 24.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Labor, *Promising Practices in WIA-SCSEP Coordination*, pp. 5-6.

population (aged 45 and over, regardless of income). This leaves older workers with limited choices and limited opportunities.

- **Although there are few federal initiatives, community-based agencies are developing and nurturing active programs and approaches to serving displaced older workers in their communities, funded mostly by private interests and with private dollars.** These programs are emerging outside of the SCSEP, ATAA, and WIA program frameworks, while others are working in collaboration or in partnership with WIA and SCSEP. Many are being patched together with private and some public funding, and are serving an older worker population more broadly defined, but perhaps just as needy for services.
- **The private market has caught on to the enormous business potential of a large and growing market of older displaced workers who are desperate for help in getting back to work.** This sector, undefined as an industry but emerging nonetheless, both fills a market need and void, but also operates with few to no regulations or protections for consumers vulnerable to scams and shams.

Currently, there is a growing constituency of public policymakers, senior advocates and retirement associations, private employers, human resource executives, unions, and workforce practitioners who are looking for ways to strengthen work and reemployment opportunities for all older workers, broadly defined, and to provide better services and tools to help them reconnect to the labor market either after a job loss or in retirement. As mentioned earlier, the demographic trends of the labor market strongly suggest that the demand for workforce services and supports for older workers will only increase. Drawing on national Heldrich Center research on dislocated workers and older workers, there are several recommendations that could be put in place to focus and enhance employment and reemployment services to better serve older workers after a job loss:

- **Better integrate both One-Stop and community-based reemployment services with the administration of Unemployment Insurance, and better integrate government benefits with employer-funded benefits.** As noted in the Heldrich Center's study on dislocated workers, many laid-off workers find new jobs with little to no assistance from the government. However, a large number are lost when it comes to looking for a new job. Research on older workers has shown that many older dislocated workers—especially those in the younger-older category (age 40 to 60)—experience stress, depression, anxiety, and desperation, psychological problems that leave them vulnerable and that hinder their ability to look for work. Many older workers need more hands-on attention and personal help with navigating the labor market and the complex array of government benefits. Reemployment services can hasten the transition of laid-off workers to new jobs, but they must be available, accessible, and effectively developed to do so. Policymakers can help with this transition by better integrating successful community-based reemployment programs and services that are currently helping older workers with Unemployment Insurance benefits and privately funded transition services.¹⁹

¹⁹ Van Horn, Rodgers, Ridley, and Harrington, *Getting Back to Work*. U.S. Department of Labor, *A Guide to Serving Mature Workers in One-Stop Career Centers* (2003, p. 17).

- Encourage the growth of innovative community-based service models in the absence of federal funding, and encourage program models and services that offer a wide array of services and interventions, including partnerships with the business community.** In the absence of public funding, state and local officials can be catalysts for fostering local support for older worker reemployment programs, such as providing data documenting the dimensions of the aging workforce on the state and local labor market, helping community-based organizations leverage private sector funding, and fostering partnerships between local employers and/or business associations such as the chamber of commerce. State and local policymakers can also work to foster better and more effective coordination between existing community-based programs for older workers and seniors, the WIA-funded system, local offices on aging, and SCSEP operators.
- Develop flexible service strategies attuned to the needs of older workers.** Policymakers need to recognize that in order to effectively serve the older worker population, they must understand the different age ranges of older workers, and the different service models and interventions that are necessary to assist these groups. Older workers are a diverse group. Younger older-displaced workers (those aged 40 to 60), regardless of income, are more likely than not looking to get back into the full-time workforce, looking to replace their lost wages, looking to enhance their job market skills, and need significant career transition assistance. This “too old to hire, too young to retire” cohort is currently the population that is not being served through the SCSEP program. Older older-displaced workers (aged 60 and above) may not be interested in full-time employment, but may be looking for more flexible work arrangements that may be supplemented by other retirement income. The SCSEP program focuses on this population, but is currently too under-resourced to meet the potential demand for services.²⁰ In addition, policymakers should explore alternative service strategies that go beyond provision of retraining or reemployment services. Research suggests that older workers are likely to be less inclined to enroll in long-term community college or other retraining programs.²¹ Older workers may benefit from accelerated or flexibly designed education options. Alternatively, older workers may benefit from earnings supplements, such as those offered through ATAA, which encourage reemployment while mitigating the potential earnings losses of displacement. Additional research and demonstration projects are needed to assess the effectiveness of earnings supplements and likely interest among older workers.
- Provide research and information on local promising practices and effective older worker reemployment strategies.** Older worker advocates have raised concerns about whether older workers can be successfully served in One-Stop Career Centers under the current WIA model.²² Overall, there is little information available to community-based organizations and public agencies about the types of public and privately funded older worker programs currently operating in the nation, about what is possible in terms of financing and structure, and about what works best to assist this population.

²⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, *A Guide to Serving Mature Workers in One-Stop Career Centers*, p. 25.

²¹ Louis Jacobson, Robert J. LaLonde, and Daniel Sullivan, *Should We Teach Old Dogs New Tricks? The Impact of Community College Retraining on Older Displaced Workers* (Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, 2003, p. 2).

²² U.S. Department of Labor, *Promising Practices in WIA-SCSEP Coordination*, p. 6.

- **Provide public information and guidance on how to navigate the career transitions industry marketplace and protect consumers from deceptive practices and unprofessional conduct.** At present, the career transitions industry is still relatively new, and there is a general lack of information available to consumers about what makes a reputable organization or professional in the field. Federal and local officials can help consumers by providing “Fact Guides” that advise consumers on a variety of topics, such as what to look for when looking for help with resume development, job search assistance, and other reemployment services; what to reasonably expect from outplacement firms, image consultants, or other such “transition” professionals; how to spot scams; and how to complain about disreputable firms or individuals.

Today, many workers and employers recognize that the economy has changed the nature of work, the workplace, and workplace life in many ways. In this new environment, workers consider themselves responsible for managing their careers and handling job transitions. But more often than not, older workers encounter more reemployment difficulties than their younger colleagues and are more vulnerable in a labor market that is different than when they first began their careers. While all displaced workers bear the costs of job loss, older workers are more susceptible to longer periods of unemployment, greater wage loss, and more mental health issues. In the face of existing economic trends, and an undisputed aging workforce, it is important that public policies toward laid-off workers—and especially older workers—be reexamined and that effective strategies be developed that provide better support to this population.