

June 22, 2010

Dear Colleagues:

I am very happy to welcome you and your site into the Wisdom Works Job Search Skills Training Program! Currently, there are five Councils on Aging sites offering the program – our goal is to expand the program to 25 sites by the end of this year and 50 sites by the end of 2011. The Wisdom Works Job Search Skills Training is a terrific program for older adults -- and it's a great way for your agency to help people learn the new and essential job search skills required for finding work in today's internet-based employee hiring system.

The next training for the volunteer HR workshop leaders is set for August 20, 2010 (location to be determined). I have added your site and contact information to the list of new sites that will be recruiting 2-4 HR volunteers for this August training.

As promised in the June Program Announcement, I am sending to you the materials you will need to launch this very simple-to-operate program at your site -- including an activity timeline, an operations manual, a sample press release for recruiting participants, and a sample letter for recruiting volunteer HR professionals to be Wisdom Works workshop trainers.

In early August, I will provide more details on the training site. At that time, be ready to give me the number and names of the volunteers you will send to the August training. In the meantime, for more information, please call Pat Roberts, Director, Marblehead COA, at (781) 631-6737 or me at 617-222-7435.

Sincerely,

Mary Kay Browne  
Senior Project Director  
Executive Office of Elder Affairs & Commonwealth Medicine's Office of Program Development

cc: MCOA Advisory Board Members

Attachments:

1. Copy of June Program Announcement
2. Activity Timeline
3. Sample PR Recruitment of Participants
4. Sample PR Recruitment of Volunteer Trainers
5. Program Manual

# June 2010 Announcement

## New Sites Invited to Adopt Wisdom Works Job Search Skills Training Program

### 2010 Training Schedule

The Wisdom Works Job Search Skills Training is a terrific program for older adults seeking employment – it helps older workers learn the new and essential job search skills required for finding work in today's internet-based employee hiring system.

Currently, there are five COA sites offering the program in Massachusetts – Billerica, Duxbury, Marblehead (program founder), Natick, and Newton. Our goal is to expand the program to 25 sites by the end of 2010 and to 50 sites by the end of 2011.

The next round for new program sites begins in June and will culminate with a training session for the Wisdom Works volunteer workshop leaders (ideally HR professionals) on August 20, 2010 (locations to be announced later). COAs that are ready to adopt the program should **register by June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010.** To register, send an email to Mary Kay Browne, Senior Project Director, at [mary.k.browne@state.ma.us](mailto:mary.k.browne@state.ma.us) including your name, address, phone number and email address.

In June, all newly registered sites will receive an operations manual for this very simple-to-operate program. The manual includes a program profile, management tips, an activity timeline, sample press releases for recruitment of participants, and a sample letter used to recruit volunteer HR professionals to be Wisdom Works workshop trainers. During the intervening weeks between the registration deadline (June 11<sup>th</sup>) and the training day (August 20), new sites will recruit workshop leaders (2-4 per site) and program participants.

(FYI: A third round for COA sites to join the program will take place in the fall, culminating with a November training days (dates and locations to be determined). An announcement for that round will occur in August and corresponding registration for the November training will not begin until mid-August.)

**Wisdom Works Program's Activity Timeline for Launching New Sites in August 2010**

Time Period	Activity/Event Details	Organizational Steps to Prepare	Staff
June 22 2010	COAs receive and review tools to launch program at new site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program manual and tools</li> <li>• Recruitment tool for volunteer trainers</li> <li>• Activity Timeline for recruiting and training trainers and advertising workshop to public</li> <li>• PR copy for recruiting participants</li> <li>• Designate a coordinator (volunteer or staff) for the program at site (if not the site director)</li> </ul>	ELD sends copies of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Operations Book</li> <li>2. PR copy for recruiting participants</li> <li>3. Trainer recruitment letter and process</li> <li>4. Schedule for Train the Trainer day (locations to be announced later)</li> </ol>	MKB at ELD
June 22 – August 6, 2010	COAs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit volunteer trainers (2-4) with HR backgrounds; conduct CORI screen.</li> <li>• Confirm trainers can attend Train the Trainer Session on August 20.</li> <li>• Inform Mary Kay Browne of number of recruits on August 9.</li> <li>• Provide a copy of Wisdom Works Manual to each volunteer trainer.</li> <li>• Get ready to recruit participants; prepare articles, ads, posters, cable PSAs, etc. for recruiting participants</li> </ul>	ELD: On August 10, send electronic file with the Wisdom Works Manual to sites that succeed in recruitment of Trainers.	COA
August 20, 2010 Train the Trainer with Jayne Mattson, 9 AM -2 PM	Program staff will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend Train the Trainer Session (9AM – 2 PM)</li> <li>• Schedule local workshop dates and rooms with volunteer trainers</li> </ul>	Keystone and Elder Affairs to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide other training materials and tools</li> <li>• Arrange for participation of trainers from other sites</li> </ul>	
August 1 to September 15	Recruit participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect materials fee</li> <li>• Instruct participants to bring copy of current resume to first session</li> <li>• Print copies of workshop training manual for each group</li> </ul>		COA
Sept/Oct 2010	Host 4 Week Series September 22, 29, Oct 6 and 13 (sample series on Wednesdays)	COA to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• space for training</li> <li>• flip charts</li> </ul>	COA and Trainers
4-6 weeks later 1 year out	Post Training Evaluation  Results Survey (1 year later)	Tools are in the operations manual	COA

**Sample PR – Use Local Agency Letterhead**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Donna Popkin  
978-671-0916

DATE: February 18, 2010

**WISDOM WORKS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM FOCUSES  
ON ASSISTING OLDER JOB SEEKERS**

Billerica, MA: Responding to the needs and concerns of the community's senior citizens is the mission of the Billerica Council on Aging (COA). Even before the current economic turmoil, the COA saw signs that seniors will need to work longer, retire later and require more financial resources to fund additional retirement years due to increases in longevity.

To meet this need, the COA will offer a program called Wisdom Works. Job seekers age 55 or older, who are or will be looking for work, can participate in this program. The series of four employment workshops will be facilitated by Human Resources professionals from a variety of companies including, \_\_\_\_\_ . These professionals have volunteered their time and expertise to facilitate the workshops developed by Keystone Associates, a premier outplacement firm in Burlington.

The four week workshops will begin Wednesday, March 24<sup>th</sup> . and end Wednesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>. Topics include "Looking Back...What's Next" (skills assessment); "Getting Started" (resume/cover letter); "Job Search Strategies"; "Interviewing" and "Research & Technology" (learning how to navigate the internet).

Each session will be held at the Billerica Senior Center, 25 Concord Road. There is a registration fee of \$15.00 per person. The COA is planning to offer daytime and evening workshops. Participants must attend all four sessions.

If you are interested in joining the program or want more information please contact COA Director, Donna Popkin at 978-671-0916, ext. 221.

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The Billerica Council on Aging is conveniently located at the Senior Center across from the Billerica green at 25 Concord Road. For more information about programs and services please call or look for the COA's monthly newsletter *The Outlook* available at town hall, library and other town locations as well as by subscription.

## Sample Letter – Use Agency Letterhead

Dear Fellow Townspeople and Human Resource Professionals,

We need your help!

As we all know, the present economic crisis has created enormous pain for many of our citizens, including older adults. Many are suffering from significant reductions in their retirement funds and beginning to realize the need to return to work. For most, the process is viewed as daunting...”Where do I begin?”...”What can I do?”...”What are my skills?”...”How do I write a resume?”...on and on the questions flow.

In recognition of this new need, I am collaborating with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs and Keystone Associates to offer a job search skills training program to help our seniors.

Now here is where you can help! We need trainers to conduct workshops and we need mentors to work one on one with individual job seekers who will have lots of questions and will need lots of coaching. Both roles require your time and commitment. If you are selected to become a trainer, it will require you to participate in a six hour training session, probably on a Friday or Saturday. Then you will be asked to lead four separate workshops, two or more times in 2010/2011. If you assume the role of mentor, you will participate in some training and you will be assigned three to four job seekers to provide individual counseling. In either role, we think this will be meaningful volunteer work for you to develop your own “job hunting” skills and assist older adults.

If you are interested, and we hope you are, or have questions, email me at \_\_\_\_\_ . If you know of other individuals in town who would be appropriate for these roles, please let us know. Or if this is an activity that you might want to “job share”, that might also work.

Whatever you decide, thank you in advance for your consideration.

Regards,

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COA Director

Wisdom Works Program Manual  
– A Job Search Techniques Training  
Workshop –

*Based upon the Marblehead Council on Aging's  
2009 Pilot Program Model*

Wisdom Works Program Manual  
– A Job Search Techniques Training Workshop –  
*based upon the Marblehead Council on Aging's Pilot Program Model*

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Introduction

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Councils on Aging perform various duties for their members. A key service that will become increasingly relevant -- job search techniques training -- will allow members to rejoin the workforce, earn additional income, and receive the psychological benefits of employment. Searching for full time or part time jobs can be difficult for several reasons.

Here are some of the obstacles standing in the way of 55+ members obtaining employment.

1. The methods and techniques of searching for employment have changed dramatically since the days when your members searched for their previous jobs.
  - a. Methods have changed. Today, according to RetirementJobs.com, 85% of all jobs are posted only on the internet. Many adults may not know how to use the internet or how to best utilize it to find new work.
  - b. Job search techniques have changed. For example, résumé formatting has changed over the years.
2. The importance of social networking has increased over time. We really need to seek jobs via social networks -- ads and unions alone are not enough.
3. Older job applicants must develop savvy methods for dealing with age biases. Job search techniques training help adults to re-shape their résumé in a way that plays down age issues and learn how to deal with questions about being overqualified. (In fact, older workers can often be more reliable than younger workers!)
4. Psychological barriers can mount quickly for someone who has been laid off. If someone is 55+ and has been recently laid off, he or she may lack the confidence to follow through on a new job search process. For example, he or she may actually find an opening but be unwilling to send in the application or to call the potential employer.

To break down these barriers for mature older workers to find new employment, you can implement a job search techniques training program to help mature older workers rejoin the workforce.

In the following sections, we will provide you the steps to replicate such a program.

On a larger scale, why does it matter that we promote the employment of older adults? The importance stems from the prediction that there will be a labor shortage in Massachusetts over the next decade. According to a brief from Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies released in 2005, all growth in Massachusetts' working-age population (16 and older) during 2005-2015 will come from the 55 and older population segment. Specifically, the number of people in Massachusetts who are 55+

will increase by 23% “while the number of 16-54 year olds in the population is projected to decline” by “2% over the same time period, despite the continued influx of new younger immigrants into the state”.<sup>i</sup> Thus, Massachusetts will not only have an increasing number of mature workers, the Commonwealth will in fact have less younger workers. The brief concludes:

*“Massachusetts will be completely dependent on older workers to generate growth in its resident labor force over the coming decade. Massachusetts will be more dependent on older workers for their labor force than most other states across the nation”.*

Therefore, it is paramount that we find ways to mitigate the barriers currently inhibiting increased 55+ employment.<sup>ii</sup>

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## Acknowledgements

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The ideas and insights for this manual were derived from conversations and interviews with Pat Roberts, the Director of the Marblehead Council on Aging (COA). Pat Roberts partnered with Clark Willmott, of Willmott and Associates, and Ralph Roberto and Jayne Mattson of Keystone Associates, to create a job search training program with hopes of attracting baby boomers to participate at the COA. In the spring of 2008, Roberts met with the President of Keystone Associates, an outplacement firm that helps people search for jobs after being laid off from their previous job. What resulted from their discussions and hard work was Marblehead’s “*Wisdom Works*”, a job search skills training program to help those who are 50+. The program consists of four weekly two-hour sessions, each one covering a different topic of the job search process, led by volunteers with backgrounds in human resources who then work with participants in small groups, training them how to find jobs. *Editors Note:* We also will to thank Eric Rosenberg, an intern in the 2009 Governor’s Community Outreach Internship Program, who interviewed Pat Roberts and prepared this manual during the summer of 2009.

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## Steps to Re-create the Wisdom Works Job Search Skills Training

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There are three categories of people that the Marblehead Job Search Techniques Training was designed for:

1. Those who have been actively seeking employment.
2. Those have been passively seeking employment. That is, they have not been searching for a job at all, but if you offered them a job, they would take it.
3. Those who will attend your program who merely have a general interest in the discussion. These people may or may not want to find employment or begin the search process, but desire to learn more about re-entering the workforce.

You must design a program tailored to address to needs of these three groups. (Note: neither program focused on people seeking a career change, since those people need to

acquire additional skills. Members can seek job training programs through community colleges and elsewhere; however, the focus of your program should be on the job search process itself.) The purpose of the Wisdom Works Job Search Skills Training Program is to help people who have the necessary job skills to re-enter in the workforce for a job for which they are qualified. The new job they seek does not have to be the same job, but should be a job that they can do effectively.

To run this program effectively, recruit a volunteer, preferably with human resources (HR) experience, to lead the program (called hereafter the “manager”). The manager will be responsible for overseeing the search process for trainers, the screening and training of the trainers, and conducting the multiple-stage evaluation process for the program (more on that later).

### **Trainers for the Workshops**

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Trainers will conduct the training sessions with participants. It is expensive to hire professional trainers. A local company that specializes in helping people find jobs may lend you help early on, but in the long run, you need to rely on volunteers to be trainers. Look up all people in your local area who have human resources (HR) backgrounds (try looking at the state associations of HR professionals) and send a letter asking for their help with your program. Since your volunteers are local, they will be more flexible in the scheduling process than volunteers from other towns.

It is not necessary that the volunteers have experience training people in job search skills; however, it is strongly recommended that all of your trainers have an HR background. A key part in being a trainer is the ability to tell stories about the job search and recruiting process, and people with an HR background are best qualified to tell those anecdotes. You will need to conduct CORI checks on your volunteers; however, as COAs, you will not be charged for this required precaution.

Trainers may choose to give their personal contact information to the participants and offer to continue coaching them post-training with their difficulties.

#### **Trainer the Trainer**

When people with HR backgrounds respond to your recruitment letter and volunteer to become trainers, have a meeting with the full group of volunteers. Offer complimentary coffee and pastries. Expect to spend a full day training the trainers, so preferably select a Saturday for your meeting. Three activities will occur at this meeting.

1. Screening. As required by law, you will need to CORI your volunteers. As will be discussed later, each class will be led by a pair of trainers, so any potential deficiencies present in a particular trainer probably will be checked by the other trainer. Therefore, there should not be a need to critically evaluate each trainer’s abilities. Thus, the only two

- requirements to be a trainer or a coach are: 1. An HR background. 2. A CORI background check.
2. Training the Trainer. Your Manager will teach the trainers about the program, its curriculum, and trouble-shooting strategies. Prepare and hand out your curriculum's literature to the trainers. Keystone Associates can also provide guidance during these train-the-trainer sessions.
  3. Scheduling and Pairing Up. Have each trainer fill out forms listing the potential days and hours each week that they could devote to conducting a class. In addition, ask for which four-week block(s) of the year they would prefer to volunteer for you. After you compile the preferences, then pair up volunteers based primarily on scheduling compatibility. Have the pairs exchange mutual contact information.

### **Finding Your Participants**

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Who are your participants? The minimum age requirement for your participants can vary on based on your preferences, influenced by your human and financial resources as well as by the demand for your program. The Marblehead program markets officially to the 55+ population, but allows 50+ people to join as well. (In contrast, the town of Brookline sets its minimum age requirement at 60 years old.)

Inform the residents of your town via myriad outreach avenues about your training program, and extend a special invitation to potential participants in the community who have not yet visited your COA. Once you bring them in for the program, they may be inclined to become regular members of your COA.

It has been observed that smaller class sizes tend to create a more effective training environment. Therefore, it is preferable to have each class have ten people or less so that the trainers will quickly get to know their trainees and become familiar with their individual circumstances. It seems reasonable to register twelve participants and expect a few to drop out of the program. A class of fifteen or more participants would be too large for the formation of strong trainer-participant connections.

On that note, it is important to emphasize that attendance should be mandatory for all of your program's four sessions. If a participant only attends one or two sessions, then the program's spirit and effectiveness are undermined. Thus, there should be a brief screening process for participants, probably consisting of a telephone or in person conversation. Here is a hypothetical situation. A participant asks, "Is it okay if I only go for the third session?" You should respond, "No, it is a package deal." It is important that someone not attend just the third session since by session three, the rest of the group would have hopefully attained a certain degree of mutual trust and rapport, and adding a new person to the group at such a late stage could disrupt that chemistry. Without that chemistry, the curriculum's crucial small group work may be rendered ineffective.

Should sessions be free? No, we recommend you charge a small, upfront, one-time fee of about \$5-\$10. By paying the “materials fee”, people will feel invested in the program and will be more likely to attend all the sessions.

### **Class Structure, Homework, Evaluations and Scheduling**

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We recommend having four, consecutive, two-hour, weekly sessions. An alternative, having sessions every other week, hinders the incorporation of the class into the participants’ and trainers’ regular schedules. If possible, have participants in advance send your trainers their résumés, if they already have résumés, to give the trainers a preliminary sense of the group’s collective level of job search skills.

Open your sessions by stressing the importance of confidentiality regarding what occurs during sessions. Make sure your sessions are a safe environment for all participants so they eventually feel comfortable sharing experiences and vulnerabilities. Over time, members will develop a rapport with one another.

Going into the first session, the participants are not necessarily expected to have completed any preparation (other than handing in any existing résumés). During each session, participants may fill out certain forms together. Along with the curriculum literature handed out during the session, trainers should also provide their participants with the homework assignments due for each upcoming session. Homework may consist of researching critical personal information for filling out applications or may require the participant to draft several different types of résumés and cover letters. During the next session, the homework will be vital to the session’s training and small group work.

At the end of every session, ask the participants to fill out an evaluation regarding how that day’s session went and its utility for the participant.

Classes should consist of group and small group exercises.

Do not give participants all the literature at once. At each session, provide participants the relevant handouts for the current session and the relevant homework assignment for the next session. Otherwise, people can get overwhelmed and/or may not attend again.

First conduct a pilot program. Afterwards, you will be able to learn from those experiences before you create multiple, concurrent classes.

### **Post Training Evaluation and Debriefing**

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About six weeks after your participants complete the training, consider sending them a survey letter asking them to describe their success or lack thereof in the job search process. This will allow you to evaluate the effectiveness of your program based on its results. Include within your letter a pre-stamped survey form so more responses will be mailed back to you. You should consider asking your graduates:

- How many jobs have you applied for since completing our program?

- Did you receive employment?
- Did our program leave out any important areas in the job search process?

With the information from the survey, you will be able to determine your program's placement rate as well as discover parts of your program which may require reworking.

After a class is completed, the manager should conduct a debriefing with the trainers to go over their experiences. Furthermore, it would be advisable to have the next pair of trainers attend the debriefing so that they may benefit from the previous trainers' wisdom and experiences.

After you have completed your first successful pilot, considering offering people a choice to enroll in either a day class or in a night class, thus being able to capture people who are busy during the day as well as those who do not like the idea of night class.

### **Costs and Revenue for the COA**

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- Binders for curriculum handouts
- Dividers for the binders
- Paper for handouts
- Postage for surveys
- Paper and envelopes for surveys.
- Coffee and pastries for train-the-trainer sessions.
- A gift (e.g. a mug) for each of your trainers upon the graduation of their class.
- An easel with flip-charts for your training program sessions
- Name "tents" on cardstock for participants to write their names during sessions
- Advertisements
  - Targeting Participants - Public Services Announcements and fliers.
  - Targeting Trainers and Coaches.
    - Paper, envelopes, and postage for sending out letters to people with HR backgrounds in your town.

Items Not To Pay For:

- You do not necessarily need to provide food at your training sessions.

Optional Costs:

- Could provide some help with transportation of graduates to the training or to a job site, if they are unable to reach either location on their own.

Funding Source:

- \$5-10 per person upfront materials fee

## Curriculum

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1. Looking Back... What's Next?
  - Understand your motivating factors
  - Assess your skills, interests, and values
  - Identify your goals and needs
2. Getting Started!
  - Develop your message
  - Build your résumé
  - Create a strong summary statement
  - Draft an effective cover letter
3. Job Search Strategies
  - Network as the most effective method
  - Post your résumé on the internet
  - Answer classified advertisements
  - Work with recruiters
4. Interviewing
  - Prepare for the interview
  - Understand how to sell yourself
  - Practice answering questions
  - Negotiate with confidence
5. Technology Portal
  - On-line job sites on the internet
  - Company research web sites

### **For More Information:**

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Contact Pat Roberts, Director, Marblehead COA, at (781) 631-6737 or Mary Kay Browne, Senior Project Director, Executive Office of Elder Affairs, at 617-222-7435.

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<sup>i</sup> Arana, Leonel and Andrew Sum. "The Graying Labor Force." Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University. November 2005. Published in *Research and Evaluation Brief*. Commonwealth Corporation. Volume 3, Issue 3. Page 2.

<sup>ii</sup> Arana, Leonel and Andrew Sum. "The Graying Labor Force." Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University. November 2005. Published in *Research and Evaluation Brief*. Commonwealth Corporation. Volume 3, Issue 3. Page 3.