

AARP Foundation Announces Its Continued Expansion of the BACK TO WORK 50+ Program to Eight New Target Markets

Washington, DC – With alarming statistics on the number of older unemployed Americans seeking work in mind, AARP Foundation is pleased to announce the further expansion of its BACK TO WORK 50+ initiative to eight new locations in collaboration with the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), generous support from the Walmart Foundation and the help of the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB). BACK TO WORK 50+ is dedicated to moving low income, unemployed men and women age 50+ from instability to stability by increasing their income through employment in good jobs in their communities.

BACK TO WORK originally launched in 2013 as a demonstration project in Denver, Colorado at the Arapahoe Douglas Workforce Center. After a successful debut, it was later expanded to 11 community college locations throughout the United States in early 2014. BACK TO WORK 50+ is designed to create local coordination of employment services, short-term training opportunities, public benefits application assistance, financial capability and employer engagement to connect 50+ job candidates to specific in-demand jobs in their communities.

Over the next two years, AARP Foundation will invest more than \$2 million to expand the program and reach thousands more older workers who need these important services. To date, BACK TO WORK 50+ has provided over 5,000 unemployed workers with information and resources to help them find meaningful employment.

“More than 3 million workers age 50-plus are looking for full-time employment. Mature workers bring assets to the workplace that employers need,” said AARP Foundation president Lisa Marsh Ryerson. “The expansion of BACK TO WORK 50+ will encourage a multigenerational workforce that brings value to employers and older Americans alike.” According to Lisa Bly, Program Director for BACK TO WORK 50+ at Moraine Valley Community College, Palos Hills, IL, “Employers value the level of professionalism that mature workers bring to the workplace. Additionally, employers appreciate them being reliable and willing to work hard at getting things done right. I’m proud to lead the efforts of getting unemployed 50+ individuals back to work!”

As part of the BACK TO WORK 50+ expansion, the participating community colleges and workforce investment boards (WIBs) will host local information sessions where job candidates aged 50 and older can learn how to update their personal marketing tools and networking strategies, target their job search on in-demand jobs, get job leads, enroll in short-term training and find resources that can help them stay strong while they’re looking for their next full-time job. This expansion into new target markets allows AARP Foundation to increase its unique position to provide access to training opportunities for jobseekers who need skills training to prepare for available jobs. Participating community colleges and workforce investment boards include:

Community Colleges

1. Alamo Community Colleges (San Antonio, TX)

2. Borough of Manhattan Community College (New York, NY)
3. Atlanta Technical College (Atlanta, GA)
4. Jefferson State College (Birmingham, AL)

Workforce Investment Boards

5. Dallas Workforce Solutions (Dallas, TX)
6. Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (Sacramento, CA)
7. Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corp. (Millersville, MD)
8. Workforce Connections (Las Vegas, NV)

“Community colleges have always served a diverse student population, including adult learners looking to retrain for the workforce,” said AACC President and CEO Walter G. Bumphus. “We appreciate AARP Foundation’s interest in working with community colleges, and recognizing that the colleges can help support older and unemployed workers in a variety of ways.”

The community colleges will focus specifically on the needs of low income, older adult women and provide an expanded level of career and support services. The colleges will have access to a specifically designed version of the Virtual Career Network career exploration platform that was developed by AACC through a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. Participants in the program will use this innovative web-based tool to explore careers in high-growth fields.

“Workforce investment boards, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Labor, build relationships with economic development organizations, publish related regional economic research and create resources to intervene for both the dislocated workforce and the incumbent workforce members of a community” said AARP Foundation Income Impact Vice President Emily Allen. The WIB's main role is to direct federal, state and local funding to workforce development programs. They also oversee the One-Stop Career Centers, where job seekers can get employment information, find out about career development training opportunities and connect to various programs in their area, usually at no-cost.

The BACK TO WORK 50+ program is one of the programs funded through the generous support of a \$2.3 million grant from the Walmart Foundation, as a part of the Global Women’s Economic Empowerment Initiative, which will help 200,000 U.S. women from low-income households gain better employment opportunities through job training, education, career counseling, and mentoring. For more information, visit corporate.walmart.com/women.