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Age-Friendly Institute Partners with NJ Advocates for Aging Well on Groundbreaking Workforce Initiative

Grant-Funded Program to Certify 12-15 New Jersey Employers, Combat Workplace Ageism, and Address Critical Labor Shortages

Waltham, MA – The Age-Friendly Institute, home of the internationally recognized Certified Age-Friendly Employer (CAFE) program, announced a transformative partnership with New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well (NJAAW) to bring age-inclusive employment practices to the Garden State. The 12-month, \$100,000 grant-funded initiative will recruit and certify 12-15 New Jersey employers as Certified Age-Friendly Employers, creating a powerful cohort of businesses committed to leveraging the talents and experience of workers age 50 and older.

The program addresses a critical gap in workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, where age is rarely included despite representing one of the fastest-growing segments of the workforce. With more than 2 million New Jersey residents over age 60—at least 25% of whom are still working—this initiative comes at a pivotal time when businesses are struggling with workforce shortages while overlooking a valuable talent pool.

"This partnership represents a significant step forward in transforming New Jersey workplaces," said Tim Driver, President of the Age-Friendly Institute. "We've seen tremendous success with our cohort model in Nova Scotia, where tourism industry employers achieved remarkable results in attracting and retaining older workers. New Jersey employers now have the opportunity to become pioneers in age-inclusive employment practices."

Experienced HR Leader to Guide Employer Outreach

The initiative will be led by Keith Bogen, SPHR SHRM-SCP, who has been appointed as Employer Outreach Coordinator. Bogen brings extensive experience as an HR Business Partner and HR Director, with specialized expertise in process improvement, employee empowerment, and global communications. His deep understanding of New Jersey's business landscape and human resources challenges will be instrumental in recruiting diverse employers across the state's three regions and various industry sectors.

"Keith's credentials and experience make him the ideal person to connect with New Jersey's HR executives and business leaders," said Cathy Rowe, Executive Director, NJAAW. "His background in organizational transformation and employee engagement aligns perfectly with the CAFE program's mission to create workplaces where talent thrives regardless of age."

Addressing Critical Business Needs

The CAFE certification provides employers with a comprehensive roadmap for becoming more attractive to age 50+ employees through improved hiring, training, and retention practices. The program is particularly timely as businesses continue to face workforce shortages that began during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"While New Jersey employers rightfully focus on DEI practices in the workplace, aging is usually not included in the diversity perspective," said Cathy Rowe, Executive Director of NJAAW. "This project will highlight the importance of older workers, demonstrate cost-effectiveness, and help solve workforce shortages by providing employers with the tools and recognition they need to tap into this experienced talent pool."

Proven Success Model

The Age-Friendly Institute's CAFE program, established in 2006, has certified hundreds of employers across all industries and sectors. The program gained particular recognition through its successful implementation in Nova Scotia, where tourism industry employers facing acute staffing shortages used CAFE certification to attract and retain older workers, leading to program expansion and discussions of Canada-wide implementation.

Supporting State Priorities

The initiative directly supports recommendations in New Jersey's Age-Friendly Blueprint, specifically Recommendation #8 to "Obtain credentials, such as CAFE, to signal workplace support for older employees." The program also builds on New Jersey's 2021 law eliminating mandatory retirement, demonstrating the state's commitment to age-inclusive employment. This project is supported through one of the New Jersey Department of Human Services Age-Friendly Project Grants. New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well (NJAAW) and the Age-Friendly Institute, will recruit New Jersey businesses and employers to form a cohort for the Certified Age-Friendly Employer (CAFE) Program. This project will bring 12-15 NJ based employers through the certification process during the grant period who will serve as models for age-friendly practices here in the state.

How Employers Can Participate

New Jersey employers interested in joining the cohort can expect:

- Guidance through the CAFE certification process
- Networking opportunities with other progressive employers
- Recognition as leaders in age-inclusive employment
- Access to a proven framework for attracting and retaining experienced workers
- Access to training and resources from the Age-Friendly Institute

The program will prioritize diversity in employer selection, ensuring representation across New Jersey's three regions (North, Central, and South) and various business sizes and industries. Interested employers should reach out to Keith Bogen at keith.bogen@yahoo.com.

About the Organizations

The Age-Friendly Institute is the leading authority on age-friendly employment practices and home to the Certified Age-Friendly Employer program. The Institute has worked with senior leaders at hundreds of organizations to establish and promote best practices for age-inclusive employment.

New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well has served New Jersey's older adults for 26 years as the only statewide nonprofit dedicated solely to advocating for policies, programs, and services that enable older adults to live with independence and dignity in their communities.

Call to Action

New Jersey employers interested in joining this groundbreaking cohort or learning more about the CAFE program are encouraged to contact the program team. The initiative represents a unique opportunity to gain competitive advantage while contributing to a more inclusive and productive workforce.

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The Age-Friendly Institute is committed to creating workplaces where experience is valued and age diversity drives innovation and success.