3.0 DESIGN WORK TO MAXIMISE PARTICIPATION

Use opportunities and incentives to improve recruitment and retention, and return older workers to the workforce.

WHY IT MATTERS

With longer and healthier working lives comes an opportunity for many people to work longer and possibly change career pathways. Career development and planning support can contribute significantly to enhancing employee motivation and productivity.

Work and life balance impacts workers of every generation. Flexibility has become increasingly more important in the workplace. The ability to work part-time or flexible hours has been found to be the most important facilitator of good health for older people to work beyond retirement age.

To attract and retain older workers, employers need to create the culture, systems and processes that support and facilitate work flexibility.

‘Early retirement has a detrimental effect on the Australian economy because the skills and knowledge of mature age people can make a substantial contribution to productivity, as well as mentoring younger workers.’

3.1 PROMOTE A POSITIVE, AGE-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE CULTURE

Build a workplace culture that values older workers by focusing on the positive contributions and potential of older workers, discouraging negative attitudes, and preventing age discrimination.

WHY IT MATTERS

Older workers make important contributions in the workplace and their active participation at work is increasingly important in the context of an ageing society. Age discrimination at work is often a barrier to workforce participation, manifesting in both the recruitment, and retention of staff. Age discrimination, either real or perceived, can also cause mature age people to self-select out of the workforce. Workplace cultures need to be non-discriminatory and actively value all workers and their contributions.

Age discrimination in employment of mature age people arises from a combination of social perceptions and economic justifications but is usually justified in terms of productivity, whereby older people are stereotyped for having some assumed behaviours regardless of the individual’s actual conditions and characteristics.’


HOW IT IS DONE

Build age diversity within the organisation. Creating a workplace where all workers make valuable and visible contributions to organisational success may be the best way to prevent culturally-entrenched age discrimination. Build organisational age diversity to support older workers by implementing non-discriminatory recruitment processes and practices and measures that encourage retention of older workers.

Recognise and reward achievements. Make sure reward and recognition programs share the achievements of older workers with the rest of the organisation. Programs should also recognise behaviourst of individuals who make significant contributions to the creation of a diverse, age-positive workplace culture.

Monitor performance to identify bias. Audit and assess recruitment and retention processes and measures, such as performance management, and address age imbalance or bias.

Build line management capability in relation to age diversity and management. Line managers have a key role in building an age-positive workplace culture.

Use the employment experiences of older workers. The experiences of older workers can positively reinforce age management practices and identify where further work is required.

More information on building organisational age diversity is available in Chapter 4.2: Take an age-inclusive approach to recruitment of this guide.

More information on building age management skills and confidence of line managers is available in Chapter 5: Front line confidence of this guide.

3.2 TAKE AN AGE-INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO RECRUITMENT

Review recruitment processes and practices to eliminate bias and focus strategies on maximising diversity outcomes.

WHY IT MATTERS

Older workers are increasingly looking to extend their working life. Organisations that are proactive in addressing the challenges of recruiting and retaining older workers will gain a significant competitive edge. There are many benefits older workers bring to organisations including:

> accumulated experience, knowledge and skills
> loyalty and a strong commitment to the business of the organisation
> established networks of contacts.

Older workers will also contribute to the organisation’s diversity and its ability to mirror the diversity of the community.

Biased recruitment practices, such as assumptions of recruiters about older workers, can narrow the applicant pool and exclude mature age job seekers.

HOW IT IS DONE

Promote the workplace to workers of all ages. Take steps to make sure the organisation’s brand and advertising material is age-inclusive and age-positive. Incentives that older workers find attractive, such as flexible work, learning and development opportunities, and health and wellbeing programs should be marketed to job seekers. Mature-age job seekers should be able to visualise themselves working for your agency and they need to feel the organisation and job is a good fit for them.

Know the job and focus on the requirements of the job. Understand the work that needs to be done and make sure selection criteria align to the work and target the key competencies required. Map job or role competencies to both formal education and work experience. Be aware that a lack of formal qualifications may be offset by development of relevant skills through work experience. Make sure appropriate value is placed on work experience.

Identify the types of flexible work options that are compatible with the job requirements. Make sure the full range of compatible options, such as part-time, job-sharing, working compressed hours, working from an alternate site, are made available to potential candidates by including them in the job documentation.

‘Recruiters are key gatekeepers in the employment process. Ensuring they are aware of their obligations and appreciate the value of mature age workers is essential.’


Seek out older workers. This could include targeting past employees, including retirees, and advertising in different places from the usual to create awareness of the opportunities that exist for older workers. Graduate programs provide another opportunity to recruit older workers. Consider reviewing programs to make sure they are supportive of mature age graduates.

Assess the cultural assumptions of the organisation or team. Investigate the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions that exist in the workplace regarding how older workers work, or want to work. Support specific behaviours that positively influence age-diversity and workforce culture, and address any negative views, assumptions or behaviours.

Make sure recruitment policies, processes and practices are merit-based and age-inclusive. Language of selection criteria, position descriptions, duty statements and advertisements should be age-neutral. Diverse age-groups should be represented on selection panels.

Educate all stakeholders about taking an age-inclusive approach. Internal and external stakeholders must be educated. Consider inclusions in contracts for outsourced recruitment companies to prevent age stereotyping, for instance, attending age stereotyping myth-busting training.

Review induction and training methods to make sure they are appropriate for the learning styles of older workers. Supporting older workers to transition smoothly into the workplace will help ensure a successful recruitment process. Provide an environment that supports all learning styles. Consider the experiences of older workers and provide opportunity for reflection and observation as well as active hands-on learning.

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3.3 BETTER MATCH WORK TO THE WORKER

Make sure jobs and tasks are designed to align with the capabilities and capacities of workers.

WHY IT MATTERS

Design of work, work processes and systems are fundamental for health and productivity of all workers. Requirements for work life balance may change through the working life span and particularly if health circumstances change. Retention of workers requires a good fit between the demands of the role and the capabilities and capacities of the worker. As workers age, their need for a good job fit may become increasingly more important and their requirements for a good job may change. Factors such as poor health, reduced physical capacity or a need for a new work-life balance may be more important as a worker ages. Flexibility and innovation in how work is organised will become important in order to accommodate older workers’ needs and changing circumstances.

A good match between workers and their work contributes to:

> satisfaction with their job and the opportunity to use their skills to best advantage
> improved health and wellbeing outcomes and reduced costs
> increased retention of workers
> decreased errors, failures and other issues
> increased productivity.

HOW IT IS DONE

Be clear about what good work looks like. Good work is likely to offer workers:

> secure employment
> variety
> good autonomy, control and task discretion
> clear expectations of what is required of them
> opportunities to use and develop skills
> supportive social networks
> challenges
> flexibility
> protection and promotion of health, safety and wellbeing
> confidence they will be treated fairly by their employer
> balance between effort and reward.

‘Managers have an obligation to make reasonable adjustments to the design of the work and work processes to accommodate individuals’ differing capabilities.’

In designing jobs and developing management arrangements, companies need to think about how staff will feel valued by the organisation, and what will motivate them to deliver a quality product or service without undue stress that might lead to poor health.’

Dame Carol Black’s 2006 review of the health of Britain’s working age population, Working for a healthier tomorrow.

Gather information on work processes, systems, jobs and tasks to identify areas for potential improvement. Look at injury or health data, risk assessment results, production failures or errors and other productivity related data to identify areas where redesign of work is warranted.

Consult your older workers to identify concerns, suggestions and preferences. Older workers who are performing jobs are likely to be aware of any job design issues and will have a sense of whether or not their job is a good match for their own capabilities and capacities. Consultation with workers should be ongoing throughout the redesign or design process.

Prepare a business case for any proposed changes to how the work is done. Spell out the rationale for changes, including costs, expected benefits and other drivers of change, such as complying with legislation. If possible, estimate the dollar value of the expected benefit.

Design jobs, tasks and work systems to meet the needs and capabilities of older workers. In designing or re-designing work consider:

> Who is at work? Think about matching skills and workers to work, age diversity, managing ill health, preventing injury.
> How does work get done? Work processes, systems of work, tasks and job design.
> What do we need to do the work well? Work plant, substances, equipment and technology.
> How do we work with others? Social aspects, support and relationships.
> How is the work managed? Communication, clarity, alignment, feedback, performance and reward, leadership and change management.
> Where do we work? Building, location, structures and operating environment.

Measure the impact of design changes on the workforce. The information from surveys, work health and safety (WHS) outcomes and indicators and other sources can be used to measure the success of job design changes on factors such as:

> uptake of flexible work options by age
> retirement intentions of staff members
> workplace culture
> impact on injuries and illness
> absenteeism
> improvements in productivity and performance.\textsuperscript{10}

3.4 PROVIDE OPTIONS FOR ALTERNATIVE OR ENRICHED WORK ROLES

Provide workers with options for alternative or enriched work roles, such as planned mobility and mentoring.

WHY IT MATTERS

As workers grow older their potential for contributing to the workplace may change. The role of work in their work-life plan is likely to change, while their wealth of experience is a resource that can be shared with others. These factors, along with changing physical capacities, mean the types of work they are suited to may alter, or, they may wish to take on different roles. The challenge for employers is to continue to maximise workers’ productivity and engagement in the workplace as they grow older and their circumstances change.

Workplaces can use the skills that older workers bring in new ways through mentoring or by offering alternative roles. Mentoring is a relationship that gives people the opportunity to share their professional and personal skills and experiences, and to grow and develop in the process. New or enriched roles provide opportunities for diverse career experiences, career development and transfer and retention of corporate knowledge.

HOW IT IS DONE

Implement a mentoring program. Harness the experiences of older workers to retain valuable corporate knowledge and transfer it to younger generations. Consider using reverse mentoring, where younger workers help older workers adapt to new technologies, as another means of developing, supporting and retaining older workers.

Use planned mobility to diversity career experiences of employees and build workforce capability, with knowledge transfer the key benefit for all involved. Challenge the traditional notion of a career that follows an upward trajectory until retirement. Support alternative concepts of career development, including up, down or lateral movements, to guard against career plateaus and disengagement. Support workers that choose to move to less senior roles by promoting a workforce culture that is encouraging and accepting of employees’ decisions to pursue career movements in any direction.

‘Job mobility is found to be timely and relevant in an ageing workforce where knowledge sharing and talent development should be leveraged.’

2011 Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) report by Dr Glenys Drew and Ms Rosemary Cooper, 2011, Job Mobility Research Report: Encouraging employees to expand their career experience in the Australian Public Service.
3. WORK DESIGN

3.5 PROVIDE AND PROMOTE FLEXIBLE WORK OPTIONS

Support workers to access flexible work arrangements that suit their circumstances, drawing from a wide range of flexible work options.

Why It Matters

The Australian Government’s 2010 Intergenerational Report makes it clear that population ageing is already responsible for slowing economic growth. Growing the economy through improving mature age workforce participation is necessary to minimise the economic impact of the ageing population.

Flexible work options are a critical enabler for mature age participation in the workforce. Many workers seek access to flexible work options to enable them to continue to contribute in the workplace and transition to retirement in a healthy way.

Older workers may require flexibility because they are:

- coping with a chronic illness or injury that prevents full workforce participation
- juggling work with care-giving responsibilities
- striving to achieve a sustainable work-life balance that supports continued health and wellbeing
- undertaking a phased transition to retirement.

In 2013 the Australian Government responded to the needs of older workers for flexibility at work by extending the right to request flexible work arrangements to workers aged 55 years or over. The Fair Work Act 2009 allows eligible employees to request flexible work arrangements from their employer, requests that can only be refused by employers for certain reasons.

Flexible work options are a key feature of age-friendly workplaces that successfully attract and retain older workers.

How It Is Done

Understand the work and identify the range of flexible work options that are compatible with the demands of the job. Provide clarity for managers and workers on the types of flexible work options, such as part-time work, job-sharing and telework, and how they could be managed with the work required.

Implement policies and processes focussed on maximising the ability of the organisation to accommodate flexible work requests. Assess existing employment conditions and optimise their potential application to support flexibility for older workers. Make sure the full range of flexible work options is available to older workers whenever the flexible work option is deemed compatible with the job role. Where possible, provide alternative roles to an older worker where their current job is deemed incompatible with the flexible work option requested. If necessary, take action to change conditions of employment that create barriers to participation at work by those experiencing ill health, injury, disability or those with caring responsibilities.
‘60 per cent of mature age workers reported that they would take-up telework if it was available to them and as a result delay retirement by an average of 6.6 years.’

Creating jobs through NBN enabled telework. Report by Colmar Brunton Research and Deloitte Access Economics for the Commonwealth of Australia as represented by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.

Educate management about the advantages of making flexible work options available and the types of circumstances when flexible work options should be offered. As the role of a manager is critical to enabling an older worker to access flexible work options, it is vital that managers fully understand the organisation’s policy, how to comply with legislative requirements, the rationale for making flexible work options available, and their role in implementing it. Provide managers with practical strategies to implement—for example, use case studies to demonstrate strategies in practice.

‘... the literature specifically identifies that the skills, attitude and resources of managers are make-or-break factors in the successful implementation of flexible work arrangements’.


Promote flexible work options. Provide older workers and managers with information on the range of flexible work options available to workers and explain how the uptake of flexible work options may be of benefit to them. Agency case studies of older workers accessing flexible work options may be useful to highlight the advantages to both older workers and their managers.

Monitor requests for, and uptake of flexible work options by older workers and review the effectiveness of the flexible work policy and process. Draw on relevant agency data and feedback from older workers to review the effectiveness of strategies promoting flexible work options and make improvements. Understand the type of flexible work options accessed and the reasons for accessing them to be proactive and anticipate workforce needs.

More information on implementing flexible work arrangements is found in Chapter 4: Health, Safety and Wellbeing and Chapter 5: Front line Confidence of this guide.
3. WORK DESIGN

3.6 HELP WORKERS TRANSITION TO RETIREMENT

Support workers to achieve a healthy and successful transition to retirement by providing them with information that allows them to make informed decisions about financial security, health and lifestyle choices, and be better equipped to plan ahead for life transitions.

WHY IT MATTERS

Individuals need to plan for their own future. Planning for a healthy and rewarding retirement involves consideration of a range of lifestyle and financial factors and information to make informed decisions. Where planning is inadequate individuals may find themselves in financially stressful and/or unhealthy circumstances that impact on their health and wellbeing.

There is also a critical need to challenge culturally entrenched attitudes that view a career as a one-way path from full education to full-time work to full-time retirement. Early full-time retirement has a detrimental effect on the Australian economy. Developing an understanding of the options and incentives available to work beyond retirement can delay a person’s decision to fully retire or may encourage a more gradual transition that benefits both workers and employers.

HOW IT IS DONE

Encourage workers to plan for their retirement lifestyle. Create opportunities for workers to think about the type of lifestyle they want in retirement and consider factors such as health and exercise, sources of social support, hobbies/pursuits and role in family. Provide information on the role of work in supporting health and wellbeing. Help workers access a diverse range of options for transitioning to retirement, including part-time work, contract work, telework and other flexible work arrangements. In some cases negative superannuation and/or tax consequences may be triggered by a change in working arrangements, such as moving to part-time work or dropping classification levels. Encourage workers to investigate all financial implications of any proposed change in working arrangements prior to setting any change in motion.

Help workers to prepare financially for retirement. Managers should initiate conversations and respond to questions from their workers and assist workers to access more information. Employers should:

> Provide workers with access to reliable sources of general information on financial matters, such as superannuation, pensions and tax. This could include running lunchtime workshops and providing links to information on the intranet. Employers can contact the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation (CSC) to arrange seminars on these topics.

> Encourage workers to seek appropriate personal financial planning advice. The complexity of the tax and superannuation systems, and their application to individual circumstances, means most workers will need help to organise their finances to maximum advantage. Workers who are members of a government super fund (CSS, MilitarySuper, PSS or PSSap) can access fee-for-service financial planning through their fund, the CSC.
3.7 USE TECHNOLOGY TO HELP WORKERS PARTICIPATE AT WORK

Assess new technologies for their ability to help older workers perform their work. Manage the adoption of new technology in ways that facilitate their uptake and protect and promote the health of workers.

WHY IT MATTERS

Over the past two decades, increasingly rapid technological advances have brought significant changes to how we work in Australia. Continuing changes in workplace technologies are expected. The introduction of new work technology brings challenges and opportunities for older workers.

The introduction of new work technologies has the potential to alter risks to the health, safety or wellbeing of workers. There are many cases where new technology protects the health or safety of workers—for example, lifting devices. At the same time, new risks can be created by new ways of working and need to be managed. The blurring of the line between work and home, created by the use of mobile technologies to carry out work outside of the workplace, presents potential to negatively affect the mental health and wellbeing of workers.

Community perceptions in Australia of older workers’ capabilities in relation to new technologies may also generate barriers, where assumptions are made that older people do not have proficiency in the use of a technology or the capability to acquire that proficiency.

The ability of many older workers to engage in work can be enhanced by new work technologies. Technologies that allow older workers to more fully take part in the workplace, or perform work from their own homes, offer those who experience injury, ill health or disability more opportunity and flexibility to more actively participate in work.

Employers need to manage the integration of new technology in ways that maximise their benefits.

‘Advanced technology will unlock more and more of the value that older Australians have to offer to the community.’

Advisory Panel on the Economic Potential of Senior Australians, Realising the economic potential of senior Australians—changing face of society.
3. WORK DESIGN

HOW IT IS DONE

Take advantage of available technologies. For workers who have limitations on their ability to perform work, consider options that could help them. Encourage managers and workers to try new options.

Manage risks related to the introduction of new technology. Anything that brings significant change to how work is performed should be assessed before it is introduced in the workplace, and be monitored during and after implementation, to make sure no uncontrolled risks to health and safety arise. Be mindful you may need to seek advice on any obligations that may arise under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (the WHS Act) and Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011 (the WHS Regulations).

Provide workers with appropriate support to adapt to new technology. Older workers may have different styles and requirements than younger workers, which need to be taken into account when developing training and providing ongoing support.

An OECD survey of 21 countries found a major work barrier faced by older workers was ‘insufficient skills relative to technological requirements’, and that this was ‘exacerbated by a lack of assistance and/or motivation to upgrade skills.’


Challenge assumptions about older workers’ capabilities in regard to new technologies. Managers and workers are expected to act constructively and support older workers, when and where required, to successfully adopt and make best use of new technology.

‘The flip side of new IT as a great enabler of flexible work, is the danger of work intensification or time pollution, where work expands into times and places previously quarantined for leisure, family or other non-work activities.’

Australian Institute of Management (AIM) White Paper November 2012 Managing in a Flexible Work Environment
3.0—Design work to maximise participation


3.1—Promote a positive, age-friendly workplace culture

The *Age Discrimination Act 2004* prohibits discrimination in the workplace on the basis of age.

APS Values, Employment Principles and Code of Conduct require APS employees to refrain from discrimination and offer equal opportunities to all in the workplace.

The Victorian Government’s *State Services Authority* provides guidance on the role of culture in managing an ageing workforce.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development’s (CIPD) UK guide *Managing a healthy ageing workforce: a national business imperative* provides useful insights into common discriminatory attitudes towards older workers.

3.2—Take an age-inclusive approach to recruitment

*Access All Ages—Older Workers and Commonwealth Laws*, explains the role of recruiters as gatekeepers and the need for them to know and understand the value of mature age workers.

Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, *Employ Outside the Box: Mature age people*, explains the benefits of a diverse workforce.

3.3—Better match work to the worker

Safe Work Australia’s Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012–2022 explains that managers have an obligation to make reasonable adjustments and design work and work processes to accommodate individuals with differing capabilities.

*Working for a healthier tomorrow* suggests understanding how staff feel valued by the organisation and what will motivate them to deliver a quality product or service. This should inform how jobs are designed to avoid undue stress that might lead to poor health.

Relevant legislation includes:

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988

The Victorian Government’s State Services Authority: an ageing workforce provides guidance on job design in the context of managing an ageing workforce.

3.4—Provide options for alternative or enriched work roles

*Job Mobility Research Report: Encouraging employees to expand their career experience in the Australian Public Service* suggests that job mobility allows an ageing workforce the flexibility to share their skills and talents.

Mentoring Australia provides a range of information on mentoring, including existing programs and benchmarks for effective and responsible mentoring programs.

The APSC provides information on employee mobility for professional development, including a set of employee mobility principles.

3.5—Provide and promote flexible work options


The Australian Government’s 2010 Intergenerational Report makes it clear that growing the economy through improving mature age workforce participation is necessary to minimise the economic impact of the ageing population.

The AIM White Paper November 2012 Managing in a Flexible Work Environment suggests ‘the skills, attitudes and resources of managers are make-or-break factors in the successful implementation of flexible work arrangements.’

The Fair Work Ombudsman provides information on flexible work arrangements under the Fair Work Act 2009, for both workers and employers.

Comcare provides information on flexible work, including how to design, implement and negotiate flexible work arrangements.
3.6—Help workers transition to retirement

The Australian Tax Office provides information to Australians aged 55 years and over on tax, superannuation and transition to retirement.

The Department of Health My Aged Care website provides a range of information relevant to over 50s, including financial information and how to access financial assistance.

The Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation has partnered with Industry Fund Services to provide financial planning services to members of government super funds, including seminars on financial and retirement planning and individual financial planning advice for employees.

The Department of Human Services provides information for older Australians on age pensions and planning for retirement, as well as a free Financial Information Service, which is available for all Australians.

The Australian Human Rights Commission provides comprehensive guidance for workers considering retirement in Your rights at Retirement: A guide to making decisions and navigating your entitlements.

Further information on possible impacts to superannuation of APS employees, relating to changes in working arrangements, can be found at the following websites:

> CSS
> PSS
> PSSap.

3.7—Use technology to help workers participate at work

Realising the economic potential of senior Australians: changing face of society, presents a series of recommendations to capitalise on the opportunities older workers bring.

The AIM White Paper November 2012 Managing in a Flexible Work Environment suggests ‘the flip side of new IT as a great enabler of flexible work, is the danger of work intensification or time pollution, where work expands into times and places previously quarantined for leisure, family or other non-work activities.’

Relevant legislation includes:

> Disability Discrimination Act 1992
> Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988

The Code of Practice: How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks provides practical guidance on achieving the standards of health, safety and welfare required under the WHS Act and the WHS Regulations.

Live longer, Work Longer: A synthesis report 2006, explains ‘work needs to be made a more attractive and rewarding proposition for older workers’.