How To Be Age-Inclusive in Your Hiring

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Topic: HR Risk and Employment Practices

Age diversity can make your nonprofit team more creative and innovative. And if that's not enough motivation, age discrimination against people over 40 is against the law.* Here are some tips to ensure your hiring is age-inclusive.

Set a Foundation for Age Diversity Within Your Organization

- Share information about your nonprofit's open positions widely within your team, and make sure employees across age groups and career stages know about all your job opportunities. Some older workers might want to make a lateral move or step into more junior roles to learn new skills or begin a retirement transition.
- If you have a management team, designate an executive sponsor to support your nonprofit's age diversity recruiting efforts. Seek a champion with a passion for your mission and for multigenerational hiring. This champion could help you focus on initiatives like recruiting older professionals to join your board.
- Add age diversity to your organization's DEI objectives, and set measurable goals.
- Review your diversity policies and make sure they include age. Craft language that explains how age diversity fits into organizational culture and values, DEI goals, and action plans. Include statements from leadership about the importance of age diversity, and share information on non-retaliation policies for reporting discrimination.
- Include age in your nonprofit's official statements about diversity. This includes the equal employment opportunity (EEO) statements frequently found on job postings, and any communications that explain your organization's stance on the importance of all forms of diversity.
- Consider signing the AARP Employer Pledge, a public statement of an employer's support for building an age-inclusive workforce.
- Review your nonprofit's branding. Make sure your website imagery and social media profiles actively (and accurately—no stock photos) communicate that your organization welcomes age diversity.

Age Diversity in Crafting, Posting, and Recruiting for Open Positions

- Post your organization's open positions on job boards focused on age diversity, like the AARP job board. Consider a variety of job posting locations, from newspapers and magazines to the classified section of local websites and neighborhood newsletters. You can also post jobs on bulletin boards at senior centers, churches, and YMCAs.
- Include language in your recruitment materials that encourages workers of all ages to apply.
- Don't ask for graduation dates or dates of birth in your application process unless you have a very compelling mission-related reason to do so.
- Don't ask for salary history, as this may discriminate against experienced workers, among other groups. Post salary ranges for your jobs.
- Audit your job descriptions. Avoid phrases such as "recent college graduate," "young, dynamic team," or "digital native." Such language could give the impression older people shouldn't apply. Use AARP's guide, "Say This, Not That," to review and make changes to your job descriptions and postings.
- Use scripted questions and interview panels to help reduce bias in your hiring. Ensure your panels include employees with a diverse range of ages.
- Seek recruiting partnerships with organizations that serve older people.

- Create flexible work situations and tailor job designs to meet the needs and preferences of older workers. An employee who's ready to retire from your staff might love to come back on a part-time consulting basis in a year or two.
- Start or participate in a return-to-work program (called "returnships") for midcareer professionals who have taken time out of the workforce to raise children, care for elders, or focus on other aspects of their lives.
- Investigate your use of AI in hiring. Many organizations use artificial intelligence to help select candidates from applicant pools. But AI can pick up biases of the humans running the job search, or exacerbate bias by basing algorithms on past criteria. If your nonprofit uses personality tests in hiring, ask your AI vendor for bias monitoring practices. Find out whether the vendor has industrial or organizational psychologists on staff or contract, and get the dates and frequency of their most recent bias audits.

*The federal Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) applies to employers with 20+ employees. State anti-discrimination laws may provide a lower threshold.

Resources:

- How to Improve Age Diversity in Hiring in Your Organization – AARP
- Say This, Not That: How to Remove Age Bias from Your Job Descriptions – AARP
- Age-Inclusive Hiring for Social Organizations Tip Sheet – Idealist
- How to Hire and Retain Older Workers – Career One Stop