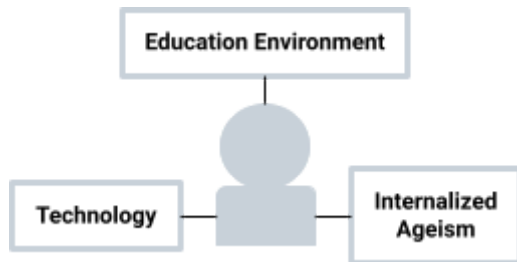


## Workforce Development Research Project

### Understanding Program Participant Challenges: Technology, Education Environment, Internalized Ageism

Challenges experienced by Workforce Development (WFD) participants highlight the complexities of re-entering the workforce and participating in workforce reentry programs.



#### Program Participant Challenges: Technology, Educational Environment, Internalized Ageism

Based on research and stakeholder feedback, program participants often encounter technology, education, and ageism challenges. Key elements of these challenges include limited access to technology, fear of returning to an educational environment, and self-doubt about abilities.

#### Value of Understanding and Addressing Participant Challenges

- ❖ Information on participant challenges can lead to programmatic changes and enhancements, targeted towards needs and interests of participants
- ❖ Identification of challenges may inform trends of current and future engagement, with implications for strategies to increase participant engagement and satisfaction
- ❖ Challenges encountered may help explain the variation among participants' success and growth
- ❖ Addressing participant challenges can: 1) lead to greater positive experiences for participants and 2) maximize participants' potential growth

#### Technology Challenges

Increased reliance on technology in work and education challenges some older adults. Negative assumptions about their tech skills affect confidence, and limited access hinders skill improvement.

#### Strategies and Practice Tips

<b>Technology Access</b>	❖ Make technology available for older adults to practice with; dedicate spaces and allocate time for older adults to use technology
<b>Technology Trends</b>	❖ Inform older adults about new features and trends in technology usage; encourage adoption and support integrating new technology into work responsibilities
<b>Tip Sheets</b>	❖ Create practical tip sheets offering guidance on use of technology; obtain older adults feedback to increase tip sheet usefulness
<b>Inclusive Spaces</b>	❖ Cultivate and promote technology spaces that are welcoming, open, and adaptive to the diverse needs of the group

### Educational Environment

Educational environments can be a source of apprehension for older adults. Disparities in prior educational experiences impact individuals' comfort with volunteer learning requirements.

### Strategies and Practice Tips

<b>Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Provide e-learning support and training as many schools use online platforms</li> <li>❖ Suggest facilitators review platform navigation during class</li> </ul>
<b>Resource Guides</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Identify and compile resources that support older adults during employment transition, outlining educational and emotional support</li> </ul>
<b>Support from Facilitators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Ensure volunteer trainers accommodate different learning styles and educational backgrounds, this could be supported by providing training, material, and or guidelines to all facilitators</li> </ul>
<b>Accessible Educational Material</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Written material should be reader-friendly with appropriate text sizes, and accommodate all educational backgrounds</li> <li>❖ For presentations, consider differing audio needs of the classroom, including volume and pace</li> <li>❖ Make course material accessible online and through paper copies</li> </ul>

### Internalized Ageism

Older adults face age bias and discrimination, impacting their self-perception and sense of worth. Internalized ageism complicates learning needed for workforce development and transition.

### Strategies and Practice Tips

<b>Reframing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Help to reframe negative thoughts into positive opportunities: <i>"I am too old to learn this"</i> → <i>"I was not taught this when I was younger; I have the opportunity to learn it now!"</i></li> </ul>
<b>Encouragement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Offer encouragement and acknowledge skills, accomplishments, expertise</li> </ul>
<b>Observe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Take note of those who exhibit self-deprecating behavior or negative attitudes and offer support and resources</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusive Safe Spaces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Create and promote accessible, welcoming spaces for all individuals</li> </ul>

### Resources

- [Bal, P. M., de Lange, A. H., Van der Heijden, B. J., Zacher, H., Oderkerk, F. A., & Otten, S. \(2015\). Young at heart, old at work? Relations between age \(meta-\) stereotypes, self-categorization, and retirement attitudes. \*Journal of Vocational Behavior\*, 91, 35-45.](#)
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- [Harris, K., Krygsman, S., Waschenko, J., & Laliberte Rudman, D. \(2018\). Ageism and the older worker: A scoping review. \*The Gerontologist\*, 58\(2\), e1-e14.](#)

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