



To: Members of the Massachusetts Councils on Aging  
From: Mary Kay Browne, Director of Special Projects  
Date: July 3, 2019  
Re: Request for Proposals for Hosting a 50+ Job Seekers Networking and Training Program for FY20 and FY21

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**MCOA seeks proposals from COAs who want to become a host site for the 50+ Job Seekers Regional Networking Groups program. The deadline for applications is COB, August 8, 2019.**

**What is the Issue?** Studies show that regular participation in focused networking groups correlates well with less time between positions and with higher levels of employment and job satisfaction. According to the most recent survey of job seekers completed by LinkedIn in 2016, 85% of all jobs are found through networking. Today, most career coaches would put that statistic out to 90 or 95%. Unfortunately, many older adults do not know what the techniques are for running an effective job search!

**Why Are Older Adults Working Beyond the ‘Traditional Age of Retirement’?** Across the nation, higher and higher numbers of older adults are seeking employment. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, adults aged 65 to 74 are the fastest growing segment of the labor market; in 2022, 32% will be working, up from 20% in 2002. And, the percentage of workers 75 years of age and older will more than double, from 5% in 2002 to 11% in 2022.

There are many reasons for why older people seek employment:

- While half of single adults over age 65 rely upon Social Security as their sole source of income, Social Security alone is insufficient for paying for all of one’s household budget
- In addition, an ever increasing number of older people are carrying greater credit card debt than ever before.
- Many older adults’ investments lost significant value during the Great Recession of 2008-2015, preceded by the 2001-02 “dot-com” crash.
- One of the key factors contributing to an older adult’s ability to sustain good health, wellness and happiness in life is to continue performing a productive role within society – ensuring a sense of purpose and meaning. Employment and civic engagement via volunteerism meet this need.

**What Can Help?** MCOA has been steadily building a network of regional **50+ Job Seekers Networking Groups** to ensure older adult job seekers have access to regular and professional networking opportunities – so essential for making a successful career transition! The groups meet regularly to provide BOTH training on 21st century job search techniques and the opportunity to network with all present. We are committed to empowering older adults to meet the challenges of career and/or life transition, while moving towards a new and different second act career or pursuing a commitment to volunteer service.

The regional **50+ Job Seekers Networking Groups** will meet biweekly from September/October to June at host locations on set days/times. The groups are led by an experienced group leader (an experienced Career Coach that we will recruit for your site). They provide a safe, professional and comfortable environment for older adults to learn modern job search strategies and techniques. The issue of ageism, and how to address it, is also integrated into each session. This is vital for helping this demographic group recognize and overcome this powerful form of discrimination. Participation in the program can significantly shorten the time required to find a new job, new career direction, or a transition into volunteerism.

The program background and design components for the 50+ Job Seekers Regional Networking Groups are described herein and posted under the “Grants” section of the [www.mcoaonline.com](http://www.mcoaonline.com) website.

MCOA makes grants for several reasons, including 1) to provide seed grants for starting creative, innovative services, 2) to encourage regional collaboration between Councils on Aging and/or other organizations in delivering vital services not yet available currently; and 3) to help COAs meet core administrative and/or programmatic needs. Please visit our web site at [www.mcoaonline.com](http://www.mcoaonline.com) to find details about additional grant opportunities. **This Request for Proposals (RFP) is a seed grant for operating an innovative regional program.** It will provide funding to the host COA during the FY20 and FY21 service years, contingent upon receipt of sufficient funding under the Service Incentive Grant award to MCOA from the MA Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

**Funding Terms:** MCOA will award 100% of program funding for FY 2020 and 50% of program funding for FY 2021. Program host sites will be responsible for 50% of program funding during FY'21. The MCOA grant for FY2020 will be \$3,800; the MCOA grant for FY2021: \$1,900. All contracts are “Cost Reimbursement” contracts, meaning the COAs must incur costs and submit invoices for reimbursement. Reimbursable costs include the group leader wages, paper and printing cost for meeting handouts, and posters and flyers.

**Sustainability for the Program:** In the application, applicants must explain how they plan to continue operating the program with local funding sources after this 2 year grant period ends.

**Eligible Bidders:** Councils on Aging who are active members up to date on their MCOA membership dues are eligible to apply.

**Areas with Priority Need:** We seek to launch 6 new sites. Currently, 10 COAs and 1 library (Auburn) will be operating the program in FY20-21. They include:

- Southeast MA: Marshfield and Scituate
- Northeast MA: Bedford, Burlington, Danvers, and Ipswich
- Metro: Belmont, Natick and Newton
- Central MA: Auburn and Worcester

Hence, areas of priority are regions in which job seekers do not yet have a regional networking group include the 4 most western counties in MA (Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire counties), Barnstable county, Bristol county, Norfolk county, Suffolk County, and northern and southern Worcester county.

## **Program Components**

**Who Benefits?** Most participants are individuals who have either experienced an unexpected lay off, or seek to re-enter the workforce after a long gap due to elder care or child care, or want to find some meaningful work or volunteer engagement after retirement.

**How Are the Sessions Designed?** The program consists of 15 bi-weekly networking/training sessions, commencing in mid-September and ending in May, with a 4 week break over the New Year. Ideally, 20-25 people attend each meeting. Each meeting provides opportunities for guided networking as well as training on new topics directly related to job search. Each meeting will run for 3 hours, with a formal, facilitated 2 hour session for job search training and guided networking, plus 30 minutes for pre-session attendee sign and casual networking, and then 30 minutes for post-session networking, meeting evaluation, and room clean up. [NOTE: Guidance on room set up is provided in a detailed Operational Kit]

**What Do Participants Learn?** Participants learn how to develop a 30-second elevator pitch, create a LinkedIn profile, develop a functional resume, interview effectively and learn how to strategically network to a new job -- all unfamiliar to someone who has not searched for a job in a number of years.

**Who Runs the Sessions?** Since January 2016, MCOA has worked with a small group of COA managers and career coaches to design, pilot and implement the program for older job seekers. MCOA relies upon Susan Drevitch Kelly, a Career/Life Coach and expert in job search techniques and career transition strategies, to manage the program, and recruit, mentor and supervise the Group Leaders who deliver the services. As Program Manager (PM), she actively builds partnerships with other stakeholders who are committed to the employment of older adults,

including the WIB/Career Centers, SCSEP, the Encore Boston Network (EBN), Chambers of Commerce, ReServe, and leaders of the age-friendly business community.

Group Leaders present valuable information, strategies and materials on a new topic at each session. Sample session topics covered by the Group Leaders include:

- Overcoming Ageism, Job Search Stress and Financial Worries [ every session]
- Self-Assessment/Transferrable Skills
- Develop a Winning Resume
- Create an Elevator Speech
- Develop Your LinkedIn Profile
- Using LinkedIn as a Job Search Tool
- Networking 101: How, When, Where
- Develop Your Marketing Plan
- Interview Preparation/Strategy

### **What are the Responsibilities of the Host Site Staff?**

The primary responsibilities of the host site are to:

- Conduct a thorough marketing plan to promote the **regional service program** [in both your town and surrounding communities]. Part of the program budget is for paper/toner for printing of handouts for meetings, pocket folders, and a composition book for the Welcome Kits (about \$200). There are also costs related to promotional materials such as paid newspaper ads, lawn signs/poster boards, lobby displays, table banner, posters, etc.
- Distribute promotional flyers for each session [templates will be provided for local printing by host sites]. Recommended distribution sites; your regional career centers, libraries, town halls, businesses, salons/barber shops, surrounding COAs and other sites with high foot traffic.
- Assign a staff person to serve as the site's Co-Facilitator. He/she must be a visible regular host for all the meetings, and shall be responsible for carrying out specific administrative duties (listed above) at the start and end of each meeting and during the intervening weeks. (See below for a full description of this important program coordination role)
- Invite the MassHire Career Center staff to a program planning meeting to coordinate roles in promoting and supporting the program and discuss how to implement a cross referral system between your local MassHire office counselors and your COA's 50+ Job Seeker Program staff.
- Provide a room for bi-weekly program meetings equipped with presentation equipment, tables and chairs for a group size of 25-30 people.
- Provide a space, whenever possible, for job seekers to meet and casually network during the off weeks and after the formal training program concludes in June.
- Ask your Board and cross-functional and collaborative groups and organizations within their community to promote and/or support the program. Ask them to work with you to contact local Age Friendly employers and invite them to attend a networking meeting, share job openings with your group, and consider hiring group members.
- Pay the Group Leader for services rendered; MCOA will reimburse you for this cost.

## **What are the Tasks of the COA's Program Co-Facilitator?**

While the biweekly meetings are facilitated by a Group Leader (GL), the administrative program management tasks are carried out by a responsible staff person of the host site. They are deemed the Program Co-Facilitator (CoF). These important tasks – see description below -- take 1-2 hours/week. MCOA has developed a program operations toolkit to guide both the Group Leader in how to deliver consistently top-quality training that provides effective job search skills to the group members and to guide the COA's staff Co-Facilitator in how to support the program and ensure its success.

The CoFaciliator has 3 main duties:

- Coordinate regular, wide spread regional program marketing;
- Set up the room for each session;
- Prepare welcome packets for first time attendees (MCOA will provide program stickers for the packets).
- Handle the biweekly coordination tasks, including:
  - Welcoming and signing in participants;
  - Maintaining a master participant list [from on-line registration received]
  - Collecting evaluation forms at end of each meeting.
  - With the GL, review the participants' biweekly feedback to ensure program is addressing the needs of the group;
  - Emailing reminders to participants 2 days prior to next session;
  - Sharing a summary of the feedback from the evaluation surveys with Susan Kelly.

## **MCOA Responsibilities:**

- **MCOA's PM will recruit and assign qualified professionals with extensive career coaching or HR experience to work as the Group Leaders at each of the selected program sites. The GL will facilitate sessions.**
- The MCOA PM has developed all of the essential **50+ Job Seekers Regional Networking Group** meeting facilitation tools, format and materials in a detailed Operational Kit which will be provided to each host site team and their respective GLs for review prior to the Program Orientation Meeting for each site team. All questions will be addressed during the Orientation Meeting.
- Supervise and support the Group Leaders who participate in conference calls and meetings with the PM about program format, content and facilitation issues.
- Track metrics sent bi-weekly to MCOA's PM by the GLs
- MCOA will provide marketing communication collateral and strategies to augment local publicity and outreach methods.
- MCOA will provide a promotional presence on social media: a LinkedIn Group, Facebook Page, and MCOA's dedicated program website at [www.mcaonline.com/50plus](http://www.mcaonline.com/50plus).



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## MCOA FY'20 AND FY'21 DIRECT GRANT APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

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### **Bidder's Conference Call (Optional) on July 17, 2019 at 2 PM – 3 PM**

Project Manager Susan Kelly and MCOA Director of Special Projects Mary Kay Browne will host a conference call for interested bidders to answer any questions you may have. **The conference call will begin at 2PM PM on Wednesday July 17, 2019.** To join the call, use the following phone number and access code:

Bidders' Conference Call Phone Number: (571) 317-3122    Access Code: 958-391-085

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### **APPLICATION SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

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1. To apply, respond to all questions (below) in one narrative document and then upload that document to the MCOA website, under the "Grants" page. In addition, to ensure your uploading was successful, please email your proposal narrative to Shari Cox at [Shari@mcoaonline.com](mailto:Shari@mcoaonline.com).
2. **Program Applications must be uploaded by COB 8.8.19.**  
*(Only if you cannot upload the application, you may fax it to MCOA via: 413-527-7138.)*  
If you have any questions about your COA's eligibility to bid for this grant, please contact Shari Cox of MCOA by email at [Shari@mcoaonline.com](mailto:Shari@mcoaonline.com) or phone at 413-527-6425.
3. Applications will be reviewed and grant awards announced no later than **8.12.19**. The notice of awards will provide you with PR copy for your newsletter to promote the program's September start.
4. During the week of August 12, 2019, AARP will issue an email promotion to a large number of adults in MA with the selected bidder's site included. Interested participants will be directed to pre-enroll via the central registration managed by MCOA and via our website [www.MCOAonline.com](http://www.MCOAonline.com).
5. A project planning/orientation meeting with your site staff and local career center colleagues will be set up by Susan Kelly, Program Manager, to occur in August and September.



## MCOA FY'20 AND FY'21 DIRECT GRANT APPLICATION

### FOR THE 50+ JOB SEEKERS NETWORKING AND TRAINING PROGRAM FUNDING

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**Please prepare the answers to these questions in a word document.**

**On Page 1 of your application, identify the** Applicant Organization's Name and Mailing Address as well as the applicant's Primary Contact by name, position title, and phone and email address. Then, reply to all the questions below (1-14), using the number to start each question and response.

#### **Application Questions Requiring a Narrative Response:**

1. The program requires an onsite staff person to serve as a Co-Facilitator to perform the key tasks to run the program. These are described in the RFP. Who on your staff will perform the Co-Facilitator role and duties (listed above)? Please provide their name, position title, and contact information, and experience working with older adults.
2. Where would the group meet (ideal group size is 20-25 people)?
3. What time of day and day of week would you like to host the biweekly networking group? (Evening hours are encouraged, though not required).
4. Does this site have Wi-Fi?
5. Does this site have a computer that job seekers could use during the session dedicated to LinkedIn as well as at non-meeting times?
6. How many cars can park at or near the proposed meeting location?
7. Does your site currently offer civic engagement or lifelong learning programming which attracts individuals in the 50- and 60- demographic? If so, please describe the types of programs that draw this group.
8. In addition to the program flyers MCOA will provide, you must also advertise the program through newspapers, newsletters, social media and other media outlets of abutting towns.
  - a. First, list all the communities in your region where you will advertise the program.
  - b. Second, in a chart with 3 columns, list 1) all the entities through which you will advertise the program, 2) the type of media each will use to reach the public and 3) the frequency each media is issued. Note: most effective outreach has been referrals from the local career center, distributing flyers via career centers and libraries and COAs, and newspaper features about this innovative program, and posters.

**Experience Promoting Employment and Civic Engagement:**

9. When your center staff helps older adults with economic case work to help pay household bills, does your staff recommend employment income as a potential solution? Please describe (a) whether they suggest employment to some people and (b) how they decide who to encourage towards employment.

**Regional Collaborators:**

10. Which MassHire career center serves your region? Please provide the location and name of Director of your designated Career Center.
11. Please discuss with the Career Center Director your interest in starting a 50+ Job Seekers Networking Group and tell us what was the outcome of that dialogue. *(The career center can support your program by referring older job seekers to your group, providing their staff as a guest speaker, hosting an open house at their office, organizing a job fair, and/or supplying a co-facilitator for the group. These are examples of what may be possible.)*
12. Are you a member and/or are you able to attend meeting of the local Chamber of Commerce or other local business leaders group? And/or, are there other ways you are in steady contact with employers in your community? If yes, please describe.

**Program Funding:**

13. MCOA intends to fund 100% of program funding during FY 2020 and 50% of program funding for FY 2021. Program host sites are responsible for 50% of program funding during FY'21. What is the source of funding you will use to run the program if FY21?
14. Regarding sustainability for the program after this 2 year grant period, please explain the plan your agency has for operating the program with local funding sources after this 2 year grant period ends.

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**THANK YOU!**

***Applications are due by COB August 8, 2019***