

Creating an Age-friendly Business in Yukon



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Why have an age-friendly business?

Satisfied customers spend their consumer dollars in places where they have developed trusted relationships and are able to get the best value for their money. If your business is age-friendly, you will be more successful in attracting and retaining loyal customers within this large and expanding demographic.

Yukon's population is aging. In 2011, Yukoners aged 60 years or older made up 15 percent of Yukon's population. By 2030, the percentage of Yukon seniors is projected to reach 28 percent. Older adults tend to be loyal customers who have considerable purchasing power and more time to shop.

Being a business that accommodates older customers is increasingly becoming a necessity. If you are planning a new business, considering changes or renovations, want to attract additional older customers, or are already providing services for seniors, this guide is designed to help.

When you make your business age-friendly everyone profits

If a business is welcoming and comfortable for older adults it will also be more comfortable for others, including parents with children in strollers, expectant mothers, people with injuries, disabilities, or other limitations (i.e. sight, hearing, mobility).

An age-friendly business will appeal to all types of customers. In a small community, word gets around, and that's good for business.



How can you better serve older customers?

Although most older adults are healthy, independent individuals, changes can and do occur with age. Understanding and making accommodations for the issues resulting from these age-related changes will increase the age-friendliness of your business.

Consider how your existing or planned business fosters courtesy, safety, comfort, visibility and clarity. The accompanying age-friendly business assessment (see page seven) will help you determine specific items to look for to make your business more age-friendly. On the following pages there are also some basic points to consider.

Courtesy

Consider how well your business respects older customers. Ensure staff are trained to provide friendly and respectful customer service by:

- meeting customer needs without stereotyping or drawing conclusions based on age or ability;
- responding to errors and complaints promptly and courteously;
- avoiding condescending behaviours (e.g. speaking too loudly, or showing visible impatience);
- handling incidents such as a fall or loss of memory while preserving a customer's dignity; and
- recognizing signs that an older adult may be physically or financially abused.

Help is available

If you notice signs that an older person may be experiencing physical or financial abuse, you can confidentially call or refer them to: **Seniors' Services/Adult Protection Unit** at 456-3946 or toll free at 1-800-661-0408 ext. 3946. For more information on abuse of older adults visit hss.gov.yk.ca/seniorservices.php.

Communicating Respect

- Speak clearly and at an appropriate even pace; however it is not necessary to speak extremely slow, in exaggerated tones or with simpler words.



Safety

Consider how people with reduced mobility, agility and balance can safely access your place of business from both outside and within your business. Ensure your business is accessible by providing:

- entrances and aisles free of clutter;
- doors wide enough for wheelchairs or walkers;
- sturdy handrails on stairways;
- floors made of non-slip surfaces;
- washrooms that are easy to locate; and
- regular snow and ice removal.

Small Cost – Big Impact

There are many age friendly modifications that are either low-cost or no-cost.

- One example is making a chair available to older customers that might have decreased stamina and need a place to rest and refresh.
- Ensure chairs are at an appropriate height (not too low), and equipped with arms to assist those that may need to push themselves up.



Help Prevent Falls by...

- Removing throw rugs that can catch feet and cause someone to trip; if you must use rugs, ensure they are secured to the floor.
- Ensuring that the floor of your business is free of obstructions, smooth and even.
- Installing bright lights in your business, especially in darker hallways or on staircases.
- Regularly clearing snow and ice from outside your business.

Comfort

Consider offering places to rest and refresh, such as:

- a place to sit while waiting or a place to put packages down;
- sturdy chairs available for those who may not be able to stand for long periods;
- an easily accessible customer washroom; and
- a brightly lit entrance way adequately heated for customers waiting for rides.



Increase Business by Providing Options...

Delivery services are extremely desirable to older adults who do not have transportation, are homebound, or have difficulty getting around.

- If you do not currently offer delivery services, why not consider providing this option?
- Are you able to offer some services on weekends or evenings?

Visibility and Clarity

Consider providing a supportive environment for those with diminished eyesight or hearing by:

- speaking clearly and at an appropriate speed;
- training staff to assist with customers with vision or hearing challenges;
- ensuring signs and menus are readable - with clear colour contrast and adequate font size; and
- ensuring your business does not have loud background noise, as this can be distracting and uncomfortable for those with hearing challenges.

Did You Know?

- Older adults require three times the light to see as younger people, are more sensitive to glare, and may not be able to see things like steps or furniture in low lighting.





How to get started on making your business age-friendly

Take a look around your business or imagine your planned place of business.

What if you had a walker? What if you couldn't see or hear as well? What if it was painful to stand for more than a few minutes? Would you be comfortable attending this business? Ask an older friend or relative to walk around with you.

First, look outside. Are there steps without railings, slippery or uneven patches, or cluttered walkways? Is there a safe path from the transit stop? Are there curb cuts for walkers and strollers? At night, is the lighting even or are there dark patches that hide tripping hazards? What do you see that could be a problem?

Walk around inside. Are the floors shiny or slippery? Do you see any obstacles? Is the lighting even? Is the signage readable – with good colour contrast – and instructive? Are the most-needed items easy to reach? Are the staff members friendly and respectful?

Take a look at your advertising and information materials, as well as your website. Computer and internet use by seniors is growing quickly; larger print and good contrast makes it easier for them to read about your business. Can a customer enlarge the font on your website? Are the sections and links easy to navigate?

To find out more about how you can make your business age-friendly, and how these changes will benefit your business, offer opportunities for older customers to provide feedback (i.e. surveys or interviews).

What have other businesses done?

Here are examples of what some businesses have done to become more age friendly:

A **grocery store** has:

- four-foot wide uncluttered aisles, automatic doors, places for people to sit;
- a washroom on the main floor with at least one high toilet;
- pricing and advertising information in legible print;
- a volunteer shopping and delivery program;
- easy access from the parking lot; and
- someone to help carry packages to the car.

A **pharmacy** has:

- automatic doors and slip-resistant floors;
- clear aisles and easy to read signage;
- a washroom that is easily accessible;
- magnifying glasses to help people read the fine print on product labels;
- prescription staff who are careful not to mention personal information at the counter, but know to move to a private area if discussion is required; and

A **restaurant** has:

- a drop-off area at the door and space to move easily between tables;
- tables that are located away from chilly air vents and chairs that are steady and easy to use;
- menus with low-fat, heart-smart, low-sodium choices and smaller portions offered at lower prices;
- staff that speak clearly, and at an appropriate speed, while looking directly at the person;
- china that contrasts with the table linens;
- menus and bills with easy-to-read print; and
- warm, welcoming staff.

A **bank** has:

- a visible customer service area and some counters at wheelchair or scooter height;
- Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) that can be used by someone in a wheelchair;
- screens with good contrast which are adjustable to reduce glare;
- staff trained to move to a private area to discuss people's business; and
- staff trained to identify signs of possible financial confusion or abuse, or people needing additional care, and are aware of whom to notify if there are concerns.

Age-friendly Business Assessment

You can use this age-friendly business assessment to help ensure your business is safe, comfortable and attractive for older consumers, as well as for everyone else.



Rating Guide

Please use the following rating system for the questions below to assess your business.

Excellent = 4 Good = 3 Fair = 2 Needs work = 1 N/A = does not apply

1) **Courtesy: Ensure all customers are treated with respect.**

- _____ Staff are trained to be friendly and patient with customers and try to meet their needs.
- _____ Staff are sensitized to avoid condescending behaviors (e.g., Speaking too loudly, speaking too familiarly – as in calling someone “Dear,” or reacting impatiently).
- _____ Staff are encouraged to move to an area where they can more comfortably serve someone who may have difficulty seeing, hearing, understanding or communicating.
- _____ Errors and customer complaints are addressed promptly and courteously.
- _____ Staff are trained in how to manage situations, such as a fall, or a confused customer, while preserving a person’s dignity.
- _____ Staff can identify if a person is experiencing a medical emergency and can notify the appropriate service.
- _____ Staff are trained to identify signs of possible financial abuse and know who to notify if there are concerns.

Excellent = 4 Good = 3 Fair = 2 Needs work = 1 N/A = does not apply

Your total: _____ ÷ number of items that applied to your business: _____

= _____ **Your total score on courtesy for older customers**

2) Safety: Provide for people with reduced mobility, agility and balance.

Outside space: access to your business is free of hazards

- _____ Sidewalk access from parking areas is level, well-maintained, free from obstructions, with curb cuts where needed.
- _____ There is prompt snow and ice removal and snow is piled well way from entrances.
- _____ Pick-up / drop-off areas are provided in convenient and clearly marked locations.
- _____ Sidewalks and parking lot are well and evenly lit.
- _____ Parking lot is located nearby for easy access.
- _____ A sufficient number of handicap and seniors' designated parking spaces are available,
- _____ Pavement is smooth, without cracks, dips or bumps.
- _____ Entrances are clear of any obstructions (i.e. piles of snow, sidewalk signs).
- _____ Entrance doors are light and easy to open for someone in a wheelchair or with a walker (automatic doors or accessible buttons are ideal).
- _____ Building has at least one level entrance or availability of wheelchair sloped entry.
- _____ Doors are wide enough for wheelchairs, walkers and / or scooters.
- _____ There is clearance by the door for a person waiting with a wheelchair or walker.
- _____ Wheelchair or walker access routes are well marked.

Inside space: customers can navigate without obstructions and distraction

- _____ Stairs have safe and have sturdy handrails on both sides.
- _____ Stair edges are clearly marked.
- _____ Aisles are uncluttered and wide enough for two walkers or wheelchairs (approx. 4 ft).
- _____ Flooring is non-slip and non-shiny.
- _____ Staff routinely check floor conditions throughout the day to ensure any snow / rain brought in from outdoors is cleaned up.
- _____ Necessary mats are securely fastened.
- _____ Elevators and ramps are available for changes of level.
- _____ Obstacles or hazards are clearly marked (e.g., Step Up, Step Down, Automatic Door, Wet Floor).
- _____ Location of elevators, washrooms, customer service and other amenities is clearly posted; a store layout map is visible near the entrance.
- _____ Most-popular items are shelved at medium height.
- _____ Emergency training of staff addresses the warning and evacuation of the elderly and disabled.

Excellent = 4 Good = 3 Fair = 2 Needs work = 1 N/A = does not apply

Your total: _____ ÷ number of items that applied to your business: _____

= _____ **Your total score on outside and inside safety**

3) Comfort: Consider customers with reduced mobility, agility and balance.

Provide for people with reduced strength and stamina

- _____ Safe sturdy seating is placed in waiting or line-up areas.
- _____ Water is available upon request.
- _____ At least one service or checkout counter is accessible for customers in wheelchairs.
- _____ Service counters have a place on which to hook a walking cane so it doesn't fall.
- _____ Seating areas (e.g., restaurant tables) are at a comfortable temperature and are free of drafts.
- _____ Phone-in or online ordering services are available.
- _____ Home delivery services are available.
- _____ Customer washrooms are found on all floors, and are well maintained.
- _____ Washrooms contain at least one toilet cubicle and hand washing area that is wheelchair accessible.
- _____ Customers are offered assistance with carrying purchases to their cars.

Provide for people with reduced sight or hearing

- _____ Premises are evenly lit and monitored at different times of the year.
- _____ Signs have large clear print and good contrast (black on white is best).
- _____ Other written materials such as pricing and advertising information have good contrast, readable font sizes (size 12 pt font or larger), and are easy to read.
- _____ Staff speak clearly, and at an appropriate speed, while maintaining eye contact.
- _____ Some staff are trained to assist customers who have vision or hearing challenges (e.g., reading labels and locating items).
- _____ Sound systems for public announcements are loud enough, clear, and not over-used.
- _____ A quiet private space is provided for discussing personal issues such as medications or finances; staff are trained to move to those areas when necessary.
- _____ The font sizes on your website can be increased.
- _____ Telephone answering services give instructions slowly and clearly and give callers the option to repeat the phone message.
- _____ The website is easy to navigate.
- _____ Background music and noise is absent or low in volume.
- _____ Service or working animals for people with disabilities are welcomed.

Excellent = 4 Good = 3 Fair = 2 Needs work = 1 N/A = does not apply

Your total: _____ ÷ number of items that applied to your business: _____
= _____ **Your total score on comfort for persons with strength/stamina concerns and sight and hearing concerns**

4) A few extras that will increase attractiveness of your business for older customers.

- _____ Seniors are visible in advertising material and are depicted positively without stereotyping.
- _____ Customer surveys include older adults.
- _____ Products and services are designed for smaller households, smaller incomes, and smaller appetites.
- _____ Discounts or special offers are available for older adults when possible.

Excellent = 4 Good = 3 Fair = 2 Needs work = 1 N/A = does not apply

Your total: _____ ÷ number of items that applied to your business: _____
= _____ **Your total score on extras**

Total Scoring:

Scoring guide:

Outstanding = 20 - 24

Good = 15 - 19

Fair = 10 - 14

Needs work = 0 - 10

Total score:

Enter your totals for each section:

1) _____ + 2) _____ + 3) _____ + 4) _____

= _____ **Your age-friendly business score**

How did you score?

Now that you have completed the assessment, you can look at the examples (page six) of what other businesses have done to help you develop a plan. Look at the evaluation for areas where you would like to improve, and create your plan for a more age-friendly business.

If you are already doing an outstanding job, or if you make some changes, we would like to hear about it – we are always looking to promote great examples of ways communities and businesses are becoming more age-friendly.

Creating age-friendly communities is a priority area in Yukon's Aging Well Strategy.
To obtain more copies of this guide, or for more information
about other programs and services for older adults, visit:
hss.gov.yk.ca/seniorservices.php

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