

AGE-FRIENDLY BUSINESSES: ENGAGING THE PRIVATE SECTOR TIPS FROM THUNDER BAY AND WAWA

During the [seventh AFC webinar](#), we asked presenters to share with us some lessons they learned when engaging the private sector in developing age-friendly businesses.

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Presenters: Rebecca Johnson and Maury O'Neil

Below are tips from the presenters.

- Conduct research at the start to understand community priorities (ex. Focus groups, surveys).
 - Use multiple methods to distribute surveys – online, one-on-one consultations, print, media advertisements, and health clinics.
 - Provision of an incentive can further increase survey response rates
- Engage stakeholders in the discussion and planning process (ex. Seniors, businesses themselves, Business Improvement Association, Chamber of Commerce, Accessibility Advisory Committee Members).
- Establishing one-on-one contact (with businesses and seniors) is most effective
- Develop a checklist that businesses can use to assess their own level of age-friendliness.
- Ensure resources are regularly evaluated and updated (ex. Business guide checklist).
- Engage franchises and national or international businesses from the start by looking at their policies in regards to being age-friendly.
- Actively promote an age-friendly business strategy (ex. Through Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Association).
- Form a group of seniors who can directly approach businesses.
- Establish a Mystery Shopper program to evaluate businesses on being age friendly
- Focus on the 5 E's:
 - Engineer – how the physical environment can be made more accessible.
 - Educate – how to increase age-friendly knowledge of the business community.
 - Share research results with businesses and, in particular, advertise potential return on investment.
 - Educate businesses on the demographics of their customer population, what being age-friendly means, and how they can benefit.
 - Encourage – how to get businesses to participate.
 - Providing businesses with an incentive can lead to action.
 - Awards, certificates, or official designations.
 - Municipal financial support for accessibility renovations (ex. Local Improvement Charge, Community Improvement Plan).
 - Develop a pilot project with one business to demonstrate the benefits of being an age-friendly business.
 - Enforce – how accessibility laws will be enforced.
 - Evaluate – how results will be measured and reported.