



ENGAGING MEN IN OLDER ADULT CENTRES TOOLKIT

Older Adult Centres' Association of Ontario (OACAO)

www.oacao.org

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Project Introduction:

In many Older Adult Centres throughout Ontario, men are not participating in the same numbers as women are. Many older adults have already seen the benefits of what Older Adult Centres can bring to them, so how do we get more men to participate in our centres?

Research has shown that older men are less likely to socialize regularly, face a higher risk of mortality related to social isolation than women and men 65+ have one of the highest suicide rates. Many men see work as being central in shaping and sustaining their identity, so retirement can be a tough change which does not come easy. This toolkit looks to bring ideas to your community to engage more men!

INCLUDED IN THIS TOOLKIT:

1. Survey results and barrier to participation
2. Examples of successful Men's programming
3. Introduction to Men's Sheds
4. Marketing Ideas
5. Fundraising Ideas
6. Brainstorming Feedback from OACAO members
7. Men's Sheds Resource List

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Survey of the Membership:

Through a survey of OACAO members, we received 115 responses on male focused programming at Ontario Older Adult Centres. Less than half of the centres held programs specifically for men but there were many great examples which will be highlighted throughout this toolkit.

But do men want programming specifically made for them?

While surveying a sample of older men, it was found that most men DID want specific programming made for them with a high interest in: fitness, education and conversation classes.

Barriers to Participation:

Some barriers to participation may include: Lack of visibility of older men within services, men do not want to participate in “help-seeking” behaviours and the stigma which surrounds Older Adult Centres with men valuing autonomy, strength and independence.

SUCCESSFUL MEN’S PROGRAMMING AT OLDER ADULT CENTRES IN ONTARIO

Men’s Breakfast

- Men gather in an informal setting with either a volunteer leader or staff member to enjoy breakfast together.
- Breakfast can be catered, brought individually, bought from the cafeteria, or eaten at a local restaurant.
- Can include an educational component, current events discussion, newspaper article discussion, speakers or
- Some Men’s Breakfasts include a “field trip” component where trips are made to agricultural sectors, industrial manufacturers, furniture makers, movies, restaurants and more.
- Consistently held once a month (e.g. first Wednesday of every month).
- Offer Men’s Breakfasts in different languages. Some individuals are more comfortable talking in their native language. This breaks down barriers to participation and allows those of similar culture and heritage to participate.
- Include a cooking class! A skills-based opportunity for men who are now caregivers, were never the cooks of the house, find themselves living independently or just want to learn more. A meal is made and then shared together.



Physical Fitness:

According to Health Canada, only about 11% of older men meet the recommended guidelines for physical activity, which decreased as they aged. One strategy recommended by Health Canada is “gender-sensitized community-based physical activity.”

Examples of men’s fitness classes at older adult centres:

- *Cardio balance and strength for men*
- *Men’s Aqua fit*
- *Strong men*
- *Men’s Yoga*
- *DDP Yoga*
- *Walk and Talk for Men*



Sports leagues have seen a lot of success with engaging men at many centres. These are often done by partnering with golf courses, arenas, outdoor public spaces or by allowing volunteers to take initiative and run a program outside of your centre.

Examples of successful sports leagues:

- *Hockey, Baseball, Slow-Pitch, Golf, Pickleball, Badminton, Walking Football, etc.*

Music:

At many centres, music is what successfully engages men! This can be done through a formal choir or though informal “jam sessions.”

Some successful examples of music programs include:

- *All male choir, jam sessions, guitar lessons, informal choirs, ukulele lesson, etc.*

Woodwork:

Some older adult centres already feature successful wood working shops with a number of tools. These shops include beginner classes, drop-in sessions and/or projects.

Other ideas for hands-on projects:

- *“Fix-it” club: small repairs on a variety of items including small electrical machinery.*
- *For those without entire wood shops, an option is wood carving or wood burning.*
- *Create comfort birds through wood carving and give them away.*
- *Work with Parks and Recreation to create accessible picnic tables or sandboxes.*
- *Create bird and bat houses for sale.*



Liability can be an issue. Some tips include:

- Regular checks on tools/machinery.
- Membership required.
- Signed waivers required by all participants.
- At least 2 people in woodwork shop room at all times.
- Trained volunteers/instructor on site.
- Annual training for participants.

Other ideas:

- Movember – use this already highly advertising men’s health month (November) to start trial programs, hold men’s health lectures or focus on men’s programming.
- Men’s sexual health workshops.
- Focus on volunteering to engage men.

Thank to all OACAO members who shared their male focused program successes.

MEN’S SHEDS

An overview:

Men’s Sheds began in Australia in the 2000’s providing welcoming, inclusive spaces for men to connect and work on projects together, to hang out and socialize. The first Canadian Men’s Shed was started in 2011 in Winnipeg. There are now over 2,000 sheds worldwide. A Men’s Shed is a welcoming, supportive place for friendship and fun to combat loneliness, isolation and depression.



Structure:

Men’s Sheds are run either independently or through a community organization model. Some men’s sheds are very small and run with very little structure. Others are larger and are connected to an Older Adult Centre. At its inception, many are a grass-roots, bottom-up movement. Run by men, for men. The focus is on “shoulder to shoulder” activity to promote discussion through an indirect method. Men’s Sheds focus on a variety of activities such as woodworking, speakers, crafts, repairs, etc. but can feature whatever the members would like to see. Costs vary throughout men’s sheds depending on location, tools and projects.

If you want to start your own Men’s Shed, visit <http://menssheds.ca/the-toolkit/> for a toolkit.

Thank you to the following Men’s Sheddors for supporting our project:

Doug Mackie - Canadian Men’s Sheds Association, David Steventon - Naismith Men’s Shed, Darrel O’Shaughnessy – Arnprior McNab/Braeside Men’s Shed and Lindsay Jenkins - Hackberry Men’s Shed in Carleton Place, Ontario.

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MARKETING

Some successful marketing and advertising ideas include:

- Word of mouth.
- “Bring a friend” promotions.
- Church bulletins.
- Involve local media through news stories or local articles.
- Promoting ideas where men congregate.
- “Get them in the door” – offer one successful activity to attract new members and then promote other programs at your centre through this activity.
- Marketing towards support systems (wives, partners, caregivers, children and grandchildren) who in turn largely encourage participation.

FUNDING

Low or no cost programs

- Men’s breakfast – Bring own food, have participants buy from cafeteria (they have a choice), run by volunteer, or host at a local restaurant
- Men’s fitness class – as part of your fitness program.

Grants:

3 Men’s Sheds in Canada began through a New Horizons for Seniors Program - Community Based Project Grant. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/new-horizons-seniors-community-based.html>

Sponsorship:

Do not be afraid to reach out for sponsors. Some may donate tools, room naming, etc.

Strategic partnerships:

Collaborate with businesses, schools, universities, faith communities, civic organizations, provincial government departments, internships, research teams, intergenerational partners, and other service providers.

Allows research sharing, diverse programming, innovative programming and services provided at a high level.



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BRAINSTORMING FEEDBACK

Engaging Men in Older Adult Centres – Feedback collected at OACAO Regional Workshops

What are some successful male focused programs at your centre or programs that engage larger numbers of men?

Fitness:

- Men's Yoga, DDP Yoga
- Men's lane swim
- Badminton
- Strength training
- Men's walk, walking tours, city walks, discovery Walks, mall walking
- Slow pitch league
- Pickle ball – drop-in and competitive
- Tai Chi
- Canoe club
- Cycling
- Ice skating
- Golf group
- Bootcamp
- Walking soccer, drop in soccer
- Basketball
- Cross country skiing
- Smaller fitness classes

Games:

- Carpet bowling
- Darts
- Horseshoes
- Euchre, chess, Men's bridge, Texas hold-em, snooker
- Horseshoes

Technology:

- Computer/tech volunteers and support
- Volunteer run computer club – learn about technological advancements, bring in educational speakers on technology

Music:

- Guitar lessons/guitar jam sessions
- Karaoke program
- English and Chinese choir
- Ukulele start up class
- "Open Jam"
- "Keep Singing" program
- Jazz band – community performances

Conversation/Discussion:

- Conversational French
- "Breakfast and a Laugh"
- Men's "Rise and Learn" breakfast
- Bereavement support group
- "Men's Night Out"
- Current events program
- Debate groups
- Reminiscence Group
- Coffee time

Arts/Crafts/Woodworking:

- Weekly carving group
- Picture framing class
- Building model boats – display boats at centre after
- "Crafts for Men"
- Wood burning
- Bird carving classes/comfort birds

Other:

- Camera club
- Stamp club
- Cooking class – men's only
- Trips that support couples
- BBQ – men did the cooking
- Sports watching
- Fishing club
- Men's Health Forum Day
- "Lift Your Spirit" meditation group
- First aid classes
- Volunteer building security team
- Intergenerational Men's Den – includes a 15 minutes mental health component
- Leaderships – sharing skills
- Volunteer roles – assigned jobs for men
- Hands on programs
- Getting a good male instructor (leadership and engaged)
- More male instructors

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What are some challenges that you face regarding engaging men in programming?

- Space for dedicated men's programming
- Transportation
- Cost of equipment
- Cost of programs – low income seniors
- Territorial programming conflicts
- Finding male volunteers
- No active leaders identified/need a "champion" of the project
- Membership requirement
- How to include LGBTQ
- Culture and attitude
- Language
- Fitness classes attended predominantly by women – men do not want to participate
- Stigma and stereotype of "aging"/stigma of senior centres
- Held significant jobs and careers prior to retirement – social status "don't belong here"
- Men's facilities not central/front focused
- Non welcoming environment
- Attracting younger male seniors
- Intergenerational programming – timing is difficult
- Insurance and liability (for woodworking projects)
- Small pool of men to grab from – tough getting new ones engaged
- Few males represented at planning committee
- Some men don't plan ahead (i.e. buy tickets for special events)
- Finding topics of interest
- Perceived as gender biased and exclusive
- Gender specific programs are frowned upon municipality
- Women dominated spaces
- How to get them in the door?
- Informal groups not always receptive to become formal within the centre
- Low participation/ Can't sustain program with low numbers
- Funding
- Finding a common ground for participants
- Cognitive and physical variables
- Getting "buy in" from men (i.e. their ideas for activities; setting aside time to participate)
- Tough to get men in group to share their ideas
- Finding male instructors
- Backlash from women
- Men not necessarily "social joiners"
- Male interest in volunteering not as high as women
- Name of program may be a barrier

Any successful marketing ideas for men's programming?

- Word of mouth
- Ensure programs are on your calendar of events
- Presentations to community groups, Rotary Club, Lions Club, etc.
- Interviews on radio stations
- Company retirement plans – get information and name out there
- Speak to Councillor/Municipal group
- Stock photos include men
- Door to door advertising
- Speak to doctors' offices and barber shops
- "Get them in the door"
- Visit places of worship
- Buy in from whole family
- Tap into high schools – promote to grandparents
- Visit Tim Horton's and McDonalds
- Use technology and social media
- Speak to Libraries
- Mention at member's meetings

Any successful fundraising ideas for men's programming?

- Dinners/breakfasts
- Partner with businesses
- "Take a risk" – municipal seed funding – invest
- Retirement homes sponsorship

Men's Sheds Resource List:

Canadian Men's Sheds Association:

Established in 2015 in Manitoba.

www.menssheds.ca

Australian Men's Shed Association:

Established in 2007 and supporting over 1000 Men's Sheds

<https://mensshed.org>

U.K. Men's Shed Association:

Founded in 2013 representing over 400 men's sheds

<https://menssheds.org.uk>

Naismith Men's Shed

www.naismithmensshed.ca

Arnprior/McNab/Braeside Men's Shed Article:

Canada's newest Men Shed opened in association with Arnprior Regional Health and The Senior's Active Living Centre:

<https://www.insideottawavalley.com/community-story/9130822--we-couldn-t-have-asked-for-a-better-location-men-s-shed-opening-in-arnprior/>

McMaster University Men's Shed Research Study:

<https://www.mcmasteroptimalaging.org/full-article/es/men-sheds-social-activities-specific-men-positive-effect-mental-health-2863#.W6ONJK2-OSI.twitter>

Men's Sheds Across the World Newsletter:

<https://paper.li/RecreationCanada/1431485509#/>

Globe and Mail Article – *Men's Sheds: Where guys tinker and improve 'health by stealth':*

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/article-mens-sheds-where-guys-tinker-and-improve-health-by-stealth/>

CBC article – *U.K. seniors turn to 'men's sheds' to combat loneliness:*

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/men-s-sheds-britain-seniors-lonely-1.4778344>

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The logo for OASIS (Benefit Plans for Not-for-Profits), featuring the letters "OASIS" in a stylized font with a red heart shape integrated into the letter "S". Below the letters, it says "BENEFIT PLANS FOR NOT-FOR-PROFITS" and "oassisplan.com".

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