

## Experience Works, Inc.

Established as Green Thumb in 1965, and renamed in 2002, Experience Works is a national, nonprofit organization that offers training, employment, and community service opportunities for mature workers. This includes a variety of programs designed to help mature individuals enter the workforce, secure more challenging positions, move into new career areas, or supplement their incomes.

Experience Works:

- Serves more than 125,000 people each year
- Has more than 400 employees and offices in 38 States and Puerto Rico
- Is the largest grantee of the federal government's Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
- SCSEP efforts benefited nearly 29,000 seniors last program year
- Is provided funding by more than 70 public and private sources
- Operates a total budget of more than \$100 million

[Senior Community Service Employment Program](#) - The largest program offered by Experience Works is the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). This program, funded under Title V of the Older Americans Act, enables us to help thousands of low-income individuals, age 55 and older, throughout the United States. Through this program, job-ready seniors are placed directly into employment, while other seniors benefit from training, counseling, and community service assignments at nonprofit organizations and public agencies in their communities, prior to transitioning into the workforce. SCSEP participants gain valuable new skills and experience that help them secure meaningful employment and provide valuable services to their host agencies and communities.

[Experience Works<sup>SM</sup> Training Services](#) - Continuous learning, keeping one's skills current and building new skills, is more important than ever in today's workforce. Experience Works offers a wide variety of technology-training services, where we use a combination of instructor-led, facilitated, or self-paced computer-skills training that may involve classrooms, computer labs, packaged training or training via the Internet. Experience Works also offers a number of job-related training programs that include industry-specific programs for areas such as home health care, agriculture, security, customer service, and small-business development.

[Geezer.com<sup>SM</sup>](#) - Geezer.com is an e-commerce Web site that provides senior artisans and crafters a nationwide market for their unique, handcrafted goods, even if they don't own a computer. Geezer.com lists thousands of products made by hundreds of seniors from nearly every corner of the country. Visit [www.geezer.com](http://www.geezer.com).

[Experience Works<sup>SM</sup> Prime Time Awards Program](#) - Experience Works Prime Time Awards Program is a yearlong effort to recognize the contributions of older workers at the local, state, and national level. The effort is capped by a week of activities in Washington, D.C., honoring America's Oldest Worker, outstanding employers of older workers, and outstanding older workers from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

[Local Services](#) - In addition to our national capabilities, we also offer a variety of services targeted to the unique needs of local markets. Local services include home health care, landscaping, home repair, administration of workforce centers, welfare-to-work programs, a statewide older worker information clearinghouse, and more. These services may be offered to a community, a county, or even an entire state, depending on local needs.

## **Our History**

The roots of Experience Works' story began in the summer of 1963 when President John F. Kennedy decided to make poverty a focus of his anticipated 1964 re-election campaign. Jim Patton, president of the National Farmers Union and a White House advisor on labor issues, encouraged the President to develop policies that would help disadvantaged residents of America's rural communities. In the last Cabinet meeting before his ill-fated trip to Dallas, the President wrote "poverty, poverty, poverty" in his notes.

Less than thirty days after President Kennedy's assassination, President Lyndon B. Johnson invited several national leaders to the White House to discuss an agenda for his new administration. Johnson needed to quickly develop a theme that would heal a badly shaken nation. Jim Patton and Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman remained after the meeting at the President's request. When the President asked for their ideas, Patton immediately replied, "I think you ought to declare war on poverty!" Moments later, the President officially announced his "war" to the press.

With the Economic Opportunity Act, key legislation of the War on Poverty, stalled in congressional debate, however, it took the personal interest of Lady Bird Johnson to help the initiative press forward. A memo to the First Lady outlined the proposal to "take the 'green thumbs' of poor, older, and retired farmers and put them to work to beautify our highways." Mrs. Johnson responded, "What an opportunity is presented here to provide [older farmers] with useful employment for which they are fully qualified, and at the same time, to beautify highways for the benefit of all our people."

On October 5, 1965, President Johnson at last signed the Nelson Amendment to the Economic Opportunity Act which funded the "green thumb" project of the National Farmers Union. Ten days later, Green Thumb, Inc. (now Experience Works) was launched as the first nonprofit organization created to run a jobs program for disadvantaged rural Americans. The following spring, crews of 280 participant farmers went to work on beautification projects in Arkansas, New Jersey, Oregon, and Minnesota.

That initial project in four states soon evolved into the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). The small demonstration program that initially launched Green Thumb in 1965 is now one of a major federal workforce initiative success story. Based on the "Experience Works model," the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) annually provides training, employment, and community service opportunities to almost 100,000 seniors across the country. Experience Works, is one of ten national organizations that, along with Governors of every state, operate the SCSEP under grants with the U. S. Department of Labor. Experience Works continues to operate this innovative and cost effective program, under the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, providing

training and employment opportunities to low-income older workers residing in rural areas.

Experience Works operates older-worker training projects across the country. These projects involve occupational skills, classroom, or on-the-job training including:

Occupational skills -- Training focused on developing skills for high-growth occupations such as home health aide, nurse assistant, and computer operator. High-growth occupations are identified for each specific project locality.

Classroom training -- Focused on developing the basic skills some participants need in order to become job ready. Our staff customizes this training to the needs of the participant.

On-the-job training -- Utilizing the skills of individual employers, we coordinate training participants for specific jobs that require special skills. The participating employer receives partial reimbursement for the extraordinary costs that may be associated with training the particular individual.

In 1995, Experience Works started the first nationwide staffing service specifically designed for mature workers regardless of their age and income. The program helps older workers find jobs that match their skills, abilities, and work preferences while at the same time helping employers to fill their temporary, temporary to permanent, and permanent full and part time employment needs with reliable, skilled, and experienced workers.

More recently, Experience Works launched Geezer.com, an innovative service to help seniors sell their handcrafted goods over the Internet, even if they don't own a computer.