This is a guide only and should be adapted to your industry and circumstances.

Navigating the Job Market as a Mature-Age Jobseeker

Introduction

Mature-age jobseekers bring valuable experience, reliability, and strong work ethics to the workforce. However, age-related biases and evolving workplace expectations can present challenges. Social enterprises, which often champion diversity and inclusion, can be a great fit for mature-age workers seeking meaningful employment. This guide offers strategies for mature-age jobseekers navigating the job market within social enterprises.

1. Understanding Your Rights and Opportunities

As a mature-age jobseeker in Queensland, you are protected under both federal and state laws that prevent age discrimination. Key aspects include:

- **Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth):** Prohibits discrimination in hiring, promotion, and workplace practices based on age across Australia.
- **Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth):** Ensures fair treatment of employees, including mature-age workers, and provides avenues for complaints about unfair treatment.
- **Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld):** Protects Queensland workers from discrimination based on age in employment and other areas.
- **Government Support Programs:** Initiatives like the Restart Program offer incentives to employers who hire workers aged 50 and over, and Workforce Australia provides tailored employment assistance.

2. Identifying Age-Friendly Employers

Finding an employer that values experience and maturity is key. Consider:

- **Researching Social Enterprises:** Many prioritise diversity and inclusion, including age diversity.
- **Exploring Employer Reviews:** Check platforms like Glassdoor and seek firsthand insights from industry networks.
- **Looking for Flexible Work Arrangements:** Some organisations offer part-time roles, remote work, or phased retirement options.

3. Updating Your Skills and Resume

A well-presented application can help counter age-related biases. Steps to take:

- **Highlight Relevant Experience:** Focus on transferable skills and achievements rather than years of experience.

- **Upskill Where Necessary:** Take courses in digital literacy, industry-specific software, or leadership training. Free and subsidised training is available through TAFE Queensland and Skills Checkpoint for Older Workers.
- **Modernise Your Resume:** Use contemporary formats and avoid outdated terminology.

4. Navigating the Job Search Process

Effective job search strategies for mature-age jobseekers include:

- **Networking:** Engage with industry groups, professional associations, and LinkedIn connections.
- **Utilising Job Search Platforms:** Websites like Workforce Australia, BeConnected, and mature-age-friendly job boards such as Older Workers Australia.
- **Practising Interview Skills:** Prepare for common questions about adaptability, technology skills, and long-term career plans.

5. Advocating for Your Value

Your experience and wisdom are assets. Showcase them by:

- **Demonstrating Adaptability:** Highlight instances where you've embraced change or learned new skills.
- **Emphasising Soft Skills:** Leadership, problem-solving, and mentoring are strengths that social enterprises value.
- **Addressing Age Bias with Confidence:** Reframe concerns about age by focusing on experience, reliability, and enthusiasm.

6. Growing Your Career in Social Enterprises

Once hired, continue to develop your career by:

- **Seeking Mentorship Opportunities:** Many social enterprises encourage knowledge sharing and intergenerational collaboration.
- **Exploring Leadership Roles:** Leverage your experience to move into mentoring, advisory, or managerial positions.
- **Adapting to Changing Work Environments:** Stay open to learning new technologies and workplace trends.

7. Staying Resilient in the Job Market

Job searching at any stage of life can be challenging. Stay motivated by:

- **Connecting with Support Groups:** Organisations like the Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland offer employment resources and advocacy for older workers.

- **Focusing on Your Strengths:** Recognise the value of your experience and perspective.
- **Celebrating Small Wins:** Each application, interview, and networking opportunity are a step toward success.

Summary

Navigating the job market as a mature-age jobseeker requires confidence, adaptability, and persistence. Social enterprises offer inclusive opportunities where experience is valued. By leveraging your skills, updating your knowledge, and embracing new challenges, you can find meaningful and rewarding work in a social enterprise.