

Ready for Your Second Career?

Make a difference in the world and earn money at the same time

by [Sally Abrahms](#), [AARP Bulletin](#), October 2013

Boomers and older Americans are giving [retirement](#) a major makeover: The old stereotype of the 65-year-old trotting off to a sun-filled life of leisure is quickly becoming a thing of the past. A new life stage is emerging — one that takes place between leaving a career in one field and flat-out retiring.

Think of it as an "encore career."

For some people, this involves paid, part-time work related to a social mission, often in the [nonprofit](#) or public sector. For others, it might be volunteer work, another [full-time job](#), a new business or even a sharper focus on a hobby or recreational pursuit. One thing an encore is not — menial.

"People are living longer, and we're adding more productive years to our lives," says Richard J. Leider, one of the pioneers of [Life Reimagined](#), an AARP program that helps people navigate this new life stage. "They're eager to use this time to discover new possibilities and make new life choices."

The idea of an encore career dates to 1997, when a San Francisco-based nonprofit called Civic Ventures (since renamed [Encore.org](#)) introduced the notion, but recently the concept has taken off.

An estimated 9 million Americans ages 44 to 70 are engaged in second careers, and 31 million more are interested in pursuing one. A survey from the MetLife Foundation and [Encore.org](#) shows that within the next 10 years, 25 percent of boomers hope to start a business or nonprofit; and half of these people want to make a difference in the world while [earning money](#).

Many older adults can't afford to stop working. They may not have traditional pensions, or perhaps the recession pummeled their investments. But even if they don't get paid, "older adults want to remain connected, relevant, useful and engaged. There's this collective feeling of 'we're not done yet,' " says Marci Alboher, author of *The Encore Career Handbook*.

To get started, speak with people in your target field, and volunteer for a place you admire before you make the leap. "Experimenting in your 50s prepares you psychologically for a new chapter rather than being blindsided if your career ends suddenly or you're too consumed to think about it," says [Encore.org](#) founder Marc Freedman.

Support for Encore Careers

A growing number of organizations are working to leverage the talents of the 50-plus population:

Encore Fellowship programs can now be found in 15 states and the District of Columbia. Last year, for example, Intel began underwriting a \$25,000 stipend for its soon-to- retire employees who wanted to transition into social service.

Some cities are gaining encore-friendly reputations. San Francisco, Phoenix, Denver, Philadelphia, Portland, Ore., Minneapolis and Boston have partnered with local businesses and organizations to explore how to employ boomers.

Universities and community colleges are providing training and retraining for paid and volunteer work. Eighty-eight schools that are part of the American Association of Community Colleges' Plus 50 Initiative offer six-month to two-year certificates and degree programs for older students.

Boomers Leading Change in Health, in the Denver area, helps those age 50-plus test-drive the health care field. Since the program launched in 2010, more than 400 boomers have taken some training.

[Life Reimagined](#) is a major new AARP initiative designed to help people explore what's next in their lives. Created in collaboration with experts in personal development, aging and social change, the program features resources, tools, coaching services and ways to connect with like-minded people.