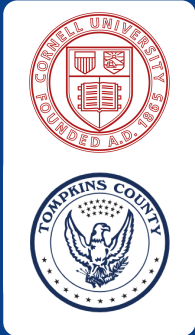


AGE-FRIENDLY BUSINESS CERTIFICATION PROGRAM IN TOMPKINS COUNTY

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The **Self-Audit Tool** is the foundation of our program, making certification a practical and engaging process for businesses

- **Holistic Framework:** Requires age-friendly infrastructure in 8 key areas, the physical environment, surrounding sound, customer service, verbal communication, visibility, marketing & web presence, gender inclusivity, and employment practices for older employees
- **Clear, Achievable Standards:** Businesses become certified by meeting a minimum of two checks in each category and 25 checks overall, making the goal realistic and accessible.
- **Streamlined Process:** Businesses complete a self-assessment, which is then validated by TCOFA. This backend evaluation is efficient and non-disruptive to daily operations.



Our primary **goals** are to scale the program's impact and ensure its long-term success.

- **Increase Enrollment:** Build a critical mass of certified businesses to make the "age-friendly" designation a visible and valuable asset across the county.
- **Build Champion Partnerships:** Leverage the influence of key community organizations like libraries and transit agencies to accelerate outreach and adoption.
- **Ensure Long-Term Sustainability:** Create a concrete action plan to transition the program to a permanent, county-wide initiative under TCOFA's stewardship.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low barrier model; no site visits, fees, or mandatory training• Evidence-based support from academic partners• Scope; initiative is county-wide and includes urban and rural businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited awareness; little visibility among broader business community• Perceived burden; 68 questions in an audit tool may seem daunting• Reliance on university resources, not always consistent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal launch and public events to build expectations and draw attention• Strategic partnerships; engage with key industry bodies, such as the chamber of commerce, as well as nonprofits, such as libraries

Recommendations

Boost Visibility & Partnerships

- Host a **publicized launch event** with county leadership and certified businesses.
- Prioritize **formal collaboration** with the Tompkins Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Ithaca Alliance.
- Implement a **recognition system** with social media highlights and press releases.

Enhance Business Engagement

- Introduce a **voluntary "Age-Friendly Pledge"** for businesses to display.
- Create a searchable online **directory** and map of certified businesses.
- Encourage voluntary **discounts or benefits** for older adults to build goodwill.

Refine the Process & Tools

- Streamline the audit tool into a more **compact**, two-page format.
- Allow **site-specific** certification for multi-location businesses.
- Develop an internship program with academic partners to ensure **sustained operational support**.

The Tompkins County Age-Friendly Business Certification Program demonstrates how a low-barrier, county-wide model can support inclusive economic participation without imposing burdensome requirements on local businesses. While the program benefits from strong institutional partnerships and an evidence-based framework, limited visibility and uneven business engagement currently constrain its reach.

Strategic outreach, stronger partnerships with key business and community organizations, and modest program refinements present clear opportunities to scale participation. With targeted action, the program has the potential to become a durable, widely recognized asset for both businesses and residents of all ages

This report can be found at <https://labs.aap.cornell.edu/node/1143>.

The official website for the Age-Friendly Business initiative, managed by TCOFA can be accessed at <https://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/All-Departments/Aging/Age-Friendly-Center-for-Excellence/Age-Friendly-Businesses>