

Collaboration with Empower the Ages

Welcome to the new semester!

In this course, you will have the unique opportunity to collaborate with senior volunteers—experienced professionals who bring a wealth of knowledge, insights, and life experiences to your projects.

Working with senior volunteers is a rewarding experience, but it also requires thoughtful communication, patience, and adaptability. To ensure a smooth and productive partnership, this document provides key guidelines on effective communication, using digital tools, and accessibility considerations.

Who are the volunteers?

We have 14 volunteers joining us through the Empower the Ages initiative. They are seniors who are now retired, volunteering their time to engage in our team projects.

Guidelines for working with senior volunteers

1. Communication best practices

- a. **Be patient and clear** – Speak at a moderate pace, enunciate clearly, and avoid jargon or overly casual digital slang.
- b. **Prefer face-to-face or scheduled calls** – Ask your senior volunteers if they prefer in-person discussions or scheduled video/phone calls or online chats. Find the way that works best for your entire team, and make sure to help your volunteer navigate any difficulty in using a tool or app.
- c. **Be proactive in engagement** – Don't wait for the volunteer to reach out; keep them informed and included in discussions.

2. Tools and Technology

- a. **Choose simple, accessible tools** – Use platforms with easy interfaces (e.g., Zoom, Google Docs, email) and provide guidance if needed.
- b. **Assist with setup if necessary** – Offer help with logging in, screen-sharing, or navigating digital workspaces, should they need it.
- c. **Be mindful of response times** – Some volunteers may not check emails or messages frequently; establish preferred contact methods early on.
- d. **Google Docs** - We have provided the seniors with instructions on how to use Google Docs for collaboration, so you can work with them online and asynchronously through the semester. Make sure to include visuals and stick to the accessibility guidelines that follow.

3. Accessibility Considerations

- a. **Use readable materials** – Provide large font options and avoid overly complex visuals in presentations or shared documents.
- b. **Be flexible and accommodating** – Adapt to any specific needs, such as extra time for note-taking or alternatives to digital collaboration.