TOOL: CALD staff recruitment and retention

To build culturally competent practice, the capacity of the workforce needs to be developed. This is achieved through mentoring, constructive feedback and continuous reflection, training and practical experience. Recruiting and retaining skilled staff at all levels of the organisation is key to forming strong connections within culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and fostering growth and continuity in quality service delivery.

Understanding the diversity profile of your organisation

For most organisations, understanding the diversity of existing staff is the first step to building a diverse and inclusive workplace. There are two dimensions to understanding the diversity of a workplace: gauging the diversity among staff and assessing their cultural competency.

Understanding the diversity of your organisation has three main benefits. It allows you to:

- gain from the existing diversity in your workforce and recognise the unique skills of staff that may not be currently used
- identify staff needs and support not yet provided
- identify whether the diversity of your staff aligns with the diversity of your external stakeholders and whether changes need to be made to address any gaps.

Organisations must also find ways to gather information about cultural diversity and languages spoken at home by staff when inducting new staff. This allows data to be collected on an ongoing basis and build a better understanding of your organisation.

To gauge the diversity of your staff, refer to the Collecting internal data on cultural diversity Tool in the **Planning** section of these resources. The collection and analysis of internal demographic data provides a benchmark for culturally diverse staff recruitment and retention and gives insight into the areas for improvement in the workforce.

Conducting an all-staff survey is the best way to understand your workforce's cultural competency. The topics to address in a survey include:

- cultural heritage or background
- language spoken at home or proficiency in languages other than English
- experience in working with customers or clients from diverse backgrounds

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- cultural competency skills

- cross-cultural communication skills and experience

- any formal training or studies.

Understanding the cultural competency of the workforce will help identify any barriers to internal culturally diverse staff engagement, recruitment and retention.

Note for service providers:

It is also a good starting point to begin thinking about the diversity of your clients and customers and any about gaps there may be between the profile of your internal staff and external stakeholders/clients/customers/communities.

Recruiting for diversity

The next stage is to take proactive steps. Traditional recruitment processes are often the first barrier to attracting and hiring diverse talent. These include:

- **Cultural bias**: These are implicit and explicit assumptions of people based on their cultural background. This can include thinking a candidate may not be an appropriate cultural fit for the organisation or that they may not represent the organisation well because of their cultural background

- **Insensitivity**: Some cultural norms in Australia can make people from specific cultures or religions uncomfortable, such as shaking hands or asking personal questions

- **Language**: Jargon and Australian colloquialisms are a barrier to many people who speak English as a second language

- **Perceived lack of qualifications**: Many people migrate to Australia with qualifications in their home country. These can be overlooked or not appreciated

- **Inflexibility**: Not considering the familial and cultural needs of the candidate, such as family care obligations and days of religious significance.

Making some simple changes to existing recruitment practices will attract more diverse candidates and give organisations more opportunities to hire the best available talent from a larger selection pool. The 10 strategies below identify starting points for introduction in current processes:

1. identify any cultural, linguistic or other diverse groups you wish to target

2. broaden the distribution of job descriptions and advertise positions outside the usual places

3. talk and listen to employees from diverse backgrounds about their experiences with the recruitment process and make meaningful changes to create greater ease of access

4. adjust the essential and desirable criteria for positions to make them more accessible to candidates from diverse backgrounds

5. ensure the application process is clear, simple and accessible. This can include being direct about requirements from candidates in the application (CV, referees, cover letter addressing the selection criteria) explaining how applicants will be assessed against the criteria and what is expected out of their performance

6. ensure the interview/selection panel is diverse and briefed on the assessment criteria. Ensure its members are aware of how easily miscommunication can occur

7. conduct post-interview counselling with unsuccessful candidates to explain why they were not selected and where they could improve in the application or interview processes

8. consider that having leaders within your organisation or business from diverse backgrounds will attract more diverse candidates

9. conduct ongoing reviews of the recruitment process

10. consider blank recruitment, i.e. blacking out names as an effective way to remove initial bias at the start of the recruitment process.

Retaining organisational diversity

Changes to workplace culture, policies and facilities can result in a lower staff turnover, greater staff development and innovation and more diverse leadership in the long term.

To improve the retention of culturally diverse staff, foster a workplace environment that is welcoming and adaptive to cultural diversity. These are some ways to improve retention:

*   culturally competent communication and proactive initiatives during the induction process show your commitment to diversity

*   culturally competent workplace policies that include cultural leave for significant cultural or significant events

*   visibility of diversity and inclusion policies for employees as a reminder of organisational values

*   provision of facilities which accommodate the cultural and religious needs of staff such as prayer or quiet rooms

*   provision of training and professional development opportunities

- ensuring open communication channels for staff to feel secure in the knowledge that their opinions are valued and that they will be listened and responded to
- flexibility to allow staff to meet familial, cultural or religious obligations
- development of mentoring programs and staff networks
- creating a culture that celebrates diversity through internal and external events, acknowledgement from management and leadership.