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Fact Sheet 4: Recruiting, Progressing and Retaining a Culturally Diverse Workforce

Attracting and retaining a diverse workforce is the best way to maximise cultural diversity for the good of your organisation.

This factsheet shows you how to improve the recruitment process for prospective culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) employees, retain a diverse workforce and create opportunities for staff progression.

1. Identifying CALD community groups to target

Using statistics and demographic information will help you decide which groups you want to target. For instance, your workforce may need to be more representative of the CALD groups that it works most closely with now or would like to engage with in the future.

2. Ensuring that your workplace can support employees from diverse cultural backgrounds

This might include looking at the following:

- Asking whether your organisation reflects cultural diversity in its policies and procedures, code of conduct, mission and principles, to ensure that language is appropriate and content reflective of diversity principles.
- Consider developing your own 'principles of diversity' along the lines of the following statements:

"Cultural diversity is the accepted norm of this organisation and its workforce. Cultural diversity refers to language used, cultural background, race, ethnicity, national origin and religion. Cultural diversity encompasses all staff and their unique experiences and skills."

"All staff benefit from developing their understanding of different cultures and perspectives, and their capacities for intercultural sensitivity and adaptation, to enable them to live and work as professionals in a diverse and increasingly globalised society."

3. Employing a workplace diversity champion, whose role would involve:

- Defining how diversity can enhance your organisation's business performance
- Promoting the importance of cultural diversity through ongoing advocacy, engagement and encouragement
- Actively promoting the benefits of diversity, both for your organisation and its employees
- Understanding the workplace diversity needs of staff
- Helping and encouraging all staff to be aware of workplace diversity issues
- Advocating the inclusion of equity and diversity issues on strategic planning agendas
- Helping to integrate workplace diversity issues in human resource policies and practices
- Developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating your workplace diversity program
- Monitoring your compliance with relevant laws and regulations, particularly around discrimination
- Keeping cultural diversity matters on the agenda by informing senior executives about

diversity issues and the effectiveness of your organisation's workplace diversity program.

4. Providing cultural competency training

This should bring all employees up to speed on your organisation's policies, procedures and expectations regarding cultural diversity.

5. Communicating and connecting with people and organisations in the CALD sector

This may involve consulting state and territory bodies, such as Ethnic Communities' Councils (ECC), Multicultural Communities' Councils (MCC), Migrant Resource Centres (MRC) or other organisations providing services to CALD Australians. This will help you learn more about multiculturalism in Australia, the cultural diversity of Australia's workforce, challenges facing people

from CALD backgrounds (particularly regarding employment), and strategies to address and respond to the above factors via a multicultural action plan or similar document.

6. Developing job descriptions reflecting and emphasising the need for cultural competence requirements

It's important that job descriptions are not overly complex. They should use appropriate selection criteria to encourage a diverse pool of applicants and demonstrate your commitment to cultural diversity and principles of access and equity, as relevant to CALD employees.

7. Effectively promoting and advertising available positions to attract the best applicants

Developing a broad communication and distribution network is the most effective way to attract a broad pool of applicants when recruiting. This involves

appealing to all possible communication channels, beyond the mainstream. Creating a contact, email or mailing list that includes ethno-specific and multicultural organisations will enable you to tap into a huge pool of strong candidates that may otherwise be overlooked. For more details on ethno-specific services, please visit the FECCA website at www.fecca.org.au.

8. Taking a culturally-competent approach to interviewing

As the front-line in recruiting new staff, your interview panel can greatly influence the face of your future workforce. To ensure that your organisation recruits the best person for the job, panel members must be on board with principles of cultural diversity and non-discrimination, reflecting these during interviews with potential new staff.

When choosing your interview panel, consider the following:

- Ensure the selection panel reflects the diversity of your organisation's clients and the community in which it operates.
- Ensure selection panel members are aware of, and preferably have trained in, culturally-competent recruitment and selection processes. They must be mindful of their roles and responsibilities in selecting new staff in line with your cultural diversity principles and policies.
- Be aware of how easily miscommunication can occur in an inter-cultural employment interview and how this may cause an interviewer to misjudge the capabilities and experience of a candidate.

During job interviews in Australia, focus is often placed not so much on actual job competency, but whether a candidate has the verbal and interactive skills to effectively engage with, and meet the expectations of, the panel. So, by being mindful of cultural differences and that cultural interpretations of what an interview will be like may vary among participants, you're more likely to select the best person for the job.



Job applications should be simple and clearly worded to encourage a diverse pool of applicants

It's also important for interview questions to reflect your organisation's commitment to cultural diversity. You can ensure this by:

- Developing a question set that, as well as determining suitability for the role, identifies a candidate's understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity principles
- Identifying the cultural backgrounds of potential staff
- Providing practical tools for the interview process, such as translating and interpreting services, if necessary and appropriate
- Explaining key terms such as 'evidence' and 'criteria' so the candidate understands how these will be used and interpreted (remembering that the word 'criteria' might not be familiar to some applicants)
- Ensuring interview questions effectively identify, or give candidates an opportunity

to comfortably discuss, previous work history. Prior recognition of a migrant's non-Australian work experience is still a major hurdle to CALD employment.

Also, if employees are offered a position based on their diversity skills

(for example, if they speak a particular language), the essential selection criteria needs to include an exemption.

Tips for retaining a diverse, dynamic and innovative workforce

The following tips can help you retain your workforce, benefitting both your organisation and its employees:

- **Making employees feel comfortable by developing and using an induction program.** This will give staff a clear understanding of your organisation, its policies and principles

(including its commitment to cultural diversity), and core functions.

- **Providing training and professional development opportunities.** Cultural competency training is a good starting point, but it's also important to provide other opportunities for staff to up-skill and be able to further contribute to your organisation. Training also opens up future career progression opportunities, which is a positive incentive for staff retention.
- **Ensuring open communication channels.** Workplaces that are too hierarchical and inflexible, with outdated practices and management styles, discourage two-way communication and can alienate staff. Opening communication channels makes staff feel secure in the knowledge that their opinions are valued and any questions or concerns they have will be listened and responded to.

Tips for creating an inclusive working environment

- Learning about and supporting cultural and religious customs.
- Celebrating cultural and religious dates, where appropriate (see [DIAC's Calendar of Cultural and Religious Dates](#)).
- Allowing staff to receive time off to celebrate cultural and religious dates.
- Providing a quiet place for prayer or meditation.
- Networking with multicultural and community organisations to develop and implement best practice models to effectively embrace and respond to cultural diversity.



A word of caution...

Many job seekers from CALD backgrounds are disadvantaged in recruitment processes as a result of overt or explicit racial prejudice and bias. This often appears as discrimination based on an applicant's name.

A recent study from the Australian National University¹ found that job applicants with 'non-Anglo' sounding names had to submit more resumes to be offered an interview. For example, someone with a Chinese-sounding name typically needs to submit 68 per cent more applications than a person with an Anglo-sounding name to land an interview. Those with a Middle Eastern-sounding name must submit 64 per cent more applications, an Indigenous person 35 per cent more and an Italian person 12 per cent more².

To avoid workplace discrimination, it's very important to be aware of the discrimination that can occur based on an applicant's name or perceived cultural background. To overcome this, you could use an anonymous shortlisting process, where candidates are more likely to be shortlisted based on skills, qualifications or experiences, rather than missing out because of their cultural identity and name.

References

¹ Elston, R. 2013. 'Job hunters change 'foreign sounding names'. Accessed 7 June 2013. Available at: <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/1756370/Job-hunters-change-foreign-sounding-names>

² Australian National University (ANU). 2009. 'Minorities find it harder to get jobs'. Accessed 7 June 2013. Available at: <http://news.anu.edu.au/2009/06/17/minorities-find-it-harder-to-get-jobs/>



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