

BUILDING A CULTURALLY DIVERSE WORKFORCE



Western Australia has one of the most culturally diverse populations in Australia. The 2011 Census showed that of Western Australia's 2.2 million people:

- 31% were born overseas (compared to 26% nationally);
- 52% had one or both parents born overseas;
- 15% spoke a language other than English at home; and
- 3% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

This cultural diversity provides local businesses with significant economic benefits including cultural and linguistic skills which can improve customer service and provide access to new domestic and international markets.

The benefits of cultural diversity for your business include:

- a positive public image as an employer of choice;
- brand differentiation based on targeted marketing;
- innovation, creativity and enhanced problem-solving; and
- expanded markets through employees' cultural connections.

Maximising the benefits of a culturally diverse workforce can be achieved through effective workforce planning.

For resources and information to assist small to medium enterprises to create a culturally diverse and engaged workforce visit:
www.workplace-essentials.dtwd.wa.gov.au.

Key issues to consider in your workforce planning include:

Understanding your business context and environment:

- Who are your customers/clients?
- Is there scope to better service an increasingly diverse customer/client base?
- Is there an opportunity to access new markets?

Understanding your current workforce profile:

- How culturally diverse is your current workforce?
- Is your workforce representative of the community and your customer/client base?

Understanding your future workforce requirements:

- What cultural and linguistic skills might benefit your business?
- What cultural awareness training do your employees require to achieve a harmonious and productive workforce?

Attraction and retention strategies:

- Where do you currently source your staff?
- What recruitment strategies could you use to reach a broader and more culturally diverse employee pool?
- What can you as a business owner do to support the cultural diversity of your workforce to retain skilled employees?

Building a culturally diverse workforce requires managers and leaders who:

- value cultural diversity in the workforce and recognise the full range of skills of employees including language and cultural skills;
- understand the importance of broadening the pool of potential employees to recruit talented people;
- see the business opportunities available by having a culturally diverse workforce; and
- are culturally aware and respect other cultures and different perspectives.

The Western Australian *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* obliges employers to ensure their employment practices do not discriminate against people on a range of grounds including race.

For information about your obligations as an employer visit the Equal Opportunity Commission of Western Australia website www.eoc.wa.gov.au.

You can increase your pool of potential employees by:

- diversifying recruitment strategies, for example:
 - contacting ethnic organisations, migrant resource centres and accessing culturally and linguistically diverse networks; and
 - advertising vacancies through ethnic media including newsletters, websites and/or radio.
- ensuring selection processes are culturally inclusive where recruitment officers and interview panel members are culturally sensitive and aware of workplace discrimination laws.
- providing work experience and internship programs for people from culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds (subject

to meeting your employer obligations under State or national employment law).

The Office of Multicultural Interests plays an important role in promoting and supporting cultural diversity in Western Australia. Visit www.omi.wa.gov.au for information on the services available and for contact details of culturally and linguistically diverse community groups and organisations.

You can support cultural diversity in your workforce by:

- establishing mentoring arrangements and providing cultural awareness training to support the integration of employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds into your workplace and the Western Australian community;
- developing the skills of your culturally diverse workforce through participation in training and development opportunities; and
- providing access to English language training to employees from non-English speaking backgrounds.

This includes the Australian Government's Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program. For further information about the program visit [www.innovation.gov.au/Skills/LiteracyandNumeracy/WorkplaceEnglishLanguageandLiteracy\(WELL\)](http://www.innovation.gov.au/Skills/LiteracyandNumeracy/WorkplaceEnglishLanguageandLiteracy(WELL)).

The Western Australian Skilled Migration Portal

www.migration.wa.gov.au provides information for skilled migrants and their employers, including information about visas, sponsoring skilled migrants, finding employment and general information about living and working in Western Australia.

There are a number of different ways that training can help your business grow and be more competitive. For information on the full range of training options available to Western Australian employers visit www.training.wa.gov.au.

For more information, resources and practical tools to help you plan, attract, develop and retain a skilled workforce, visit:
www.workplace-essentials.dtwd.wa.gov.au



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