

RECRUIT, HIRE & SUSTAIN DIVERSITY



STRATEGIES TO RECRUIT, HIRE & SUSTAIN DIVERSITY
IN THE WORKPLACE

Written by Z. Ruby White Starr

The National
RESOURCE CENTER
for REACHING VICTIMS
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Equity

STRATEGIES TO RECRUIT, HIRE & SUSTAIN DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Introduction



There is strong empirical confirmation that effectively recruiting, hiring, and retaining a diverse staff is positively correlated with increased organizational performance. Many¹ studies and surveys show however, that recruiting, hiring, and retaining a diverse staff is a challenge that many organizations face. There are many reasons why this may occur. Some organizations attribute the lack of diversity in their organizations to a shortage of a diverse pool of candidates from which to choose from. Others may attribute it to existing hiring practices (such as the nature of a competitive process, historical qualifications, or public-facing inclusion initiatives that lack meaningful effort). Less often, can organizations identify the ways that their existing organizational culture may contribute to a more homogenous staff; one that shares similar cultural² and social norms. *Strategies to Recruit, Hire, and Sustain Diversity in the Workplace* is intended to identify and respond to these and related challenges.

Strategies to Recruit, Hire, and Sustain Diversity in the Workplace provides suggestions on how to broaden recruitment strategies and examine existing efforts to interview, assess and select diverse candidates. However, if efforts begin and end there, organizations will continue to lose talented, diverse staff who choose not to join their teams or leave due to repeated turnover. In addition to a more comprehensive recruitment strategy and an interview and selection process that addresses cognitive and institutional biases perpetuated through existing hiring practices, organizations must build the foundation for an inclusive culture that encourages new ideas, welcomes various world views, and values difference.

Many organizations assert to value equity but may not take the necessary steps to examine how their power structures create, maintain, and perpetuate inequalities. For example, an organization may invest time and effort to recruit and hire staff that represent a community they hope to reach.

¹ See for example: Eboh Cletus, Helen & Asiah Mahmood, Nor & Umar, Abubakar & Ibrahim, Ahmed. (2018). Prospects and Challenges of Workplace Diversity in Modern Day Organizations: A Critical Review. *Holistica*. 9. 35-52. 10.2478/hjbpa-2018-0011 and Vera Institute of Justice, Survey to the Field for the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims, Data Collection Period 3/22/18-4/12/18.

² Throughout this article, culture is used to refer to shared experiences or commonalities that have developed and continue to evolve in relation to changing social and political contexts, based on: race, ethnicity, national origin, sexuality, gender, religion, age, class, language, disability status, immigration status, education, geographic location, or other axes of identification. As defined by Warrier, S. (2005). Culture Handbook. Retrieved from <https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/culture-handbook/>

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However, for that hire to be successful in the organizational culture, they must operate within existing paradigms that may be at odds with the reason they were hired to begin with. What if the new hire struggles with the project because it is based around “educating” community members, but the community rejects Western standards that position helpers as “experts” and community members as needing to be changed? What if the new hire pushes back on established deliverables that dictate the development and distribution of an online survey because this approach may not reach communities that have been historically marginalized. These communities maybe willing to participate in a focus group, but not complete a survey or may value oral (not written) traditions? In cases such as these and many that parallel these, organizations often fall back on existing requirements, historical assumptions, or question the competence or “organizational” fit of individuals raising these differences. Hiring a more diverse staff will have little to no value if new hires are required to assimilate to the existing culture.

Inclusive organizations accept that their existing organizational cultures must adapt, evolve, and change to integrate new ideas, worldviews, and differences. They understand that representation is not inclusion. Inclusive organizations do not put the onus to change on the diverse staff they seek to employ if they want to improve their programs and services. They operate in a way that leverages difference internally to promote equity in program development,

intervention, and evaluation externally. For this reason, *Strategies to Recruit, Hire, and Sustain Diversity in the Workplace* begins with recommendations to create the foundation to sustain diversity, continues with recommendations to change existing paradigms in staff selection, and then offers suggestions to broaden existing recruitment strategies.

Strategies to Recruit, Hire, and Sustain Diversity in the Workplace is offered as a primer to begin to think about and redesign the existing structures that impede inclusion and equity in the workplace. The strategies offered are not exhaustive. In some cases, the strategies may include not only what is needed, but suggestions for how this can be done. In other cases, they require your own inquiry and edification beyond this tool.

Strategies to Recruit, Hire, and Sustain Diversity in the Workplace promotes intersectional strategies, there is a heavy emphasis on racial equity as “it’s possible--and only possible-- to close equity gaps by using strategies determined through an intentional focus on race.”³ The strategies provided are not listed in order of priority. They should be carried out concurrently and with transparency as there is not a place you “arrive” and move to the next step. They are of all of equal importance and work connectedly to increase not only diversity, but equity in and beyond the workplace.

³ The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2006). Race Matters: What's Race Got To Do With It? Baltimore, MD: Retrieved from <https://www.aecf.org/resources/race-matters/>

Strategies to Sustain Diversity in the Workplace

Set Expectations

Make your reasons, intentions, strategies and desired outcomes clear throughout the organization and get agreement and commitment.

- Articulate the business and ethical case for creating an equity culture.
 - Determine the financial, creative, and cultural benefits to creating this environment.
 - Share these with staff and be transparent about changes required as a result.
- Convey not only in words, but through actions, that approaches, values, and ideas, etc. that challenge the status quo are welcome and will be considered.
- Acknowledge & address the implicit bias and deep-rooted prejudices that individuals hold.
 - Do not tolerate stereotyping or tokenization at any level of anyone in the workplace.
 - Recognize the subtleties of and eliminate micro-aggressions.
- Support diverse communication styles.
 - Recognize that when there is a high variance in predispositions, backgrounds, and cultures, it results in different forms of expression that can lead to miscommunication.
- Ensure your organization is representative of and involved in communities it reports to serve.
 - Prepare staff to strengthen their cultural capacity.
 - Do not limit project, volunteerism, and collaborative involvements to mainstream organizations and institutions.
- Allow for the observance of religious practices and worship and the celebration of diverse holidays such as Juneteenth, Chinese New Year, Gay Pride observation, etc.
 - Accommodate substitutions of existing holiday or leave days or institute rolling days off.
- Minimize resistance to change from dominant culture⁴ groups.

⁴ The author defines and uses dominant culture to refer to the culture that shapes the norms and standards of an organization, institution, industry reflected in the United States as the ideology, beliefs and values of white, middle class, cis-gendered, heterosexual, Christian, physically able individuals who speak English as a primary language.

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- Recognize that staff from dominant culture groups may believe they are negatively affected because of their organization's commitment to inclusion & equity. Reframing paradigms to promote equity can feel discriminatory to those who have benefitted from the inequalities.
- Set expectations and procedures for handling situations of employees who disagree with the direction of the organization.
- Build a reputation for being diversity friendly.
 - Create an environment where people of different ages, personalities, work and learning styles, experience, and world views want to be.
 - Understand that word of mouth will spread about your cultural capacity.

Build Capacity

Increase your organizational capacity internally and externally to recognize, respond to, and grow because of differences.

- Institute education programs to build your organization's ability to eliminate personal, interpersonal, organizational and structural barriers to equity.
 - Ensure staff are educated on norms of dominant culture.⁵
 - Institute implicit bias education and opportunities for reflection.
 - Provide opportunities for staff to increase their cultural capacity through reading, study, cultural activities, travel, community involvement, etc.
- Hire a racial equity coach.
 - Ensure equity coaches have the knowledge and experience to address structural issues relevant to racial equity.
 - Recognize mainstream equity coaches may focus on eliminating bias on its face (i.e. recommend strategies like removing names to make interview selections race blind or standardizing questions without considering that they are worded with nuances only certain groups support).
 - Establish formal equity promotion programs in your organization.
 - Support educational programs to advance under-represented employees.
 - Ensure equity programs are not implemented using a single cultural dimension approach but instead communicate the unique challenges of intersectional identity.

⁵See for example White Dominant Culture & Something Different, adapted by Partners for Collaborative Change based on "White Supremacy Culture" By Tema Okun and Kenneth Jones, available at https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/preserve/museums/files/White_Supremacy_Culture.pdf and Paying Attention to White Culture and Privilege: A Missing Link to Advancing Racial Equity by Gita Gulati-Partee, M.B.A., OpenSource Leadership Strategies, and Maggie Potapchuk, M.Ed., MP Associates at http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/2_Gulati_AB3.pdf

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- Share relevant knowledge through mentorship with an understanding that differences do not reflect deficiencies or lack of skill.
 - Ensure areas identified for development are actual skills or behaviors needed to do the job, not based on attitudes, fears, and preferences of the dominant culture.
 - Provide opportunities for individuals to be mentored both by people who are not like them and by people who share similar identities.
 - If you lack mentors that represent staff, identify and engage external resources (such as cultural leaders, elders, consultants, etc.) to provide mentorship until the critical mass of people of color and other intersectional identities are integrated into the staff at large.
 - Do not allow your insecurities (or those of other staff) related to making mistakes, prevent people who are “different” from getting the mentorship they need.
- Accept that no one can teach you the “correct” way to work with people of color or other specific cultural groups.
 - Recognize individuals are not monolithic even if they come from similar cultures. Their preferences for what they need to succeed will vary.
 - Ask questions of the person you are working with related to how they would like to work with you and what would be most helpful for them.
 - Check in regularly to ensure agreement and course correct as needed.
- Acknowledge generational differences in attitudes and values.
 - Do not allow for attitudes that manifest as stereotypes (i.e. millennials lack patience or expect high praise/promotions for delivering the minimum level of work. Or the inverse, baby boomers resist technology or are less open to diversity and change generally).
 - Work to eliminate generation gaps through a focus on both strengths and possibilities for growth.
 - Create opportunities for cross-generational mentoring.
- Avoid working in isolation; create opportunities to reflect, seek consultation, and accept feedback when it is offered.
 - Work with culturally specific⁶ community-based agencies & technical assistance providers.
 - Commit necessary resources.⁷

⁶The author defines and uses culturally-specific to refer to services and organizations created by and for specific cultural communities, such as Latino, African American, Asian, Native, Indigenous, Muslim, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questions (LGBTQ), people who are deaf, people with a disability, immigrants, or other cultural groups with evolving and intersecting identities.

⁷For more information see Starr, R.W. Moving from the Mainstream to the Margins: Lessons in Culture & Power, J Fam Viol (2018) 33: 551. Available at <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs10896-018-9984-1.pdf>

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Be Accountable

Take responsibility for the outcomes of the actions and decisions you make and do not make, demonstrate you can be trusted, and deliver on your commitments.

- Do your own work.⁸
- Align your policies, practices and culture with the values of diversity, inclusion and equity.
- Conduct an assessment of current practice and set measurable results for change.
 - Create a table identifying the make-up of your organization using the Table of Diversity (<https://www.decidediversity.com/tableofdiversity>)
 - Use similar strategies to make certain that job duties, compensation, evaluations, promotions, recognition, etc. are equitable.
 - Ensure opportunities, particularly at the higher levels are equally distributed.
- Support staggered work hours, telecommuting, and other flexible work arrangements.
- Avoid diversity taxes, for example, practices that require people of color to act as translators and serve on equity committees without a stipend or additional compensation.
- Ensure organizational policies, procedures, and culture allow for staff to work in the gender they identify with regardless of their sex at birth.
- Recognize that promoting equity in organizations is not a single effort but a long-term strategic process that requires time and resources.
- Practice, rather than profess, your commitment to sustain diversity and promote equity.

⁸Suggested primers to begin this work include Beyond Inclusion, Beyond Empowerment by Leticia Nieto and Dismantling Racism Works, Dismantling Racism 2016 Workbook available at <https://resourcegeneration.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2016-dRworks-workbook.pdf>

Strategies to Interview, Assess, and Select Diverse Candidates

INTERVIEW

- Make sure candidates are interviewed by a diverse group of individuals in the organization.
- Include unconscious bias/hiring training for all members of an interview team.
- Eliminate biased questions that elevate dominant culture norms and standards and ignore the need for differences and cultural variations.
 - Ensure a diverse set of people have contributed to the development and interpretation of acceptable answers to questions.
- Ask about strong community connections and shared concerns and interests to communities they will serve.

ASSESS

- Take into account varying experiences prospective candidates may have throughout their life that contribute to their ability to do a job beyond formal and traditional experience.
- Determine what candidates with an intersectional identity can bring to a position that no one else can.
- Do not use dominant culture norms and values to rate responses (i.e. determine questions were not answered because they were approached through storytelling in a non-linear way).
- Give concrete weight to race analysis ability, proximity to community they will serve, language skills, etc.

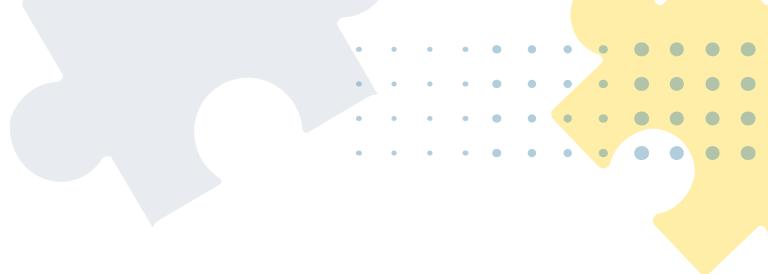
SELECT

- When you set priorities to elevate diversity, inclusion and equity, follow through with them in decision-making.
- Acknowledge and examine your reasons for not hiring a particular candidate.

Strategies to Recruit a Diverse Workforce

- Increase the hiring time frame of your program to build a large applicant pool.
- Advertise job openings in:
 - Diverse local, regional, and national publications geared to communities that have not been adequately represented and served.
 - Professional organizations with diverse memberships (i.e. the Association of Black Women's Attorneys, the Latino Social Workers Association, etc.).
 - Schools and colleges with diverse enrollments.
 - Ethnic studies departments and associations on college campuses.
 - Community or service organizations serving culturally specific populations
 - Specialized online recruiting sites targeting particular underserved groups such as:

hbcuconnect.com	hirelatinos.org
blackjobs.com	ihispano.com
blackcareernetwork.com	diversityinc.com
LatPro.com	diversity.com
- Ensure qualifications posted are actually ones needed to do the job and not based on historical assumption.
- Request assistance to review ads and descriptions for bias-free language that does not favor particular candidates and deter others.
- Highlight policies, practices, and initiatives or programs that promote racial equity in job announcements, presentations, etc.
- Use informal and non-traditional networking channels. For example:
 - Promote an employee referral program
 - Request the assistance of local service providers and organizations
 - Attend functions at diverse professional organizations.
 - Conduct speaking engagements on careers in non-profit or social service before diverse audiences.



Latinos United for Peace and Equity is the National arm of Caminar Latino. Latinos United for Peace and Equity and Caminar Latino create opportunities for Latino families to transform their lives and communities and works to change the social conditions that give rise to violence.

Funded by the federal Office for Victims of Crime, the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims (NRC) is a one-stop shop for victim service providers, culturally specific organizations, justice system professionals, and policymakers to get information and expert guidance to enhance their capacity to identify, reach, and serve all victims, especially those from communities that are underrepresented in healing services and avenues to justice. The NRC is working to increase the number of victims who receive healing supports by understanding who is underrepresented and why some people access services while others don't; designing and implementing best practices for connecting people to the services they need; and empowering and equipping organizations to provide the most useful and effective services possible to crime victims. The NRC is a collaboration among Caminar Latino, Casa de Esperanza, Common Justice, FORGE, the National Children's Advocacy Center, the National Center for Victims of Crime, the National Clearinghouse on Abuse Later in Life, Women of Color Network, Inc., and the Vera Institute of Justice. The NRC's vision is that victim services are accessible, culturally appropriate and relevant, and trauma-informed, and that the overwhelming majority of victims access and benefit from these services.

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