

CHECKLIST FOR LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT (LEP) RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF BILINGUAL STAFF

Is your organization having difficulty recruiting and retaining bilingual or multi-lingual staff? Are your internal processes unnecessarily screening people out as candidates? Here is a tool that will assist you in this process.

INTRODUCTION:

As we work to serve increasingly diverse populations, it becomes even more important to recruit, develop and retain staff with non-English language skills and broader cultural knowledge. Developing your workforce to provide non-English language services will enhance overall customer service, increase the pool of customers who may be served, and potentially reduce the costs of contracting for external language services. The more Limited English Proficient (LEP) customers we can serve increases our success.

The National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) Equal Opportunity Committee has worked to develop the following checklist for agency leaders, human resource staff and hiring authorities as a tool for identifying additional ways to recruit bilingual staff. This tool also will help you screen your internal processes for unintended barriers, which may be filtering out potential employees from consideration.

This checklist, while not all inclusive, provides some best practices and steps that should enhance your efforts in recruiting and retaining staff with skills to better serve all of your population, including those customers with Limited English Proficiency. This checklist also offers suggestions to further develop the skills of existing staff to serve LEP customers better.

This tool complements the “Checklist for Developing a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan,” developed and distributed in 2003 by the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA’s) Equal Opportunity Committee, which assisted workforce agencies and others in assessing their LEP populations and the needed services.

For clarity and brevity this publication refers to bilingual staff. However, this term may encompass multilingual staff and staff who can communicate in American Sign Language.

***HIRING, DEVELOPING AND RETAINING BILINGUAL EMPLOYEES MAKES GOOD
BUSINESS SENSE!***

CHECKLIST FOR LEP RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

◇ POSITIONS/CLASSIFICATIONS

- ❑ Identify jobs that are the most critical for serving LEP clients. These can be identified through service providers or data on the clients you serve.
- ❑ Workforce agencies with employee unions could review positions in conjunction with their state's classification system, identifying critical positions and incorporating language skill requirements into the qualifications for the positions.
- ❑ An additional option, depending on the size and needs of the LEP populations being served, may be to create a position for a qualified staff translator/interpreter who may also be able to provide cultural training to colleagues.
- ❑ Review the minimum job qualifications for position being recruited to determine if they are creating barriers.

◇ RECRUITMENT

- ❑ Maintain a continuous open recruitment list for these jobs. Identified candidates can be added to the list. This will enable your organization to draw from a continuous pool of candidates.
- ❑ Assess and determine if the jobs you are recruiting for in your organization require a college degree. Consider using comparable years of experience versus the college degree. By using relevant work experience candidates may qualify for hiring lists, expanding your pool of potential staff.
- ❑ Hire non-permanent staff to meet your immediate business needs. These candidates may become more competitive for permanent positions with the on-the-job experience gained.
- ❑ Establish an automated hiring system to simplify the recruiting process. Provide a means for applicants to apply through the Internet. Make your need for bilingual candidates known through your website and through the other ways you promote your organization, making it an attractive organization for whom to work. For example, include such wording as "Bilingual Applicants Are Encouraged To Apply" in recruitment announcements.
- ❑ Expand your thinking on how to identify candidates – Contact other state agencies and military installations; ask current LEP employees; recruit through America's Job Bank and/or on-line; and contact community and faith-based organizations. Foster a relationship with these customers. One way to develop that relationship is to become a member of their organization or serve as a board member. Professional organizations are available to assist with recruiting candidates with specific skills.
- ❑ When testing applicants for jobs, consider allowing more time during the examination process. Individuals with a native language other than English may need more time to allow for translating from one language to another.

◇ CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

- ❑ Interview panels should reflect the diversity of the candidates who are being interviewed.
- ❑ Individuals should be assessed to ensure their ability to read, write, speak and understand both English and the other language.

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- Recruiters and hiring officials should be aware of LEP resources within their organization that may be of assistance in the interview process.

◇ **HIRING**

- Consider paying additional compensation for the full-time or part-time use of a language skill.
- Create or develop in-house training programs to prepare bilingual job seekers to compete for the LEP jobs.
- Identify the resources available for persons with limited English proficiency in the organization. Review and modify internal procedures based on your assessment.
- Identify a bilingual mentor for the new hire. This will assist employees with a smoother transition.

◇ **TRAINING**

- The New Employee Orientation for the organization should include, as part of the curriculum, information regarding the LEP Policy and a written commitment from management to serve all clients. Review opportunities to reinforce this message within the organization.
- Provide your employees with training on cultural etiquette and workplace diversity.
- Develop a curriculum that teaches bilingual staff the "organization's terminology" in their native language. Use this curriculum to educate vendors and companies with which your organization does business. This will provide consistency and accuracy in the information provided to the LEP customer.

◇ **RETENTION**

- Encourage staff to apply for tuition reimbursement if they are interested in learning another language. Internal policies should be updated to provide for these opportunities.
- Staff meetings should include open discussions regarding diversity and the important contributions bilingual employees bring to the workplace (e.g., discussions regarding active recruitment of bilingual candidates, hiring and retention). Embrace diversity in the organization by bringing guest speakers to staff meetings.
- Organize brown bag lunches that bring employees together to learn about workplace diversity initiatives.
- Organize potluck lunches so employees enjoy the richness of the ethnicity and diversity in the workplace.
- Establish an LEP Advisory Committee. This group can identify language pockets and make recommendations for continued improvements in recruiting, hiring, and retention of employees.

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- Conduct Exit Interviews with staff to gain knowledge and information regarding employee's view of operations. This may be valuable information that will assist the organization in improving services to bilingual staff in the future.
- Recognize bilingual employees who make valuable contributions to the organization and the community, through an employee recognition program. If your organization does not have a recognition program, consider developing one.

◇ TECHNOLOGY

- Develop an Intranet (website within the agency). A site on your organization's Intranet can serve as a resource for employees regarding diversity in the organization. The website could, for example, identify interpreter services and the various languages in which customer services are available to employees who speak different languages.
- Identify other websites on the Internet that employees can read and refer to: for example, <http://www.lep.gov>.

◇ DOCUMENTS

- Determine the vital documents that need to be translated. It is important to ensure that vital documents are translated accurately and appropriately and that you include staff internal to your organization in the review process. Because of the legal ramifications and the nature of some of the documents, identify key bilingual staff to participate in the process.
- Verify the websites employees use as tools for translating letters and documents for providing services to the public are accurate and appropriate.

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DISCLAIMER:

While the United States Department of Labor and its Civil Rights Center are supportive of the National Association of State Workforce Agencies' efforts to devise this checklist, it has not approved the checklist nor sanctioned its use as a means to demonstrate compliance with Title VI or Section 188 of WIA.