

EQUITY IN GOVERNMENT

A DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION TOOLKIT



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WHY THIS MATTERS

Why Equitable Hiring in Washington State Government?

Inspired by the development of the Equity Office, created through ESHB 1783 in the 2020 legislative session, our work focuses on one of the stated goals of the Office, which is to instill equity work into hiring across Washington State government agencies ([HB 1783 2019-20: Creating the Washington State Office of Equity, 2020](#)).

The purpose of this resource is to assist agencies and departments to achieve and maintain a diverse government workforce, within an equitable workplace culture. This toolkit focuses on improving practices and systems to ensure more historically marginalized individuals are represented and supported in the public sector.

See **Appendix A** for What Is Your ‘Why’?

Guiding Principles of this Project

- Economic Justice
- Representative Bureaucracy
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Examples of State Agencies’ “Why”

Attorney General’s Office (AGO)

“Diversity, equity, and inclusion are critical to the success of the AGO’s office ... AGO also recognizes that diverse perspectives and backgrounds result in better information and decision-making, further building public trust.”

Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)

“Staffing and leadership that reflect and are responsive to the communities we serve. Recruit, retain, promote and provide supports for people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and ideas. Create a positive workplace climate to increase job satisfaction and effectiveness.”

Department of Licensing (DOL)

“We build great teams:

We build a diverse workforce of team players with the right skills, attitudes, and work ethics to achieve our goals.”

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment in Washington State

Despite Executive Order 11,478, and the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, calling for equal opportunity in federal employment, and a “federal workforce reflective of the nation’s diversity,” racial and ethnic minorities, particularly hispanics, are significantly underrepresented in the federal government ([Executive Order 11,478, \(1966-1970\)](#); [Civil Service Reform Act of 1978](#); [Starks, 2009](#)). This underrepresentation extends to state and local government jobs, and also has a significant impact on immigrants ([Lewis, Lui, and Edwards, 2014](#); [Rice, 2004](#)).

In addition to general underrepresentation, racial and ethnic minorities are also found to be underrepresented in leadership and senior level positions, both when considering the rates of employment at lower levels and by the population of communities at large ([Starks, 2009](#)). Women also face difficulty achieving upward mobility in local, state, and federal government. This results in an over-representation of women in lower level jobs, and underrepresentation in management and leadership positions ([Rice, 2004](#)).

Departments and agencies can address this issue by creating and implementing equitable hiring policies and practices. Recruitment is a first and crucial step, where many applicants first encounter an organization’s culture and decide whether or not to apply. However, job seekers coming from the low-wage sector often do not have the privilege of making a choice about whether or not to apply for a job based on factors like organizational culture. However, by instilling equitable practices you will make individuals feel that their skills and background are valued and welcome in your organization.

Outreach

Outreach is an important step in cultivating a diverse pool of applicants. Being intentional about where and how outreach is conducted can lead to a more diverse applicant pool, which will likely lead to a more diverse workforce. Diverse organizations offer a bridge to underrepresented communities. These organizations help employers reach qualified candidates all across the state of Washington. Specifically, government agencies must work to develop relationships and network with diverse organizations.

Government agencies can also utilize ethnic agencies and commissions to network and learn about opportunities to recruit new employees. Specifically, these include the [Commission on African American Affairs](#), the [Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs](#), the [Governor's Office of Indian Affairs](#), and the [Commission of Hispanic Affairs](#) (Board and Commission Profiles: Washington Governor's Office). Each agency has commissioners, community networks, or Tribal Nations that they work with throughout the state. By partnering with each of these agencies an employer has the opportunity to create a pool of qualified diverse candidates that will have different opinions and perspectives.

Higher Education

There are many opportunities to access a diverse pool of candidates from the higher education sector. The State of Washington has six public colleges and universities, additional campuses for many of these, as well as 34 community and technical colleges. Each school has at least one job fair annually, a career center, or event for employers to reach out to the students for employment opportunities. Below are links to some of the advertised job fair or career events:

- Washington State University hosts a bi-annually Career Expo every February and October ([WSU Career Expo](#)).
- The University of Washington has a Career & Internship Center. This center will help employers find potential employees that attend or have recently graduated from the school ([Career & Internship Center: University of Washington](#)).
- Pierce College offers a Job and Career Connections on both of their campuses in Puyallup, Fort Steilacoom. This resource allows employers to post job openings at no cost ([Workforce- Job and Career Connections, 2020](#)).
- The Puget Sound Career Consortium for Employers is a network for employers and students from Tacoma Community College, Green River College, and Highline College ([The Puget Sound Career Consortium for Employers](#)).
- Walla Walla Community College hosts an annual Hospitality & Tourism Job Fair in March. In addition, the college partners with [WorkSource](#) to help students connect with employers ([Hospitality and Tourism Job Fair](#)).

Job Descriptions

A position description tells a potential candidate whether or not they have the skills and/or qualifications to be a successful applicant. When creating a position description, there are many factors to consider. These include, but are not limited to, appropriate job titles and duties, salary range, and educational requirements.

As the needs of your organization change over time, the role and duties of incumbent employees may change. Annual review of each position description form (PDF) will help to prevent a complete overhaul of duties, which can be time-consuming, when a position becomes vacant. Minimally, position descriptions should be analyzed and updated when there is turnover in the position. Considering new business needs, as well as those that may be outdated, will create a more accurate job posting and aid in your recruitment efforts.

Salary

It is best practice to include a salary range on the job description. Not displaying salary ranges is an exclusionary process that will likely dissuade individuals who have financial concerns from applying. Showing the salary range will also help keep the interview process moving forward, as you will know your final candidate is aware of the range that they can expect to be compensated.

While this is no longer the case for Washington State, it has become a common practice to ask for the candidate's current salary. The amount of money a candidate is currently making is irrelevant to the

position that they are applying for. Candidates should be judged on the skills and experience that they have. Therefore, the amount of money that they are currently making should not be a thought.

In seeking to address the issue of pay equity, Washington State prohibits employers from asking about an applicant’s current or historical salaries in the 2019 Legislative Session. The Legislature found that the “practice of inquiring about salary history has contributed to persistent earning inequalities” that disproportionately impact women. Wash. Leg. Code ch 49.58 § 49.58.005.

Valuing Experience

The requirement of an educational component has become a controversial issue. Regardless of the determined credential, employers should focus on the needs of the position, whether a postsecondary credential is appropriate or otherwise necessary, and if the satisfaction of the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) may be accomplished through work experience. During the HR screening process where an educational component is a requirement, a candidate without a degree will be disqualified. Even though a candidate may have the experience to do well in the job.

Job Description Tips

A report from the [International City/County Management Association](#) discusses the common issues found in job descriptions and provides recommendations to address them:

Biased language:

- Does not express commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Does not connect position responsibilities to organization objectives
- Contains information that is out of date
- Over-emphasizes the minutiae that comes with any job
- Is not position-specific

([Smith, 2019](#)).

Making a job description more equitable does not mean that you must create brand new descriptions. In most cases it will require words to be added or taken out of a description. Below are examples from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network on how position descriptions can be updated to be more equitable.

Before	After
Manages the successful resolution of client issues, including competing demands, sensitive situations, and conflicts with other groups.	Thoughtfully works with the client to resolve issues, including competing demands, sensitive situations, and conflicts with other groups
Mobilizes team, establishing the tactical plans, projects and objectives needed to accomplish these goals and ensure their attainment.	Mobilizes and encourages team, establishing the specific (or concrete, day-to-day) plans, projects and objectives needed...
Proactively manages the talent in their area, establishing performance goals and objectives, providing ongoing constructive and formal performance feedback, and establishing and implementing development plans.	Proactively develops (or nurtures) the talent in their area; co-constructing performance goals, objectives, and development plans, and providing ongoing constructive performance feedback.

Manages and resolves the diverse perspectives of stakeholders.

Is sensitive to (or understands) the diverse perspectives of stakeholders and works with them to resolve differences.

Screening Process

Evaluating the Resume

The first time you will engage with most candidates when you receive their application materials, such as a resume and cover letter. In attempts to increase efficiency and/or prevent biases, various tools have been used to process resumes, including Applicant Tracking Filters. Additionally, interview committees should conduct the initial resume review blind, without the names of candidates to reduce bias. The resume review process affords many opportunities to apply an equity lens. We have developed a Skills Crosswalk, which will help you analyze your own resume review practices when considering individuals from the generally low-wage fields of retail, hospitality, and customer service.

Applicant Tracking Filters

An Applicant Tracking Filter is used to collect data on candidates and screen for content or qualifications ([Rangel](#)). Keywords and phrases are then determined by the hiring authority and resumes are filtered according to the frequency and number of keywords and phrases present in a resume.

Pros and Cons of Applicant Tracking Filters

A Guide to Inclusive Hiring, a toolkit on hiring used by the City of Minneapolis, recommends removing resume filters from the process, wherever possible, as these tools may eliminate qualified candidates whose background does not obviously suit a position ([A Guide to Inclusive Hiring, 2017](#)). While filters can be a useful tool to mitigate bias, they do not provide a sophisticated and comprehensive review of non-traditional work histories that may otherwise equip a candidate to be successful in that role. According to a January 2019 report, Beyond Compliance, it is recommended that managers conduct the initial screening of application materials, rather than relying on human resources ([Smith, 2019](#)). Understandably, this would require a coordinated effort within the agency, as roles and resources would shift.

Benefits

- Efficient means of sorting through resumes, regardless of quantity
- Prevents bias related to identifiable information, such as name and address

Drawbacks

- May filter out qualified applicants
- Disadvantages candidates who do not include keywords

There may be areas where candidates may lack experience or a specific skill, but they may be capable of learning a required skill or have equivalent experience that would prepare them for that learning. There is a reason that experience is often a substitute for an education requirement: because on-the-job learning is one of the best ways to develop skills. While ATFs have pros and cons, your

organization should consider the ways practices like filters and a focus on key words and phrases can either hinder or help your efforts at incorporating equitable hiring practices.

Skills Crosswalk

The intention of this skills crosswalk is to provide a framework and tool for evaluating applicants who may have a background in sectors associated with job segregation, such as retail, customer service, hospitality, and short term jobs like gigs or contracts. Individuals can become pigeonholed in these jobs and may encounter barriers in their efforts to gain employment in a more traditional office environment. Workers in the low wage sector tend to cycle through low-wage jobs and have a difficult time exiting those types of jobs (Escobari, Meaney & Seyal, 2019).

We have created a skills crosswalk to aid hiring managers in identifying transferable skills common in retail, customer service, and hospitality jobs. One of the goals of this crosswalk is to create a more representative bureaucracy by reframing our thinking behind skills and qualifications required for a job, which, ideally, results in a more equitable representation in the public sector.

Some things to consider:

- How can the skills gained in the retail, customer service, and hospitality sectors be applied to your job posting?
- What skills must an employee possess and what can be taught on the job?
- What is equivalent experience and how do you determine how to apply it?

Examples of Private Sector Jobs with Government Job Postings

For the purposes of this crosswalk, we have provided a few examples of jobs from the sectors mentioned above and highlighted aspects of the job postings that can be considered as either direct or equivalent experience.

See Appendix B for Skills Crosswalk.

Interviewing

Interviewing is where an organization most directly interacts with a candidate. A candidate will gain a critical first impression of an organization, practices, and culture. The interview process is a strong place to start with applying an equity lens, because of the many facets involved. Some of the key areas where equitable practices can be applied include addressing implicit bias, having a diverse panel, and meaningfully engaging with the formulation of interview questions.

Implicit Bias

Being aware of your own implicit bias as you engage in the hiring process is key to ensuring more equitable hiring practices. Interviewing is especially important, whether in-person or over video or phone conference, because it is where you will likely first interact with the candidate.

The more informed you and your hiring panel are on the concept of how profound an influence systemic issues like racism, sexism, and classism are on everyone in our culture, the more you will be aware when you are engaging in bias during an interview.

“As our assumptions, conversations, consumption of culture and media, and interactions with systems reinforce one another, our brains “normalize” what we see and result in the internalization - both by white people and people of color - of racial stereotypes.” ([Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative: Organizational race equity toolkit, 2018](#)).

Mitigation Measures:

- Take the [Harvard Implicit Bias Test](#)
- Have discussion groups and workshops where you talk about stereotypes, biases, and personal experiences with these issues in your life [link to training resources on site]
- Share cultural materials (books, films, history, music) that will help others learn more about the experiences of marginalized individuals [link to inclusion section on site]
- Normalize discussions about race, institutional racism, and racial disparities (Gooden, 2015).
- Make interrupting bias an expectation on a hiring committee member's expectations list.

Diverse Hiring Panel

Having a diverse hiring panel that is actively engaged with every aspect of the interview process and evaluation of the candidate is strongly recommended. This will allow the candidate to see that diversity is important within the organization. It will also provide space for diverse voices in the hiring process and offer valuable perspectives that an otherwise homogeneous hiring panel may not have considered.

Hiring toolkits from many jurisdictions have emphasized the importance of this practice. An Urban Sustainability Network report recommends a hiring panel that reflects the participants and/or communities in which your work takes place ([Williams-Rajee, 2018](#)). Your organization should establish guidelines for what you consider an adequately diverse panel. Some jurisdictions, like Madison, Wisconsin, recommend having at least one woman and one person of color on the panel ([Equitable Hiring Tool, n.d.](#)).

General Interviewing Guidelines

Applying an equity lens to the process will both help you learn more about a candidate and their background, specifically their understanding and experience with DEI concepts. Additionally, this demonstrates to the candidate that equity is a value for your agency. Here are some areas in which you can apply an equity lens to interviewing:

1. Ask questions about a candidate's experience with DEI. See examples below.
2. Ask questions about a candidate's understanding of DEI concepts. See examples below.
3. Open ended questions, this allows candidates to talk about their skills and background that may not clearly translate to the position they are applying for but are relevant.
4. Make sure that all interviewers know the question in advance and have an opportunity to provide input--when there is a diverse hiring committee it is more likely that new perspectives and ideas for the questions will come up.

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5. Interviewers should discuss what they are looking for in an answer before meeting with candidates. For example, interviewers might look for candidates emphasizing collaborating and communicating with diverse groups, or helping others understand the importance of diversity.
 6. Take substantial notes during and after the meeting to reflect on the interview and ensure your work is in line with the “stated values and goals” of your organization (JustLEAD).
 7. Consider personal bias in interview questions. Regularly meeting with colleagues and discussing your interviewing practices and reflecting on recent hiring experiences will help you remain actively engaged with ensuring your hiring practices are more equitable.
 8. Conduct follow up surveys with new employees to gain insight about their experience with the hiring process and ask them questions about their experience of the interview and hiring process. Be sure to send these out in batches to help ensure responders have anonymity.
 9. Conduct a diversity audit. Diversity audits are surveys or focus groups that include “responses from various positions and ranks and from various members of both management and subordinate groups in the organization” (Arekere & Rice, 2005). This can also be done in the form of an exit interview.

Example 1 – City of Tacoma

1. Please provide examples of ways in which you have worked to eliminate institutional racism in previous jobs.
2. How has your culture influenced you?
3. What opportunities have you participated in to increase your knowledge of racial equity, inclusions, or diversity? What did you learn, and how did you apply the learning?
4. Tell us how you have worked with people to create or foster equity in the workplace.
5. What actions have you taken to create a welcoming environment, so everyone feel included?
6. Tell us about a situation in which you were required to work with or provide services to a diverse group of people. (City of Tacoma)

Example 2 – City of Madison

For evaluating experience with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The City of Madison and [department name] is dedicated to the Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative, in which we examine our day to day operations and impacts with the goal of creating a fair and just community so everyone can have equal outcomes. What educational, volunteer, and life experiences demonstrate your ability to contribute to the City of Madison’s goal of achieving racial equity and social justice?

RETENTION

“Moving forward to recruit a diverse workforce without having an effective retention strategy is like trying to fill a leaky bucket.”

- Woo, McIntosh, & Stanley-MacAulay

Recruitment starts earlier than you might think--as early as onboarding new hires. Now begins the important work of creating an inclusive and welcoming workplace culture rooted in diversity and equity. Your organization now employs more individuals from historically underrepresented groups and the culture and climate of said organization will determine whether they stay.

Federal bureaucrats have a history of 10 to 20% higher turnover compared to private sector employees (Borjas, 1982). Meanwhile, the cost of turnover can be estimated at 100 to 150% of a year's salary for the position (Pitts, Marvel, and Fernandez, 2011). Retention is especially important when considering diverse employees and the significant efforts an organization deploys to recruit and hire diverse candidates.

There are many factors that influence employee retention. While there is complexity, there are also many opportunities to influence factors and improve the retention of diverse employees. Explore the topics below to see what you and your organization can do to help retain diverse employees.

See Appendix C for Retention Factors.

Inclusion

Employees must feel more than tolerated at work, inclusion means fully integrating all employees. This is not the same as assimilation, where an organization would expect individuals to become more like the existing employees or hide parts of themselves that are different. Inclusion means making space for different experiences and perspectives and ensuring that all employees feel valued. It is helpful to have conversations with employees, asking teams to determine what true inclusion would look like in their team, department, or the agency as a whole. Two specific strategies to help increase inclusion are developing [employee resource groups](#), and [planning events](#) to celebrate diverse employees.

Employee Resource Groups

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), also known as Affinity Groups, and Business Resource Groups (BRGs), first began in the 1960s in response to racial tensions and discrimination of people of color in the business sector, specifically. While the name has changed over time and the practice has been adopted by the public sector, there is no significant difference in groups because of the name. Thus, throughout this section and the website, we will refer to these groups as Employee Resource Groups.

The first ERG, a Black Caucus, started at Xerox and was supported by company leadership ([Douglas, 2009](#)). The goal of the caucus was educating and bringing awareness to white employees, particularly leadership, about the discrimination that black employees were experiencing regarding promotions.

The group was very active and worked to change company policies and practices that were discriminatory; moving on to create the first National Black Caucus and, later, a Black Women's Leadership Caucus ([Douglas, 2008](#)).

Today, ERGs often continue in this advocacy vein, with a particular emphasis on creating systemic change, as well as community and a support system for fellow employees ([Welbourne, Rolf, & Schlachter, 2015](#)). ERGs span many different groups and identities, from racial identities, to being a parent, a parent of a child with disabilities, or being a queer employee. ERGs can go a long way in supporting employees socially and systematically.

Many ERGs are open to any employee who is interested in the group and is aligned with the ERG's values and mission. Allies help to shape workplace culture and can be supportive in interrupting bias. However, it is important that participating allies take their cues from those in the group who directly identify as a member of the specific ERG. As they are invited to do so, allies may come alongside group members in discussion and event planning. Finally, allies should engage in self-reflection on their personal biases and be open to feedback.

Specifically, Washington State has six groups:

- Blacks United in Leadership and Diversity
- Veteran's Employee Resource Group
- Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network
- Latino Leadership Network
- Disability Inclusion Network
- Washington Immigrant Network

See Appendix D for Starting and Employee Resource Group and 4 Ideas to Help You Step into ERG Leadership.

Events for Diverse Employees

Like our lives outside of work, we learn about each other and build relationships through gathering together. Events in the workplace are often the same, and they also provide space to celebrate diverse employees and the opportunity to raise awareness of cultures and communities.

Events may include, but are not limited to:

- Pride (LGBTQ)
 - Agencies may choose to walk in the annual Pride Parade or have a day in-office to celebrate and acknowledge LGBTQ+ employees and customers/constituents.
- Diwali
 - Annual festival of lights celebrated by many religions.
- Black History Month
 - MLK Day of Service
- Juneteenth
 - Celebrating the end of slavery in the U.S.

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- Women of Distinction
 - A celebration of women in the workplace, accompanied by specific awards, nominated by coworkers, etc.
 - [Women's Suffrage-Washington State Historical Society](#)
 - Quarterly lunch for specific employee groups

Events can also have the goal of educating employees and invite self-reflection. Ideally, through increased awareness and education, employees will come to recognize microaggressions and be better prepared to step up and say something in the workplace.

Ultimately, events should reflect the community in your agency and come from employees. Employees who are a part of a specific culture or community should be the ones to develop the event(s), however this should not be mandatory. It is not your employee's responsibility to educate or share their culture.

LEARN MORE: Microaggressions can be defined as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative ... slights and insults toward [a group of marginalized people]" (Sue, et al., 2007, p 271). Addressing microaggressions and other self-reflections should be most prominent in diversity training, however employees may develop events specific to learning and reflection if there is interest.

When employees choose to engage in diversity and education work, the immense emotional labor must be recognized. For example, event planning could be incorporated into positions or committees, like a steering committee for inclusion. Specific sub-committees may be formed for particular events or educational series, and other employees may be invited into such sub-committees. Events may also emerge from Employee Resource Groups (ERG), see above for more details.

There may be resistance from some employees. Leadership should have a solid understanding of events and be prepared to advocate for the group and stress the importance of such events for agency culture.

Leadership

Retention requires a positive DEI culture, and is primarily developed and reinforced through leadership. Some initial steps that leaders can take are to assess the current climate of their organization or agency, and create a [Strategic Diversity Plan](#) that directly responds to areas of opportunity discovered through the [climate assessment](#). Leaders are also responsible for supporting all other strategies discussed in the retention sections on this website, including [Employee Resource Groups](#), and [diverse employee events](#).

Organizational Climate Assessment

Many organizational climate assessments have been developed over the past 50 years. Some assessments emerged from a particular sector or, more specifically, one field. The ClimateQUAL assessment is one example, designed by the University of Maryland Libraries and the Industrial and Organizational Psychology program ([Kyrillidou, and Baughman, 2009](#)). Regardless of the original field, most Organizational Climate Assessments will cover three distinct aspects of an organization:

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1. **Climate:** How things are done within an organization. This includes policies, procedures, and practices.
 2. **Culture:** Why things are done, and why they are done in a certain way.
 3. **Workforce Diversity:** The makeup of an organization's workforce, focusing on race, ethnicity, cultures, and identities.

([Kyrillidou, and Baughman, 2009](#); [Patterson, et al., 2009](#)).

Through climate assessments, organizations can learn valuable insights, such as outcomes on multiple levels (individual, group, and organizational). Specifically, turnover, job satisfaction, and performance by an individual and the organization as a whole can be understood ([Patterson, et al., 2009](#)).

Assessments are often developed and administered from third party organizations whose entire focus is on current research, strategies, and implications of such assessments. Thus, it is recommended to use an outside agency to conduct a climate assessment. If resources do not allow, your agency may consider developing a climate assessment in-house. Here you can find a [guide to creating your own assessment in-house](#).

See Appendix E for Creating an In-House Climate Assessment.

Strategic Diversity Planning

A diversity plan can help to bring focus to your definition of diversity, create goals and objectives specific to related initiatives, and provide justification and accountability ([Building a Diversity Plan, n.d.](#)). Whether a strategic plan, a diversity plan, or the two woven together, diversity planning should be specific: goals, objectives, and persons accountable for progress. To effect systemic change, diversity, equity, and inclusion must be integral to your organization at all levels ([Diversity Planning Tools, n.d.](#)). A strategic diversity plan can aid your organization to:

- Develop strategies for recruiting and retaining diverse employees
- Cultivate an inclusive culture
- Promote an inclusive work environment through thoughtful policies and practices

([Diversity Planning Tools, n.d.](#))

The University of Texas at Austin's Office for Inclusion and Equity has developed a guide for diversity planning committees that consists of five stages:

1. Committee Formation
2. Development of Planning Process
3. Data Collection and Analysis
4. Development of Diversity Plan
5. Implementation of Diversity Plan

([Diversity Planning Tools, n.d.](#))

They recommend you form a committee that reflects your constituency and begin by developing a mission statement. Spend time at the outset to create timelines, identify critical issues, and assign

specific tasks for development. At this stage, work together as a committee to envision your finished product and allow that to inform your planning efforts.

Determine what data you may need, such as turnover rates, duration of employment, lateral or promotional movement, complaints of bias and/or discrimination, or diversity training offered. In your data analysis, look for themes or patterns and consider what issues emerge and how they can be addressed. A diversity SWOT analysis will help your committee articulate the issues, goals, objectives, and deliverables. Finally, implement your diversity plan, seek feedback, and schedule regular check-ins ([Diversity Planning Tools, n.d.](#)).

Here are some diversity plans from agencies and organizations in Washington State:

- Washington State Department of Health [Diversity and Inclusion Council Strategic Plan](#)
- Washington State Bar Association [Diversity and Inclusion Plan](#)
- Washington State University - Vancouver [Strategic Plan](#)
- Washington State Office of Financial Management [Workforce Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#)
- University of Washington [Diversity Blueprint](#)

Education

Agencies need continual training and exposure to new communities, perspectives, in addition to self-reflection to truly achieve a positive DEI culture. This can be achieved through a variety of ongoing, annual trainings, activities developed by employee resource groups, diversity events, and even a multicultural resource directory. Communities are constantly changing and growing; thus, an agencies and employees DEI work is never done. It is helpful to create excitement regarding trainings and learning in general, a perspective often set by leadership.

Diversity Trainings

Training that provides thoughtful room for discussion is an essential element to any organization that values Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in its workforce. Diversity training, however, should not be a stand-in for other aspects of DEI, such as intentional recruitment practices, and inclusive policies that give employees a voice and improve retention. Diversity training should be one element of a comprehensive strategy to develop and maintain a diverse workforce with inclusive values ([Blackman, 2019](#)).

Establishing a regular participation requirement in diversity training will show the organization's commitment to engaging a diverse workforce. For example, you could create a policy that requires employees to attend a diversity event or training quarterly or every six months. If your organization has a robust series of diversity events ([link to events for diverse employees' section](#)), as discussed elsewhere on our site, it will ensure fresh options are available on a regular basis and improve attendance and participation for event planners. While there are many agencies and guest speakers that can be hired to facilitate a training, there are several strategies that your agency can use to develop a broad-ranging diversity training program.

Some strategies and ideas for diversity trainings include:

- Incorporate elements of DEI into other trainings
- [Book Clubs](#) to promote discussion and empathy
- Diversity training offered to state employees through the Learning Management System
 - Diversity and Inclusion
 - Washington State Diversity and Inclusion Training
 - Diversity: Creating Synergy in the Workplace
 - Inclusive Leadership: Mitigating Implicit Bias in Hiring Process Workshop
 - Diversity Management
- [LGBTQ+ cultural competency](#) - this is an example where the training unit can involve ERGs to either plan the training or even act as a liaison
- Bring in external trainers to cover a wider range of topics that require more specialized knowledge
 - White privilege in the workplace
 - Microaggressions
 - [The Impact of Unconscious Bias in the Workplace](#)
- Viewings or screenings of [Ted Talks](#) or other related media

CONSIDER: Having a wide selection of options will help to reduce resistance from employees who may resent a mandate. Clearly communicating the agency's commitment to diversity and making that connection for your employees will also help in this regard.

Finally, consider creating a training request process for your organization. Employees are best situated to gauge their needs and/or those of their department and should have an outlet to notify human resources or the training department. For example, microaggressions as behaviors are not new, but for some, putting a name to the issue is, and talking about it can be difficult. Employees who want to know more but are not comfortable speaking with coworkers can request the organization provide support through education.

Multicultural Resource Directories

This can be both a recruitment and retention tool for agencies. When diverse candidates apply for positions, it is helpful to make it clear what resources are available to them within the organization and within the broader community ([Guenter-Schlesinger, and Ojikutu, 2009](#)). Furthermore, when resources are clearly available to existing employees, they may have more success building community and meeting their needs and thus be retained in your agency.

Likely this directory will have to be built from scratch for your organization, though you may be able to collaborate with community partners to adapt or develop the community resource section.

Important sections or groupings that may need to be addressed are Social, Health, Family, Legal, and, of course, Institutional/Agency resources. Work with existing groups of employees to determine what is important for a community to have information on. This may be work for a steering committee, or an Employee Resource Group. One example of a Diversity Directory for students at the [University of](#)

[Arkansas can be found here](#). [A template can be found here](#), and used as a foundation for building out your own directory.

See Appendix F for a Multicultural Resource Directory template.

Onboarding

Onboarding is the process in which employees learn the necessary Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities to be successful in their role and within the organization ([Stephenson, n.d.](#)). Though onboarding technically begins during the interview, we have included it within retention, as the more substantial onboarding efforts occur post-hire. During the interview, you have the opportunity to speak about your organization's mission, vision, and values, ask questions of the candidate, and answer theirs in turn ([Stibitz, 2015](#)). An effective job announcement will also lay the groundwork for meaningful discussion, as you can include this core messaging, which the candidate can use to both assess their fit and prepare for the interview.

However, while you can get a sense of an organization's culture during the interview, Day One is when you are fully immersed ([Burns, 2018](#)). It is recommended that, initially, you keep culture at the center when onboarding, rather than focusing on agency and department structure, policies, and compliance; many of these key elements will be addressed through required paperwork and training ([Stibitz, 2015](#); [Stephenson, n.d.](#)). Organizations should determine the duration of the onboarding phase as it fits their needs and those of the new employee.

Here are some suggestions that may improve your onboarding process and, ultimately, retention:

- Check in with current employees regarding their onboarding experience to see what can be improved.
- Create a checklist for supervisors/managers to organize necessary tasks, documents, and timelines for themselves, such as ordering an access badge two weeks prior to the employee's start date and scheduling regular check-ins ([UC Davis Onboarding Toolkit: New employee checklist, 2019](#)).
- Create a handbook or resource that includes things like a glossary of terms, how to set up voicemail, and how to contact technical support.
- Other than essential paperwork, avoid making this the focal point of their first day.
- Collective responsibility.
 - Shared onboarding duties will help the entire team invest in the new employee's success.
 - Identify a point person for questions or concerns for the duration of their training or probationary period, which does not necessarily need to be a supervisor.
- Create a welcoming environment.
 - Have a low-key welcome event on their first day, such as a light snack or coffee with the team.
 - Ask for volunteers to accompany the new employee to lunch for the first week.

-
- Have their workstation clean and, to the extent possible, stocked, and have an access badge available.
 - Supervisor sets clear expectations of duties and timelines for training and provides a copy for future reference.
 - Unless they were promoted from within the division or department, there should not be a significant difference in how you onboard an internal versus external hire.

Mentorship

Research by Conboy and Kelley of Cornell University, as well as Guenter-Schlesinger and Ojikutu of Western Washington University, has shown that mentorship can be an effective strategy in improving equity and retention for diverse populations ([Conboy, & Kelly, 2016](#); [Guenter-Schlesinger and Ojikutu, 2009](#)). Present in the private sector since the 1980s, mentorship programs can result in increased representation in managerial positions by women and men of color by 9 to 24% and improve retention by 15 to 38% in the same groups. These programs also offer two-fold benefits, where people of color as mentors develop leadership skills, while fostering professional growth in mentees ([Creating a Workplace Mentoring Program: Key Steps and Tips, 2020](#)).

Some potential drawbacks, as found by Conboy and Kelley, are that men, who are typically dominant in an office environment, benefit more from mentorship programs, as the mentor's professional influence is an important factor. In addition, an ineffective mentor can do damage to a mentee's career trajectory, and a mentee may become dependent on a mentor. These are issues that can be addressed through comprehensive policies and should not be a deterrent to implementing a program within your organization.

Some best practices to keep in mind when implementing a mentorship program:

- Engage senior mentors: Better outcomes were found for mentees whose mentors were more experienced and/or tenured with the organization. This is a method to keep in mind in mitigating some of the drawbacks.
- Partner mentors and mentees intentionally: Matching personality traits, especially conscientiousness and openness to experience, saw mentees with a 25% higher rate of promotion.
- Involve direct supervisors: Bringing direct supervisors into the process makes the program part of the organization's culture, rather than relegating it to an isolated category or department.

Leadership through mentoring: Providing opportunities for people of color to mentor new employees--regardless of whether the mentee is also a person of color--is an effective way to develop leadership skills in the mentor, foster development in the mentee, and improve retention on either side of the mentor/mentee relationship.

See Appendix G for 5 Steps for Developing A Mentoring Program.

Opportunities for Learning: Exiting Employees

Exit Surveys have been a practice since the 1950s, and are used to gather data about the reasons an employee is leaving their job, and what may have helped retain them ([Brooks, 2007](#)). There are many

different things to consider when implementing exit surveys or updating your current practices. Every agency, department, team, and individual are unique, take a look at the factors below to explore potential changes to your current practices. You can find a list of sample questions on the resources page.

Exiting is not the only time to listen deeply to employees' experiences, however. Consider how you provide opportunities for employees to speak up, and how you request feedback all year every year! ([See also: Diversity Audits](#))

- What kind of survey does your agency administer? By phone, online, in-person? There are implications for each choice. Read on to learn how your method will impact other aspects of the process.
- When do you conduct interviews or surveys? This may be impacted by the method of interview or survey. For example, phone interviews may be conducted a few weeks after an employee has left, giving them time to evaluate why they left or reflect on their experience. Meanwhile, online, and in-person surveys may be conducted as a part of the exiting process and making them mandatory will create a significant response.
- Who conducts interviews or surveys? Again, this is impacted by the chosen method. Phone and in-person interviewers should be chosen carefully. You might consider asking the employee who they would like to conduct the interview, or even hiring an outside evaluator.
- Questions to ask. You might focus on questions about your organizational culture, a person's supervisor, opportunities for leadership, or general job satisfaction. Questions could also focus on developing the vacated position--does the employee have any advice for changing the position description, title, duties, or fit for the position within the agency? Again, the survey method will impact the topics, or at least the number of topics you can cover in an exit survey. Questions may vary depending on the reason for leaving. For example, a retiring employee versus a fairly recent employee.
- Focus groups. If you have a large agency, you may consider focus groups with employees who are leaving in the same couple of weeks. Moderators should be carefully chosen, and you may consider hiring an outside agency.

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Appendix A – What Is Your ‘Why’?

What is Your 'Why'?



Appendix B – Skills Crosswalk

Skills List for Crosswalk

Category
Interpersonal
Leadership
Regularity
Flexibility
Organizational

1. Private Sector Example of Job Posting 1
2. Public Sector Example of Job Posting 2
3. Private Sector Example of Job Posting 3
4. Private Sector Example of Job Posting 4

EXAMPLE OF JOB POSTING

FedEx Service Center Support

POSITION OVERVIEW:

Responsible for handling the needs of customers, processing documentation that accompanies the movement of freight, and performing other administrative and customer service duties as necessary in the daily operation of the service center.

ESSENTIAL JOB DUTIES/RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Perform administrative/clerical functions, including but not limited to, maintaining files, copying, imaging, answering phones, data entry, sorting/ distributing mail and/or packages
2. Verify and complete required documentation and reports
3. Provide accurate information and assistance to customers, which includes determining pick-up and/or delivery needs, problem resolution, updating systems to meet customer special handling requirements, selling company services and provide potential leads to sales
4. Enter freight shipment information into computer system to include, but not limited to, accurately status shipments, generate freight bills and/or correct freight bills, etc.
5. Administer freight pick-up process, as required
6. Assist customers via phone, e-mail and/or fax in all inquiries, including but not limited to, tracing shipments, rate quotes, tariff discrepancies, billing and/or invoicing questions, etc.
7. Make freight delivery appointments, as required
8. Review drivers' Hours-of-Service logs to ensure accuracy, as required; report discrepancies to appropriate leadership member
9. Assist city operations, including but not limited to, checking-in drivers and processing related documentation, coordinating drop-off situations, coordinating driver collections, etc.
10. Communicate with sales, operations and other service centers and/or departments to ensure customer's needs are achieved and all issues are resolved
11. Reconcile cash and checks collected, prepare deposits and prepare COD check remittance to customers, as required
12. Comply with all applicable laws/regulations, as well as company policies/procedures

DSHS ALTSA Customer Service Specialist 2

Our Vision here at [ALTSA](#) is: Safe, healthy individuals, families and communities.
Some of what you will be doing:

- Perform program intake functions
- [Interact with the public in person](#) and on a multi-line phone system
- Provide clients, families, and advocates with [information about basic long term care program eligibility requirements](#)
- [Refer and direct clients](#) to appropriate staff including the assigned Adult Protective Services Investigator
- Operate [multiple complex computer programs](#) for [research and data entry](#)
- Manage Individual Provider contracts using appropriate computer program; [arrange and provide Orientation Training](#) to prospective providers
- Enter [and complete background checks](#) through Background Check Unit
- [Maintain and update manuals](#), phone lists, and other reference materials
- Who are we seeking?

Professionals with one of the following:

- Four years of experience providing assistance to customers regarding inquiries, complaints or problems
- Or a bachelor's degree
- Or an associate's degree and two years of experience providing assistance to customers regarding inquiries, complaints or problems

Desired:

- Excellent [communication skills](#)
- Experience handling confidential material
- Ability to type a minimum of 40 words per minute
- Knowledge of the Medicaid or Individual Provider process is a plus
- [Excellent organizational skills](#); ability to multitask and stay calm while working with clients who may be upset
- Prior experience in a fast-paced office setting with [extensive face to face customer interaction](#)
- Ability to understand, [interpret and apply knowledge of WAC's, RCW's, regulations, and policies](#) to resolve customer inquiries, complaints, and concerns

EXAMPLE OF JOB POSTING

Starbucks Barista

POSITION OVERVIEW:

Responsibilities and essential job functions include but are not limited to the following:

- Acts with integrity, honesty and knowledge that promote the culture, values and mission of Starbucks.
- Maintains a calm demeanor during periods of high volume or unusual events to keep store operating to standard and to set a positive example for the shift team.
- Anticipates customer and store needs by constantly evaluating environment and customers for cues.
- Communicates information to manager so that the team can respond as necessary to create the Third Place environment during each shift.
- Assists with new partner training by positively reinforcing successful performance and giving respectful and encouraging coaching as needed.
- Contributes to positive team environment by recognizing alarms or changes in partner morale and performance and communicating them to the store manager.
- Delivers legendary customer service to all customers by acting with a customer comes first attitude and connecting with the customer. Discovers and responds to customer needs.
- Follows Starbucks operational policies and procedures, including those for cash handling and safety and security, to ensure the safety of all partners during each shift.
- Maintains a clean and organized workspace so that partners can locate resources and product as needed.
- Provides quality beverages, whole bean, and food products consistently for all customers by adhering to all recipe and presentation standards. Follows health, safety and sanitation guidelines for all products.
- Recognizes and reinforces individual and team accomplishments by using existing organizational methods.
- Maintains regular and punctual attendance

Office of the Secretary of State: Office Assistant 1 - Elections Assistant

Headed by an elected state official, the Office of the Secretary of State is responsible for administering elections within the state, registering corporations and charities that do business within the state, collecting and preserving the records of governmental bodies within the state, and maintaining the Washington State Library. The office also administers the Address Confidentiality Program, the Legacy Washington and the Combined Fund Drive. Visit our website at: www.sos.wa.gov.

The Elections Division plays a critical role in ensuring Washington's democratic process is fair, accurate, accessible, and secure. Elections staff provide valuable services to voters, as well as statutorily required training and certifications to election administrators in all 39 counties. The division develops elections policy, administers our statewide voter registration database, manages statewide elections, and verifies and accepts petitions for initiatives and referenda.

This position will report to the certification and training manager and are responsible for:

- Reviewing petition sheets
- **Comparing voter's signatures for validity**
- Proofreading elections and voter documents
- **Processes petition sheets, provides customer service**
- Stacks, sorts, and codes petitions for validation
- **Compares signatures** from the petitions sheets or electronically to signatures in the voter registration records to determine validity
- **Answers customer inquiries in-person, and by phone and email**
- Utilizes a multi-line phone system
- **Compares text to the original for accuracy**
- Checks to ensure spelling and style are correct and consistent
- Checks to **ensure page numbers, heading and captions are correct**
- Verifies that photos and illustrations are correctly captioned

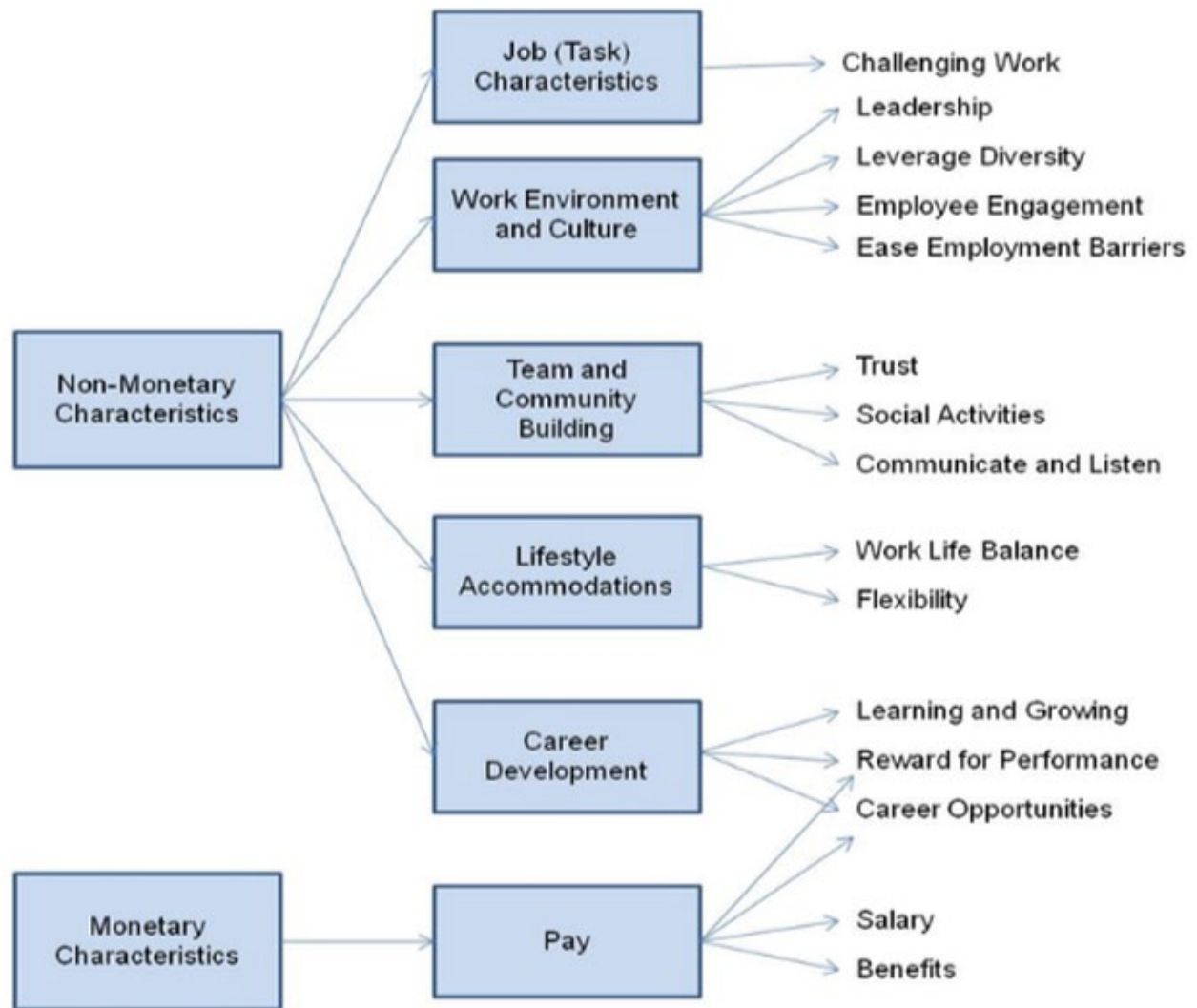
REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Ability to read and write English language
- Ability to efficiently use a personal computer and applicable software to successfully perform the essential job functions of the position
- Ability to solve math problems using addition and subtraction
- Attention to detail
- Ability to multitask

PREFERRED/DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- High school diploma or GED
- Prior signature petition checking experience (state or county)
- Experience answering high volume phone lines
- Experience performing routine clerical duties such as typing, data entry, and file management
- Experience working directly with customers either by phone, email, or in-person
- Ability to follow directions and learn new skills
- Ability to concentrate for extended periods of time

Appendix C – Retention Factors



Khazanchi, Owens, (2011). Chapter 12 Retaining Global IT Talent. In J. Lufman, Managing IT human resources: Considerations for organizations and personnel (178-193). Business Science Reference.

Appendix D – Starting and Employee Resource Group & 4 Ideas to Help You Step into ERG Leadership



Starting an Employee Resource Group (ERG)

This is an example of the steps Douglas found many ERGs have followed to become established in the past (2009). Remember that each agency is unique and your employee groups are unique as well. Use this model as a conversation starter with your forming group. Create your own steps to follow based on your needs and community.



Step 1: Awareness and Education

Educating and bringing awareness at a broad level and the micro levels

- Assessing the organization and recruit employees to the group.
- Consider what leadership looks like and where folks from your community are within the organization. How do you engage folks at all levels?
- Educate employees at the organization, this is an opportunity to share and celebrate culture and help employees understand the ERG. Examples might include Bring your Child to Work Day for a parents group, or a Pride day for an LGBTQ group.



Step 2: Affiliation

Build community, build communication networks and methods.

- Events may include guest speakers, facilitated discussions, or reading groups. Begin and end events with networking opportunities for members to build community.
- During this phase you will establish and begin maintaining communication strategies and methods.
- Remember to listen to your members, survey or do quick focus groups to establish the kinds of events that would be most interesting or inviting. Similarly, use communication methods that your group prefers.



Step 3: Access

Assess the organization and the access your ERG members have. Develop a plan to improve this access.

- Start by understanding the access group members may already have to leadership and to making systematic or policy changes.
- Group members may be interested in a training on networking --both within the organization and beyond it.
- Develop a mentorship program to increase members access to leadership and to provide an opportunity for leadership development. Learn more on our mentorship page.



Step 4: Advancement

Continue the work started in step three, with a focus on leadership and trainings.

- Gather data and present your findings to leadership. For example, are members from your group not being presented with the opportunity to enter into existing leadership trainings?
- Use this data as a springboard to suggest a new training or development program specifically for your members.

4 IDEAS

TO HELP YOU STEP INTO ERG LEADERSHIP

DISCOVER



Learn the history of your group, understand the needs and wants from members and the expectations leadership may have of the group. Do not make changes right away, give yourself plenty of time to learn and connect with members

DEVELOP

Begin planning with your group, create goals, initiatives, and a mission if one does not already exist. This should all be created on the foundational knowledge you gained in the last step. Members should take an active role in shaping and creating these with you.



DRIVE



Begin implementing your plan. Make sure everyone in the ERG feels purposeful. Everyone has something to contribute to achieving the goals.

Diagnose

Continually assess how things are progressing, changes in the environment, changes in group membership and needs. How do you need to adjust goals and the overall plan?



CONSIDER YOUR CONTEXT



Remember that this group is likely to be very different from groups at other agencies or organizations. Listen to members, empower them, amplify their voices. Many of these skills and strategies are true in any leadership position.

To Learn More

All of these steps come from a 2013 research paper by Welbourne and McLaughlin. [Learn more by reading the full article](#) on the Resources page on our website.

Reference:
Welbourne, T. M., & McLaughlin, L. L. (2013). Making the business case for employee resource groups. *Employment Relations Today*, 40(2), 35-44





In-House Climate Assessment

Pre-Development Considerations

- Is it really less expensive to develop in-house? Consider the costs of staff time and the impact of less time elsewhere.
- Does leadership support this assessment?
- Is there a commitment to take action on the results of an assessment?



Looking for examples of questions for an assessment? You can find a [bank of questions here](https://hi-survey.com/EmployeeClimate.htm).

References:
<https://hi-survey.com/EmployeeClimate.htm>

Appendix F – Multicultural Resource Directory Template

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Local Counselors (specific to various communities and identities).	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Doctors Offices	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Acupuncture Offices	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chiropractor and Massage Offices	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Reproductive Health Clinic	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Bereavement	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Family	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Resources for Parents	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Resources for Caregivers of Aging Parents	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Adoption Resources	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Resources for Families with Children who have Disabilities	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Housing Resources	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Legal	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Immigration Counsel	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Family Counsel	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Landlord-Tenant Law Resources	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Agency Resources

-
- HR employees
 - Employment Assistant Programs
 - Employee Resource Groups
 - Diversity and Equity Committee
 - Diversity and Equity Plan
 - Diversity and Equity Statement
 - Mentorship Program
 - Leadership Development Program
 - Space for Meditation, Prayer, or Breastfeeding
 - Wellness Room

Social

- Community Groups
 - Meet-ups
 - Non-Profits
- Hairdressers
- Religious Organizations or Group

Health

- Local Counselors (specific to various communities and identities).
- Doctors' Offices
- Acupuncture Offices
- Chiropractor and Massage Offices
- Reproductive Health Clinic
- Bereavement

Family

- Resources for Parents
- Resources for Caregivers of Aging Parents
- Adoption Resources
- Resources for Families with Children who have Disabilities
- Housing Resources

Legal

- Immigration Counsel
- Family Counsel
- Landlord-Tenant Law Resources

Appendix G – 5 Steps for Developing A Mentoring Program

5 STEPS FOR DEVELOPING A MENTORING PROGRAM

DEFINE PROGRAM GOALS

Mentorship programs can be geared towards improving performance, grooming for managerial or leadership positions, or even retention and assisting new employees as they acclimate to the organization's culture.

As it relates to retention, a mentorship program can be built into your onboarding process. You can work with your team to clearly define goals and objectives as they relate to retaining a diverse workforce.

OUTLINE THE PROCESS

In this planning phase, you'll want to break the process down and thinking critically about each step. **Some considerations:**

- Application process for mentors and mentees
- Structure of the relationship (one-on-one is recommended)
- Duration of the program
- Frequency and location of meetings
- How you will evaluate and assess

GATHER PARTICIPANTS

It is suggested that you seek mentors on a voluntary basis, as well as seeking recommendations from managers. This will aid in reducing potential bias in a recommendation-only policy. Through questionnaire or interviews, determine the skills, experience, and goals of both mentors and mentees.

MATCH MENTORS & MENTEEES

Be intentional when matching mentors to mentees. Research has shown that successful mentorship program help to improve retention, increase tenure, as well as aiding in professional development, leadership skills, and promotion within the organization.

PROVIDE MENTOR TRAINING

Clear expectations and support for mentors are essential to the success of your program. **Here are some areas for discussion:**

- What is a mentoring program in the workplace?
- What benefits will the mentors and mentees enjoy?
- How often will mentoring take place?
- What format will the mentorship take?

Developed from *Creating a Workplace Mentoring Program: Key Steps and Tips*, from a February 14, 2020 article from Indeed.com: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/workplace-mentoring-program>