

ADDRESSING WORKFORCE DIVERSITY THROUGH THE HEALTHWEST STANDARDS FOR WORKFORCE MUTUALITY

BACKGROUND

Workforce Mutuality describes *the extent to which the diversity of the workforce of an organisation or a sector reflects the actual diversity of the community.*

In 2016, members of HealthWest raised concerns about a ‘diversity gap’ between the diversity of the community across Melbourne’s west and the relative lack of diversity in the health and community sector workforce. Research indicated that closing this diversity gap would:

- 1) improve equity and access to opportunity for local communities, and
- 2) improve health and social outcomes, that results when the community is supported by services that reflect the community’s diversity.

In early 2017, HealthWest and partners committed to address the diversity gap and create important system level change through the development and pilot of the Standards for Workforce Mutuality.

PARTNERS

The Standards were developed with the support of Expert Advisory Panel members:

- Migrant Resource Centre North West
- Western Health
- Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria
- Monash University
- Campbell Page
- Brimbank City Council
- Westgate Community Initiatives Group
- Commonwealth Bank of Australia
- Victorian Multicultural Commission
- University of Melbourne
- Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health
- cohealth
- Local community representatives

The Standards were piloted by five HealthWest member organisations:

- commUnity+
- Tweddle Child and Family Service
- IPC Health
- cohealth
- Bolton Clarke

METHOD

The Standards for Workforce Mutuality were developed with the support of an Expert Advisory Panel, including representatives from community, private sector, peak bodies, universities and HealthWest members. The Standards were launched at the Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria

State-wide Conference in May 2018. The Standards and associated tools were then piloted with five HealthWest members to determine their effectiveness and useability. Participants met over four months piloting two Standards each, including self-assessment and development of an actionable work plan. External consultants evaluated the pilot through stakeholder interviews.

OUTCOMES

The Standards for Workforce Mutuality appear to be an effective mechanism for building workforce mutuality by creating systems-level change. External evaluation of a pilot of the Standards for Workforce Mutuality found:

- The Standards were reported to be exceptionally thorough in their breadth and application, while generally remaining tangible enough to be of practical help to organisations. All five pilot organisations agreed that meeting the Standards would lead to improvements in workforce mutuality.
- Pilot organisations indicated that engagement with the Standards led to deepened understanding about issues of diversity and inclusion, and new insights about the organisations level of responsiveness to community diversity.
- The process of completing a self-assessment was typically found to be manageable, with pilot organisations highlighting how easy it was to pick up and use the Standards straightaway. Pilot organisations had already begun building workforce mutuality into their goals, strategic plans and workforce planning during the pilot period.
- The Standards were considered to have a strong future in health, community and human service sectors, as well as the potential to make an impact in other sectors such as the government and corporate sectors.

For more information about the Standards or the evaluation please visit

<http://healthwest.org.au/projects/workforce-mutuality/>