

# Recruiting for Diversity

What we heard  
in Melbourne's west



HealthWest  
Partnership

# Acknowledgments

HealthWest Partnership acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands that we work on, the Wurundjeri, Bunurong, and Wadawurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation, and pay our respects to their cultures, their elders past and present and to all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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HealthWest Partnership thanks the organisations and individuals that agreed to be interviewed for this project.

All efforts have been made to de-identify organisations and individuals in this report through the elimination of names, titles, organisation names and any other identifying features.

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# Executive Summary

The relationship between economic inclusion (employment) and good health, and equally the link between unemployment and poor health outcomes, is well understood (Allen et al., 2010). Acknowledging and responding to this social determinant of health is a crucial primary step we can take towards the prevention of ill health and wellbeing across the west and beyond.

The **Recruiting for Diversity** project (the Project) aims to identify what hinders and supports human resource (HR) departments to adopt fair, accessible and equitable recruitment practices that would lead to better workforce diversity. The Project sits within a group of economic inclusion for health initiatives led by HealthWest, including:

## ONE

Development of a **Workforce Mutuality Toolkit** providing practical guidance on how organisations can better reflect the community they serve.

## TWO

Listening to perspectives in the **Community Conversations** which explored the nature of economic exclusion and community-informed ideas for reducing barriers to participation for refugee and migrant communities.

## THREE

A **Workforce Mutuality Accelerator Program** that provides organisations with tailored support to accelerate their efforts to improve workforce mutuality.

We interviewed 8 HR staff from health and community sector organisations in Melbourne's west.

Amongst the participating organisations there was widespread agreement on the importance of workforce diversity and mutuality. Whilst there was an absence of targeted plans, policies and procedures, there were many examples of innovative practice. The challenges cited by participants were varied:

- difficulties in knowing where to start
- the absence of workforce diversity data collection and use
- restrictive recruitment practices
- digital access within the community
- a lack of relevant community networks that enable access to diverse candidates
- the absence of dedicated resourcing
- challenges associated with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic
- other systemic level issues, including barriers to education for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds and restrictive professional registration requirements for some roles.

HR departments have an apparent high degree of influence in recruiting for diversity. A leadership culture of innovation, coupled with the provision of dedicated resources will support organisations to succeed. Drawing upon the evidence from this report and Healthwest's prior work in economic inclusion for health, organisations are recommended to:

- Design policies and plans with recruiting for diversity in mind
- Support leaders to understand the mechanisms, substructures and practical strategies for better diversity and inclusion outcomes
- Obtain a clear picture of workforce diversity through data collection and analysis
- Support HR teams to test and iterate flexible recruitment procedures
- Engage with community members to learn about employment barriers and enablers.

Whilst the wide-ranging impacts of COVID-19 have been felt intently by organisations, they have, in many cases, led to an agility not yet seen within many modern workplaces. In this time of flux, and where social and health disparities have never been more evident, it is a chance for organisations to capitalise on their capacity to improve economic inclusion in Melbourne's west.



# 1 | Background

Over recent years, HealthWest Partnership has sought to create system level change that enables greater economic inclusion for health in Melbourne's west. This work has centred around drivers that may increase economic opportunities for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds and has involved a range of initiatives in the workforce diversity space. Initially this work began with the development of a **Workforce Mutuality<sup>1</sup> Toolkit** that provides guidance for organisational workforces to better reflect the communities in which they are placed.

To understand more about economic inclusion from a community perspective, HealthWest then partnered with Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) and Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH) to undertake the **Community Conversations project**. This involved gathering further information on the nature of economic exclusion among women and young people from refugee and migrant communities, and sourcing community-informed ideas for reducing barriers to participation.

The **Recruiting for Diversity** project in 2021 explores barriers and enablers, within organisations, that support or hinder recruiting for diversity. This work provides insight into organisational culture, systems and structures relating to recruiting a diverse workforce from the perspective of human resource (also known as People & Culture) departments (hereafter, HR in this report).

## Project Aim:

Identify what hinders and supports human resource (HR) departments in the health and community sector in Melbourne's west to adopt recruitment practices which are fair, accessible, and equitable for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

The project considers health and community organisations as ecosystems and is concerned with the interplay between HR departments, the organisational context within which those HR departments are placed, and their organisational leadership.

## Learning questions:

1. What cultures, systems and structures exist within HR departments which may hinder or support organisations to adopt recruitment practices which are fair, accessible and equitable?
2. What cultures, systems and structures exist within organisations and their leadership which may hinder or support HR departments to adopt recruitment practices which are fair, accessible and equitable?



1 | Workforce mutuality describes the extent to which the diversity of an organisation or a sector's workforce reflects the diversity of the community it serves.



## 2 | Methodology

### Overview

The project involved the facilitation of individual interviews with HR staff, held online via video conferencing. Interviews were led by HealthWest's Evaluation Project Manager and were joined by HealthWest's Communications Project Manager for notetaking. Interviews took place over September and October 2021 and were held with HR staff at a range of seniority levels including operational, middle and more senior positions.

### Design

In the early stages of the project, HealthWest worked with partners from the Centre for Multicultural Youth and the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health to shape the Recruiting for Diversity project focus and interview questions. Together it was agreed to take a strengths-based approach and to ensure interviews were pitched at the organisational level rather than the personal experiences of individuals. We acknowledge, however, that while our focus has been on organisational perspectives, the views shared were provided by individuals whose personal assessments will have no doubt shaped their responses. A project proposal was drafted, including a project overview flyer, interview guidelines, and a privacy and consent form.

### Target Group

Staff within HR departments from HealthWest member organisations in Melbourne's west were identified as target participants for interviews. Medium-large sized organisations were invited to participate as they typically have HR departments and a greater capacity to implement change of significant scale (see Fernando et al., 2016, pp. 457–458).<sup>2</sup> The project engaged organisations that have identified recruitment practices and / or workforce diversity as an area they wished to progress.

Both organisational and individual (staff) participation was voluntary. A total of 8 HR staff members were interviewed across 6 participating organisations. These organisations included representation across not-for-profits, local government, and community health. Hospitals were invited however did not choose to participate at this time.

### Interviews

Interviews were conducted online via video conferencing and followed a schedule of 10 key interview questions (see **Appendix 5.1**). De-identified notes were taken during the course of each interview by a dedicated notetaker. Notetaking aimed to capture key points, views and sentiments and were not a direct transcript of discussions.

Themes covered in the interviews included:

- Interviewee's understanding of their organisation's commitment to recruiting a diverse workforce
- The role of HR and supports for their department to adopt equitable recruitment practices
- What is needed to make recruitment practices more equitable.

2| Note however that several studies have identified smaller organisations can exhibit greater flexibility in recruitment (Parry & Jackling, 2015), and approach cultural fit of employees in a more mutual way (Vermaut & Zanoni, 2014).

Specifically, interviews aimed to explore:

- Reasons for their organisation's interest in recruiting for diversity
- Attitudes towards recruiting for diversity at the leadership, HR and amongst general staff
- Documentation relating to recruiting for diversity – policies, planning documents, procedures
- Resourcing
- Perceived challenges in recruiting for diversity
- Support needs of HR departments
- HR departmental degree of influence
- Enablers of organisational change.

Throughout the process of interviewing, many examples of good practice were also shared alongside the above-mentioned themes that HealthWest set out to explore.

## Data Analysis

Key statements from interview notes were highlighted, analysed and themed using Affinity Mapping. Affinity Mapping is a process used to recognise patterns in large amounts of information, by grouping or clustering that information together into themes that 'make sense'. Affinity Mapping is an analysis method that helps to identify relationships and reveal patterns within data (captured ideas, opinions, challenges, issues etc.) (Huddle Academy, n.d.).

## Terminology

For the purposes of this project and throughout the course of the interviews, HealthWest referred to the following terms in the following ways.

### **"Diversity"**

This project has focused on the recruitment of women and young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, however does not exclude experiences as they relate to all forms of diversity.

### **"Fair / Accessible / Equitable"**

Just and reasonable in relation to individual's life circumstances.

Allowing/supporting participation of a range of people.

### **"Recruitment Processes"**

Hiring processes including, but not limited to:

- Position descriptions
- Selection criteria
- Job advertisements
- Promotion of job opportunities
- Application procedures
- Interview procedures
- Candidate selection

## Limitations

This Recruiting for Diversity project has been small in scale. The ideas/content shared in this report may be generalisable more broadly, however further research would be needed. HealthWest views the project as a 'first look' into the perspectives and perceptions of some HR departments from health-related organisations in Melbourne's west.



The content of this report shares what HealthWest heard during the course of interviews and takes this at face value. The findings represent the views and perspectives of the HR staff HealthWest spoke with on behalf of their organisations. HR staff were not asked to provide supporting evidence.

Through this project, HealthWest aimed to gain an understanding of broad organisational environments, practices and policies, and has done this through conversations with individuals. It is important to therefore acknowledge the individual lens through which the views have been shared about organisations more broadly.

It is also important to note that participating organisations have an existing interest in the area of recruiting for diversity and a desire to progress their approach to this end. HealthWest acknowledges that all organisations are at varying stages in their thinking about and practice towards recruiting for diversity, and that research into organisations where the topic is largely new, may reveal significantly different findings.

Finally, this project has maintained a focus on cultural diversity. Whilst interviewees were invited to share their experiences as they pertained to all forms of diversity, the focus on culturally and linguistically diverse communities remained.

## What this project offers

HealthWest believes that the findings from this project contain transferable data of significance to like-minded organisations in Melbourne's west and other similar locations, despite the above-mentioned limitations. Firstly, this helps to fill a gap acknowledged in the literature of the limited research in Australia and overseas on organisational enablers for equitable recruitment practices (Almeida et al., 2012, pp. 1950–1951; Guo & Ariss, 2015, pp. 1290–1292). A brief scan of the literature has identified six Australian-specific studies focused on HR or decisions makers (specialist recruitment agencies were excluded), however none were conducted in health and community organisations.<sup>3</sup> One of the larger Australian studies was conducted in a regional Australian town with demographics differing to Melbourne's west. Three reports focused on the perspectives of Diversity and Inclusion professionals and benchmarking diversity and inclusion practices in Australia was identified.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, a major factor impeding diversity and inclusion in workplace settings is a lack of awareness or consideration for local contexts. The rich insights that staff, embedded in a particular location, can bring is therefore of significant value. The benefit of understanding the HR perspective is particularly pertinent given the level of authority and influence that HealthWest have learned HR positions hold (see later **3.6 HR's influence**).

The contribution of the Recruiting for Diversity project, alongside the Standards for Workforce Mutuality and the experiences of individuals shared in the Community Conversations report, provide an opportunity to understand challenges around economic inclusion at a local systems level. Approaching the issue of economic exclusion from a variety of related viewpoints enables us to begin to identify strengths, gaps and opportunities that may otherwise go unseen.

3| References to the six Australian studies include several journal articles which were based on the same study. Almeida et al., 2012; Almeida et al., 2015; Almeida & Bertone, 2016; Almeida & Fernando, 2017; D'Netto & Sohal, 1999; Fernando et al., 2016; Maher, 2014; Parry & Jackling, 2015.

4| It is very likely those surveyed were primarily in HR roles, though this was not made clear (University of Sydney Business School, 2018; University of Sydney Business School, 2015; The Korn/Ferry Institute, 2013).

## 3 | What we heard about recruiting for diversity

### 3.1 Motivators


HealthWest began the conversations by asking HR staff about their organisation's interest in recruiting for diversity – namely why their organisation has an interest in this area and how that interest had come about (noting the presence of existing interest as a prerequisite for participating in the project as mentioned above under limitations). Many participants, including those with a broad community clientele reported seeing **the value of and need for their workforces to reflect the make-up of the community** in which they work (workforce mutuality). Reasons for this shared by participants included:

- demonstrating the organisation's 'commitment to the community' and good moral practice
- to provide more effective services to clients (e.g. language alignment between staff and clients)
- a broader movement, within the sector, towards employing those with lived experiences / peer support workforces.

Some participants indicated that the motivation underpinning recruiting for cultural diversity was deeply embedded within their organisations given that the primary purpose and function of the organisation was centred around **servicing the multicultural community** and / or servicing those facing economic exclusion, where cultural diversity is largely represented.

This positive effect of a diverse ethnic client base on recruitment outcomes for migrants have been identified in several Australian studies (Almeida et al., 2015; Fernando et al., 2016), suggesting that the cultural diversity of Melbourne's west is a good motivator to emphasise.

Some organisations noted additional **business-oriented motivations** including compliance to meet targets set by funders, increasing numbers of diverse candidates applying for roles, and the understanding that "diversity pays dividends, so it's just good business". Maher's study cautioned against models of diversity management where the business rationale is the sole or primary motivation, and cultural and social values of diversity are undervalued, noting its risks of continuing to ignore historically underrepresented people (2014, p. 92). Conversely, as many of the organisations with whom Healthwest spoke primarily value diversity and inclusion from a moral / ethical viewpoint, it may be worthwhile for health and community organisations who wish to see greater organisational change to consider the issue from a business perspective (see Diversity Council Australia's report by Russell et al., 2019).



Workforce mutuality describes the extent to which the diversity of an organisation or a sector's workforce reflects the diversity of the community it serves. The [Standards for Workforce Mutuality](#) provide guidance on increasing workforce diversity within the workplace.

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**"diversity pays dividends,  
so it's just good business"**

Participant

### 3.2 Attitudes and support

This project explored organisational cultures around diversity in the domains for organisational leadership (executive officers and senior leaders), HR departments and the general staff group.

#### Organisational leadership

All participants indicated their leadership is supportive of workplace diversity which perhaps may not be surprising, given, as noted above, the requirements for project participation. For some organisations, senior leadership / executive officers are particularly passionate about the topic with interviewees noting:

- CEOs who actively promote diversity/inclusion
- the notion of diversity as deeply embedded within the core values of their CEO
- where workplace diversity forms part of their CEO's vision and values
- where their CEO's open mindedness has been a key enabler in progressing workplace diversity.

For some organisations this support from leadership has seen:

- gender equity targets set at the board level
- funding of website recruitment pages that now actively promote inclusion within the organisation
- diversity reflected within leadership staffing
- enthusiasm (for leaders and the staff body) to learn more about diversity.

In some instances, it was highlighted that whilst there is in-principle support from leaders, this did not translate into tangible action. This is also documented in grey literature and research. In the Benchmarking Diversity and Inclusion Practices in Australia 2018 report, 36% of those surveyed did not believe their organisation was enacting their equality and diversity and inclusion policies satisfactorily (University of Sydney Business School, 2018, p. 20). The mismatch between policy or organisational principles (reflecting leadership intention) and actual implementation and practice is a feature in quite a few studies surveying both employee and employer perspectives (D'Netto & Sohal, 1999; D'Netto et al., 2014; Soldan & Nankervis, 2014, p. 549; Syed, 2008, pp. 36–37).

#### HR departments

Similarly, HealthWest have heard that all participating HR departments are supportive of and have a willingness towards increasing workplace diversity. Participants reported that their HR teams are very keen to progress efforts in this space and that diversity is active in the minds of HR staff. Interviewees shared the topic of diversity is often, if not regularly, the focus in HR staff training, professional development and in staff meetings. Some organisations had recently employed HR staff for the specific goal of progressing workforce diversity. One organisation noted that the staff make up of their HR team reflected a high level of diversity and one indicated they were actively reviewing their recruitment processes with the aim to increase inclusivity. Whilst HealthWest heard many encouraging and positive examples of a shift towards more equitable recruitment practices, it is worth noting that HR teams are not without a range of implementation barriers including the impacts of COVID-19 (see later **3.4 Challenges**).

“[Leaders] ... have the power to create authorising environments and allocate necessary human and financial resources. They can demonstrate the accountability, engagement and oversight needed to ensure that workforce mutuality plans are implemented successfully.”

Standards for Workforce Mutuality

## General staff group

HR perspectives on the culture and attitudes towards diversity within the broader staff body indicated general support, though it appears that for some organisations that support may not be universally consistent across all departments. This differs from the case of leadership and in HR teams where the support seems more widespread. It was noted that some departments within organisations were 'doing better than others'. We heard that in some situations this is more likely to be the case where the department comprises frontline staff who may have a greater understanding of / relationship with diversity due to community/public/client facing roles.

This finding is reflected in the Diversity Council of Australia's recent Inclusion @ Work Index report that suggests that nearly 1 in 5 (19%) Australian workers neither support nor oppose their workplace taking diversity and inclusion action (D'Almada-Remedios & O'Leary, 2021).

Those organisations whose function centres around support for multicultural and / or economically excluded communities felt that their already diverse workforce were strongly committed to the notion of workforce diversity.

## 3.3 Systems and structures


Does this support, seen broadly across leadership and HR departments show up in organisations' systems and structures?

Viewed as the scaffolding that supports recruitment for diversity, HealthWest sees 'systems and structures' as including planning documents, resourcing, policies and practices – those foundational elements that support this work at both a strategic level and on a day-to-day operational basis.

Despite widespread support from senior leaders and human resource departments, only one interviewee reported that recruiting for diversity is included in their organisation's **strategic and planning documents**. Additionally, for most organisations that HealthWest spoke with, there were not specific diversity policies beyond those currently required at a legislated level such as Equal Opportunity. One organisation indicated they have a "robust diversity and inclusion policy" and one organisation noted that a lack of policy had not been a barrier to recruiting for diversity in practice.

A lack of awareness of policies was reported in Maher's study (2014, p. 82), despite their actual existence. The Benchmarking Diversity and Inclusion Practices in Australia 2018 report stated that 84% of companies surveyed had a written policy on equality, diversity and/or inclusion (University of Sydney Business School, 2018, p. 20), a vast improvement from the 51% identified in the 2001 Australian HR Institute (AHRI) Workforce Diversity Survey (quoted in Syed & Kramar, 2010, p. 104). However, the 2018 report also noted that most of the policy provisions related to harassment and bullying, and flexible arrangements, and only 23% included provisions for the needs of culturally diverse workers. Furthermore, only 63% had a formal diversity and inclusion strategy (University of Sydney Business School, 2018, p. 20).

These findings, alongside what HealthWest have heard, suggest that inclusion of recruiting for diversity in policies, strategic and planning documents, and associated promotion of these, may be a critical/foundational step for organisations.



Resources such as the Workforce Mutuality Toolkit, developed by HealthWest, provide guidance for organisations at planning, policy and practice levels.

This toolkit includes Workforce Mutuality Standards, a Good Practice Guide and a Self-Assessment Tool for organisations.

Half of the HR staff interviewed shared instances where dedicated resourcing had been made available. This resourcing has supported a number of initiatives across the 3 organisations:

- The development of a new HR System that allows for reporting on staff's cultural backgrounds / nationalities (Indicator 2.8)
- A website revamp that now promotes the organisation as an inclusive workplace (Indicators 2.1 and 2.7)
- Appointment of HR staff with the specific role of driving workforce diversity (Indicator 2.3)
- Rainbow Tick compliance (Standard 2)
- Provision of diversity training for staff (Indicator 2.4).

These initiatives demonstrate alignment with or towards Standard 2 of the Standards for Workforce Mutuality

The remaining HR staff with whom HealthWest spoke stated that no dedicated resources had been allocated to support recruiting for diversity.

It is important to note that whilst only half cited examples of dedicated resourcing, all HR staff were able to share an array of **innovative ways** in which their organisations have adopted practices that make recruitment more fair, accessible and equitable.

Interviewees shared that some of these practices had come about through necessity, some by accident, and others with specific intentions around increasing workforce diversity. Regardless of the impetus, this shows a groundswell in recruiting for diversity and demonstrates an on-the-ground resourcefulness amongst HR teams in taking action.

**Appendix 5.2** outlines the full range of good practice examples heard during interviews and shows where these link to the HealthWest-developed Standards for Workplace Mutuality, demonstrating some positive progress amongst participating organisations.

### 3.4 Challenges

Through the project HealthWest sought insight into HR perspectives on the challenges of recruiting for diversity. It is interesting to note that here, HealthWest heard a wider range of topics/issues from HR staff, than was the case in other areas explored (such as **3.1 Motivators**, **3.2 Attitudes and support**, and to some extent, **3.3 Systems and structures**) and signifies the nuances within and across the different types of organisations participating in the project.

For some organisations in the very early stages of this work, **knowing where to start** was cited as the biggest initial difficulty. For others, challenges are around **operational processes** such as knowing where or how to access diverse candidates (in order to promote job opportunities), deeply embedded traditional or rigid recruitment practices, and a lack of

Community members raised several similar challenges in the Community Conversations report (HealthWest Partnership, 2021) such as:

- An overly complex job-seeking system
- A lack of networks to assist navigating such a system
- Issues of digital access



networks with external organisations (e.g. community organisations who have links to diverse people experiencing unemployment). Further to this, barriers around candidate's levels of **digital literacy** were mentioned as a challenge, particularly given the recent increase in reliance on the digital world in response to COVID restrictions.

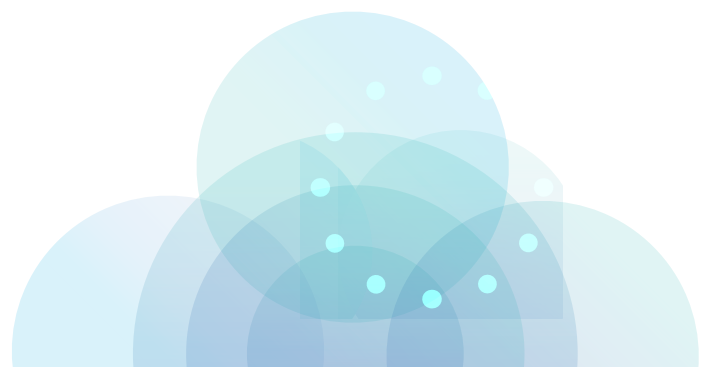
Two HR staff from two different organisations raised the topic of **workforce diversity data** as a key barrier to progress. In these cases, and potentially with other organisations, challenges are around a lack of any workforce diversity data collection in the first instance, or where there is data collection taking place, that data remaining unused. Both cases may represent missed opportunities for valuable insight and benchmarking and can leave HR staff and organisations on the whole, stumbling in the dark.

All the above recruitment challenges have similarly been identified in published studies in Australia and overseas (D'Netto et al., 2014; D'Netto & Sohal, 1999; Lang, 2021; Soldan & Nankervis, 2014; Vermaut & Zanoni, 2014) and in grey literature (CMY, July 2020; D'Almada-Remedios et al., 2021; HealthWest Partnership, 2021, pp. 18-19). Given the more recent rapid reliance on digital platforms resulting from COVID-19, digital inclusion in particular has been identified as a significant issue in Melbourne (CMY, July 2020) and in Melbourne's west (HealthWest Partnership, 2021, pp. 18-19). This reminds us of the value of research that shines a light on local contexts and highlights that in Melbourne's west, if not elsewhere, organisations may see benefit in moving beyond a complete reliance on digital job application processes. For jobs that require the use of technology as part of the role, organisations may find value in the building of digital capacity amongst new employees once recruited. Similarly, growing digital literacy amongst job seekers may also be a pertinent area of focus for local skill building / employment pathway programs, alongside a much greater emphasis on networking opportunities that bridge the gap between willing candidates and organisations seeking to fill roles.

Additionally, and despite the large-scale job loss seen, particularly in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020; Biddle et al., 2020, pp. 12-14), HR staff reported a recent large reduction in the number of job applications received, noting that for some roles, nursing as one example, applications would have been previously received from the large international labour force present in Australia.

Moving beyond day-to-day practicalities, less tangible, yet equally significant barriers were raised, such as **conscious and unconscious bias, and systemic issues** such as barriers to education as a precursor to barriers to employment or professional registration requirements associated with certain roles.

A couple of interviewees stressed the need for ongoing support for culturally (and other) diverse staff beyond recruitment. Another talked about the importance of children and young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds being able to imagine themselves in certain careers. The latter two points were highlighted in a US review of a program developed to increase the diversity of the library workforce in Minnesota, US. That particular program had a positive impact on improved, targeted recruitment plans, however, long term efficacy was lacking. This was found to be the case due to an absence of ongoing support beyond recruitment for specific population groups, and the difficulty of challenging library worker stereotypes (Wagner & Willms, 2010, pp. 134-136).





**COVID-19** was also cited by HR staff as being a very current and impactful issue, eclipsing staff attention on the development of inclusive recruitment policies and practices.

The re-deployment of staff, including human resource staff, into critical COVID-response roles has seen attentions shift from 'how can we improve' to 'just getting through', or as one organisation stated - the slowing down of Diversity and Inclusion Staff Working Group activities (that have previously included a focus on increasing workforce diversity).

In discussions with community members throughout the Community Conversations project, a number of barriers to employment were cited by individuals (and in associated research). Communication (English and workplace 'lingo' literacy), discrimination, recognition (or lack thereof) of migrant strengths and difficulties in gaining work experience were highlighted as significant challenges (alongside some of the issues referred to above), suggesting there is something to be gained from organisations and HR departments taking steps to **understand the issue from the candidate perspective**.

### 3.5 Enablers for improvement

HealthWest aimed to gain insight into some of the factors that may enable organisations to adopt new practices or make changes to their recruitment practices by exploring HR staff views on what had enabled them to make improvement to systems and practices within their organisations in the past. Whilst the conditions, strategies and approaches shared with HealthWest did not strictly pertain to recruiting for diversity, they may provide indicators for effective change management and highlight some factors that may enable change towards inclusive employment.

HR staff shared the following enablers:

- Innovation / learning mindset amongst organisational leaders
- Whole of organisation buy-in
- Reaching out externally / partnering / networking with others
- Drawing upon skills / networks within the organisation not ordinarily drawn upon
- Thorough research and planning
- Systems tailored specifically to meet needs (rather than one size fits all approach).

One area not directly mentioned was the need for overarching diversity and inclusion change management plans (though some of the above points would fall within such a plan). This vital area was identified by Diversity Council Australia's report on Making the Switch for Change at Work (Russell et al., 2019). One possible reason for this omission may be that the organisational change approach is likely to be driven by executive level leaders and few interviewees were appointed at this level.

### 3.6 HR's influence

Overall, organisations reported that HR have a high level up to an extremely high level of influence over recruitment practices within their organisations. In the case where some or many HR departments are not involved in day-to-day recruitment on the ground, it appears they still have a considerable level of impact in terms of advice provision, staff training, internal messaging, and in policy and process development, particularly if evidence based.

This suggests that whilst support from leadership, resourcing and whole of organisation buy-in are important mechanisms for adoption of new policies and practices, directing support into HR teams is a worthwhile investment towards increased workforce diversity.

### 3.7 Recommendations

Creating an enabling environment for the adoption of recruitment practices that are fair, accessible and equitable for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds requires organisations to initiate proactive strategies in a range of organisational domains. Steps can be taken to build an organisational culture around inclusivity that is underpinned by structures and systems specifically designed to increase workforce diversity.

The participants HealthWest spoke with shared the following thoughts on actions organisations could take to better support this work.

#### Organisational cultures and leadership

- Leadership buy-in: in order to implement new practices, HR need to work with organisational leaders
- Provide internal resourcing to support this work
- Build staff capacity through diversity and inclusion training, induction activities and professional development programs (such as mentoring).

#### Systems and Structures

- Incorporate recruiting for diversity into strategic plans and reporting requirements
- Collect and make use of workforce data that provides baseline understanding and benchmarking opportunities
- Aim to create a culture of diversity and inclusion that is consistent across the organisation, capitalising on the strengths of specific teams with expertise in diversity and inclusion.

#### HR Teams and processes

- Appoint staff in roles dedicated to driving / supporting recruitment for diversity
- Adjust and trial recruitment practices, in particular:
  - Authorise and resource flexible recruitment / application processes. This may include:
    - > more flexible online recruitment systems (and / or options aside from online)
    - > increased resourcing that enables staff to step outside of 'usual' processes
    - > options to change standard practices such as traditional position descriptions or key selection criteria.
  - Resources that enable prospective candidates to access supported pathways into employment within the organisation and initiatives that continue to support candidates once employed (such as ongoing digital skills development)
  - Networking opportunities to connect with like-organisations, employment support organisations and prospective candidates
  - Increased public promotion of organisation as an inclusive place to work.



## 4| Concluding remarks

Whilst interest in recruiting for diversity was a requirement for participation in this project, the conversations HealthWest have had indicate that **interest in and support for workforce diversity is generally widespread** particularly amongst leadership and within HR departments.

Many HR departments have begun work in this area and there are **many examples of good practice** taking place amongst organisations within Melbourne's west. For some organisations these examples have come about within the context of action-oriented leadership and dedicated resources. For others they may have come about through necessity or compliance. And for others, initiatives have emerged through on-the-ground innovation. In most cases, examples of good practice took place despite the absence of (or absence of awareness of) specific recruiting for diversity plans and policies. And whilst this may not have been a barrier for these good practice examples to have come about, it is important to note that organisations may see much greater success with **intentionally designed policies and plans** (including resourcing and reporting requirements) to elevate recruitment. Organisational plans and policies can also sustain commitment to recruiting for diversity across organisations and beyond that of passionate individuals, be they senior leadership, managers or operational HR staff.

**Design policies and plans with recruiting for diversity in mind**

In order to see an increase in the adoption of recruitment practices that are fair, accessible and equitable it is important for leadership support to translate into tangible action.

As has been noted early in this report, **leadership buy-in** (or lack thereof) does not appear, in and of itself to be a current barrier for organisations to adopt inclusive recruitment practices. It may be however, that organisational leaders can be supported to **better understand practical strategies (and associated resourcing)**

**Support leaders to understand the mechanisms, substructures and practical strategies for better diversity and inclusion outcomes**

that will lead to better diversity and inclusion outcomes both for their organisations and for the diverse community in which they are placed. Part of this work may include:

- fostering a culture of learning and innovation – that support design-test-redesign approaches within the organisation
- considering the recruitment of diverse community members from a business perspective alongside ethical viewpoints
- directing support towards HR departments as key drivers in this space.



Early on in the process of improving workforce diversity it is important to have **a clear picture of the demographic make-up of a particular workforce** as it currently stands. This baseline data can then be used to understand the degree to which that workforce reflects the make-up of the community the organisation aims to serve.

As stated in Counting Culture 2021, the first step towards increasing and capitalising on cultural diversity requires the ability to adequately measure “the degree and breadth of culturally diverse talent in [the] leadership team, workforce, customer base and labour market pool” (D’Almada-Remedios et al., 2021, p. 7). Continued and ongoing collection of workforce data can provide hard evidence for success or otherwise, and can help to guide strategic plans, policies and reporting requirements. The appointment of staff in dedicated roles to support this work may be a valuable resource for organisational leaders to consider.

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**Obtain a clear picture of workforce diversity through data collection and analysis**

At the operational level, the ability for HR teams to **test and iterate flexible recruitment procedures** will likely be of benefit. This would include:

- reviewing role requirements and application processes
- networking opportunities to connect with local partner organisations and prospective candidates
- the implementation of systems that support candidates once appointed.

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**Support HR teams to test and iterate flexible recruitment procedures**

Importantly, **attending to community perspectives** on employment barriers will likely help to bridge the divide between willing prospective candidates and job vacancies needing to be filled.

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**Engage with community members to learn about employment barriers and enablers**

The Recruiting for Diversity project, alongside the Workforce Mutuality Toolkit and Community Conversations, highlights there are **multiple pathways to increasing economic inclusion** whilst improving organisational effectiveness through a diverse workforce.

COVID-19 has shown **organisations have great capacity for change**. Border closures have resulted in labour shortages. The economic and health inequities prevalent in Melbourne’s west have come to the fore. Whilst HR staff cited that COVID has been a key challenge in, or delayed progress with recruiting for diversity efforts, perhaps it is because of the impacts and opportunities that have resulted from COVID, that we need now to prioritise recruiting for diversity.

## 5 | Appendix

### 5.1 Interview guide

1. We are aware your organisation has an interest in recruiting a diverse workforce. Can you tell us about that?
  - a. Why does your organisation have an interest in this?
  - b. How did this interest come about?
  - c. How has your executive and management supported this?
  - d. What has been your HR department's response to working in this space?
  - e. What has been / what do you think will be the staff response to this?
2. Is equitable recruitment built in to your organisation's or department's planning documents? If so, how? If not, why?
3. What resources has your organisation made available to support recruiting for diversity?
4. What policies or procedures within your organisation or department support your team to adopt more equitable recruitment practices?
5. How could your organisation support your HR team professionally in this area?
6. What influence do you feel the HR department has on the organisation's approach to recruiting for diversity?
7. Thinking about when your organisation or team have successfully made improvements in your recruitment practices – how was the need for improvement identified and what enabled that success?
8. In your opinion what are (or what could be) some of the most challenging aspects of developing equitable recruitment practices within your organisation or team?
  - a. If HR were to suggest alternate recruitment processes, how do you feel these suggestions would be received?
9. Thinking about a time when your HR department have faced challenges in recruiting for diversity, have you managed to overcome these? If so, how? If not, what would help?
10. If you could make one change tomorrow to ensure that recruitment is more inclusive of women and young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds – what would that be?



## 5.2 Good practice examples

During interviews with participating organisations, HealthWest heard many instances of positive actions and steps towards recruiting for diversity. There is some strong alignment with the **Standards of Workforce Mutuality**, indicating these actions are 'on track'. The **Good Practice Guide** (one component of the Workforce Mutuality Toolkit) sets out further 'real world' examples of actions organisations can take.

Examples of good practice	Alignment with / towards the Standards for Workforce Mutuality
The development of a new HR System that allows for reporting on staff's cultural backgrounds / nationalities	<b>Towards Standard 2, Indicator 2.8:</b> Staff data is collected in a safe and confidential way, compared to community data and used to set workforce mutuality targets
A website revamp that now promotes the organisation as an inclusive workplace	<b>Standard 2, Indicator 2.1:</b> We promote diversity and inclusion as core values of the organisation <b>Standard 2, Indicator 2.7:</b> Mutuality with the community is reflected in internal and external publications, communications and other promotional resources
Appointment of HR staff with the specific role of driving workforce diversity	<b>Standard 2, Indicator 2.3:</b> Adequate budget and resources are allocated for improving workforce mutuality
Rainbow Tick compliance	<b>Standard 2:</b> Creating an organisational culture that values diversity
Provision of diversity training for staff	<b>Towards Standard 2, Indicator 2.4:</b> Staff are provided with diversity training and resources that are appropriate for the diversity of the community
Seeking feedback from community members on the organisation's job application processes	<b>Standard 3, Indicator 3.1:</b> The organisation seeks out opportunities to work together with community, other organisations and sectors to build accessible and sustainable job pathways for people from diverse backgrounds <b>Standard 4, Indicator 4.1:</b> Workforce planning processes result in the development of position descriptions, role scope and selection criteria that facilitate diversity and inclusion



Methods used to access diverse candidates (i.e. advertising roles in a range of culturally specific media)	<p><b>Standard 3, Indicator 3.1:</b> The organisation seeks out opportunities to work together with community, other organisations and sectors to build accessible and sustainable job pathways for people from diverse backgrounds</p> <p><b>Standard 4, Indicator 4.4:</b> Jobs are promoted in formats and platforms that will reach diverse communities</p>
Use of data (for example, a new HR system that enables reporting on staff cultural background or nationality; undertaking quarterly analysis of gender pay gaps)	<b>Towards Standard 2, Indicator 2.8:</b> Staff data is collected in a safe and confidential way, compared to community data and used to set workforce mutuality targets
Rethinking what is required for particular job roles (i.e. experience vs soft skills fit)	<b>Standard 4, Indicator 4.1:</b> Workforce planning processes result in the development of position descriptions, role scope and selection criteria that facilitate diversity and inclusion
Changes to position descriptions / key selection criteria to make them more accessible	<b>Standard 4, Indicator 4.1:</b> Workforce planning processes result in the development of position descriptions, role scope and selection criteria that facilitate diversity and inclusion
Diverse interview panels	<b>Standard 4, Indicator 4.5:</b> Recruitment processes are transparent and unbiased
Offering pathways to employment	<b>Standard 3:</b> Building job pathways for a diverse community
Additional supports for candidates once appointed	<b>Standard 5:</b> Staff from diverse backgrounds are provided with equitable support relevant to their individual needs and the requirements of their role
Adjusting recruitment processes to make accessible for those with less digital confidence / literacy	<b>Standard 4:</b> Employing a diverse workforce
Internal opportunities for staff to progress diversity and inclusion (e.g. 'Inclusion Champions' program, staff working groups)	<b>Standard 2:</b> Creating an organisational culture that values diversity
Partnering with external organisations (e.g. Neighbourhood houses) to build job seeking skills and access to prospective candidates	<b>Standard 3.1:</b> The organisation seeks out opportunities to work together with community, other organisations and sectors to build accessible and sustainable job pathways for people from diverse backgrounds

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