

Consideration for employers



VOLUNTEERISM

Cultural expertise and lived experience are essential ingredients needed to ensure services and programs delivered to diverse communities are accessible, responsive to community interest/needs and are culturally appropriate.

Whilst most organisations recognise the importance of engaging community perspectives, they generally rely on altruism and voluntary participation of community members to gain these insights. Thus, there is a culture of volunteerism; whereby individuals and groups are frequently asked to share their cultural expertise or lived experience voluntarily or in exchange for gift cards and catering.

This project consulted with various bi-cultural workers and community leaders, and found that **an overwhelming number of community members felt that constant volunteerism leads to burn out and resentment.**

Additionally, it was felt that **volunteerism can perpetuate power imbalances** whereby white perspectives are privileged and remunerated and non-western cultural perspectives are seen as secondary and not worthy of remuneration.

It was a recommended outcome of the project that organisations should be encouraged to **implement policies and procedures that support employment pathways for cultural experts and bi-cultural workers** that may lead to sustainable employment and remuneration.



EXPENSES

Whilst it is recommended that employers seek to create ongoing, secure employment opportunities for bi-cultural workers and take active steps to challenge casualisation of the workforce, cohealth recognises that the majority of bi-cultural workers are employed as consultants or on a casual/part time basis.



When setting budgets for projects or costs associated with bi-cultural work consider the following:

Payment for professional services NOT honorariums or gift cards	Flexible working hours to accommodate community needs – may incur after hours or weekend rates
A minimum of 3 hours payment for any booking	Funds for professional development
Paid travel time and travel expenses	Payment for supervision
Paid preparation time to read relevant materials, prepare for group work etc.	Payment for orientation and reading organisation policy/ induction materials
A clear cancellation policy; Less than 24 hours cancellation paid in full. Less than 48hours cancellation paid 50%.	Paid participation in team meetings and induction processes
Cover personal expenses including; use of personal cars, laptops, phones, credit etc	Provision of work phone, laptop, cars, emails (where possible)
Payment for follow up phone calls, referrals or emails post community engagement	

CAPACITY BUILDING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Bi-cultural workers have highlighted that there are limited capacity building opportunities and professional development pathways for their career progression. This is compounded by the casual nature of their employment and the prioritisation of academic qualification over cultural expertise or lived experience (VRHN, 2016. Talking about health report).

It was a recommended outcome of the project that organisations should seek opportunities to provide professional development and capacity building for people in bi-cultural worker roles.

Bi-cultural workers should also be supported by systems and processes that enable them to complete their responsibilities, for example;

Orientation to an organisation is essential, regardless of whether a bi-cultural worker is casual or ongoing

Bi-cultural workers have many transferable skills and may wish to work in different roles across the organisation – this should be supported

Professional development opportunities should be provided regardless of whether a bi-cultural worker is casual or ongoing

Preparation materials should be provided with sufficient time to prepare (a minimum of one week is advisable)

Career progression or diversification can be supported by the provision of mentoring, internships or placements

For projects where specialised knowledge is required, bi-cultural workers should be offered capacity building on this topic

PERSONAL SAFETY

Casualisation of the bi-cultural workforce can impact the level of support bi-cultural workers receive from their employing agencies and when working with their cultural communities.

When working within their communities, bi-cultural workers navigate complex boundaries between personal and professional connections. Developing clear boundaries can be made easier with organisational support.



Recommendations from bi-cultural workers include

Paid orientation, induction and education about safety standards and procedures - particularly in relation to their bi-cultural work

Education about employee rights and eligibility for support services

Adequate insurance coverage.

Provision of regular (paid) supervision enabling bi-cultural workers to debrief and develop strategies for boundary setting in collaboration with their managers

Provision of work email and phones to separate work and community life

CULTURAL SAFETY



Western organisations generally exist in postcolonial contexts that prioritise western ways of knowing, systems and structures. This can disadvantage people from non-western backgrounds and perpetuate unequal power dynamics.

This context coupled with unconscious bias, prejudice, ignorance or discrimination can contribute to an unsafe work environment for bi-cultural staff.

Recommendations to support cultural safety in the workplace were developed by cohealth's bi-cultural project, they include



Deliver Cultural safety training across the whole organisation



Teach Australian workplace expectations during the orientation process



Practice self-reflection; acknowledge that unconscious bias, beliefs and assumptions influence how we work



Embrace different world views, ways of knowing, thinking and doing.



Encourage people to use language that identifies when something is a subjective experience or belief



Build trust and relationships among participants that allows them to feel safe in challenging each other and expressing their needs



Recognise how power, privilege or disadvantage influences people's decision making and outcomes



Zero tolerance for racism and culture-based bullying



Ask your staff/colleagues what best suits them. Learning and ways of gaining knowledge are intrinsically cultural and laden with norms and expectations



Respect a person's lived experience. Bi-cultural workers know their community and their needs



Respect cultural norms and protocols. Social, gender and age norms will influence the expectations and experiences of community engagement



Offer flexible working arrangements to allow for prayer times and other cultural/religious practices



Challenge paternalism; commit to sharing power. Step back and let communities take the lead. Prioritise their voices, interests and needs - Be advocates for this!



Everyone's knowledge and skills are valued



Be creative and flexible! things change and grow to respond to communities' needs



Bi-cultural staff may feel isolated due to a lack of diversity in the organisation - encourage the establishment of networks or buddy systems to support people of colour in the workplace



Diversify your workforce at all levels; prioritise cultural expertise and lived experience.



