



Enterprise Guidance on Fostering Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Competence in the Selection Process

Introduction

Minnesota state agencies are committed to fostering a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and culturally competent work environment free from unlawful employment discrimination and without barriers to equal employment opportunity (EEO). A primary strategy for fostering workplace inclusion is developing the cultural competency of state employees and hiring individuals with these competencies. To support this strategy, we want to incorporate cultural competence into each stage of the selection process. This document provides guidance on incorporating values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural competence into the selection process.

What is cultural competence?

Cultural competence is a continuous learning process focused on developing knowledge, appreciation, acceptance, and skills in different cultural approaches. Cultural competence is also a product of enterprise and agency policies, attitudes, and practices. Together, these factors influence employee perceptions about the work environment and create culture where all employees feel valued and respected. This, in turn, positively impacts engagement, inclusion, job satisfaction, employee retention, and productivity.

We will not discriminate

Every stage of the selection process must be free from discrimination based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth and related medical conditions), marital status, familial status, receipt of public assistance, membership or activity in a local human rights commission, disability, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, and age. Our efforts to increase diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural competence cannot include unlawful discrimination.

How we Define Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility and Cultural Competency

Diversity is all the ways that people are different and the same at the individual and group levels. The Office of Inclusion strives to increase diversity across the enterprise, which is expressed in many dimensions, including but not limited to race and ethnicity, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, language, culture, national origin, religious beliefs, identity, age, invisible or visible disability status, political perspective, and other dimensions.

Equity is ensuring everyone has what they need to be successful. It requires commitment to strategic priorities, resources, respect, and consideration, as well as ongoing action and assessment of progress toward achieving goals. The Office of Inclusion actively works to challenge and respond to bias, harassment, and discrimination. We are committed to advancing community outcomes for all Minnesotans by eliminating disparities and inequities in our processes, policies, procedures, and systems.

Inclusion is the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals fully participate in all aspects of organizational work, including decision making processes. The Office of Inclusion pursues deliberate efforts to ensure that the State of Minnesota is a place where differences are welcomed, different perspectives are heard, and every individual feels a sense of belonging and value.

Accessibility means everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience has access to the same tools and content. The Office of Inclusion strives to intentionally provide quality content that is accessible to every audience, regardless of technology or ability. We are actively working to increase the accessibility and usability of all platforms and in doing so adhere to the available standards and guidelines.

Cultural Competence is our ability to understand and interact effectively with people from other cultures.

Agency Mission/Vision/Metrics

Every agency should have its own mission and vision of its commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity. Human Resources should integrate these tenets into selection processes and policies, identify challenge areas and create solutions, and define metrics to assess success. Metrics should be tied to an agency's Affirmative Action Plan and goals. Agencies should have a way to audit their internal practices to continuously improve. Consider how training components might be used to support and encourage the practices suggested in this guidance document.

Position Description

Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) recommends conducting job analyses. This helps create effective and useful position descriptions that reflect essential job function and the knowledge, skills, and abilities tied to job tasks.

Use position descriptions to embed agency cultural competence commitments and set expectations tied to performance of job tasks. A well-written job description will not only provide information about the work assigned to the job, but also about the relations with other roles at the agency and throughout the state. Standardized language in job descriptions can help achieve this. For example:

Responsibility Statement: To be deliberate in fostering positive interpersonal relationships with coworkers, managers, and visitors so all are treated in a respectful, professional, and humane manner.

Task Statements:

- A. Be respectful of the rights, responsibilities, and duties of others and of the human rights of all individuals.
- B. Maintain a professional level of conduct and interaction with other staff.
- C. Perform duties and responsibilities in a way that is respectful to others.
- D. Maintain composure during difficult and stressful situations.

Cultural Competence Needs Assessment

Every position requires cultural competence. When reviewing a position, consider the responsibilities of the position and how cultural competence may impact the way the position functions. For example, consider:

- How the position interacts with internal and external customers
- The programs managed/administered by the position and how consideration of cultural competence may impact those duties
- Policies, procedures, or guidance written or influenced by the position that may be influenced by cultural competence

If the position has limited impact on programs and limited customer interaction, consider how the position will work internally. For example:

- Most positions need to interact and communicate with coworkers and internal customers in a culturally competent manner

- Some positions create work output that may need to be written or produced in accessible formats
- Some positions, such as skilled trade workers and laborers, may need to consider how to perform their work while still ensuring that buildings and facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities

Some positions have a very direct focus on diversity, inclusion, and equity, which requires higher degrees of cultural competence and greater familiarity with these strategies. While all positions require a foundation in cultural competence, be aware of positions that may require greater degrees of skill in this area.

Selection Strategy

Developing a selection strategy is an essential part of any selection process. There may be changes or revisions that can be made to the job posting, minimum qualifications, or to the recruitment plan that would invite a more diverse pool of applicants. Consider how the posting will appear to potential candidates and identify unintended barriers you can remove. Ask yourself whether the posting and recruitment strategy communicates to applicants that your agency is a welcoming, inclusive, and culturally competent place to work.

Intake Meeting

Defining the recruitment strategy prior to launching your recruitment efforts is a critical step. It allows participants to define roles, set timelines, and set expectations at each point of the process. MMB recommends scheduling an intake meeting with the hiring manager, human resources, and the agency's affirmative action officer to discuss options for including cultural competence throughout the selection process. Be mindful of formulating an advertising plan and targeted outreach that focus on cultural competence objectives. Consider how these efforts affect the candidate experience.

Job Posting Language

To immediately set a tone for applicants, MMB recommends implementing standard language on all job postings, as follows: .

Our differences make us stronger and leveraging them helps us create a workforce where everyone can thrive. The [agency] is an equal opportunity employer. We are committed to embedding diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility at our workplace. We do this by developing strong leaders and advocates, increasing cultural competence and understanding among all employees, and removing

institutional barriers and attitudes that prevent employees from advancing as far as their talents will take them. We prohibit discrimination and harassment of any kind based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth and related medical conditions), marital status, familial status, receipt of public assistance, membership or activity in a local human rights commission, disability, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, or age.

Minimum Qualifications

Agencies should follow qualification setting guidance outlined in the [Assessing and Setting Qualifications](#) guide. Minimum qualifications establish the lowest level of experience and education needed to perform the essential functions of the job successfully. Minimum qualifications must be job-related and should be reviewed every time a position is posted to ensure they are applicable. MMB provides the following expectations for setting minimum qualifications:

- Create meaningful qualifications that are linked directly to essential job tasks (via a preferred job analysis method).
- Remove qualifications that may unduly limit the applicant pool.
- Be deliberate in the way qualifications are written so they don't create unintentional bias against any given applicant group.
- Be aware of alternatives to traditional posting language by implementing [inclusive posting language guidance](#).
- Encourage equivalencies, whenever possible, to broaden the ways an applicant can qualify.
- If there is no experience equivalency provided, restrict post-secondary degree qualifications only to those jobs where a specific degree or licensure is actually required to perform the job.

Given our commitment to fostering workplaces that are inclusive for employees from all backgrounds and diverse populations, MMB recommends that most jobs have minimum qualifications related to cultural competence. All job-related qualifications should tie back directly to the essential functions of the job. Refer to Appendix B for examples of minimum qualifications for cultural competence.

Preferred Qualifications

Use preferred qualifications to attract applicants that possess the skills and experience that align with the culture/mission of the agency. For example:

Our employees are dedicated to ensuring cultural responsiveness. Preferred candidates will have a variety of experiences working effectively with others from different backgrounds and cultures.

Interviewing

Preparing for the Interview

Prior to the interview, consistently ask all applicants if they will need any accommodations to participate in the selection process. Partner with your agency ADA coordinator to provide reasonable accommodations necessary to enable individuals with disabilities to participate in the selection process.

The interview panel should include two to four individuals. When possible, this panel should represent different perspectives and roles in the agency.

Developing Interview Questions

Agencies should follow interviewing guidance outlined in the [Assessing and Setting Qualifications guide](#). Interview questions must be job-related and should always be tied to the knowledge, skills, abilities, and KSAs and competencies needed to perform the job. Interviews should include questions about cultural competence that are job-related.

Consider the outcome you are trying to achieve when asking a question. It is important to develop ranking scales for each question you ask so you know if the candidate is achieving the outcome. (Refer to sample question 1 in Appendix A.)

Appendix A

Sample Interview Questions Related to Cultural Competence

The following represent a sample of questions that were contributed from state agencies; there are many additional questions that are useful in assessing Cultural Competence. The first example also contains example anchors for measurement and evaluation. Be sure any interview questions that you use are job-related for the specific position at issue.

1. How would you advocate for diversity education and diversity initiatives with individuals who don't recognize the value of these initiatives?
 - a. Ranking of 1: Did not correctly identify diversity or identify ways to advocate for diversity or address it with a reluctant audience.
 - b. Ranking of 3: Shows a basic knowledge of diversity, may have partial ideas on how to advocate.
 - c. Ranking of 5: Showed awareness of diversity education and initiatives and described specific ways they would advocate with individuals who don't see their values.
2. Our customers are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, geography, literacy, and several other factors. We value the ability to work effectively with people who differ from us in some way or another. Provide an example of how you have built and sustained relationships with someone different from yourself. What were the circumstances and how did you go about building and sustaining the relationship?
3. Ability to work with individuals from all backgrounds and to adapt to various communication and work styles is necessary in this position. What have you done to gain a better understanding of a different race, ethnicity, or culture?
4. Please tell us about the last time you adjusted (adapted) to a wide variety of people by accepting or understanding their perspectives. What was the group? What was the situation? What was the outcome?
5. In a previous work setting, please tell us the actions that you've taken to create a work environment where differences are valued, encouraged and supported.
6. What role do you believe diversity plays in determining program outcomes?

7. How would you go about building rapport with a co-worker who is from a background different from yours?
8. Sometimes there is a belief that a commitment to diversity conflicts with a commitment to excellence (i.e. we will have to limit our standards to achieve or accommodate diversity). How would you describe the relationship between diversity and excellence? What kinds of leadership efforts would you undertake to encourage a commitment to excellence through diversity? (Supervisor/Manager Question)
9. What areas of diversity do you think you have to learn more about and how would you go about doing it?
10. What kinds of experiences have you had in relating with people whose backgrounds are different than your own?
11. Describe a time when you found it difficult to work with someone from a different background.
12. Describe a situation that required you to consider a different perspective from your own when exploring an issue.

Appendix B

Cultural Competence Minimum Qualification Examples

Minimum cultural competence qualifications will vary based on job-relatedness, and not all minimum qualifications are job-related for every job. All minimum qualifications MUST be related to the specific job.

Below are examples of different responsibilities that a position may perform, and an associated example minimum qualification that captures the cultural competence component that was needed for that particular job.

Responsibility	Minimum Qualification Example
Communication:	<i>Ability to effectively communicate with colleagues and customers from different backgrounds.</i>
Policy Development:	<i>Ability to research and incorporate perspectives and needs from different cultural and community stakeholder groups in the development of policy.</i>
Program Administration:	<i>Knowledge of different cultural and community groups sufficient to administer the programmatic area and ensure stakeholders understand the requirements and expectations of a given program and that their needs are factored into program decisions</i>
Direct Care and Treatment:	<i>Ability to consider reasonable treatment alternatives, based on the cultural needs and considerations of patients.</i>
Auditing/Compliance/Enforcement:	<i>Awareness of various cultural norms, sufficient to adapt tactics and expectations to balance legal and program requirements with cultural norms.</i>
Food Service:	<i>Ability to prepare food in accordance with different cultural dietary restrictions.</i>
Management/Supervision:	<i>Ability to treat employees inclusively in the areas of reasonable accommodation, scheduling, expectations, individualized resource needs, training, and development, irrespective of cultural differences.</i>
Strategy:	<i>Ability to set long-term and short-term goals and objectives that equitably empower all employees, stakeholders, and the public.</i>