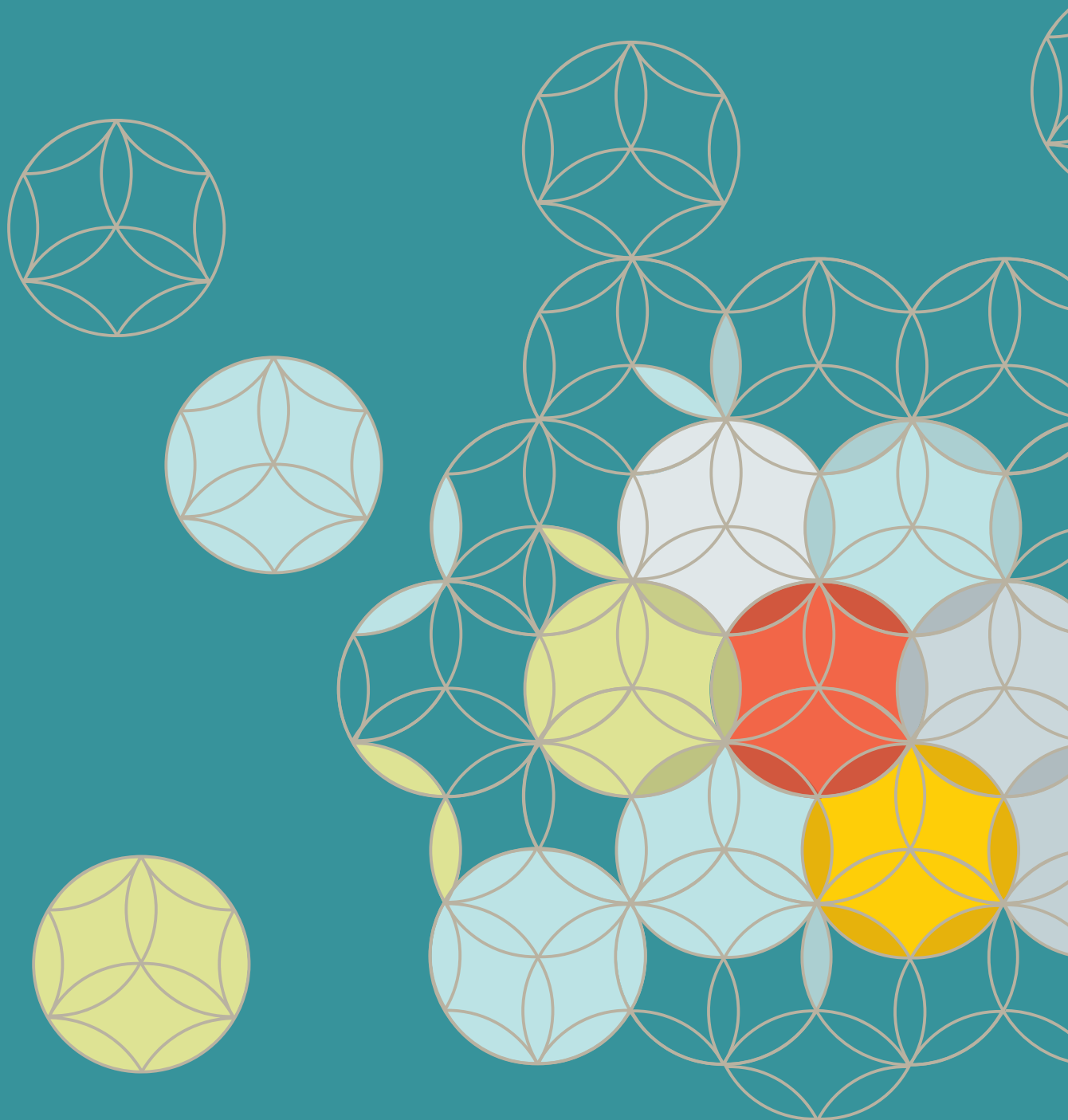


Community Sector

Attracting and retaining staff in rural and regional Victoria



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Published by the
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Community Development
1 Spring Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000
Telephone 03 9208 3543
August 2010

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Authorised by the Victorian Government, Melbourne

Design – The White Studio
Print – Impact Digital
Printed on 55% recycled paper

Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format, such as large print or audio, please telephone the Office for the Community Sector on 03 9208 3543, or email communitysector@dpcd.vic.gov.au.

This publication is also published in PDF and Word formats on www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/communitysector

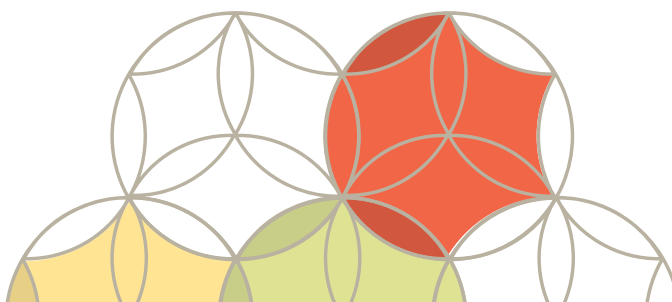
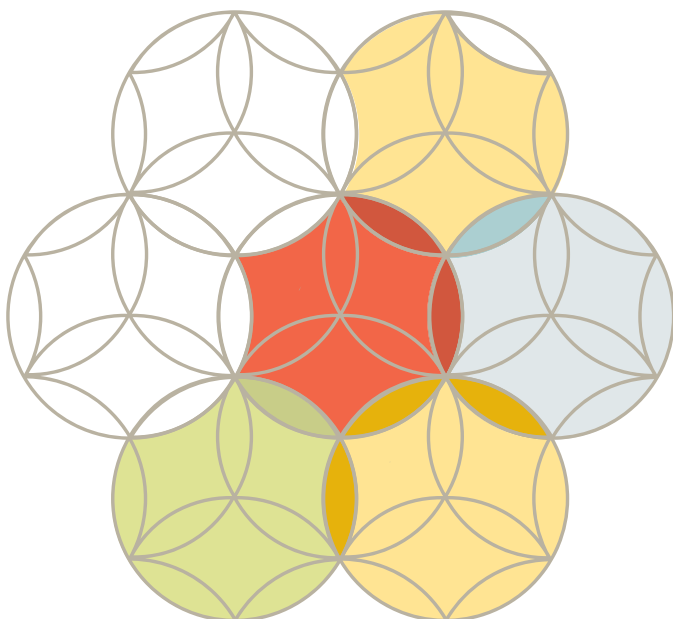


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1. Introduction

Purpose of this guide

This guide has been developed to assist the not-for-profit (NFP) community sector in the application of good practice in the attraction and retention of staff in regional Victoria.

Regionally based organisations face particular challenges in attracting and retaining staff.

This guide has been designed to be used by Boards, CEOs, managers and any staff tasked with recruiting staff in regional Victoria.

It includes an overview of the rural and regional workforce, strategies for attraction and retention, and case studies of regional organisations that have been successful in attracting and retaining staff.

Using this guide

This guide has been developed based on generic approaches to attraction and retention in the community sector, and can be used wholly or selectively to reflect the size, resources and scope of work in your NFP community organisation.

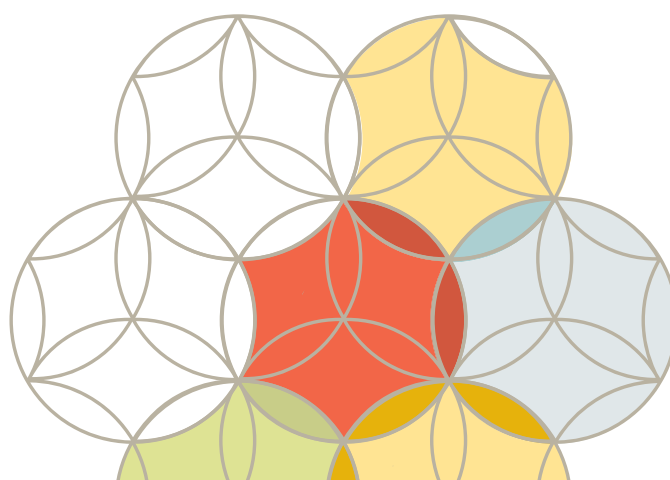
Background

The guide is based on a previous publication developed by the State Services Authority (SSA).

Working in collaboration, the Office for the Community Sector (OCS) and the SSA, have adapted the original publication to suit the attraction and retention needs of the NFP community sector in regional Victoria.

The guide complements recent work undertaken by the OCS, implemented as part of the the *Victorian Government's Action Plan: Strengthening Community Organisations*, aimed at assisting organisations to align their workforce with the environment in which they operate.

This included the development of a *Community Sector Workforce Capability Framework Tool Kit* and a *Best Practice Recruitment and Selection Tool Kit*. These can be downloaded from the Office for the Community Sector website www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/communitysector



Existing practices and strategies

If your organisation has existing practices and strategies for attracting and retaining staff, this guide can be used to review your current practices, and to identify any gaps or opportunities for further activities.

The Office for the Community Sector

The Victorian Government established the Office for the Community Sector (OCS), within the Department of Planning and Community Development, in order to support the long term sustainability of the not-for-profit community sector.

The OCS works in partnership with the NFP community sector and with other government agencies to implement the *Victorian Government's Action Plan: Strengthening Community Organisations*.

Building the capacity of NFP community organisations through initiatives such as the development of the *Community Sector Workforce Capability Framework*, the *Best Practice Recruitment and Selection Tool Kit* and this guide are key components of the Action Plan.

The State Services Authority

The Victorian Government established the State Services Authority (SSA) to improve services, standards, governance, and workforce development of the Victorian public sector.

The SSA publication *Attracting and Retaining Staff: A Guide for the Public Sector in Rural and Regional Victoria* was written in response to the research findings of the report *Recruiting and retaining the rural and regional public sector workforce* (2008). That report documented the difficulties public sector organisations were facing in attracting staff with particular skills to their organisations, and then retaining them.

Attracting and Retaining Staff: A Guide for the Public Sector in Rural and Regional Victoria assessed the particular challenges public sector organisations in rural and regional Victoria were facing and proposed 10 strategies for attracting and retaining staff.

2. The rural and regional workforce

The challenges facing community sector organisations

The common challenges that organisations face when trying to recruit and retain staff in hard-to-fill roles include:

- a low interest or even no response to particular job advertisements;
- a reliance on people needing to relocate to take up critical roles;
- prospective candidates being unfamiliar with the regional and rural area in which the organisation is located;
- negative perceptions of rural and regional living;
- lack of educational institutions supplying graduates with the required qualifications;
- private and public sector organisations offering more attractive remuneration or conditions; and
- limited accommodation for staff or few options that meet their expectations.

Rural and regional population

The population in Victorian rural and regional areas is different from the population in the metropolitan areas in several ways. The most noticeable differences are that the rural and regional population is:

- slightly older;
- has a higher percentage of people born in Australia;
- includes a higher number of sole parents;
- has a lower proportion with year 12 education; and
- has a lower proportion of people with degree/qualifications.

The rural and regional population is growing at a slower rate than the population in metropolitan Melbourne. This is in part due to the high number of young people leaving rural and regional Victoria, usually to study and find work, and the low number of skilled migrants moving to Victoria who are choosing to settle in rural and regional areas.

Another key demographic shift in rural and regional Victoria is the increasing number of people aged over 45 years moving from the city to rural and regional areas, commonly called sea changers and tree changers.

Importantly, whilst metropolitan areas differ from rural and regional areas, there are also differences between each of the rural and regional areas. Table 1 provides a demographic snapshot of each region to highlight these differences.

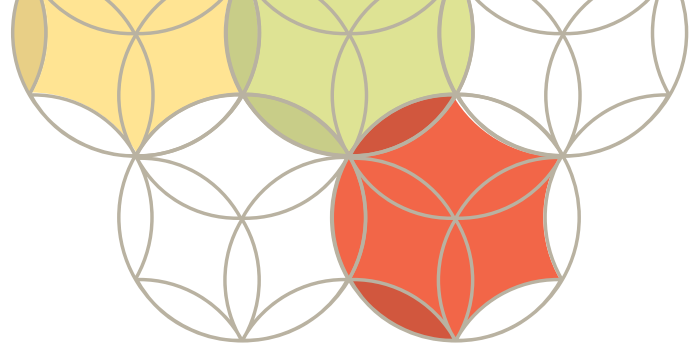


Table 1. Demographic snapshots of each Victorian area

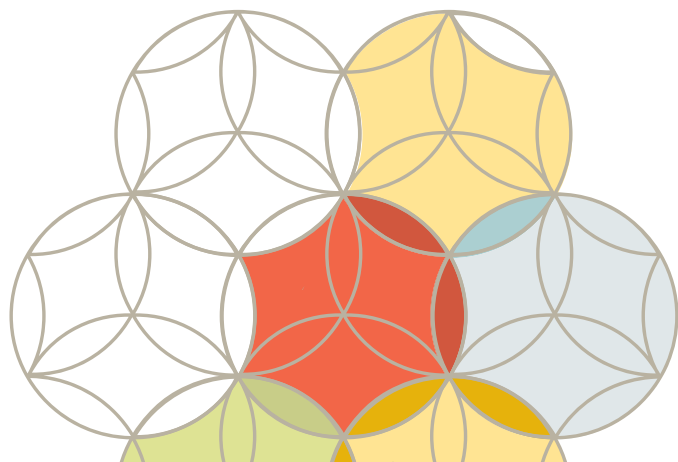
	Rural and regional areas					Metropolitan regions		
ABS 2006 Census data	Barwon SW	Grampians	Hume	Lodden Mallee	Gippsland	North and West	Eastern	Southern
Demographic								
Ave annual population growth (2001–2006)	0.88%	0.63%	0.73%	0.77%	0.65%	1.98%	0.55%	1.72%
Median age of population	41	42	41	42	42	34	38	37
% born in Australia	87%	91%	89%	92%	88%	67%	71%	69%
% of sole parents	14%	14%	15%	15%	14%	11%	9%	10%
Education levels								
% of population aged 20–24 with year 12 education	69%	68%	62%	63%	58%	82%	85%	78%
% of population aged 35–44 with year 12 education	39%	37%	35%	36%	33%	56%	62%	56%
% of men aged 30–34 with degrees	15%	14%	11%	12%	10%	28%	33%	26%
% of women aged 30–34 with degrees	24%	23%	20%	22%	18%	35%	41%	34%

	Rural and regional areas					Metropolitan regions		
ABS 2006 Census data	Barwon SW	Grampians	Hume	Lodden Mallee	Gippsland	North and West	Eastern	Southern
Workforce participation levels								
Women aged 50–54	76%	73%	77%	75%	73%	70%	79%	75%
Women aged 55–59	58%	58%	61%	58%	54%	52%	65%	60%
Women aged 60–64	32%	34%	37%	34%	31%	29%	41%	37%
Men aged 50–59	88%	85 %	88%	85%	79%	85%	91%	85%
Men aged 55–59	77%	74 %	77%	74%	72%	74%	83%	74%
Men aged 60–64	57%	57%	58%	56%	53%	54%	67%	54%

Key target groups for attraction and retention strategies

These population trends suggest organisations in rural and regional areas could benefit from targeting the following groups when they are looking to recruit new staff to their organisation:

- local residents interested in upskilling or a career change;
- the increasing number of mature-aged people who are considering moving out of the city
 - sea changers and tree changers;
- people in their late 20s and early 30s looking to return to regional areas, often to raise families; and
- skilled migrants.



3. Strategies

3.1 Attraction and recruitment

Overview

For most employers, attracting people to work for their organisation involves multiple steps and starts well before placing a job advertisement. Reviewing the role and job description, identifying the target audience, deciding on the most effective ways to reach prospective employees and writing creative advertisements, are just some of the key steps involved in the attraction and recruitment process.

However, for employers in rural and regional areas, there is often an extra step in the process, particularly for those organisations located outside the main centres and in smaller towns. For many potential candidates, accepting a new job also means moving to a new location and swapping life in the city for life in the country.

To generate interest, employers need to sell the location and the associated lifestyle as much as they need to sell the role and the organisation. Many community sector organisations are already doing this and are looking at ways they can improve their recruitment, and often this is by collaborating with other local organisations.

Questions to consider

Considering the following questions may help identify gaps in your current approaches to attraction and recruitment and spark some new ideas.

planning your attraction strategies

- do you have a good understanding of the role, skills and experience you are recruiting for?
- who are likely target candidates?
- do you know where to find these candidates?
- how easy will it be to find candidates with the skill sets in the current local, regional and statewide labour market?
- how strong is the demand for the skill set and/or the role you are recruiting for?
- what does the current labour market offer in terms of salary and/or benefits for the type of role you are recruiting?
- are you able to find people locally, or will you need to undertake a search or advertise the role?
- do you know anyone else in your organisation (or similar organisations) who has recently tried to fill a similar role?
- do you have an attraction strategy for hard-to-fill roles?

analysing your audience

- what are the media habits of your target candidates?
- will you be targeting sea changers/ tree changers/young families? How?

selling the role and organisation

- why would someone work in the role?
- why would someone work in your organisation?
- what are the selling points for the role and your organisation?

AIDA formula

Attention/attract

the headline is attention grabbing

a key benefit of the job is highlighted in the heading or sub-heading

Interest

states the most appealing aspects of the job

includes why someone should apply

Details/desire

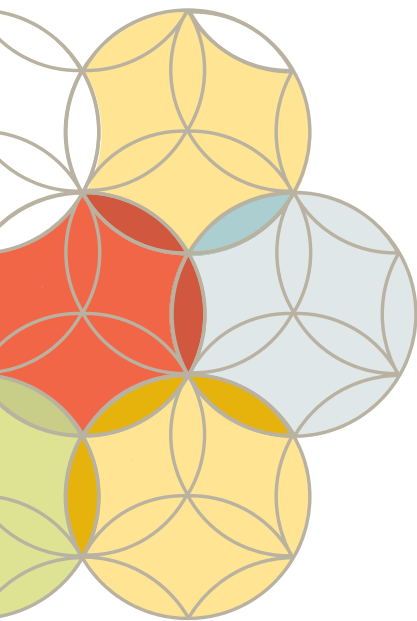
screening tool – make sure your advertisement attracts the people you want and screens out those who may not be right for the job

includes the key criteria the person needs to meet to be successful – this does not mean stating each and every selection criteria

Action

includes details on how to apply – makes it easy

includes a teaser to find out more information – remember in print advertisements you want your target market/s to find out more information online



selling the location and lifestyle benefits

- why would they work in your region?
- what things may put candidates off?
For example, having to commute long distances, moving to the country or not knowing anyone. How can you address these?
- what are the selling points for living and working here?

writing the advertisement

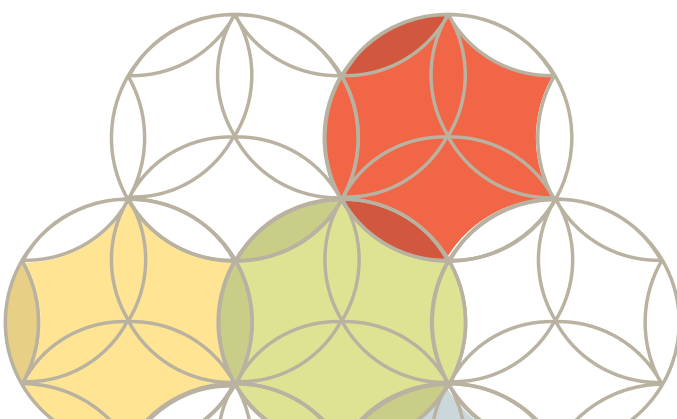
- is your job advertisement aimed at your target audience and their interests?
- are you selling the benefits of the role, organisation and location in job ads?
- how closely does your job description match the profile of candidates available?
- does your print or online advertisement meet the AIDA formula? (see opposite)

choosing the right marketing mediums

- will you employ a number of marketing strategies to source candidates? For example, ask existing employees if they know people who might be interested.
- are the marketing mediums relevant to your target market/s? How do you know?
- where will the advertisement be placed?
- which local and/or regional media will you use?
- will you advertise outside your local area? Where?

recruitment processes

- do you have regular communication with the candidates about the stages of the recruitment process?
- if your candidates are from out of town, will you organise a visit to show them the workplace and location?
- does your recruitment process match how you market your organisation?



Key points

Consider the following when deciding on your marketing approaches:

- print advertising can be expensive, so use it to drive people to your website where you can include detailed information;
- third-party websites (such as Seek and MyCareer) can be good for looking for résumés as well as posting advertisements. Search for the skills you are looking for and then invite those job seekers to apply for a job;
- to meet the expectations you set out in the job advertisement, be honest and accurate.

Further resources

Office for the Community Sector 2010, *Best practice recruitment and selection – a tool kit for the community sector*.

Office for the Community Sector 2010, *Community Sector Workforce Capability Framework Tool Kit*.

State Services Authority 2008, *How positive is your work environment: the organisational, management and individual perspective on making improvements at work*.

Regional Development Victoria – Make It Happen in Provincial Victoria, www.provincialvictoria.vic.gov.au.

Community Sector Workforce Capability Framework Tool Kit

The Capability Framework lists the skills, knowledge and attributes needed in a wide range of emerging and current job roles in the not-for-profit community sector.

It was developed to assist Victorian community organisations with the recruitment and retention of staff, performance management, and career planning.

The listed capabilities and attributes can be used to develop organisationally specific job descriptions.

It is particularly useful for smaller community organisations that do not have a dedicated human resources team.

The *Community Sector Workforce Capability Framework* is free to download on the Office for the Community Sector's website www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/communitysector

Best practice recruitment and selection – a tool kit for the community sector

The best practice recruitment and selection tool kit was developed to assist community sector staff in the application of best practice in the recruitment and selection process. This, in turn, supports the broader objectives of meeting workforce capability needs.

The tool kit represents an end-to-end best practice and recruitment process, from planning to evaluation, and includes information sheets and templates that can be adapted to suit specific organisational needs.

The *Best Practice Recruitment and Selection: a tool kit for the Community Sector* is free to download on the Office for the Community Sector's website www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/communitysector

Case Study

Attraction and retention: Murray Human Services Inc

Murray Human Services Inc provides supported employment, residential and day services, and a range of support programs for people with disabilities or those who are disadvantaged who live in the areas around Echuca, Kyabram and Swan Hill.

With 14 workplaces in towns of varying sizes and socioeconomic circumstances over a range of 200 kilometres, it is important for Murray Human Services to maintain its reputation as an organisation for which people are happy to work.

Outgoing CEO, Karen Witney, says that several key strategies have been vital to the organisation's work to build and maintain this reputation.

These include the coordination of volunteers interested in moving into paid employment with the organisation and a dedicated Human Resources Manager "who is able to speak with knowledge and passion about the values, cultures and job requirements much more effectively than a recruitment agency".

The other key to the organisation's success in attracting and retaining staff (its turnover rate is much lower than the average for community sector organisations) has been the move to become a registered training organisation.

"When we were developing our strategic plan five years ago, we made the decision to become a training provider. This has had the most significant impact on our attracting and retaining people because people can now see that there are great opportunities for career direction. Not everyone stays with us, of course, but most people do."

Employees can now undertake training for certificate and diploma courses through Murray Human Services and these opportunities are particularly attractive to people who begin as volunteers/students and can then start developing a career in the industry through training.

Karen says that the wide variety of services provided by Murray Human Services has been another key to attracting and retaining staff – enabling people to gain experience in several areas of service provision including leadership and coordination.

3.2 Creating pathways for local people

Overview

As it can be costly and time-consuming to relocate people from the city, many rural employers are looking at how they can draw more heavily on their regional population by creating new pathways for local people.

This involves establishing new entry points into an organisation. It also includes developing programs to support existing staff to obtain the qualifications, competencies, skills and knowledge required to move into new roles, particularly in occupations where there are skill shortages. These strategies enable organisations to 'grow their own', which helps them to decrease their reliance on enticing people to their region to take up positions.

The health and education sectors have undertaken considerable work in this area, particularly in relation to nurses and teachers. For example, in the health sector, a pathway may enable a person to join a hospital as a patient services assistant and then move through to a Division 2 (Certificate IV level) nurse role and then to a Division 1 (Bachelor degree level) nurse role. In the process, they are supported to undertake certificate or diploma qualifications, or a university degree.

It can also be productive when several organisations are willing to collaborate to grow a pool of people with needed skills rather than directly compete for scarce skills.

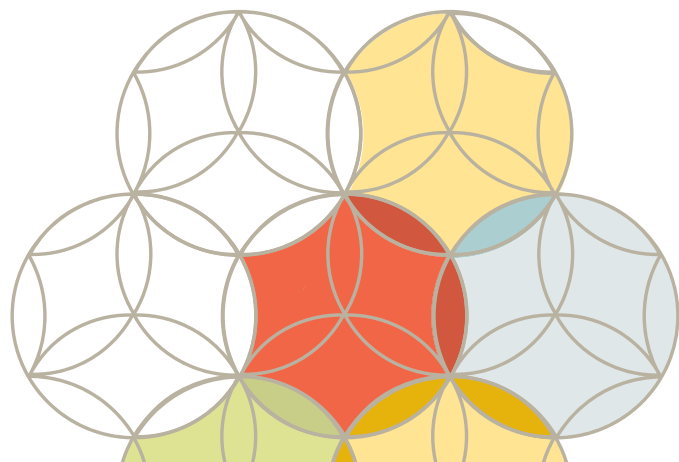
A combination of factors is creating more opportunities to develop staff, including:

- new technology;
- the growth of regional campuses of universities and TAFE institutes; and
- an increased willingness and ability of universities, TAFE institutes, Adult, Community and Further Education and private training providers to offer flexible delivery methods and customised courses.

Who to target in the local community

Many people in the local community may have the aptitude, motivation and relevant experience for roles in an organisation, but lack relevant qualifications or recent experience.

Offering this group pathways into new roles can be a fruitful source of skilled staff.



Questions to consider

Considering the following questions will help you assess the feasibility of creating new pathways.

identifying roles and potential target group(s)

- what roles could local people be trained in and developed to undertake?
- what backgrounds or experience would people need to be suitable for this type of work?
- what base qualifications would be essential, if any, as a minimum?
- could any new support roles be created to support hard-to-fill critical roles?
- who are the people most likely to be interested in training in these roles?

assessing the feasibility

- what would the cost be to offer these pathways? To the organisations? To the individual?
- are there people in the local area who would be interested in these pathways? How could you find out?

collaborating and forming partnerships

- are there other local organisations who need the same types of staff?
- could you collaborate with other community sector organisations to create new roles?
- are there local education institutions or training providers who can deliver relevant courses to assist with upskilling?
- what course delivery models would be most suitable?

Key points

Many people, particularly young people living in the city and suburbs, have had limited exposure to rural and regional Victoria and may hold negative perceptions about the country lifestyle. As more people grow up in the city, the proportion of young people with regional ties will continue to reduce. Therefore it is important to look at ways of expanding opportunities for school leavers, graduates and mature-aged people who are settled in rural and regional areas to study courses related to critical and hard-to-fill roles.

Consider the following when deciding on your approach:

- forming partnerships with other organisations with similar shortages;
- creating pathways may also require looking at job design; and
- creating pathways may take significant investment and a long-term view.

Analysing the potential cost, benefit, and risk involved in upskilling (for example, the loss of investment if an employee leaves the organisation for another after receiving training).

Are there strategies in place to mitigate risk?

Evaluation tips

- consider monitoring the number of staff expressing an interest in the pathways and undertaking the required study;
- monitor the cost of the new pathways;
- monitor course completion rates; and
- monitor the number of staff who progress as expected along the pathway.

Case Study

Creating pathways: Lifeline Gippsland

As a not-for-profit agency, Lifeline Gippsland relies on a pool of committed volunteers to assist in the delivery of its telephone and related services.

Operations Manager, Kate Buxton, says the move by some volunteers to paid positions has greatly assisted the organisation in meeting the challenges of recruiting and retaining staff in a regional, community organisation.

“We have found there have been some really successful pathways from being a volunteer to becoming a paid employee. With this kind of model, if someone has been a volunteer and then applies for a paid position, they do so because they already have a passion and knowledge about the organisation,” she said.

“This doesn’t mean that someone new can’t develop the same passion, but it does immediately tick a box in the recruitment process if you know someone already has a strong commitment”.

Finding the right employees who are able to fit well into the organisation and who understand and are willing to work as part of a team has been a challenge for Lifeline Gippsland.

Having recently spent a lot of time and resources without successfully filling an administration position, Kate has now outsourced these activities to a recruitment agency.

“This might not be the right model for all organisations, as there are costs involved, but we think that we are going to be better off using the agency to advertise and short-list on our behalf. Recruitment is also very time consuming”.

3.3 Flexible working arrangements

Overview

Flexible working arrangements cover alternative ways of working and leave policies to help staff balance their work life with their life away from paid work. The flexibility relates to how work is done, when it is done and where it is done. The most common options include:

- part-time work;
- job-sharing;
- working from home;
- compressed hours;
- flexible start and finishing times; and
- unpaid leave.

Using flexible working arrangements is one way community sector organisations can compete with private sector employers for staff, as offering flexible working arrangements can make community sector employment more attractive.

Offering flexible arrangements can broaden the pool of potential applicants and attract people living outside the area, who might be unable or unwilling to relocate.

Questions to consider

Considering the following questions will help you to identify gaps in your flexible work offerings and think of possible options that will suit your organisation. This will also help improve existing working arrangements.

needs and gaps

- what flexible working arrangements does your organisation offer?
- how many staff use these arrangements?
- what arrangements are being used by staff in critical areas and hard-to-fill roles?
- do you routinely monitor and report on the numbers of staff working part-time, using purchased leave, job-sharing or working from home?

marketing

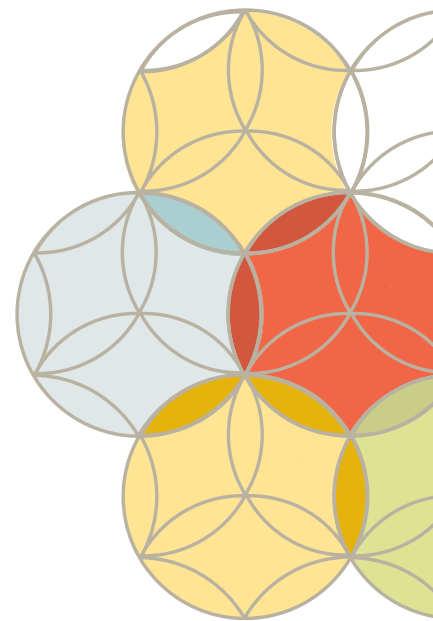
- do staff have a clear understanding of your flexible working arrangement policies and do they use them as intended?
- how does your organisation promote these arrangements internally and externally?
- do you advertise the availability of flexible working arrangements, particularly for hard-to-fill roles and do you promote them on your website?
- do you ask candidates in interviews if they are interested in hearing details about the flexible options available?

implementation and capability

- do all staff know where they can find out about these options?
- do managers know the steps involved in approving flexible work options?
- do you have processes in place for assessing applications for part-time work, job-sharing and other flexible options?
- do you actively promote success stories internally?

monitoring and evaluating

- do you review flexible arrangements to find out what benefits result and if any improvements are needed? If yes, how often?
- do you have mechanisms in place to discuss and resolve issues arising from flexible working arrangements?
- do you ask staff why they stay in your organisation, and if so, how important flexible working arrangements are to retaining them?



Key points

Following is a list of factors to consider when designing flexible working arrangements in your organisation:

- not all flexible arrangements will work for every role in every organisation;
- options negotiated must be feasible and workable for both the individual staff member and the organisation as a whole;
- flexible arrangements require managers to focus on outputs and outcomes rather than hours worked when assessing performance;
- workloads must be appropriate to the amount of time worked, as this is critical to the success of flexible working arrangements; and
- a review period should be put in place once a flexible working arrangement has been established to ensure that both parties are happy.

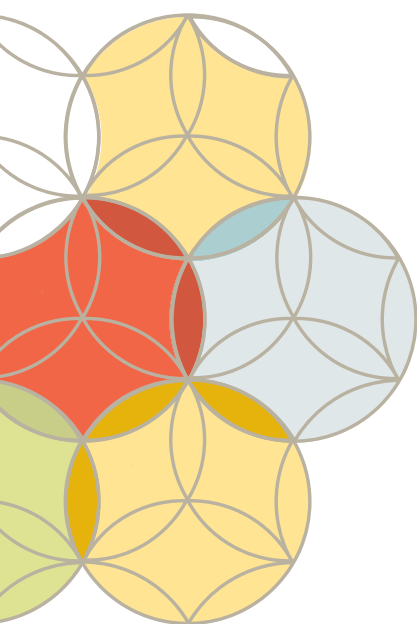
Evaluation tips

- ensure mechanisms are in place to monitor new flexible arrangements and ensure any issues are dealt with promptly;
- monitor the impact of promoting flexible work practices in advertisements or on the website;
- consider how flexible arrangements and policies will be evaluated at the time they are developed or implemented.

Further resources

Workforce Victoria, *Getting the Balance Right: Creating Family Friendly Workplaces*

Workforce Victoria, Ways2Work website <http://ways2work.business.vic.gov.au/>



Case Study

Flexible working arrangements: Child and Family Services, Ballarat

As a growing organisation, the not-for-profit Child and Family Services (CAFS) Ballarat, must ensure that it meets current and future demand for clients' support and assistance.

Child and Family Services Ballarat has been supporting children, young people and families since its inception as the Ballarat Orphanage in 1865. The organisation provides community services to those in need in areas from Bacchus Marsh through to Ararat.

The organisation's ability to meet current and future demand is complicated by its need to attract and retain loyal, skilled staff members willing to work in regional Victoria.

Jeanette Hatt, Manager Organisational Development, says that CAFS recognised some time ago that flexible working arrangements were the key to both attracting and retaining skilled and loyal staff.

"We have adopted fair and flexible workplace initiatives because ... primarily we are organisationally committed to our staff as our most valuable resource," Jeanette said.

"If our most valuable resource is not nurtured then service delivery to our client groups may be impacted upon. Our clients and the services we provide to them are the very reason why we exist, so it is fundamentally in our best interests to adapt our practices to meet staff needs."

A recent citation as an Employer of Choice for Women in the Workplace by the Equal Opportunity in the Workplace Agency was a welcome recognition that CAFS, whose workforce is 87 per cent female, is providing opportunities for its employees to access flexible working policies and procedures.

Some of the flexible work arrangements available to CAFS employees include time in lieu, purchased leave, additional annual leave between Christmas and New Year, six weeks paid maternity leave and working from home in certain circumstances.

3.4 Relocation support

Overview

Relocation support helps ease the transition for new staff, their partners and family members when they move to a rural or regional location to accept a job.

While most NFP community sector organisations will not have the resources to provide financial reimbursement for relocation costs, providing advice and support for new employees can be equally valuable.

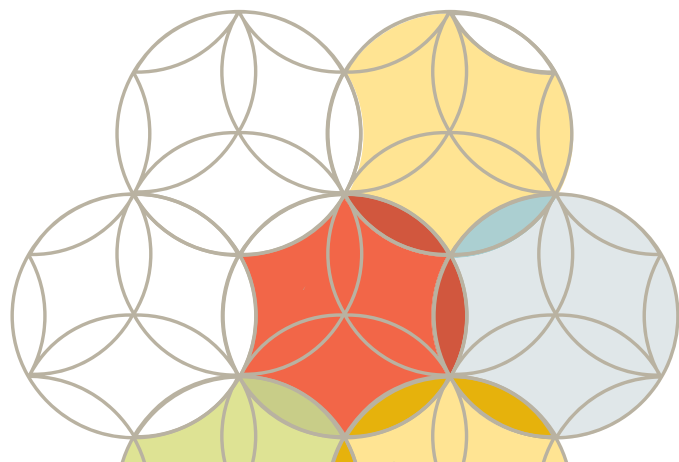
Offering support to the whole family to settle into a community, not just the new staff member, increases the chances of retention. This is particularly important where the people relocating have not lived outside a city before.

Relocation support can include providing information and advice to new staff and their partners on a range of issues, including accommodation, schools, child care, community facilities, sporting clubs, arts and craft groups, networks and local events.

How relocation support can help you retain staff

Providing support for staff to relocate and settle into a community can mean they are:

- less likely to experience social and professional isolation;
- more likely to assimilate into the community and connect with people with whom they share interests;
- more likely to feel satisfied that their employer understands the challenges of moving and is genuine about helping them to settle; and
- more likely to stay with an organisation.



Questions to consider

The following questions aim to help generate discussion in your organisation on the adequacy and effectiveness of your current relocation program, highlight any gaps and spark ideas on how it could be improved or expanded.

recruitment

- does your organisation outline the relocation support you provide to staff and their families in interviews?
- do you routinely send job applicants information on your relocation policies and resources that staff members or partners can access?
- can you organise for short-listed applicants to be shown around the town and community as well as the organisation?

accommodation

- can you provide applicants with information on the local real estate market?
- is the availability or quality of accommodation likely to be an issue for new staff?
- are there any local networks to help new staff find accommodation, particularly in areas where little rental housing is available?
- have you explored whether other organisations have accommodation that may be available for your staff on a temporary basis?
- would staff be eligible for any government subsidies or allowances to help cover the cost of accommodation?

settlement support for staff, partners and families

- when candidates are offered jobs, do you ask them about partners and family who may require support to relocate?
- do you put the staff member and their partner in touch with local services and relocation specialists before they start?
- do you have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)? If so, do staff and partners have access to it during the moving stage, for example, to discuss issues with children not wanting to move or concerns about settling into the community?
- are there any local groups or local resources that staff and their families could be linked to, such as professional networks, country-of-origin groups, business development groups, council officers or tourism staff?
- do you provide a ‘meet and greet’ service for new staff?

Evaluation tips

- consider using surveys to find out how satisfied staff were with the support provided to them and their family during the moving and settling in phases;
- ask what other support, advice or information would have helped them to settle in faster and enjoy living in the new community.

3.5 Incentives

Overview

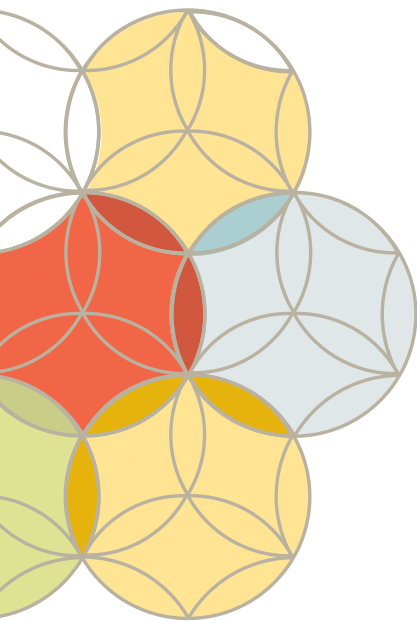
Incentives may be offered to encourage people to join an organisation, stay longer or to reward and motivate existing staff.

For the majority of community organisations, the major incentive for workers relates to the philosophy of the organisation, and a willingness to give to the community. This philosophy should be communicated and promoted to prospective and existing staff, to reinforce the positive work that employees are doing.

Organisations can also offer more tangible incentives. In some community sector organisations, the ability to package salaries is a big financial incentive. Non-financial incentives can include support for training and attendance at conferences, additional paid leave and opportunities for staff exchanges.

In some cases incentives are targeted at specific people, for example graduates or skilled people, for hard-to-fill jobs or roles in difficult-to-fill locations. Some organisations are looking to offer incentives to encourage students to undertake placements or holiday employment in the hope that early exposure may spark their interest in working in a rural area during their careers.

When designing incentives for new staff, consideration needs to be given to those available to existing staff. This will help ensure a level of equity and help prevent incentives for new staff acting as a disincentive for existing staff.



Questions to consider

The following questions aim to help generate discussion on the adequacy and effectiveness of your organisation's current incentives, identify any gaps and generate ideas on what could be improved or expanded.

reviewing incentives

- which of your incentives are working and which are not?
- what incentives do other organisations offer staff who are in short supply?
- have you asked staff for their feedback on current incentives and ideas for alternatives?
- how could existing incentives be improved?
- what do new candidates ask for and how closely are their expectations aligned with your offerings?

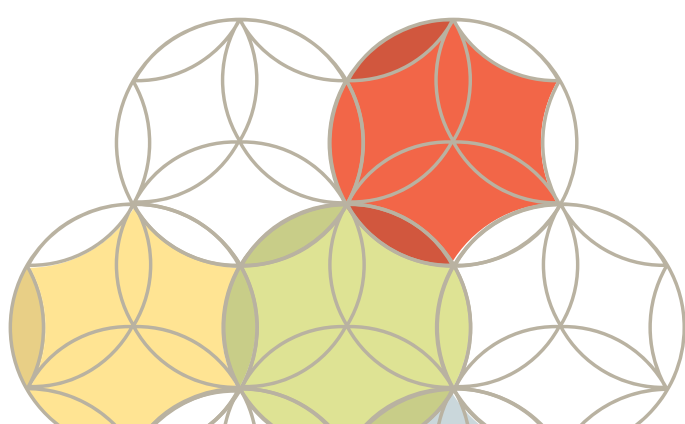
Key points

Organisations may need to use incentives to make rural and regional employment more appealing to attract staff. Consider the following when deciding on your approach:

- some staff incentives benefit the organisation more directly than others, such as payment for extra professional development or training;
- different staff and groups of staff will value different incentives.

Evaluation tips

- consider monitoring and recording the responses and effectiveness of different schemes;
- monitor how existing staff view the different incentives;
- assess why an incentive is failing to yield results.



Case Study

Incentives: Pinarc Support Services

Pinarc Support Services enables people with a disability, their families and carers, to live as equal and valued members of the Grampians community.

Business Manager - Quality and Human Resources, Donna Hogan, believes that there are several key challenges in attracting and retaining staff to the organisation.

“We seek to provide specialist services such as occupational therapy and speech pathology but there are limited qualified applicants in this area when we, or other organisations like ours, try to recruit,” she said.

“The salaries we are able to pay are sometimes less than those available in the hospital sector and we have to find ways to make living and working in regional Victoria more attractive than in the big cities.”

Donna believes that Pinarc Support Services has been innovative in its development of initiatives that have been attractive to new and existing staff members.

These include options for further training and development and promotion, the ability for staff to work collaboratively as a team, flexible working arrangements and support for work/life balance. Workstation reviews by in house specialists help staff members to feel they are being listened to and valued.

These incentives have contributed to “a positive environment where existing staff will stay and recommend the organisation as a vibrant, exciting and meaningful place to work,” Donna said.

Donna believes that staff members recognise that the organisation is committed to “recruit to the utmost and do all that we can to get staff into positions and we are flexible.”



3.6 Job design

Overview

When organisations are finding it difficult to attract staff to particular roles, or are experiencing high turnover in particular roles, a reassessment of the role may be needed, and in some cases, the role may need to be redesigned.

The term 'job design' typically refers to:

- what work or tasks are to be done;
- who does them;
- how work is to be done; and
- where it will be done.

Well designed jobs have the right levels of autonomy, support, supervision and challenge, and allow the employee to focus on the tasks for which they are trained and skilled. Well designed jobs also ensure that the people in them have manageable workloads and achievable goals, targets and timelines.

Well designed jobs are more attractive to people and therefore are generally easier to fill.

In the health sector significant work has been undertaken in this area, particularly in relation to nursing and allied health roles. Job redesign in health services has led to the development and growth of new positions, such as allied health assistants, and the reassigning of tasks between different professional groups.

While good job design is important for any role, it is particularly important for the roles that are critical to service delivery and are experiencing skill shortages.

Some organisations share staff resources with other organisations, particularly where they are unable to attract a person to a specialist role.

Another approach is to review how and where the job is undertaken and whether the role can be redesigned as a part-time or job-share arrangement.

Questions to consider

The following questions will help you to identify the roles that may need to be reviewed or redesigned and areas that need to be considered in the process.

identifying current jobs and design issues

- which roles attract few or no applicants?
- do the tasks and level of responsibility match the level, title and remuneration of the role?
- is the level of support adequate or do people feel isolated in these roles?
- what factors will influence demand for these positions in the future, for example, extra funding, new projects or an increase in client demand?
- will more, less or the same number of people be required in these roles in the future?

exploring options

- what are the most important tasks undertaken in the roles?
- is there any duplication of tasks with other roles?
- are there any time consuming or unnecessary tasks that do not use the person's key skills and training?
- could any of the tasks be undertaken by other positions?
- how are these roles designed in other organisations?
- could a position be shared with another organisation?
- how would staff in these positions view additional tasks?
- how will the redesign of this role affect the design of other roles?
- what training and support will be needed to implement a new model?
- how else could people gain support, particularly if they work in sole practitioner roles?

Key points

Consider the following when deciding on your approach:

- identify the priority tasks for hard-to-fill critical roles;
- gain the perspectives of people who are in the roles or have worked in these roles;
- consult with staff, and clients if appropriate, who will be affected by a redesigned role;
- ensure people who will pick up the new tasks are adequately trained and supported.

Evaluation tips

Monitoring the implementation of a newly designed role can be done by gaining feedback from staff in the role, people undertaking reallocated tasks, other team members, colleagues and managers, and (if appropriate) clients.

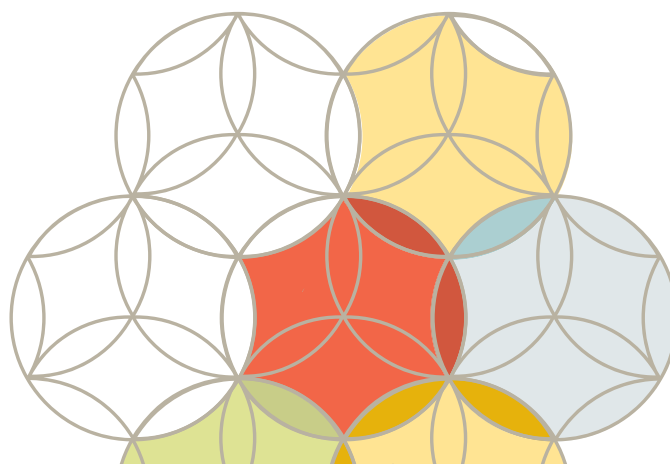
The monitoring and evaluating may focus on the following questions:

- are staff clear on the priority tasks?
- do staff have more time now to focus on priority tasks?
- are there any issues arising from the reassignment of tasks?
- do staff in new roles have manageable workloads?
- is anything not working with the new job design?
- are there any clear benefits?

For example, a rise in the number of satisfied clients, quicker turn around times on providing advice, a cheaper service or an increase in number of site visits completed.

Further resources

Office for the Community Sector 2010, *Community Sector Workforce Capability Framework Tool Kit*.



3.7 Staff development

Overview

Staff development encompasses all the activities an organisation provides for individual staff to gain the knowledge, skills or behaviours necessary to undertake particular tasks or roles.

Development activities include classroom-based programs, conferences, online courses, on-the-job learning and professional reading, as well as activities that provide opportunities for staff to learn from peers, such as shadowing a colleague or having a mentor.

Staff development is commonly provided as a preparatory measure and is usually offered when someone starts with an organisation, starts at a higher level, or has a new set of tasks to perform in their existing role.

Many people find the opportunity for development a powerful incentive to work harder or remain loyal to the organisation. Professional development may be a greater incentive than a pay increase.

Therefore, in addition to preparing staff for new or difficult challenges, staff development can be used as part of an organisation's attraction and staff engagement strategies.

It can be difficult for organisations in rural and regional areas to organise appropriate development. It is often costly in terms of time, accommodation, travel and back-filling positions for staff to travel for training.

Therefore some organisations are exploring less formal approaches, such as coaching, mentoring and online courses that complement traditional methods such as face-to-face courses.

Questions to consider

The following questions will help you to review how your current staff development activities could be enhanced to improve your organisation's ability to attract and retain staff.

- why are you investing in staff development? Is it to increase staff capacity, increase capability in particular skills, minimise succession risk, increase staff engagement or improve information sharing?
- what is your organisation's current return on investment for development activity? Where are you likely to get the greatest returns?
- what forms of development are available in your organisation?
- what do you hope to see change as a result of the activity? How will you know these changes have occurred?

Key points

Development activities are best directed to the areas where an organisation will gain the greatest benefits. Typically, resources are best directed towards those staff with clear needs and a demonstrated capacity to learn and grow, and who have certain levels of loyalty to the organisation.

When designing staff development programs and activities, consider the following:

- opportunities for ongoing development can be used to encourage people to seek and accept employment with your organisation;
- activities are best structured towards the achievement of a small number of specific goals or learning outcomes;
- people learn best from experience and situations that provide ample opportunity for trial, error, exploration, practice, application and refinement of new skills, knowledge and behaviours in a safe and guided environment;
- the more active the participant, the more effective the activity will be for lasting skills, knowledge or behavioural change;
- leaders who model learning behaviour and visibly participate in development activities themselves will help their staff succeed.

Evaluation tips

Effective evaluation can only occur if development goals are clear. Clear goals provide the basis upon which to measure the development activity or to assess whether an alternative activity could have achieved the same outcome more efficiently.

Most commonly, evaluation focuses on assessing:

- the application of new knowledge and skills in the workplace via feedback from managers and peers;
- the achievement of organisational change, often done by comparing performance on key measures before and after development.

Further resources

Office for the Community Sector 2010, *Community Sector Workforce Capability Framework Tool Kit*.

William C. Byham, Ph.D., Audrey B. Smith, Ph.D., and Matthew J. Paese, Ph.D, 2002 *Grow your own leaders: How to identify, develop and retain leadership talent*, DDI Global.

Case Study

Staff development: Quantum Support Services

Quantum Support Services provides a range of services in the Gippsland region, including housing and homelessness support, family violence programs, and youth support programs.

Quantum Support Services' Manager of Quality and Service Development, Steve Koczvara, explained that the greatest challenge in recruiting staff is the lack of experienced and qualified people within the local population.

"There has been a prolonged pattern of young people moving to Melbourne to gain qualifications and not returning to Gippsland," Steve said.

In response to this, Quantum Support Services has focused its efforts on providing developmental support and on-the-job training for relief staff, who don't necessarily have all of the demonstrated skills, qualifications, or experience, but who demonstrate their eagerness to learn on the job.

"The work of the relievers is evaluated in terms of their ability to fulfil the roles and responsibilities of the position – but also in relation to possible ongoing employment within other areas of the organisation," Steve said.

Through this recruitment practice, Quantum Support Services currently has five full-time employees working in service delivery roles, who entered the organisation as relief workers.

Steve explained that this was beneficial for both the employee and the organisation.

"It allows a more flexible entry point into the workforce for people who may otherwise not have sufficient experience, and it establishes greater levels of confidence on which to make decisions about appointments for permanent positions."

3.8 Career development

Overview

People are often attracted to an organisation, or a particular role, when they can see how it will make a clear and positive contribution to their progression along a career path.

Promoting and communicating the way in which particular roles or challenges can contribute to an employee's career aspirations, is another fundamental component of effective attraction and engagement strategies.

This provides a challenge to the majority of rural and regional community organisations in Victoria, as career paths can be limited due to the often small size of the organisation.

In these cases, it is a good idea to explore the option of collaborating with other organisations to create career opportunities for staff. Secondments between organisations are a possible way of achieving this.

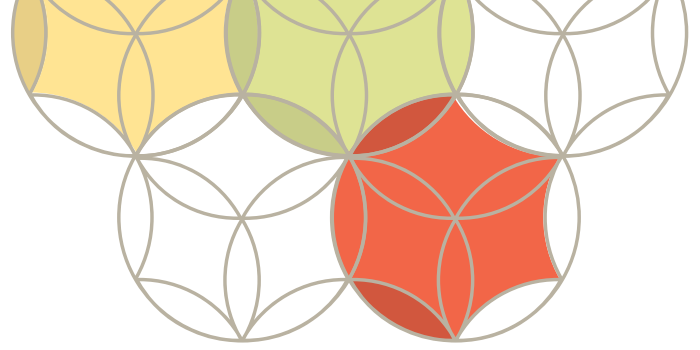
Providing staff with these career opportunities can be challenging. It involves identifying and capitalising on opportunities to align business needs with individual staff members' career interests.

Some staff may not have strong career aspirations or sense of a career pathway. Career counselling can provide staff with clarity and opportunities to progress towards their career goals.

Questions to consider

The following questions will help you consider how you can create or enhance career pathways for your staff and expand career development opportunities.

- what are the common career aspirations among your current staff? How do you know? How can you find out?
- how can you create real and achievable career pathways that will be attractive for your workforce? What are the obstacles? What are the opportunities for supporting career development?
- what organisations could you collaborate with to expand career path development opportunities for people?
- how can you promote these career opportunities to your current and potential workforce?



Key points

The identification and development of career pathways and the associated development opportunities in an organisation involves four key steps:

1. mapping common pathways within the organisation

Look at progression in terms of movement from one role to another, or from one area of the organisation to another. This information can be obtained through analysis of internal records of staff movements in the past.

2. mapping common pathways involving the organisation

Review where people typically come from when they join your organisation and where they go to when they leave. This information can be obtained through an analysis of résumés and through conversations with current, former and departing staff members.

3. identifying obstacles for career pathways

Normally, career pathways progress upwards, sideways or both. In some organisations, the opportunities to progress a career through a sideways move can be culturally or administratively difficult.

4. removing career obstacles through cultural or administrative reforms

Consider establishing job rotation, placement/secondment opportunities, or a program of higher duties to help address some of the obstacles.

Further resources

Office for the Community Sector 2010, *Community Sector Workforce Capability Framework Tool Kit*.

Case Study

Career development: Moira Healthcare Alliance and four local hospitals

Moira Healthcare Alliance (MHA), a not-for-profit provider of home and community care services, worked in partnership with four local hospitals, a registered training organisation and the Moira Shire Council to develop an innovative model for training direct care workers and nurses in the shire.

'The Moira Model', as it is called, is based on the concept of training local people to address difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified staff. Under this model, staff work at one of the local hospitals or the MHA while they undertake study and training.

The success of the program is due to a number of factors, including the flexibility of the local training providers, Wodonga TAFE and Charles Sturt University, which provide the training onsite rather than at their campuses.

The CEO of MHA, Donna Richards, said the success of the Moira Model has provided both students and employers with new and increased opportunities.

"The opportunities for employment has allowed people of all ages, and especially women, to gain employment and a career pathway that was not previously available to them," Donna said.

"For rural-based people the option to travel for training and education is often unaffordable and unsustainable, and the Moira Model has helped people realise a career dream."

There are now two hospitals with established training centres and 28 Certificate IV Nursing students participating at these centres. There are 58 Bachelor of Nursing students supported through the model.

In addition, a number of other courses have been added to increase local expertise and reduce workforce gaps. These include Diploma of Welfare and Disability Studies.



3.9 Succession planning

Overview

A lengthy vacancy in a critical role, such as the CEO, can have a significant impact on the operational ability and performance of an organisation.

Succession planning limits this impact, decreases the likelihood that a critical role will be left vacant for an extended period of time.

A traditional approach to succession planning is to groom particular individuals for senior leadership roles. This can be a risky approach, especially in organisations where job roles frequently change and evolve.

A better approach is to develop a number of staff who have the potential to undertake a particular type of critical role at some stage in the short to medium term future.

In rural and regional Victoria, the roles that often face the greatest succession risk are the roles that are critical to service delivery. Because of this, one of the greatest challenges to community organisations in these areas is to adequately plan for succession.

It is important to note that effective succession planning does not force anyone to vacate a role, guarantee anyone a role, or exclude anyone from applying for a role.

Questions to consider

The following questions may help generate discussion about possible succession planning priorities and activities.

- what is the significant work that needs to be undertaken, now and in the foreseeable future?
- which types of roles are critical to this work?
- what are the characteristics of these roles?
- which roles may need to be filled in the foreseeable future?
- what is the potential of your existing staff to fill vacancies in different types of critical roles, giving consideration to aspirations, capability, engagement, experiences and achievement?
- are the skills required for succession to different types of critical roles common or rare within the wider labour market?
- is your organisation an attractive proposition for people with the skills required for your critical roles?
- what are the greatest risks?
- what can be done to address the scenarios that are most likely to occur and have the greatest impact?
- how are you going to review the risk exposure and mitigation strategy success?

Key points

Consider the following when deciding on your approach.

Succession risk management is strategic implementation of activities and processes designed to decrease the likelihood of lengthy vacancies in critical roles and to limit the impact of vacancies when they do occur.

The five step approach for succession risk management is:

1. understand context
2. identify possible risks
3. prioritise risks
4. identify and target mitigation activities and
5. review.

The most important point is to have regular and structured discussions about the work that needs to be done, critical roles, staff potential, the capacity of the workforce, where the greatest risks are and what are the most appropriate risk mitigation strategies.

A key approach is to develop a number of staff who have potential to undertake a particular type of critical role at some stage in the short to medium term future.



Evaluation tips

Given the high number of factors that contribute to succession risk, an organisation should review and reassess the succession risks to which it may be exposed on a regular basis – once or twice a year, or when there are significant organisational changes.

Further resources

State Services Authority 2008, *Succession Risk Management Tool Kit*, www.ssa.vic.gov.au.

Case Study

Succession planning: Alexandra Hospital

The Alexandra Hospital is located 125km north-east of Melbourne and employs more than 100 people. With fewer than 12 full-time staff and about 15 casuals, the majority of staff working at the hospital are permanent part-time.

Human Resources Coordinator, Sally Musgrove, said that the hospital developed a formal, documented succession plan to minimise the impact on service delivery and patient care in the face of sudden absences or resignations.

“Our succession plan lists senior roles such as managers and a range of other critical roles including the allied health staff, finance, payroll staff, and other clinical staff. For the CEO position, there are four people listed who could move into this role in the short term. In the long term it would be filled through a recruitment process,” Sally said.

Succession planning has been made easier by the hospital’s support for staff multi-skilling and moving between roles.

“Our finance officer is also a Division 2 Registered Nurse, a trained podiatrist’s assistant and can also work in reception. Most roles are advertised internally to give opportunities to staff to upskill and move into different roles.

“Our performance development reviews also allow staff to express their career interests and aspirations. Our staff don’t have to spend 20 years in the same job—it is up to them to act on these opportunities as they arise.”



4. Resources list

Office for the Community Sector and State Services Authority, *Best practice recruitment and selection – a tool kit for the community sector*, 2010, available at; <http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/communitysector>.

Office for the Community Sector, *Community Sector Workforce Capability Framework Tool Kit*, 2010, available at www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/communitysector.

Regional Development Victoria – *Make It Happen in Provincial Victoria*, available at www.provincialvictoria.vic.gov.au.

State Services Authority, *How positive is your work environment: the organisational, management and individual perspective on making improvements at work*, 2008.

State Services Authority, *Attracting and Retaining Staff: a guide for the public sector in rural and regional Victoria*, 2008.

State Services Authority 2008, *Succession Risk Management Tool Kit*, www.ssa.vic.gov.au.

William C. Byham, Ph.D., Audrey B. Smith, Ph.D., and Matthew J. Paese, Ph.D, 2002 *Grow your own leaders: How to identify, develop and retain leadership talent*, DDI Global.

Workforce Victoria, *Getting the Balance Right: Creating Family Friendly Workplaces*. Workforce Victoria, available at ways2work.business.vic.gov.au/

