

# Tips and Best Practices: *Recruit* bilingual human resources effectively



## Key success factor:

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**Adapt recruitment practices and evaluate linguistic competencies in both languages**

Hiring bilingual staff is an administrative decision, but the recruitment of candidates is entrusted to human resources specialists. They frequently use generic approaches, whereas the bilingual applicant pool is more limited and recruitment approaches must take this into account.

## Recruitment in a minority context: a tailored approach

In a very competitive employment market, bilingualism is an additional skill which bilingual professionals want to put to use. Key factors which attract candidates:

- The reputation of the employer and the outreach of the organization
- Working conditions: work schedule, vacations, workload, autonomy, teamwork, etc.
- Quality of work/life: geographic proximity, public transportation, day care, etc.
- The salary and the social benefits for the position according to market conditions

## Job profile

It is important to determine the linguistic profile of positions in advance: Managers must ensure that the human resource department understands and respects linguistic requirements.

- Determine the level of language skills required for each skill: speaking, understanding, reading, writing;
- Decide what weight will this factor will have in the selection of candidates;
- Clearly indicate the bilingual nature of the position in the job description and in the posting;
- The language requirement notice may be accompanied by a note indicating that courses to upgrade skills may be required or provided.

## Recruitment approaches: *standing out to attract bilingual candidates!*

When there are shortages, the following recruitment approaches have been used to successfully attract candidates in settings where French is a minority:

- **Recruitment by affinity:** recruit within the Francophone community, offer training and ensure that the trained professionals return to work in their communities of origin
- **Recruitment by economic incentive:** offer premiums for bilingual positions, recruitment premiums or other financial benefits linked to the recruitment of bilingual staff;
- **Recruitment by professional practice characteristics:** offering benefits such as electronic records, equipment, videoconferencing, or links with colleges and universities;
- **Recruitment by contractual agreement:** (predetermined timeframe) with intent to retain in the future.
- Offering **summer employment** to future bilingual professionals.

This initiative is made possible through funding from Health Canada under the Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013-2018: Education, Immigration, Communities

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## Advertisement: *seek candidates where they are!*

It is not sufficient to simply indicate that you are seeking bilingual candidates, it is necessary to adopt a promotional strategy to attract the best candidates. Here are a few suggestions:

- Publish the announcement in both languages: in French and English media, mailing lists, and in the French and English interfaces of job search websites (Workopolis, Monster, Job boom, etc.);
- Use expressions such as: *Candidates who speak French and English are invited to submit their applications*. Include a French sentence in the English announcement
- Use social media (Facebook, LinkedIn), professional contact networks, university networks and word-of-mouth.
- Post the announcement on the website of the organization, especially if it includes bilingual elements
- Consult Francophone community organizations in the region

## Selection process for bilingual candidates and evaluation of language skills

It is recommended that a **standardized tool** be used for assessing language skills to ensure fairness and rigor both for the candidates and for the resulting quality of services.

- Include a question on self-reporting of language competencies in all recruitment forms: English, French and other;
- Create a bilingual selection committee able to ask questions in French and in English:
- Determine in advance the language competency assessment mechanism and tools. The process can be done in-house as well as by a specialized external firm
- Highlight the possibilities of language training and support for improving and maintaining skills in both languages

The presence of a French-speaking person during the interview is necessary to ensure that the candidate has sufficient knowledge of French, but also to send a clear message to the candidate that bilingualism is important to the organization.

## Recruitment toolkit: a good practice

The development of a recruitment toolkit for bilingual candidates is a good practice which has been implemented in many minority communities in Canada. It can:

- Highlight the benefits of working in a bilingual environment
- Serve as a promotion and attraction tool for the health organization wanting to recruit more bilingual human resources
- Provide elements of practical information on local French-language services and other services to facilitate integration into the local community

The recruitment toolkit can be compiled in collaboration with the local Francophone community.

[www.HHRStrategy.ca](http://www.HHRStrategy.ca)

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