

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/police-perspectives/the-mechanics-of-diversity-recruitment>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Every police department should be expected to have a competent, professional workforce that is responsive and accountable to the community it serves as well as reflective of it. In Arlington, Texas, we have learned that workforce diversity is a key ingredient in assembling a workforce in which the community can have confidence.

Police executives who want to commit their agencies to diversity recruitment strategies must first face an almost overwhelming reality. Historically, minorities and women have largely been excluded from policing. That reality creates a challenge in and of itself. How can you attract nontraditional groups into a profession that may be perceived as accessible only to white males?

One major stumbling block is the perception that if the standards were lower, then throngs of minorities would apply. Every minority police officer with whom I've ever spoken was staunchly opposed to lowering standards, which is neither necessary nor productive. Rather, *higher* standards are what's needed to attract assets in short supply. My belief and experience is that higher standards attract minorities. Several mechanical steps can be taken to enhance diversity recruitment outcomes.

The first step in minority recruitment is adopting a philosophy that diversity is a necessity. True minority recruiting requires a full commitment to the results of a diverse workforce. Policies and practices should be reviewed. The applicant selection process must be non-discriminatory. Those policies, practices, or processes that discourage, inhibit, or adversely affect nontraditional groups of employees such as focusing solely on educational attainment rather than professional experiences or those that serve to exclude rather than include certain candidates, should be discarded. Policies prohibiting sexual harassment, racial jokes, and other forms of discrimination are essential. They indicate a commitment to achieving a professional work environment. Achieving Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) standards should be a byproduct not the purpose of your effort.

The next step is creating a strategic minority recruitment plan. The plan should specify recruiting strategies, locations, and a timeline for achieving full implementation of the plan. Minority employees who are fluent in the language of their ethnic communities, citizens, and community groups should be enlisted to assist in planning and implementing recruitment strategies. Elements of a recruiting plan should include:

Evaluating the success of a department's strategies is the final component required for successful recruitment. The plan should be periodically adjusted to maximize its effectiveness. Recruiting protected classes of people is both an art and science. It requires delicately balancing community needs and management philosophies with fiscal constraints. A sincere approach should yield a workforce that reflects the community it serves.

The [Police Perspectives: Building Community Trust](#) blog series explores the importance of and provides guidance on how to build and enhance positive relationships between law enforcement agencies and the diverse communities they serve.

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