

BUSINESS CASE FOR DIVERSITY

Diversity is simply good business practice if the state workforce is to be as effective and efficient as possible in delivering services and programs to the citizens of Kansas. The changing demographics of Kansas mean that the public served by us is changing. When agencies recruit and retain an inclusive workforce – one that looks like the population it serves – and when individual differences are respected, appreciated and valued, diversity becomes an organizational strength that contributes to achieving results. And, the labor market has become increasingly competitive. Kansas State government must use every available source of candidates to ensure that each agency has the high-quality workforce that it needs to effectively and efficiently deliver its services and programs. Any agency that fails to take steps to recruit among the full spectrum of the labor market is missing a strategic opportunity.

Diversity offers a variety of views, approaches, and actions for an agency to use in strategic planning, problem solving and decision making. It also enables an agency to better serve the taxpayer by reflecting the customers and communities it serves. In sum, an effective diversity strategy has a positive effect on cost reduction, resource acquisition, creativity, problem solving, and organizational flexibility. Each of these actions has a direct impact on achieving the mission and business of the agency.

For years now, we have known about the projections for changing demographics across the nation and in the State of Kansas, and the impact those changes will have on the composition of our citizenry and workforce. We are now seeing those projections come true. Each year, the number of women, people of color, immigrants, and people with disabilities in the available workforce continues to grow. That change in demographics is even more pronounced in our state's population.

To provide the level of service needed and required by the citizens of this great state, the composition of our workforce must mirror our population. We must have the capacity, at all levels of state government, to literally and figuratively speak the language of the people we serve; to understand and empathize with their needs; and to appeal to them as a resource and trusted service provider.

In the private sector, the business case for diversity is an organization's appeal to customers and its ability to tap potential new markets. They understand that a diverse workforce benefits their bottom line. While Kansas state government is not driven by a profit motive, we understand that success in developing and delivering valued services to a diverse population can only come through the achievement and appropriate management of a diverse workforce.

Recognized diversity initiatives and results will help us continue to attract the most capable and dedicated to public service. Qualified and interested applicants are attracted by employers who demonstrate a commitment to developing and promoting a wider array

of people. Appropriately managing diversity will aid in our recruitment selection and retention processes. It will also increase our workforce's creativity.

Change is a certainty for our future, if for no other reason than the need for smaller, more cost effective, efficient organizations. Diversity addresses this need. by recruiting and retaining an inclusive workforce, agencies benefit from the multiple views, approaches, and actions that build organizational strength. Also, by learning how to work successfully with differences, the workforce becomes more effective in its own thinking, including its ability to achieve results.