

Improving social services through competency-based recruitment



PAHRODF
Philippines Australia
Human Resource and
Organisational Development
Facility

“A society where the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged are empowered for an improved quality of life.”

This is the vision of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) for the Philippines by 2030. In order to achieve this, DSWD is implementing poverty-alleviation programs such as Pantawid Familyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP), and Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan - Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (KALAHI-CIDSS).

These core programs are crucial in achieving the department’s mandate of helping poor Filipino households get access to education, health and livelihood. Accordingly, the delivery of these services relies heavily on human resource.

From job mismatch to job fit

In the past years, however, one of the challenges of the department’s Human Resource and Development Bureau (HRDB) was the high turnover rate of employees. According to Cristi Cruz, OIC-division chief of the HR Planning and Performance Management Division, the high turnover rate was usually a result of job mismatch. Unfortunately, this high turnover usually leads to delays in providing services to poor households.

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CASE STUDY

CRISTI CRUZ

Department of Social Welfare and Development



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“Let’s say a social worker resigns from work – it is not easy to find a replacement. It may take months. So there will be a gap in delivering the service because the position tasked to run the program is vacant. One of the reasons employees resign from their job is they are not fit for the position,” said Cristi.

In 2011, the Facility implemented the “Competency Modelling and Enhancing of the Recruitment System” intervention, aimed at improving and standardizing competency based-recruitment processes in DSWD, speeding up processing and filling up of job vacancies, and creating better fit between position holders vis-à-vis actual job requirements.

Competency-based recruitment is a big shift from the department’s previous recruitment process. In the past, the HRDB just administers an exam and select applicants for endorsement to hiring agencies based on exam scores. Interviews were not a priority in the recruitment process; an interview only happens when the hiring agency requests for one.

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Through a series of workshops that ran for seven months, HR staff of DSWD discovered the benefits of conducting in-depth assessment of recruits. They were trained to conduct functional and job analysis for selected Pantawid Pamilya, KALAHI-CIDSS and plantilla positions; develop competency models for benchmark positions; write job descriptions; use competency models and profiles as basis for targeted selection; develop targeting selection criteria, processes and interview guides; and make recruitment decision using targeted selection interview results.

“Unlike the other trainings, which were spoon-feeding, the great thing about this intervention is that we were the ones who gathered the data; we were trained to write competency-based descriptions, we benchmarked high performer staff, we transcribed our own interviews. We learned a lot because we’re very hands on with the project,” said Norabel.

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The knowledge and skills that the HR team gained were immediately applied on the department's major project as the intervention came on the heels of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program's expansion – from 1 million target beneficiaries in 2010 to 2.3 million for 2011. Because of the intervention, the program's urgent need for massive human resource was supported through rapid hiring using competency-based job descriptions.

“It's an innovation. It was the first time that the department ventured into competency-based recruitment and we knew from the start that it will cause positive change. With competency-based recruitment, we are now doing quality assessment. Since it is targeted, it is easier for us to assess if the applicant has the experiences for the competencies required of the position; it is easier to choose who fits the bill,” said Norabel.

“There is domino effect. If recruits perform well, then the department also performs well”

Since then, DSWD has been using competency-based recruitment, especially in recruiting Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) positions. The MOA positions, which were developed to speed up hiring of personnel for its banner programs, currently comprise majority of workers in DSWD.

“When we started using competency-based recruitment we got people who are really fit for the positions and would most likely stay longer. Before, the MOA positions usually resign quickly, just after two months. So now you can really see the effect because, so far, our competency-based recruits are still here,” said Cherry Yatco, chief admin officer for recruitment. “It's a great feeling whenever you see your recruits staying and even going up the ladder...you feel like you are part of their journey.”

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Changing old impressions

Now that the department is getting quality recruits, Joy Evangelista believes that competency-based recruitment is proof that government has quality manpower. This may change old mind sets: “Before, people think that government employees are not doing anything in their jobs or they only got in the government because of referrals. Now that we are moving into competency-based recruitment and selection, we can prove that all the recruits of the government are quality recruits; that we are getting the right people to deliver services that our countrymen need,” she said.

The competency models that the HR team developed, now serves as the department’s guide for hiring people. Even referred applicants need to pass the competency screening for the positions they are applying for. With competency-based recruitment in place, DSWD is better equipped to expand or take on more programs to ensure that all its target sectors - children, elderly, poor households, persons with disability – are assisted.

“There is domino effect. If recruits perform well, then the department also performs well,” ends Joy.