



Understanding the Cultures of Minnesota's Emerging Care Workforce

LeadingAge[®] MN
FOUNDATION

THANK YOU TO...

The **LeadingAge Minnesota Foundation (LAMF)** who is proud to lead this work, on behalf of our LeadingAge Minnesota members.

The **Employer Voices Advisory Council** and **Immigrant Voices Advisory Council** — comprised of LAMN members and partners.

This work was made possible through the generous support of the **MN DHS Grants, Equity, Access, and Research Division.**

Westlund Enterprises — a valued consultant and LAMN member who helped create and facilitate the training you see today.

Understanding the Cultures of Minnesota's Emerging Care Workforce

Focused topics include:

- Learn from a panel of community members that represent Minnesota's largest immigrant communities
- Discussions around communication best practices, work/life balance, ways to interact with different cultures and communities
- Panelists will share their experiences with employers that led to increased dedication or frustration

Presenter Introductions



Khadija Ali (Executive Director) – Pamoja Women & Healings Home Health Care



Salah Mohamed (Director of the Board) – Somali American Social Service Association of MN and Director of Lulu Logistics and Consulting



Lily Moua-Yang (Change and Transformational Coach & Realtor) – Community Activist



Zehra Rizvi (CEO) – YouEd



Iryna Petrus (Program Manager) – Ukrainian American Community Center



Tecla Welch (Director of Health Services) – Catholic Elder Care

Communication

What are cultural norms for communication?

In your opinion, what is the best way to provide a promotion to people from your community/ies when considering communication?

Salah Mohamed – Communication



Salah Mohamed (Director of the Board) – Somali American Social Service Association of MN and Director of Lulu Logistics and Consulting

The elders are peacemakers, resolve conflicts, and will have the last word

A nomadic lifestyle has developed a certain way of life or culture

Individuals typically will be comfortable asking for more responsibility or promotion at an organization – very frank at times!

Somali children are taught to speak up for what they want and to ensure they are heard

Individuals can be very blunt – if there is trust between the two individuals. Jokes or good-natured jabs will occur when trust is high.

Nicknames are common and are not received in a negative way

Tecla Welch – Communication

Elders are at the top of the hierarchy and families are expected to take care of elders

Very humble, no bragging about skills or accomplishments

Not typical to approach the boss – you don't ask for anything, you just stay humble

People will not ask for a promotion – it's up to the employer to see the potential in a person to be a leader or put them in a leadership role

Interviewees might be very soft spoken, quiet, and humility may be perceived as timid. Humility is a cultural norm, where bragging about skills and accomplishments are not normal.

Humility is not a timid character trait, but rather a cultural value



Tecla Welch (Director of Health Services) –
Catholic Elder Care

Zehra Rizvi – Communication

Elders are valued and there is an expectation that you will care for them

South Asian cultures tend to be less direct than other cultures – being direct is a sign of deep trust and connection between the individuals

Individuals will be incredibly respectful and humble in a work setting – think of it as the opposite of a LinkedIn profile!

People with talent will wait for their superiors to notice, to compliment, to promote

Creating and maintaining a safe and respected work environment will be noticed and higher retention will occur



Zehra Rizvi (CEO) – YouEd

LAMF's Employer Guide

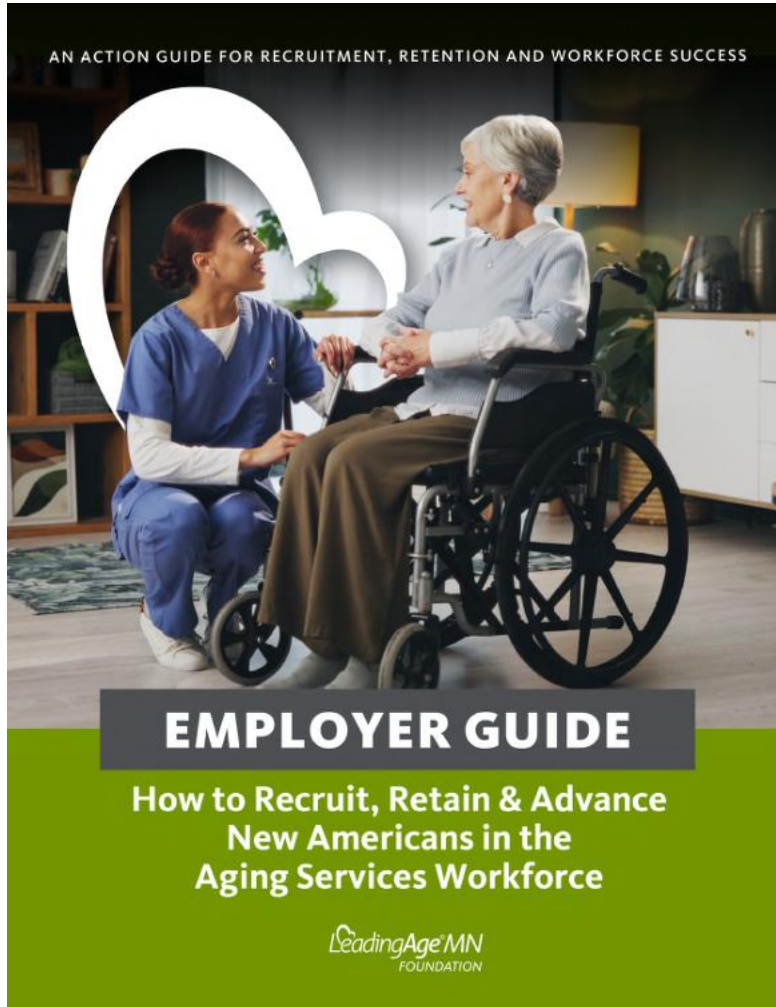


TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 05** Getting Started
- 08** Introduction to New Americans
- 14** Partner & Prepare
- 20** Recruit & Hire
- 26** Welcome & Recruit
- 31** Educate & Retain
- 37** Tools & Resources
- 62** Appendix

TOOLS & TEMPLATES

- ▶ **Section 3 Tools:** Partner & Prepare
- ▶ **Section 4 Tools:** Recruit & Hire
- ▶ **Section 5 Tools:** Welcome & Onboard
- ▶ **Section 6 Tools:** Educate & Retain

Recruitment

What culture clashes have you experienced in your professional field?

Are they conundrums, or do you feel that there could be ways to resolve these clashes?

What can employers do to ensure that people from your community can show up as their true selves and feel comfortable?

Lily Moua-Yang – Recruitment

Families take care of their elders as they age. They also honor three generations prior to their parents and take care of them in ceremonial ways.

Traditional career fairs are not well attended by the Hmong community – getting out INTO the community is better

Hmong centers and community gatherings are great locations to interact and spread the word about job openings – strong community ties are important

Employers: Bring your opportunities to the source to find the right talent



Lily Moua-Yang (Change and Transformational Coach & Realtor) – Community Activist

Khadija Ali – Recruitment

Celebrating employee's cultural backgrounds are essential to ensure retention efforts are successful

Pay attention to religious beliefs and requirements – some individuals might not be able to work on certain days of the week, others might need time to pray several times a day

Friday is a holy day in Islam

Ask the right questions about culture – don't be superficial with inquiries. Take time to learn from each other.

Cultures communicate regularly and frequently, and if there is a good place to work, people will know about it

Employers: Build partnerships with culturally specific Community-Based Organizations because word of mouth and trust occur this way and are proven effective recruitment strategies.



Khadija Ali (Executive Director) – Pamoja Women & Healings Home Health Care

Tecla Welch – Recruitment

Bring recruitment efforts to Kenyan churches and communities

Flyers, notices, and physically stopping into churches and community gatherings will go a long way to those in the community

Celebrating culture and being genuine about it is very important, including food, clothing, and practices



Tecla Welch (Director of Health Services) –
Catholic Elder Care

Inclusive Interviewing Strategies

SECTION 4 TOOLS: RECRUIT & HIRE

► **Overview:** New Americans bring essential skills and values to long-term care. But traditional interview questions often block them from showing their strengths, especially if English is not their first language. This tool helps employers adapt interview practices to reduce stress and build trust, while still meeting safety and compliance standards. It outlines when non-technical questions can be asked and answered in a candidate's native language with an interpreter, and when safety and technical questions must be answered in English (or the required workplace language). This balanced approach supports fair, inclusive, and safe hiring decisions.

► **How to Use This Tool:** Use this checklist when reviewing your organization's interview process. Check off what you already do well, and make notes of what you'd like to try.

► **Example Interview Questions:**

With Interpreter Support (Native Language Allowed):

- "Tell me about your last job."
- "What are your career goals?"
- "What do you value most about an employer?"
- "What is something you are most proud of from your past work?"

With Interpreter Support (Native Language Allowed):

- "If a resident fell, how would you respond?"
- "Explain how you use gloves or protective equipment."
- "What would you say if a resident was in pain?"
- "Can you tell me (or show me) how you would greet a resident?"
- "Please show me how you wash your hands before patient care."

Inclusive Interviewing Strategies		Notes
USE OF INTERPRETERS	Allow interpreters for personal, values-based, or teamwork questions so candidates can share more fully. (background, interests, career goals, teamwork style).	
	Remind interpreters to translate literally (not "help" the candidate answer).	
	Keep safety and regulatory questions in English, as language competency in emergencies is critical.	
	Require English responses for technical, or job-specific questions (handling emergencies, resident care procedures, safety equipment use).	
	Invite bilingual staff into the interview when possible to ease communication and build rapport.	

Culture Clashes & Bereavement

What kind of bereavement policy would best fit your culture/community?

What should employers consider?

Iryna Petrus – Culture Clashes

Many Ukrainians understand and speak Russian in addition to Ukrainian

Elders live at home with the family, who cares for them. Aging Services is an unfamiliar concept to Ukrainians.

Ensuring that elders are happy and feel loved when they pass away is a cultural value to Ukrainians

Make sure to ask the individual what do they need specifically – treat each scenario as unique and focus on the requests

Review policies to understand specifics and how they might affect the individual

Bereavement policies tend to be outdated and are not appropriate for today's workforce – different cultures have different needs and requirements of time and energy

Ukrainian funerals happen quickly (typically within one week of the individual passing), which can make planning ahead for time off very challenging



Iryna Petrus (Program Manager) –
Ukrainian American Community Center

Salah Mohamed – Culture Clashes

When someone passes away, the burial is quick, usually within 24-48 hours so little notice is given to employers

The family of the deceased spends a lot of time hosting, caring for family who have traveled to attend the funeral, and taking care of related tasks

Offer condolences, ask how one can help, give grace to those suffering

Depending on their role, an employee might be needed in the community for extended amounts of time to offer guidance and support



Salah Mohamed (Director of the Board) – Somali American Social Service Association of MN and Director of Lulu Logistics and Consulting

Khadija Ali – Culture Clashes



Khadija Ali (Executive Director) – Pamoja Women & Healings Home Health Care

Show up to cultural events, including funerals

Inquire about cultural specifics, what to say, and how to act during events (weddings, birthday parties, funerals) – it shows a high level of dedication and respect

Advocating for the requirements of a culture should not be viewed as a “problematic employee” – their culture/religion/spiritual beliefs are important

Engagement Ideas to Celebrate Culture & Identity

SECTION 6 TOOLS: EDUCATE & RETAIN

► How to Use This Tool:

- Plan monthly or seasonal celebrations.
- Integrate cultural activities into daily life.
- Provide residents with opportunities to connect personally with staff.
- Pick a few ideas to start, rotate them across the year, and adapt them to your community's needs.

Food & Shared Meals

- **Host Cultural Potluck Days** where staff bring traditional dishes, inviting residents to taste and learn.
- **Offer Cooking Demonstrations** with staff preparing favorite recipes alongside residents.
- **Create a “Recipe Stories” binder** with family recipes, shared in both English and native languages.

Trust & Relationship Building

- **Encourage Staff to Share “About Me” Boards** (photos, family traditions, hometown maps) to help residents connect personally.
- **Offer Language Connection Moments** — staff teach residents simple greetings or words in their native languages.
- **Promote One-on-One “Getting to Know You” Chats** where residents can learn about staff journeys and share their own life histories.

Workplace Environment

- **Post a World Map** or globe with pins showing staff origins and residents' family heritage, if they wish.
- **Rotate cultural display tables** with artifacts, clothing, or art provided by staff and residents' families.
- **Add a Language & Culture Corner** in resident newsletters or activity boards.

Inclusive Workspaces

If you had the power to create an ideal, uplifting workplace, what would it look like?

How can leaders help create this?

What does a successful day look like to you?

Zehra Rizvi – Inclusive Workspaces

Pay is not the only reason to stay at a job but it does matter, even if the employee is too humble to say so



Zehra Rizvi (CEO) – YouEd

Hours adjustment during times of religious or spiritual importance can be a significant driver of retention

Don't micromanage. Do offer work-related feedback that is useful for professional growth.

Khadija Ali – Inclusive Workspaces



Khadija Ali (Executive Director) – Pamoja Women & Healings Home Health Care

Communications and expectations should be very clear, very concise, and understood by everyone at all levels of the organization

Check to see if employees feel “stuck” – are there areas they are interested in growing or responsibilities they’re interested in taking on?

Include employees in decisions to have them be part of a solution, be part of a team, be part of the organization’s growth

Iryna Petrus – Inclusive Workspaces

Joy at work is incredibly important and individuals don't want to lose that with a promotion or professional growth

We grow together – when I grow you grow

Money is not always the focus when looking for professional growth, or a job in general

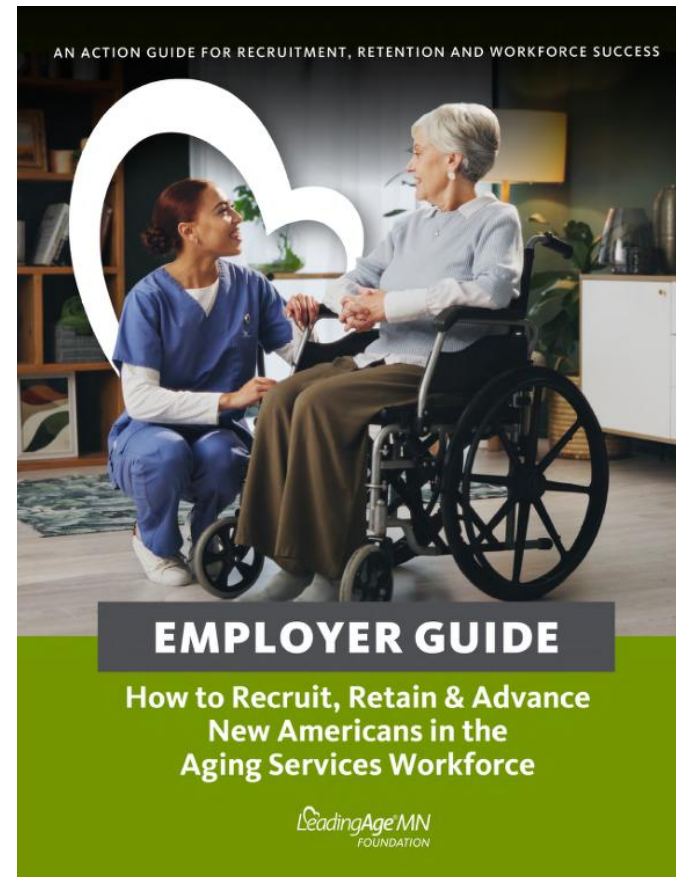
Honest, straightforward, clear, and compassionate communication feels respectful



Iryna Petrus (Program Manager) –
Ukrainian American Community Center

Let's Recap

- A panel of community leaders from Minnesota's largest immigrant communities shared their experiences
- Discussions centered around communication best practices, work/life balance, ways to interact with different cultures and communities



Thank You!