

Framework for Recruitment & Retention of Bilingual Human Resources in the Health Sector

March 2015



Note to the Reader

In this document, the expression “healthcare” is used to refer to both the medical and social services fields of practice.

The expression “health organization” is used to refer to health establishments, healthcare providers or to any other term intended to describe a public, private or community organization offering health services to the population.

Report

The report was written by Suzanne Tremblay of Sultrem Inc., who was our consultant. The English translation was provided by Ghislaine Prata.

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Key Findings

The availability of professional staff having the language skills required to offer services in French is one of the major challenges to accessing French language health services for minority Francophone communities in Canada.

- Bilingual human resources represent an **essential link** in ensuring effective communication to increase the quality and safety of health service delivery for official language minority communities.
- In a minority setting, recruitment and retention of bilingual human resources requires an **adapted approach**, taking into account a more limited pool of potential candidates as well as the workplace realities experienced by bilingual staff.
- The communication encounters which bilingual staff will have to face must be taken into consideration in the process of planning, recruiting and organizing the work of bilingual staff as well as for retention measures.
- The employer must define, for each bilingual position, the proficiency level required for each communication skill and use standardized tools to evaluate, recruit and assign bilingual staff. The employer must also ensure that the necessary training and tools are offered to allow staff to work effectively in both languages.
- The framework for recruitment and retention of bilingual human resources in the health sector revolves around six major steps and involves a continuous improvement process wherein all steps are important in ensuring the quality and safety of bilingual health services.
- Key factors in the successful recruitment and retention of bilingual human resources are:
 - Engaging the community and defining health needs and priorities;
 - Defining the linguistic profiles and explicit roles of bilingual positions;
 - Adapting recruitment practices and evaluating linguistic competencies in both official languages;
 - Adopting measures to welcome and integrate bilingual staff and to increase awareness among all staff of the importance of language services;
 - Training, providing tools, supporting and recognizing bilingual human resources;
 - Continuously assessing the workload and satisfaction of bilingual staff and of the targeted client group.
- *Santé en français Networks* are already working in their respective communities, in partnership with various stakeholders in the healthcare system and in Francophone communities. This document presents courses of action and examples of innovative practices to further stimulate collaboration between health organizations, communities and the *Santé en français Networks*.
- The concepts and courses of action presented are aimed at increasing French language health services across the country. Although this document was written for Francophone minority communities, the model is sufficiently generic to be adapted for other minority groups.



1. Introduction

The availability of health professionals having the linguistic competency required to offer services in French is one of the main challenges to accessing French language health services for Francophone and Acadian communities living in a minority setting particularly when:

- Francophone communities live in a remote area or represent a low percentage of the population, and
- the post-secondary education system in health sciences is predominantly Anglophone.

The *Société Santé en français* national project, *Strategies for the integration, recruitment and retention of bilingual health professionals in communities*, seeks to develop and experiment new and innovative recruitment and retention strategies for health professionals within official language minority communities.

A result of this initiative, the present document, *Framework for Recruitment & Retention of Bilingual Health Staff*, deals with approaches to the recruitment and retention of Francophone and bilingual health professionals, from English or French educational settings, within health establishments and organizations. Based upon a review of the literature on bilingual human resources in the health sector and an analysis and synthesis of theoretical concepts and research findings, it proposes a framework for the recruitment and retention of bilingual human resources in the context of health services for a minority population.

It is also based upon a study done in 2013 by the *Réseau franco-santé du Sud de l'Ontario: Human resource strategies for sustaining the continuum of care for Francophone populations in Central, South-West regions of Ontario*. This study, based upon a review of data from a number of surveys and interviews conducted within health organizations in the Central South-West region of Ontario (Toronto and surrounding areas) indicated that the recruitment of bilingual staff represented a major challenge to the development of the offer French language services. The study brought forth the needs of health organizations with regards to:

- Understanding and acting upon the factors which influence the recruitment of Francophone human resources;
- Developing strategies to increase the capacity and facilitate the recruitment of Francophone human resources.

Role of the *Santé en français* Networks

The objective of this document is to support the efforts of the *Santé en français Networks* and their partners to strengthen the capacity to recruit and retain bilingual human resources able to offer French language health services within Anglophone or bilingual health establishments. It also serves as a basis for the development of practical tools aimed at supporting the *Santé en français Networks* in their initiatives to increase awareness and to collaborate with key players in the health system, health organizations or management staff, as well as with health professionals and educational institutions. The tools can also be used to directly support the efforts of a health organization wishing to increase its French language services.

While recognizing that Anglophone or bilingual health organizations are responsible for the recruitment and retention of their human resources (bilingual), the *Santé en français Networks* can also play various supportive roles in this respect, including:

- Offering support to health authorities (planning, policy development, community consultation, etc.);
- Adopting a consultation role with establishments or management staff;
- Collaborating with educational institutions (student placements, promoting health careers, identification of bilingual students, etc.);
- Providing tools and increasing awareness amongst health professionals and managers;
- Community mobilization.

The tools developed from the identification of best practices could be used to directly support a health organization’s efforts to increase and retain its bilingual staff.

Scope and Limits

A number of Canadian, American and international sources have shown interest in challenges pertaining to the recruitment and retention of bilingual human resources in the health sector. This document deals specifically with the challenges and best practices in recruitment and retention of bilingual human resources as a means of accessibility to French language health services in a minority setting. Various other modalities for accessibility may also apply depending upon demographic context (interpreters, navigators, liaison officers).

This document does not deal specifically with the offer of French language services but can serve as a practical adjunct to complement those aspects of recruitment and retention which seek to increase the offer of services in French.

The recruitment of bilingual human resources within a minority setting remains a complex issue. This document presents a synthesis of the literature and of best practices in the area of recruitment and retention of bilingual human resources within Anglophone and bilingual health organizations. It represents a reference source and the foundation for the framework to support the recruitment and retention of Francophone and bilingual health professionals and providers working in a minority setting.

Throughout the document, the following color codes are used to position the various concepts or best practices according to the different dimensions of the health system:



A number of text boxes illustrate examples of best practices. Each one is numbered and also utilizes the above color codes. References are listed in Appendix I.



2. General Context of Health Systems

The ultimate goal of a health system is to improve health and ensure optimal quality of life for all people.

Major Health Trends

Governments and health systems are constantly seeking to improve quality while decreasing costs. More concretely, they wish to:

- Offer coordinated care centered on the needs of the individual;
- Offer quality care and services: effective, efficient and safe;
- Provide a coordinated continuum of care to the population;
- Ensure the best results in overall health.

Bilingual Human Resources in the Health Sector

It is within this overall context of healthcare system transformation towards person-centered care that the issue of bilingual human resources in the health sector is situated. Health service establishments and their management staff in Canada are increasingly sensitized to the risks posed by language barriers on the quality, safety and effectiveness of healthcare services:

- Recruitment of human resources is a major issue in the health sector and the challenges posed are **greater** with respect to the recruitment of Francophone or bilingual professionals;
- **Concerted efforts** are required in order to better understand the issues and identify innovative solutions to increase the number of professionals able to provide services in French;
- This is a **shared responsibility** between all key players in the health sector and the community.

Provision of French Language Services in Yukon

[1]

As of April 2013, the government of Yukon invested \$289,000 to introduce three pilot projects to strengthen French language services in the health and social services sector and to begin developing a corporate four-year plan on French language services.

The pilot projects are:

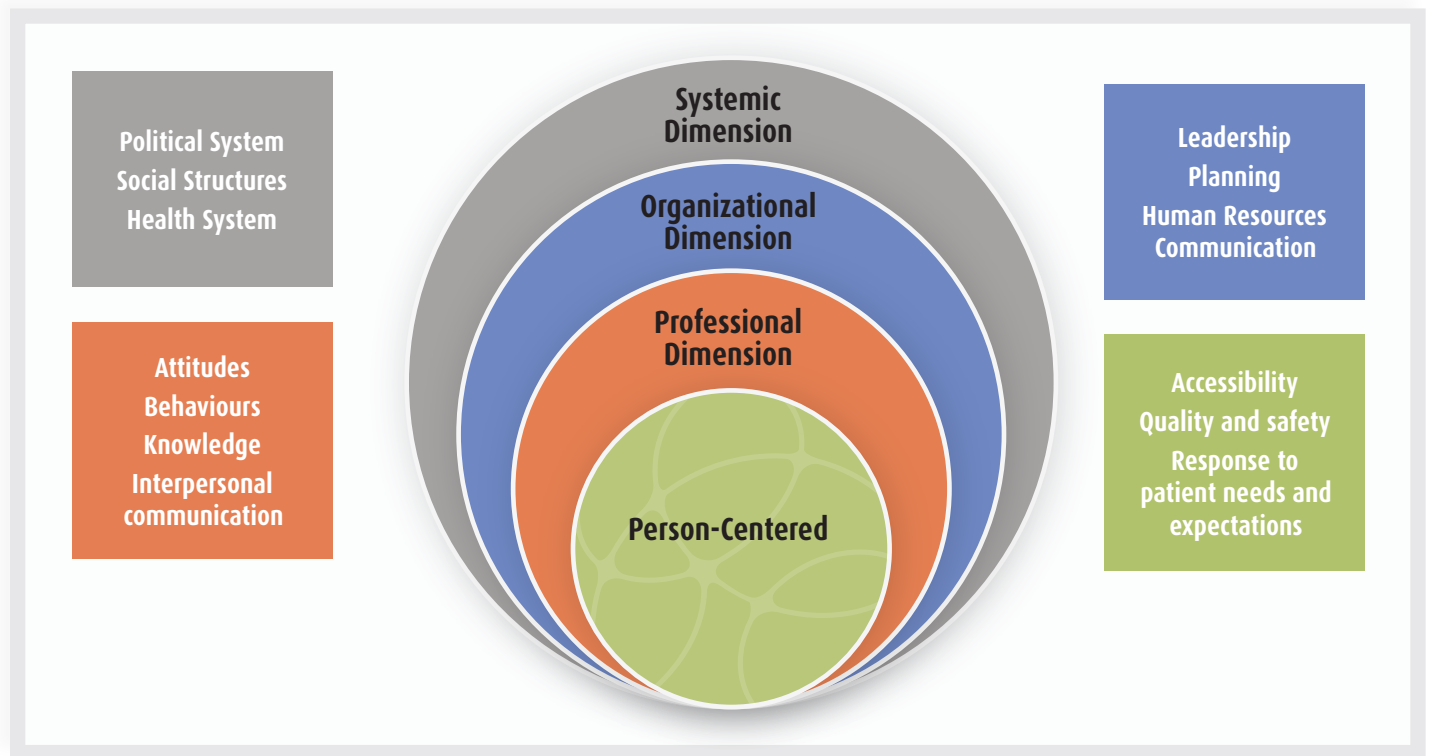
- an active offer of the services available in French;
- the implementation of well-coordinated interpretation services;
- the development of an implementation plan to staff designated positions in the health and social services sector.

"These pilots offer us the perfect opportunity to improve our services to the Francophone community in ways that realistically respond to the needs of French-speaking citizens. The four-year plan will ensure there is a corporate approach to providing improved levels of frontline French language services throughout the Yukon government."

Doug Graham, Health and Social Services Minister, 2013.

Conceptual Model of Dimensions of the Health System

In a minority setting, **action is required on all dimensions of the health system** in order to have a significant impact, as described in the conceptual model below.



Source: *Study on linguistically and culturally adapted health services: a Pan-Canadian portrait*, Tremblay, S, Prata, G, 2012

- The strategies to be implemented must be based upon knowledge of the issues related to providing French language services in an English language setting.
- The ability to speak French exists among health professionals but is a skill which is often unreported by the professionals themselves who fear having their professional practice modified:
 - This linguistic competence is also rarely valued or sufficiently exploited by organizations;
 - Certain provinces favor the development of linguistic competencies among internal resources. They have developed approaches and tools in this area.

On the basis of theoretical concepts of communication, the efficient use of bilingual employees and the realities of bilingual work environments, a framework is proposed which describes the key steps to successful recruitment and retention of bilingual human resources able to provide health services to official language minority communities in Canada.

3. Bilingual Human Resources: Theoretical Concepts

In Canada, the term “bilingual staff” usually refers to proficiency in communicating in both official languages: English and French. The ability to speak a language other than English is a skill that should be recognized in the same manner as another professional or technical competence. Language skills are essential for certain functions and desirable for others.

In addition to the degree of bilingualism, medical, professional and technical terminology which bilingual human resources must master in both languages must also be taken into account. Given that their training was received in either French or English, it is essential that they have access to additional training and tools (lexicons, dictionaries, client documentation, etc.) enabling them to use adequate professional terminology in one language or the other.

Bilingual human resources remain as the **preferred approach** in the area of linguistic access to health services. They provide communication with the client which is direct, efficient, of high quality and safe. They are used in a variety of communication encounters.

Bilingual Staff and Communication

A research project conducted by the *Centre for Culture, Ethnicity & Health* in Melbourne, Australia seeking to better define the contribution of bilingual staff, attempted to answer the following questions:

- How are bilingual staff defined?
- What is the value of bilingual staff and what roles do they perform?
- What issues should be considered in employment and retention of bilingual staff?

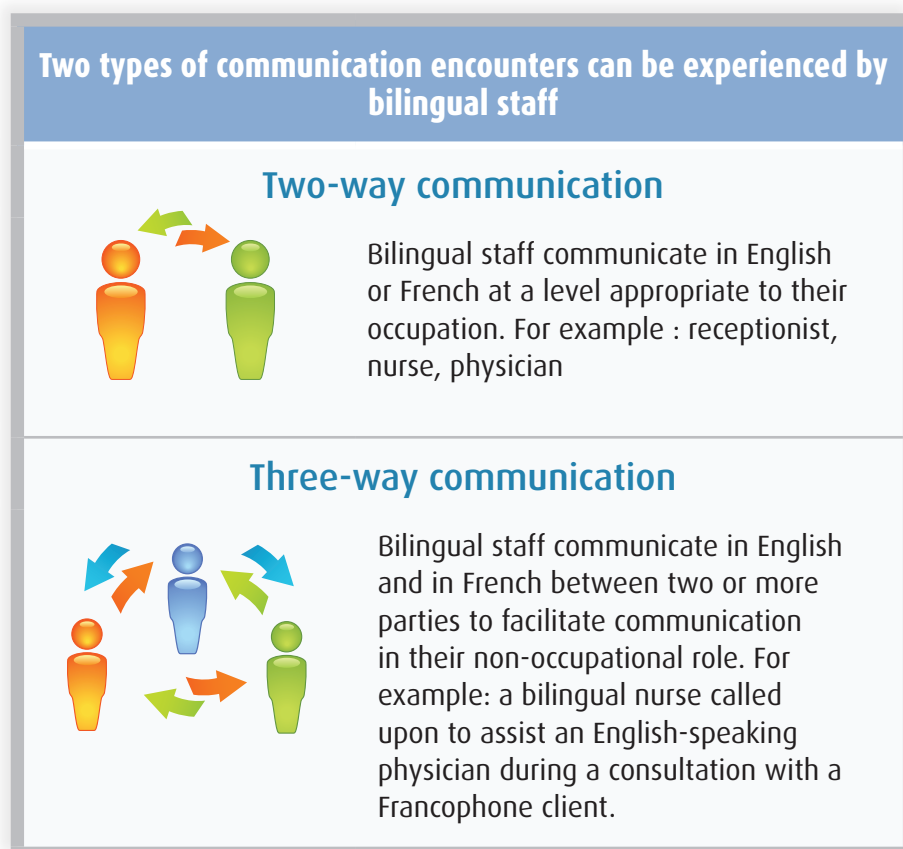
Some Key Findings from the Study:

- Bilingual staff are employed in **a wide range of occupations** within health organizations such as: receptionists, patient care attendants, nurses, physicians, social workers, case managers, client services, etc.;
- Bilingual staff are valuable resources to their organizations:
 - they can fill communication gaps promptly and can do so in various manners;
 - they can provide increased understanding of communities;
 - when used appropriately, bilingual staff can be cost effective.



- The distinction between types of communication encounters required of bilingual staff and interpretation is not always well recognized. The study draws a distinction between communication encounters and interpretation, unless a bilingual professional has been trained in interpretation (see below).
- It is important to conduct a formal evaluation of the language skills of a candidate given that employers identified a difficulty in doing so in a language other than English:
 - Selection interviews do not represent a formal evaluation process.
- The recruitment and retention of qualified bilingual staff present significant challenges:
 - Employers and supervisors recognize that despite the recruitment and retention measures in place, they want information to help them achieve better outcomes.

The communication encounters with which bilingual staff will be confronted must be taken into account within planning, recruitment and work organization processes for bilingual staff as well as in retention measures.



Bilingualism and Communication Skills

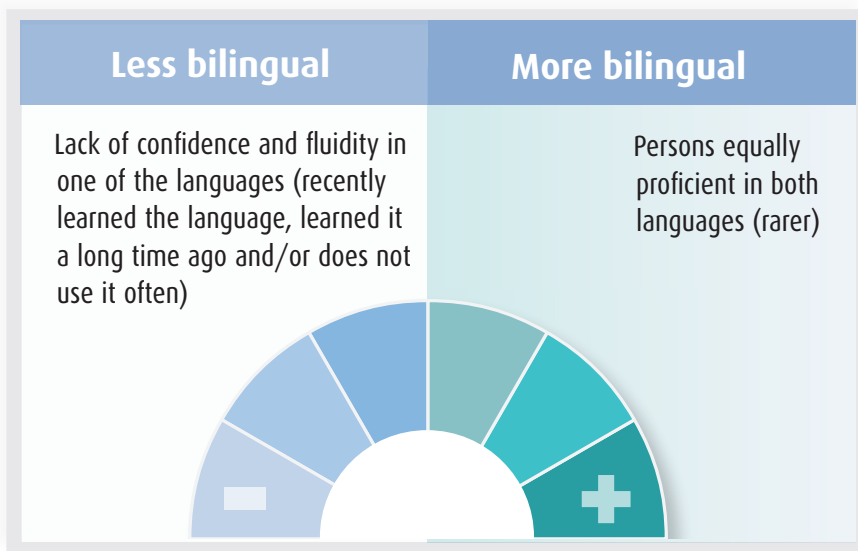
In Canada, there is no uniform definition of bilingualism, nor are there national standards regarding evaluation of language skills. However, the following are a few important elements to consider when recruiting bilingual staff, according to *Different Words Different Worlds* by Elaine Davies:

- Bilingual individuals have skills in two languages. However, there is a difference between having skills in a language and mastering a language. A person may speak two languages but use one of them or be more at ease in one or the other;

- Proficiency in a language can vary across the four communication skills:

Speaking | Understanding | Reading | Writing

- Few people are equally competent in both languages. One language tends to be dominant and proficiency can also vary over time and according to changing context;
- Bilingual individuals possess different degrees of bilingualism and their position along the continuum varies according to the communication skills (speaking, understanding, reading and writing).



The employer must define, for each bilingual position, the proficiency levels required for each of the communication skills and use standardized tools to evaluate, recruit and assign bilingual staff. The employer must also ensure that the necessary training and tools are offered to allow staff to work effectively in both languages.

Efficient Utilisation of Bilingual Staff by Health Organizations

A study by George Washington University, School of Public Health and Health Services: *Talking With Patients - How Hospitals Use Bilingual Clinicians and Staff to Care for Patients With Language Needs* (2009), presents the results of a survey conducted by a research team at the university which sought to better understand:

- How are bilingual staff used?
- How are policies developed?
- How do these practices affect the provision of language services?

This study, based upon a national survey targeting human resource directors of over 800 hospitals as well as interviews with selected respondents, is regularly cited in the literature as it bridges the gap between theory on bilingual staff and reality in the workplace.

Recommendations from the study *Talking with Patients*

[2]

- Hospitals should develop explicit policies or plans related to the provision of language services for patients with limited English proficiency (LEP)
- Bilingual clinicians and staff should be assessed for language proficiency if they provide direct services or care to patients with LEP
- Volunteer interpreters (informal) should have their language proficiency assessed and be trained in medical interpreting
- Hospitals should require that all staff, including clinical staff, receive education on the critical importance of language services to patient care, and training on how to access language services
- All hospitals should know who their patients and workforce are and strive to meet the language needs of all of their patients
- Hospitals should take a proactive approach to learning more about the many ways in which high-quality language services can be provided to their patients

The recommendation from this study constitute the basis of a culturally and linguistically competent organization.

Development of a Policy on Bilingual Human Resources – the Manitoba Experience

[3]

In 2013, the *Santé en français Network* in Manitoba, in partnership with health authorities and government bodies, undertook a strategic reflection process aimed at developing a policy and guiding principles related to bilingual human resources. A first step consisted of carrying out an environmental scan of policies pertaining to bilingual human resources in Canada. Afterwards, the strategic committee interested itself in labor issues regarding French language health services in order to foresee the challenges which health authorities and organizations would face in developing French health services in a minority setting.

The policy having been developed, the committee is working in 2015 to draft guidelines which will support implementation of the policy. Meanwhile, steps for adoption of the policy by the Ministry of Health in Manitoba will be initiated.



4. Realities of a Bilingual Workplace

For bilingual health professionals, the daily reality of bilingualism in a minority setting presents important challenges on all levels of the healthcare system: systemic, organizational, professional and at the personal/community level.

The results of numerous studies and surveys conducted with Francophone or bilingual professionals and health providers working in an Anglophone work environment concur with respect to the issues they are faced with.

The following Table provides a summary of the issues brought forth in a study by the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA 2007) on Francophone nurses and in a study by Danielle de Moissac et al. (2014) conducted with nurses, patient attendants and social workers.

Systemic Issues	Examples
Dominance of English (de Moissac)	In Anglophone establishments, although the language of communication between the professional and the Francophone client can be French, the workplace language, which includes oral communication between team members, meetings, official events and documentation, must be English.

Personal/ Community Issues	Examples
Lack of promotion of the Francophone culture (de Moissac)	Absence of internal policies and incentives to promote the visibility of French language and Francophone culture on a daily basis and to recognize the contribution of bilingual staff.



Organizational Issues	Examples
<p>Additional workload (CNA and de Moissac)</p> <p><i>I have to translate too frequently or within timeframes which are too short.</i></p>	<p>Bilingual professionals must often take on additional tasks and their responsibilities become disproportionate to those of unilingual English-speaking professionals. As well as frequently being obliged to play the role of “translator or interpreter” or assume an additional workload to treat Francophone clients, they must write reports in English and deal with computer systems in English.</p>
<p>Inequity in management practices which promote linguistic duality (de Moissac)</p>	<p>Lack of follow-up with respect to French language training for English-speaking employees and virtual absence of English language training for bilingual employees.</p> <p>Does not promote equity with respect to linguistic duality.</p>
<p>Non-bilingual executives or managers (de Moissac) according to province or setting</p>	<p>Language barriers in communicating with superiors in French, as managers are generally not bilingual.</p>
<p>Fewer opportunities for advancement (de Moissac)</p>	<p>Given bilingual staff shortages, management may be tempted to maintain bilingual employees in their current positions since bilingualism is required. Advancement opportunities are thereby limited for bilingual staff.</p>

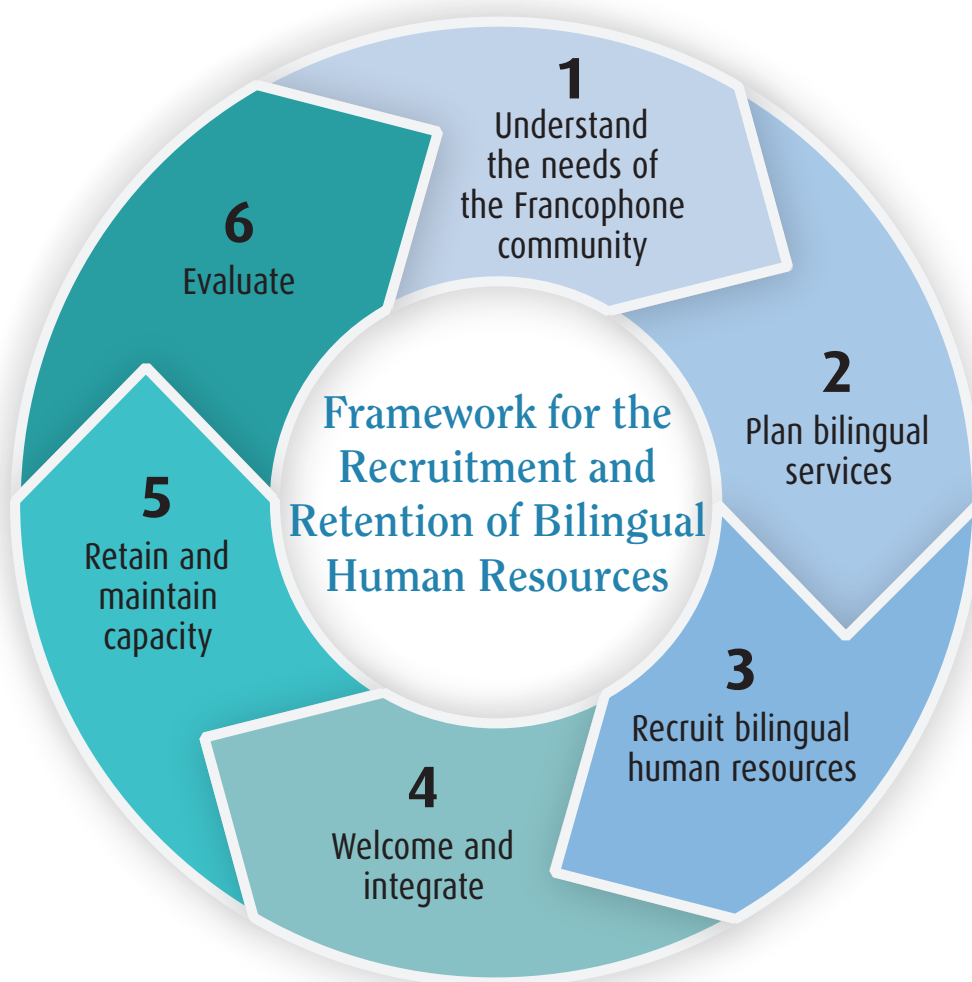
Professional Issues	Examples
<p>Language skills in the two official languages (CNA and de Moissac)</p>	<p>In many minority settings, Francophones completed their studies in English and are more at ease in a position which requires the use of English clinical terminology.</p>
<p>Fatigue and increased stress (CNA)</p>	<p>Fatigue and stress increase for the bilingual nurse. In the absence of professional documentation in both languages, concern with providing the client with the correct information in French is omnipresent. Concerns for patient safety add to the stress experienced by the Francophone nurse. The nurse may be penalised regarding holidays because of the need to ensure that a bilingual nurse is available as a replacement.</p>
<p>Professional isolation (CNA)</p> <p><i>My colleagues have difficulty understanding the cultural differences.</i></p>	<p>Francophone professionals face significant language barriers with colleagues who do not understand French. Unless they work in an environment which systematically encourages the use of French, they often experience a sense of isolation.</p>
<p>Difference in what is considered as a francophone or bilingual setting (de Moissac)</p>	<p>The Francophone culture is not experienced on a daily basis in a bilingual institution - for example, continuing education and posters in education rooms are almost exclusively in English.</p>

Certain issues among those mentioned above are systematically repeated in **all of the studies consulted**. They fall primarily under the responsibility of the organizations and solutions are largely dependent upon the willingness of the latter to address the problems identified. The following are a few examples:

Additional workload	<p>The additional workload is rarely measured and work planning and work organization is not adapted to optimize the contribution of bilingual staff. One of the challenges is to ensure that Francophone patients are directed to bilingual resources in a planned manner.</p> <p><i>For e.g.: reserve a time slot for a Francophone clinic to which bilingual staff are assigned.</i></p>
Language skills in the two official languages	<p>Bilingual staff require tools, training and continuing professional education to assume the communication roles assigned to them.</p> <p><i>For e.g.: primary documents and instruction leaflets for patients should be systematically translated.</i></p>
Professional isolation	<p>Stems primarily from an Anglophone organizational culture. Changing an organizational culture requires vision, determination, a sense of direction and time.</p> <p><i>In its role as partner to the organization, the community can assist in overcoming professional isolation.</i></p>



5. Framework for Recruitment and Retention of Bilingual Human Resources in the Health Sector



The framework focuses on six steps leading to the recruitment and retention of bilingual human resources able to provide French language services within Anglophone or bilingual health organizations. It is based on a traditional cyclical approach tailored to the specific challenges facing bilingual staff working in minority setting.

The purpose of the framework is to address the needs of Francophone communities by means of bilingual human resources in the area of health services. The framework represents a continuous improvement process in which all steps are important. The current offer of French language services in a minority setting is generally insufficient or does not reflect the actual needs of the Francophone communities. A health organization cannot be limited to reliance upon perceptions, and dialogue with the community is required in order to validate and clearly identify needs. In this context, planning is an important step involving a strategic reflection process and an evaluation of organizational capacity, the results of which will inform recruitment efforts.

The following sections briefly present the challenges and success factors for each of the steps as described in the literature as well as some examples and best practices.

Step 1 – Understand the Needs of the Francophone Community

In the context of person-centered healthcare, the development of French language health services within English-speaking majority settings must meet the needs of the Francophone community. This stage of the process is required in order to better understand the Francophone community and to define with them the specific health needs and priorities that the health organization will attempt to address.

Health organizations can refer to demographic data from Statistics Canada, clinical data, data on health professionals from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) or to any other provincial health database to ensure evidence-based decisions.

Provincial and regional health authorities periodically consult their populations to better understand their needs and to plan the organization and delivery of services. It is essential that these consultations take Francophone communities into account and that their particular needs are identified in public reports. The data produced generally represent a reliable source of information for local health organizations wishing to develop their offer of French language services and to determine the bilingual human resources requirements necessary to do so.



*Francophones
need to see
French, hear
French being
used and feel
that people
want to speak to
them in French.*



Understand the needs of the Francophone community

To which needs are we attempting to respond?

The following Table lists a few suggested modalities and success factors.

Systemic Level	Organizational Level	Community Level
General population consultations Francophone community consultations General statistics Francophone demographic profiles	Client satisfaction questionnaires Accreditation process of regulatory organizations Establishment statistics Linguistic profile of clients Review of existing French language services in the community Local consultation	Community profiles Francophone community surveys, focus groups; Informal needs assessment at community events; Feedback from community members serving on establishment committees Social networks and others
<i>French language questionnaire</i> <i>French language advisory committee</i>	<i>Questions regarding French language services</i>	<i>Needs and priorities of Francophones</i>

Community engagement efforts help to bring healthcare organizations closer to the communities they serve and improve the quality of services. Beyond the professional services available in a health organization, the ability to provide an active offer of services at reception, in communications and with respect to information they provide is important to ensure that the client feels comfortable using the French language.

In the absence of adequate data, many Francophone communities have undertaken local consultations or developed community profiles in order to bring forth their health needs and priorities when these are not evident in provincial or regional consultations.

Community Engagement Consultation in the Nova Scotia *Santé en français* Health Network

[4]

In 2009, the *Réseau Santé – Nouvelle-Écosse* submitted a project proposal to the government of Nova Scotia to conduct a province-wide consultation seeking to determine the health and wellness needs and priorities of the Acadian and Francophone community.

The community expressed itself on different health issues according to their perceptions and experiences. The main topics covered were: seniors, youth and adolescents, mental health and the health system.

It is important that healthcare organizations establish links with the Francophone communities they wish to serve in order to make them fully engaged partners.

Step 2 – Plan Bilingual Services

For English healthcare organizations wishing to increase the number of bilingual human resources, planning is an essential step. Good planning allows the organization to adequately prepare and to significantly increase its success rate.

According to the Office Francophone Affairs in Ontario (*Staffing and managing designated bilingual positions, A practical guide for managers, 2011*), the recruitment of bilingual staff is a **more complex process** for the employer than recruitment for non-designated or non-bilingual positions:

- The number of qualified candidates is limited and becomes even more so as position requirements increase;
- The recruitment process includes an evaluation of language skills in French and in English;
- The majority of managers are not in a position to evaluate the quality of French language in a work setting;
- The expectations of the community regarding accessibility, continuity and quality of care are high.

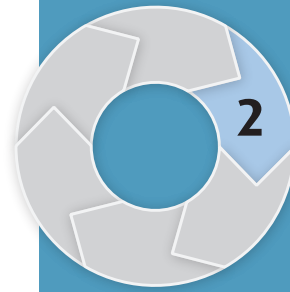
For these reasons, it is not unusual to see bilingual positions remain vacant or filled by persons lacking French language skills.

Recruitment Strategies

It is during the planning phase that the health service provider must reflect upon the various recruitment strategies available. Over and above the traditional recruitment approaches which rely upon grants for hiring and obtaining funds from federal, municipal or private foundation programs for bilingual staffing, there are also complimentary strategies which have been the object of experimentation and which have generated meaningful results in practice. They are:

- Strategy seeking to create a pool of future candidates by means of bilingual students and interns;
- Strategy seeking to build bilingual capacity of current human resources.

These strategies designed to increase the number of bilingual staff are not mutually exclusive but require different concrete actions.



Plan bilingual services

How do we prepare?



Strategy Seeking to Create a Pool of Future Candidates by Means of Bilingual Students and Interns

Some Actions:

- Establish partnerships with educational institutions;
- Promote the identification of bilingual students enrolled in health programs in post-secondary English institutions;
- Create summer jobs for bilingual students;
- Welcome bilingual students and interns;
- Create a pool of potential candidates who will have knowledge of the organization and who will have developed ties.

"Exposing students from the diverse health disciplines to community practice in a rural setting and having them do clinical internships, these experiences can contribute to attracting health personnel and facilitate their recruitment in rural areas."

Increasing access to health workers in remote and rural areas through improved retention. W.H.O. 2010

The Tour of Francophone Establishments

[5]

In collaboration with Southern Health-*Santé Sud* and the *CNFS-volet Université de Saint-Boniface*, the Manitoba French Health Network organized a tour of three health establishments in the rural region of *Santé Sud* for future graduates of the nursing programs of Saint-Boniface University. This original initiative's goal was to attract future graduates to rural regions, to encourage them to do a clinical internship in these regions and to subsequently work there. The initiative also sought to establish ties between the managers of the establishments, the community and the future graduates of these programs.

Network staff and 20 students boarded a rented bus and travelled more than 200 km to tour the participating establishments. They were warmly welcomed everywhere and were able to visit the sites, meet key people, ask questions and obtain information.

All of the participants would recommend this visit to future graduates:

- 80% of participants indicated that the visit would incite them to do a practical internship in rural establishments;
- 80% stated that they would consider the region to begin their career;
- 100% want to work in a designated bilingual position.

"All of the establishments gave us a feeling of being very important."

Strategy Seeking to Build Bilingual Capacity of Current Human Resources

Some Actions:

- Identify bilingual staff (employment form);
- Evaluate language skills and encourage existing staff to be evaluated;
- Improve skills through language training, provision of tools and staff support;
- Take advantage of free provincial or territorial language training or translation support programs;
- Mobilize and increase awareness among all staff;
- Monitor and continuously improve.

**Reimbursement Program
for French Language Courses
– Réseau du mieux-être
francophone du Nord de
l’Ontario (RMEFNO)**

[6]

On its website, the RMEFNO is promoting reimbursement programs offered by the Office of French Language Health Services and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for French language courses. Eligible employees are those who work for health organizations identified or designated to offer services in French and who wish to improve their skills in French.

**Kaiser Permanente “Bilingual
Staff” Program**

[7]

The Qualified Bilingual Staff (QBS) model and program of the American organization Kaiser Permanente, recognized for its effective management practices, focuses on the diversity of its existing staff to ensure linguistically and culturally competent services are offered to clients at all points of contact.

For Kaiser Permanente, bilingual staff represents **essential links** in ensuring effective communication and quality care for communities with limited English proficiency who are served by the organization.

The choice of one strategy or another depends upon the commitment of the organization, the possibilities which exist in their environment and the relationships they have developed with Francophone communities.

In certain settings, there exists a pool of health professionals from non-traditional sources, such as French immersion programs and Francophone newcomers.

Innovation is necessary to stand out and attract future health professionals.

How do we Prepare?

To effectively plan the recruitment of bilingual human resources in a minority setting, we must ask more specific questions and not rely on frequently erroneous perceptions or overestimate organizational capacity to serve the Francophone community. The following Table suggests some questions grouped according to four themes.

Questions for Planning the Recruitment of Bilingual Human Resources

<p>1. Have a global vision and plan for the development of French language services and the recruitment of bilingual human resources</p>	<p>What are the motivations and degree of provider engagement with regards to the Francophone community? Voluntary or mandatory?</p> <p>Does the organization have links with the Francophone community? With bilingual organizations?</p> <p>How are client needs measured?</p> <p>Does the establishment collect and record the linguistic identity of clients in medical records?</p> <p>Does the strategic plan take into account the development of services in French or bilingual services? How?</p> <p>Is there a person responsible for coordinating French language services?</p>
<p>2. Evaluate the need for bilingual human resources</p> <p><i>Identification of client language in databases is necessary in order to assess needs.</i></p>	<p>In which sectors are there bilingual positions?</p> <p>What are the specific needs and skills required for each bilingual position?</p> <p>What is the proficiency profile of candidates sought? (Speaking? Understanding? Reading? Writing?)</p> <p>Will the positions be designated or identified bilingual? Will they be unionized?</p> <p>How do you plan to assess language skills in French and in English?</p> <p>Are language skills considered to be a professional skill?</p>
<p>3. Know and measure the actual capacity with regards to bilingual human resources</p>	<p>Are the language skills of current staff known? Updated?</p> <p>Is there a plan to increase this internal capacity, for example, access to language training?</p>
<p>4. Plan recruitment taking into account local labor market issues</p>	<p>What are the opportunities to establish links with post-secondary training institutions? In the region? French? English?</p> <p>Where do professionals currently working in the organization originate from?</p> <p>Is the organization open to accommodating bilingual interns? Or to recruiting bilingual foreign professionals?</p>

These sample questions seek to ensure that the recruitment of bilingual human resources is the subject of reflection and planning in order to foresee the measures and actions to implement.



Planning is essential. Many Anglophone health organizations embark on the adventure of recruiting bilingual human resources, one position at a time, with no preparation, and are often disappointed with their lack of success.

The next section aims to provide practical advice, drawn from field experience and knowledge of the issues faced by bilingual health professionals in Anglophone organizations. It often consists of a reminder of good management practices that are simply not applied in the specific context of bilingual human resources.

Designation of Bilingual Positions

[8]

A position is designated bilingual when knowledge of both official languages is required. Management must then determine the level of bilingualism required for each communication skill.

Designation enables:

- Predetermination of the language skills required for a given position or for all provider services;
- Assurance of the continuity of services when a position becomes vacant;
- Indication to candidates, partners and to the community of the permanent nature of the position.



Recruit bilingual human resources

How to recruit effectively?

Step 3 – Recruit Bilingual Human Resources: Recruit Differently!

Although the decision to recruit bilingual human resources is an administrative decision, recruitment is usually entrusted to human resource specialists. They often use generic approaches, based on the profile of professionals already working in the organization, whereas the bilingual applicant pool is different, more limited, and recruitment approaches must take this into account.

The recruitment of bilingual human resources in a minority setting requires a tailored approach:

- Attitude of attraction rather than selection;
- Integration approach focusing upon a positive image of bilingual positions within the organization. Focus on the benefits of bilingualism;
- Assurance that potential candidates will receive the support necessary to provide French language services (training, tools, etc.);
- Explicit importance given to the criteria of language proficiency in the hiring process;
- Approaches targeting the expectations and values of different groups of potential candidates:
 - Young professionals;
 - Experienced professionals returning to the workplace following an absence;
 - Applicants from French immersion programs;
 - Foreign-trained professionals.

Recruitment Toolkit for Service Providers

[9]

The Réseau des intervenants francophones en santé et en services sociaux de l'Ontario (RIFSSSO), a not-for-profit umbrella organization of French-speaking professionals working in the fields of health and social services in Ontario, has developed a toolkit intended for service providers, available in French and in English, which contains information to support providers in their recruitment efforts.

HR Support Kit- Pathway to Bilingual Services

Recruitment must also take into account factors of attraction for young professionals in their choice of a job setting. Bilingual health professionals, like their English-speaking counterparts, are seeking stimulating positions that allow them to evolve in the health sector. They are aware of the competitive aspect of the labor market. Bilingualism is an additional skill that professionals would like to use.

- The key elements of a bilingual human resources recruitment process are the:
- I. Job profile;
 - II. Recruitment approaches;
 - III. Advertisement;
 - IV. Selection process and evaluation of language skills.

<p>The reputation of the employer</p> <p>Establishment outreach</p> <p>Employer of choice</p> <p>Support for professional practice (training, technical equipment, etc.)</p> <p>Links with academic, research and community settings</p>	<p>Work conditions</p> <p>Flexibility, work schedule</p> <p>Vacations, holidays, etc.</p> <p>Professional autonomy</p> <p>Interdisciplinary teamwork</p> <p>Workload</p> <p>Possibilities for advancement</p>
<p>Quality of work life</p> <p>Geographic proximity to home</p> <p>Public transport</p> <p>Day care in the workplace</p>	<p>Salary</p> <p>Salary according to market conditions</p> <p>Social benefits</p> <p>Bilingualism bonus</p>

At least one of these elements must stand out to attract and retain candidates, and usually more than one is required. The greater the job market competition is, the higher the expectations of professionals will be.

Toolkit for Recruitment of Bilingual Professionals by the Réseau Santé en français Î.P.É
[10]

In 2007, the Network developed a first version of the **Recruitment Toolkit** intended for bilingual students or health professionals able to offer bilingual services. This toolkit contains information relevant to facilitating relocation in Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.), a profile of the Acadian and Francophone community, the services offered, the attractions, etc. It highlights the advantages of working in a bilingual environment. In 2013, the Network presented an electronic version of the Toolkit.

The Network recruitment Toolkit is also used by the Ministry of Health (recruitment and retention Secretariat) in their efforts to recruit bilingual health professionals in P.E.I.

I. Job Profile

It is important to determine the linguistic profile of positions in advance, and managers must ensure that the HR department understands and respects the linguistic requirements:

- Determine the level of language skills required for each position (skills may be required for a particular position or for a member of a team);
- Decide how to determine the level of language proficiency required in both languages and what weight this factor will have in the selection of candidates:
 - The use of standardized evaluation tools is recommended;
- Is the position designated bilingual?
- If the bilingual nature of the position has been determined, this should be formally indicated in the position description and in the posting, while respecting collective agreements, as applicable;
- The language requirement notice may be accompanied by a note indicating that courses to upgrade skills may be required or provided.

Algorithm and Linguistic Framework

[11]

The conceptual framework *More than Words* of the Welsh government includes a series of tools to determine which positions require bilingual employees and what level of language proficiency is required for these positions.

The tools are designed to support healthcare organizations in the evaluation of bilingual positions (algorithm) and the evaluation of employee language skills (linguistic framework). The use of these tools by health organizations ensures a better quality of services for the target population.

II. Recruitment Approaches

The recruitment of bilingual staff is dependent upon a complex and dynamic interplay between organizational factors related to the workplace, professional factors, and personal factors. When there are shortages, recruitment approaches must extend beyond traditional approaches. The organization must stand out to attract bilingual candidates.



Several theoretical approaches to recruitment used in rural or isolated areas can also be used to meet the needs of Francophone minority communities. These approaches are:

Recruitment by affinity	Recruit within the target settings (francophone communities, rural and isolated settings), offer training, and ensure that the trained professionals return to work in their communities of origin.
Recruitment by economic incentives	Offer premiums for bilingual positions, recruitment premiums or other premiums.
Recruitment by professional practice characteristics	Attract and retain professionals by offering them advantages related to technology (electronic records, equipment, videoconferencing, etc.) or links with colleges or universities.
Recruitment by contractual agreement	Recruitment for a determined period of time following a student bursary or other advantage requiring a period of time working in the region.

Schoo, A., Stagnitti, K., Mercer, C. and Dunbar, J. 2005-12-23, A conceptual model for recruitment and retention: allied health workforce enhancement in Western Victoria, Australia, Rural and remote health, vol. 5, no. 477, pp. 1-18.

These approaches are primarily used to recruit medical or nursing staff but they can also be used to support the recruitment of other categories of health professionals.

Recruitment by Professional Practice Characteristics

[12]

The municipalities of Argyle and Yarmouth and the Town of Yarmouth in Nova Scotia partnered to offer recruitment incentives to physicians who choose to practice family medicine in their communities, in collaboration with the South West Health District Health Authority’s Physician Resource Management Department.

The three municipal units are also partners on the ownership and management of two medical family practice medical centers: Harbour South (capacity for eight doctors) located in the Town of Yarmouth and the A.M. Clark Health Centre (capacity for five doctors) in Pubnico.

Both of these facilities are fully-equipped **turnkey medical centers with state of the art equipment** and the **option of electronic medical record management**. Doctors can immediately begin their practice, without the problems or expense of setting up an office and practice.

The provider website is an excellent recruiting tool, especially if the site offers bilingual information.

Job Offer

The *Santé en français* Networks can play a supportive role by disseminating the job postings of establishments in their region on their websites or in social media.



Use of a standardized evaluation tool of language competency ensures equity and rigor both for the candidates and for the resulting quality of services.

* See Duchon, E., Bodkin, A.
Finders Keepers: Recruiting &
Retaining Bilingual Staff, HC Link,
March 2014

III. Advertisement: Seek Candidates Where they Are!

In order to recruit bilingual staff, it is not sufficient to simply indicate that you are seeking bilingual candidates. Here are a few basic rules to consider in order to succeed:

- The announcement should be published in both languages; in the French media, in the English media and on mailing lists;
- The announcement should be published in the English and French interfaces of job search websites (Workopolis, Monster, Job boom, etc.);
- The announcement in English should include a sentence in French to encourage bilingual candidates to apply.*

In 2015, recruitment is often done by **word of mouth** or through **contact networks**, including:

- Professional and personal networks, partners, colleagues:
 - Take advantage of French or bilingual events, conferences, etc.;
- English, bilingual or French universities or colleges;
- The network of Francophone community organizations;
- Social media: LinkedIn, Facebook and others. It is possible to find different groups of bilingual professionals and to promote free of charge on the LinkedIn website;
- Recruitment agencies and others.

IV. Selection Process for Bilingual Candidates and Evaluation of Language Skills

- Include a question for self-reporting of language skills in all recruitment forms: English, French and other;
- Create a bilingual selection committee able to ask questions in French and in English:
 - The interview should necessarily be conducted in both languages;
 - Invite a bilingual staff member or a partner to participate in the selection committee. The organization may also seek assistance from the *Santé en français* Network to identify a French-speaking member to participate in the selection committee;
- Highlight the possibilities of language training and support for improving and maintaining skills in both languages;
- There are several ways to assess language skills according to the needs of an organization:
 - If the organization wishes to do the assessment of language skills in-house, they must use standardized tools in order to ensure that the assessment will be done according to principles of consistency, transparency and accountability;
 - The services of a specialized firm can also be used to assess language skill level. They have the expertise and desirable neutrality. Several training institutions also offer this service.

Step 4 – Welcome and Integrate Bilingual Human Resources

Participation of the Francophone community is an important supporting factor in the recruitment and retention of bilingual human resources. The integration and the management of bilingual professionals are the responsibility of health organizations who can partner with Francophone community organizations to ensure that bilingual professionals are also **welcomed and supported in the community**.

The following actions can contribute to the reception and integration of bilingual human resources in English-speaking or bilingual health facilities.

At the Organizational Level	At the Professional Level	At the Personal and Community Level
<p>Develop a staff orientation program that puts forth the importance of diversity and linguistic accessibility, as well as the advancement opportunities for bilingual staff</p> <p>Ensure that information is provided in French</p> <p>Develop / maintain an organizational culture open to bilingualism and diversity</p> <p>Establish and communicate the follow up measures that will ensure a smooth integration</p>	<p>Create a welcoming environment that provides support for bilingual work</p> <p>Increase awareness among all staff of the importance of bilingual services</p> <p>Foster collaboration between English-speaking and French-speaking employees</p> <p>Provide programs to facilitate the integration of bilingual staff: mentoring, pairing of new bilingual employees, etc.</p>	<p>Develop partnerships with the Francophone community to promote community welcome</p> <p>Invite the Francophone community to participate in community awareness activities of the organization</p> <p>Involve the <i>Santé en français Network</i> to identify best practices elsewhere in the country</p>



Welcome and integrate bilingual human resources

Why a specific welcome?



It is important that bilingual resources feel welcomed as an integral part not only of the organization, but also of the Francophone community. This requires tailored approaches for welcoming and integrating bilingual staff.

Welcoming Communities Pilot Project in Central South-West Ontario

[13]

The capacity to recruit bilingual staff and offer services in their language to Francophones living in a minority setting rests in part on the commitment of the entire Francophone community.

Following this principle, the *Réseau franco-santé du Sud de l'Ontario*, a non-profit organization that contributes to the development of health services in French in the central-southwestern Ontario, contributed to the creation of 4 Welcoming Communities on their territory in order to facilitate the integration of bilingual student trainees during their stay and to promote the retention of Francophone and bilingual human resources within Francophone minority communities. These attraction measures, adapted to each region, allow for recognition of the value of bilingual human resources and the vitality of the host communities. Student trainees may have opportunities to meet other bilingual professionals and to make presentations in French during various events.

In addition to countering the isolation often experienced by students, this unique pilot project allows for the creation of links between health organizations in the various regions and the Francophone communities.

Step 5 – Retain Bilingual Staff and Maintain Language Capacity

Retention of bilingual human resources is a critical issue for employers and they must adopt concrete and appropriate retention measures to succeed, particularly given that they have undertaken additional efforts to attract and recruit bilingual human resources.

The following Table presents the main factors influencing the retention of bilingual staff.

At the Organizational Level	At the Professional Level	At the Personal and Community Level
Organizational culture	Adequate workload	Recognition from the community
Management commitment	Perception of equality or organizational justice	Active and dynamic communities
Support (tools, training)	High level of work satisfaction	Community support
Recognition of performance and work	Low levels of job stress associated with bilingualism	
Autonomy at work	Fair opportunity for career advancement	
Multidisciplinary team work		

According to de Moissac (2014), in order to ensure that staff remain bilingual in their workplace, it is necessary to offer language support in both official languages.

A designated bilingual establishment, or one recognized for its offer of French language services, must create a work setting where clients and their families always feel at ease to communicate in the official language of their choice.

The capacity to recruit and retain bilingual staff and to offer services in their language to Francophones in a minority setting does not only rest upon health establishment management practices, but also on the commitment of the entire Francophone community in requesting and using the services offered.



Retain bilingual staff and maintain language capacity

What are the conditions for success?

Recruitment is improved when retention is optimal because employees are prepared to recommend their employer.

Employer of Choice According to de Moissac

[14]

Visibility in community activities

Innovation in recruitment

- Establishes partnerships with training institutions;
- Sponsors future professionals;
- Offers scholarships, internships and summer jobs to students.

Develops customer-supplier approach to human resource management (HRM)

- Social responsibility of HRM (defender of employees);
- Meets expectations of employees:
 - Equity-Employability-Fulfillment-Ethics-Listening;
- Allows vertical and horizontal advancement.

Clear and bidirectional communication policy

- From top to bottom: assign targets, provide guidelines;
- From bottom to top: provide feedback, report issues.

De Moissac, D., et coll. Le recrutement et la rétention des professionnels de la santé et des services sociaux bilingues en situation minoritaire, Université de Saint-Boniface et Université d'Ottawa, 2014.

Appreciation and Professional Recognition

[15]

A number of initiatives celebrate the contribution of professionals and other healthcare staff and thereby contribute to retention and to staff commitment towards the Francophone community. Some are at the community level and others at the governmental or organizational level:

- **Étoile Santé** campaign of the PEI French Health Network (RSFÎPÉ) to recognize health professionals who offer health services in French.
- The **Prix d'excellence Bonjour!** for French language services recognizes the contribution of Ministries, offices and government agencies in Nova Scotia towards the development and the implementation of programs and services in French which address the needs of the Acadian and Francophone community in Nova Scotia.

Strategies to Improve Retention of Francophone and Bilingual Human Resources

Generally, bilingual staff seek work settings wherein they can use French in a climate where they feel **valued** and **authorized** to do so. The following measures represent proven options to meet the various challenges posed by the retention of bilingual human resources within Anglophone work environments.

At the Organizational Level	At the Professional Level	At the Community Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a bilingual organizational culture Recognize the contribution of Francophone and bilingual staff Develop policies on French language services Build a welcoming workplace where it is easy to work in a bilingual manner Encourage staff to speak French in their work Ensure that bilingual staff is not isolated, particularly if they are alone in offering French language services Develop models of service and of work organization which facilitate pairing of Francophone professionals and patients Create positions in partnership with other organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure access to tools (lexicons, dictionaries, online translation tools, etc.) Do not wait until staff must request French language tools Offer professional development, continuing education and occasions to acquire or maintain language skills in both languages Make career advancement possible for bilingual staff Facilitate the creation of bilingual management or coordinator positions Ensure adequate remuneration and assess the possibility of financial incentives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate collaboration with the Francophone community Encourage partnerships with other bilingual or Francophone organizations Celebrate the contributions of bilingual staff

Healthcare in French Networking Opportunity

[16]

The French Language Health Services Network of Eastern Ontario developed the concept of a Healthcare in French networking opportunity for health and social service professionals in South Eastern Ontario. The 2nd edition (2015) attracted more than 40 Francophone and bilingual professionals from the Kingston region and allowed them to foster collaborative ties in order to facilitate information sharing regarding French language services offered in the area.

“The professionals and health providers are at the heart of the offer of health services in French. We sense a real desire on their part to respond to the needs of Francophones and they are seeking the means. Occasions like these serve to strengthen their capacity, including sharing of information and contacts.”

Natalie Béland, Director, Communications and Community Participation



Evaluate

How and what to evaluate?

Step 6 – Evaluate

The development of a system of continuous assessment and a comprehensive monitoring plan for recruitment and retention of bilingual human resources is required to ensure the long-term success of the implementation of French language services.

One of the main issues put forward by bilingual employees is the heavy workload and the unrealistic expectations placed upon them. Given their close ties with the community, it can be difficult to maintain a balance between the demands of the community, of the organization and of colleagues. Managers must ensure **careful monitoring of working conditions and of the workload** of bilingual staff, through regular meetings and during the annual appraisal process.

The following Table presents evaluation strategies applicable at various levels and some performance measurement indicators.

Organizational Level	Professional Level	Community Level
Collection and analysis of data on the evolution of language skills of staff Measurement of the use of bilingual services by Francophone clients Surveys of employee needs and satisfaction levels Comparison of results from previous years	Regular and annual follow-up meetings Workload measurement Exit interviews with bilingual staff who leave their jobs Discussion groups with bilingual staff	Survey of the level of satisfaction of Francophone clients Ensuring that client survey questions are available in French Publishing the results of surveys in French and in English Sharing with the community
Indicators	Indicators	Indicators
Staff turnover rate vs. bilingual staff turnover rate Number of bilingual staff Number of language training sessions offered Participation rate	Retention rates for bilingual staff Collection and continuous analysis of qualitative data from exit interviews	Satisfaction rates of Francophone clients Satisfaction rates on language accessibility

The result analysis stemming from the performance measurements will allow a health organization to make the necessary adjustments to its bilingual human resource recruitment and retention practices.

As a result of the participation and feedback from the community, a health organization can:

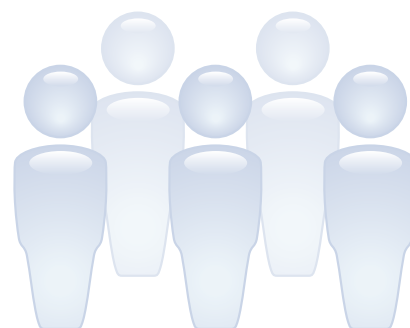
- More accurately determine clients' needs;
- Take into account their preferences and questions, and understand cultural attitudes;
- Provide services more efficiently;
- Increase client and staff satisfaction;
- Improve the quality and safety of care.

Patient and Family Advisor Program of Health Sciences North in Sudbury

[17]

"Share your perspective with Health Sciences North as a patient or family member"

The HSN establishment invites community members who have recently been a patient, or whose loved one was cared for at HSN, to partner with them as Advisors to share perspectives on what they do well and what they can improve. These advisors will have the opportunity to participate in discussion groups, review patient education materials and work on short-term projects to help improve the patient care experience. The registration form (in French and English) is on the website of the organization.



Key Factors

1

Engage the community
and define health
needs and priorities

2

Define the linguistic
profiles and explicit roles
of bilingual positions

3

Adapt recruitment
practices and evaluate
linguistic competencies
in both languages

4

Adopt measures for
welcoming, integrating
and increasing awareness
of staff to the importance
of language services

5

Train, provide tools,
support and recognize
bilingual human
resources

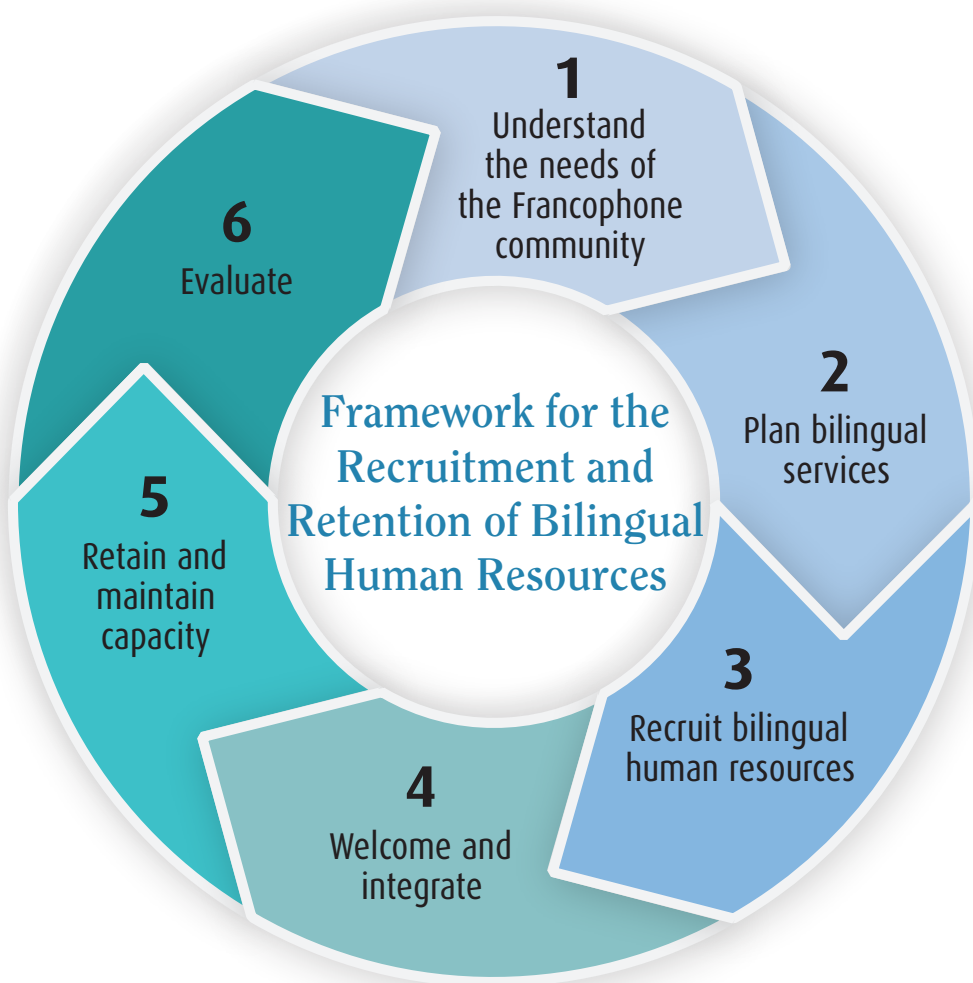
6

Continuously evaluate
workload, and staff and
client satisfaction

6. Conclusion

The recruitment and retention of bilingual human resources in the health sector, in a minority setting, require a **tailored approach**, taking into account the smaller pool of potential candidates and the realities experienced by bilingual employees within health organizations.

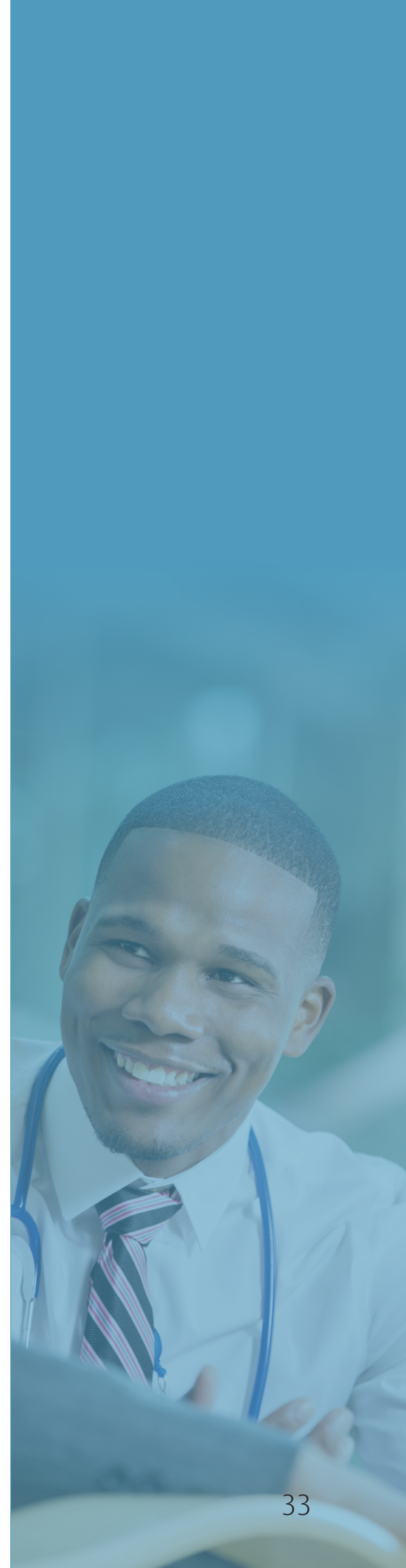
The framework for the recruitment and retention of bilingual human resources in the health sector is articulated around six main steps. Some courses of action emerge for each stage of the framework. Stemming from research and field experience, they constitute **key factors** to successfully recruit and retain bilingual human resources to provide quality health services in both English and French.



The framework for the recruitment and retention of bilingual health human resources is a continuous improvement process where all steps are important. Taking into account the theoretical, technical and best practices presented in the document, it is possible to increase the capacity to recruit and retain bilingual human resources in order to ensure bilingual healthcare services which are safe and of high quality, even in minority settings.

Santé en français Networks are already working in their respective communities, in partnership with various actors in the healthcare system and the Francophone communities. They can go further in supporting the recruitment and retention of Francophone and bilingual human resources by Anglophone health organizations. The document presents courses of action and examples of innovative practices to further stimulate collaborations between health organizations, communities and the *Santé en français Networks*.

This document seeks to strengthen bilingual human resources recruitment and retention capacities within Anglophone health organizations. The concepts and courses of action that are presented aim to increase French language health services across the country. Although the document was written for Francophone minority communities, the model is generic enough to be adapted to other minority groups.



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Appendix I List of Text Boxes and References

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6	Language Training http://www.reseaudumieuxetre.ca/pour-les-fournisseurs/trousse-dinformation-de-loffre-active/programme-de-remboursement-de-cours-de-francais/
7	Qualified Bilingual Staff Model- Kaiser Permanente http://kpqbs.org/index.html
8	Designation of bilingual positions http://santeenfrancais.com/publications/posts/2013/nouvelle-publication-de-sante-en-francais-competences-linguistiques-et
9	RIFSSSO Recruitment Toolkit for Service Providers (Available in French and in English) http://www.rifssso.ca/ressources/publications/ressources-docs/trousse-d%E2%80%99appui-rh-vers-un-service-bilingue/
10	Toolkit for recruitment of bilingual professionals by the Réseau Santé en français Î.P.É . http://santeipe.ca/carrieres-et-formation-en-sante/choix-de-carriere/
11	Algorithm and linguistic framework http://www.ccwales.org.uk/working-in-welsh/
12	Recruitment by professional practice characteristics http://www.munargyle.com/fr/initiative-de-recrutement-de-medecins.html
13	Welcoming Communities pilot project in Ontario South Nancy Larivière : nlariviere@francosantesud.ca
14	Employer of choice according to de Moissac http://ustboniface.ca/file/documents---recherche/Recrutement-et-rtention-des-professionnels-bilingues-2014.pdf
15	Appreciation and professional recognition : http://santeipe.ca/campagne-etoile-sante-fr/ https://acadien.novascotia.ca/fr/%C3%A0-propos-des-prix-bonjour
16	Healthcare in French networking opportunity http://rssfe.on.ca/upload-ck/Communique_5a7_2015.pdf
17	Patient and Family Advisor Program of Health Sciences North in Sudbury (HSN) http://www.hsnudbury.ca/portalfp/patifrtsandvisitors/patifrtfamilyfrgagemfrtfeedback/tabid/623/default.aspx

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