



Culturally Appropriate Practice (CAP) Framework & Cultural Appropriateness Test (CAT)

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Contents

03	Who should use this Framework?
03	About the Framework
03	Recognizing individual differences
04	Core Culturally Appropriate Practice (CAP) Framework
04	Trust-centred engagement
06	Respect for independence and dignity
08	Work-realistic Design
10	Language and communication accessibility
12	Practical navigation over information dumping
14	Cultural appropriateness test (CAT)



This framework was developed in response to an identified need for practical guidance on delivering culturally appropriate programs and supports for international agri-food workers. Feedback from a survey and workshop with organizations and individuals supporting international agri-food workers highlighted the importance of approaches that are responsive to workers' needs, experiences, and realities.



Who Should Use This Framework?

This framework is intended for organizations and personnel who design, coordinate, deliver, or evaluate navigation supports for international agri-food workers, including navigation staff, community organizations, health system partners, settlement agencies, and program managers. Employers are not the primary users but have an important role in supporting access to services and reducing practical barriers while respecting worker privacy, autonomy, and trust.



About the Framework?



The framework provides a structured approach for designing, delivering, and evaluating culturally appropriate navigation supports. It outlines practical strategies, communication approaches, and service delivery principles that address common barriers such as language, transportation, demanding work schedules, privacy concerns, and unfamiliarity with local systems.

The framework emphasizes that effective support goes beyond providing information or referrals. It requires building trust, reducing barriers, and delivering services in ways that are accessible, flexible, and responsive to workers' daily realities.



Recognizing Individual Differences

Cultural appropriateness cannot be assumed. Workers from similar cultural, linguistic, or geographic backgrounds may have different values, preferences, experiences, and support needs. Programs should avoid assumptions and remain responsive to everyone's circumstances and perspectives.



Core Culturally Appropriate Practice (CAP) Framework

Trust-Centred Engagement

This section outlines a trust-centred approach to engagement that recognizes the realities faced by international agri-food workers. Many workers experience barriers to accessing services due to demanding work schedules, fear of employer retaliation, language differences, transportation challenges, and concerns about confidentiality. A trust-centred model responds by prioritizing relationships, safety, and accessibility over rigid systems or procedures. The operational examples and program language below demonstrate how programs can build credibility, reduce fear, and strengthen participation through flexible service delivery, warm hand-offs, and collaboration with trusted community messengers.

Concept	Operational Examples & Program Language
Relationships are prioritized over systems	Operational examples: • Services scheduled outside peak harvest hours and adjusted during overtime periods. • The program’s rules clearly include written statements that say employees will not be punished or treated unfairly for speaking up (for example, reporting concerns), and that their jobs and rights at work are protected by law. • Intake processes minimize documentation and avoid collecting employer-sensitive information unless required. • Proactive follow-up when work demands interfere with appointments. Program language: • “Participation in this program does not affect your job, hours, housing, or work permit.” • “Your information is confidential and will not be shared with your employer without your permission.” • “We schedule services around your work hours.” • “If work prevents you from attending, we will reschedule.”

Concept	Operational Examples & Program Language
Warm hand-offs are used instead of general referrals	Operational examples: • Appointments scheduled directly with the worker present. • Transportation coordinated when needed. • Consent processes explained clearly in the worker's preferred language. • Providing the name of the person that will be present at their appointment. • Referral follow-up tracked and addressed promptly. Program language: • "We will call and book the appointment with you." • "We will help arrange transportation if needed." • "You will not have to repeat your story at each location." • "[Name] will be present at your appointment." • "We will follow up to make sure you received the service."

Concept	Operational Examples & Program Language
Support is delivered through trusted messengers (employers, faith leaders, community partners)	Operational examples: • People are personally invited to attend activities, rather than only using mass communication strategies • Information sessions are added on to existing events where people gather • Voluntary information sessions held at community gathering spaces. • Program introductions delivered by trusted worker representatives or faith leaders. • Materials available in primary languages spoken by workers. • Clear separation between employer management and confidential services. Program language: • "It would be great to see you at this event. Do you want to meet me there?" • "After the basketball practice, someone will be able to speak with you about X" • "This service is separate from your employer." • "Participation is voluntary." • "Information is available in your preferred language." • "Worker and community representatives help guide this program."





Respect for Independence and Dignity

This section highlights approaches that reinforce worker dignity, autonomy, and informed choice in service delivery. For many international agri-food workers, previous experiences with authority, dependence on employers, or uncertainty about their rights can make it difficult to seek support openly. Programs that emphasize voluntary participation, personal choice, and confidentiality help reduce fear and create safer conditions for engagement. The examples below illustrate how respectful, worker-centred practices can ensure that support is offered without pressure, decisions remain in the hands of workers, and assistance is delivered privately and with care.

Concept

Support is offered, not imposed

Operational Examples & Program Language

Operational examples:

- Services are introduced as optional, with clear explanation of what is and is not required.
- Workers are given time to decide without pressure from staff or employers.
- Information is shared in small group or one-on-one settings where workers can ask questions privately.
- No incentives are tied to participation that could create perceived obligation.

Program language:

- "This service is available to you. It is your choice whether to participate."
- "You can take time to decide."
- "Saying no will not affect your job, housing, or future support."
- "You may stop participating at any time."

Concept	Operational Examples & Program Language
Choice and autonomy are emphasised	Operational examples: - Workers choose appointment times that fit their schedules. - Multiple service options are explained clearly (e.g., clinic location, transportation type, language preference). - Consent is obtained before sharing any personal information. - Workers can bring a trusted peer or interpreter of their choice. Program language: "You choose the option that works best for you." "We will explain your options so you can decide." "We will not share your information without your permission." "You may bring someone you trust." "You can bring someone you trust who can act as an interpreter."

Concept	Operational Examples & Program Language
Assistance is provided privately and respectfully	Operational examples: - Private spaces are used for conversations about health, transportation, or personal concerns. - Staff avoid discussing individual situations in front of employers, supervisors, or other workers. - Interpretation is provided discreetly and professionally. - Sensitive paperwork is managed confidentially and stored securely. Program language: "We will speak with you in a private space." "Your information is confidential." "We will not discuss your situation in front of your employer or others." "You can ask questions without anyone else present."





Work-Realistic Design

This section reflects the importance of designing services that recognize the demanding and unpredictable realities of migrant and seasonal agricultural work. Long hours, changing schedules, transportation barriers, and seasonal work pressures can make consistent participation difficult, even when workers want support. Flexible and practical program delivery helps reduce unnecessary barriers by adapting services to workers' schedules, simplifying information, and responding to missed appointments with understanding rather than punishment. The operational examples and program language below demonstrate how programs can remain accessible, responsive, and realistic within the context of agricultural work.

Concept

Scheduling reflects long hours and seasonal demands

Operational Examples & Program Language

Operational examples:

- Services offered early morning, late evening, or weekends during peak season.
- Reduced programming expectations during harvest periods.
- No penalties for reduced engagement during high-workload months.
- Flexible rescheduling without administrative barriers.

Program language:

- "Services are scheduled around peak work hours and harvest season."
- "We adjust scheduling during busy periods."
- "You can reschedule if work hours change."
- "Missing an appointment due to work will not result in removal from services."

Concept	Operational Examples & Program Language
Information is concise and practical	Operational examples: • One-page summaries instead of lengthy brochures. • Clear step-by-step instructions for accessing services. • Verbal explanations supported by simple written materials. • Key details highlighted: location, time, transportation, cost (if any), documents needed. Program language: • “We provide clear, short instructions.” • “We explain what to bring and what to expect.” • “Information is available in your preferred language.” • “If anything is unclear, we will review it with you.”

Concept	Operational Examples & Program Language
Missed appointments or transportation challenges are treated as realistic, not failures	Operational examples: • No automatic discharge for missed appointments. • Outreach occurs to identify barriers (shift changes, ride cancellations, weather). • Transportation back-up options are explored. • Data tracking distinguishes systemic barriers from participant disengagement. Program language: • “If transportation or work prevents attendance, we will help reschedule.” • “Missing an appointment does not mean you lose access.” • “We understand that schedules and rides can change.” • “We will work with you to find another option.”





Language and Communication Accessibility

This section emphasizes communication approaches that are accessible, culturally relevant, and responsive to the everyday realities of migrant and seasonal workers. Because many workers rely primarily on mobile devices for communication, effective engagement requires information to be delivered in formats that are easy to access, understand, and respond to quickly. Communication strategies that prioritize mobile-friendly platforms, culturally grounded translation, and visual or scenario-based materials can improve understanding, reduce confusion, and increase participation. The examples below illustrate how programs can communicate in ways that are practical, respectful, and aligned with workers' languages, experiences, and communication preferences.

Concept	Operational Examples & Program Language
Primary communication is mobile-first and WhatsApp friendly	Operational examples: • Program updates, appointment reminders, and service information sent via WhatsApp or SMS. • Two-way messaging allows workers to ask questions and confirm attendance. • Messages designed for low data usage and limited time to engage. Program language: • "We share updates and reminders via WhatsApp or text." • "You can reply with questions or confirmations at any time." • "Messages are short and easy to read on your phone." • "No app download is required beyond WhatsApp."

Concept	Operational Examples & Program Language
Translation is paired with culturally relevant framing	Operational examples: • Materials translated into the primary languages of workers (e.g., Spanish, Tagalog, Haitian Creole). • Cultural references, examples, and scenarios match the workers' context and experiences. • Translation reviewed by community members to ensure clarity and respect. Program language: • "Information is available in your language." • "Examples and instructions reflect your work and community experience." • "We check translations with community members to ensure clarity." • "Instructions and tips are culturally relevant, not literal translations."

Concept	Operational Examples & Program Language
Visual and scenario-based are prioritised over text-heavy materials	Operational examples: • Step-by-step diagrams or photos show how to access services. • Short videos or illustrated guides explain procedures. • Role-play or scenario examples used in group sessions or WhatsApp video clips. • Minimal text; key points highlighted visually. Program language: • "Instructions are shown in pictures and simple steps." • "We use short videos or diagrams to explain what to do." • "Examples reflect real work and housing situations." • "You don't need to read long texts to understand the service."





Practical Navigation over Information Dumping

This section focuses on practical navigation supports that help migrant and seasonal workers access services with greater confidence and fewer barriers. Complex systems, transportation gaps, unfamiliar processes, and changing work demands can make it difficult for workers to follow through on appointments or service referrals, even when support is urgently needed. Providing clear step-by-step guidance, anticipating common barriers, and building in flexible supports can reduce confusion and improve continuity of care and services. The operational examples and program language below demonstrate how programs can offer practical, responsive assistance that helps workers successfully navigate systems and respond to unexpected challenges.

Concept	Operational Examples & Program Language
Step-by-step guidance is provided	Operational examples: - Written or visual guides break tasks into simple steps (e.g., how to reach a clinic, complete forms, or ride public transit). - Short instructional videos or WhatsApp clips show each step. - Staff or community partners review steps verbally in one-on-one or small group sessions. Program language: "Here are the steps to follow, one at a time." "We show you exactly what to do and where to go." "Instructions are simple and easy to follow."

Concept	Operational Examples & Program Language
Common barriers (phone numbers, transportation gaps) are explicitly addressed	Operational examples: • Program shares reliable phone numbers and points of contact for every service. • Transportation challenges anticipated with multiple options (rideshares, shared vans, public transit directions). • Emergency contacts provided for unexpected barriers (missed bus, closed office, etc.). Program language: • “We provide all the phone numbers you may need.” • “Transportation options are explained in advance.” • “If a bus or ride doesn’t arrive, here’s what to do next.”

Concept	Operational Examples & Program Language
Support and contingency planning are built in	Operational examples: • Clear escalation steps if appointments are missed, documents are incomplete, or services are delayed. • Workers know whom to contact directly without relying on intermediaries. • Guidance includes contingencies for work schedule changes, weather, or emergencies. Program language: • “If something goes wrong, contact this number right away.” • “We will help you find another option or reschedule.” • “You are not penalized for unexpected problems.” • “We will guide you through the next steps if barriers arise.”





Cultural Appropriateness Test (CAT)



If the answer is NO to any of the questions below, the tool, training, or activity should be adjusted to align with culturally appropriate practices before implementation. Document decisions and rationale to track adaptations and maintain accountability.

Question	Rationale	Practical Examples for International Worker Context
Can this be understood after a long workday?	Workers may be fatigued after 10 to 12 hour shifts, often in heat or physically demanding conditions. Materials should be concise, visually clear, and simple.	• Step-by-step WhatsApp clips instead of long manuals. • Visual diagrams showing instructions. • Short sessions scheduled outside peak work hours.
Does this preserve dignity and privacy?	Participation should not expose workers to judgment, ridicule, or employer oversight. Private spaces, confidential communications, and respectful tone are essential.	• Intake in private rooms or discreet corners of housing/worksite. • Staff avoid discussing personal situations in front of supervisors. • Consent obtained before sharing any personal information.
Does this assume trust, or intentionally build it?	Workers may be wary of authority, employers, or outsiders. Approaches should explicitly build trust, avoid coercion, and ensure clarity about confidentiality and non-retaliation.	• Introduce program through trusted messengers (community leader, faith leader, peer representative). • Written assurances: "Participation will not affect your employment, housing, or work permit." • Warm hand-offs for services rather than leaving the worker to navigate alone.

Question	Rationale	Practical Examples for International Worker Context
Does this work without a Canadian phone number?	Many international workers may have temporary or international SIMs, limited data, or shared phones. Tools should be accessible through common platforms (e.g., WhatsApp) and not rely on Canadian-specific accounts.	• Use WhatsApp or SMS-based communications instead of requiring Canadian-only apps. • Provide physical instructions as backup. • Avoid email-only registration or verification.
Does this support independence rather than create reliance?	Workers should be able to act on guidance without requiring constant staff intervention, while still having support if needed.	• Step-by-step visual guides or checklists. • Clear contingency plans: what to do if transportation fails or an appointment is missed. • Choice of when and how to engage, without punitive consequences.
Are language and cultural context considered?	Materials, training, and activities should reflect the worker's primary language, literacy level, and cultural norms.	• Translation paired with culturally relevant examples. • Visual and scenario-based materials prioritized over text-heavy instructions. • Advisory input from worker representatives.
Are real-world barriers anticipated?	Long work hours, seasonal demands, transportation gaps, and employer-controlled housing may create obstacles. Programs should plan for these in scheduling, delivery, and follow-up.	• Flexible appointment scheduling. • Transportation options provided or coordinated. • Program locations are accessible across many communities. • Understanding of peak harvest periods and overtime.
Is there a feedback mechanism in place?	Ongoing feedback from workers and service providers helps ensure programs remain responsive, relevant, and effective. Evaluation processes should identify emerging barriers, assess whether supports are meeting workers' needs, and inform continuous improvement.	• Regular opportunities for workers to provide feedback in their preferred language. • Anonymous feedback options available to protect privacy and encourage honest input. • Feedback collected through multiple methods (e.g., surveys, interviews, informal conversations, focus groups). • Processes in place to review and act on feedback. • Periodic assessment of worker satisfaction, service accessibility, and outcomes. • Community partners, navigation staff, and other stakeholders engaged in program review and improvement.



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