

# 04

# IMPLEMENTING YOUR WORKPLACE HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM

## Key questions to ask

- What are the basics of creating a workplace health and wellbeing program?
- Where can I get more help?



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In this section of the Healthy Workplace Resource Toolkit, we look at the basics of creating a workplace health and wellbeing program.

# WHAT ARE THE BASICS OF CREATING A WORKPLACE HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM?

Whether you are the manager of a small operation with a handful of employees, or the health and wellbeing coordinator with a large statewide organisation – the principles of creating a workplace health and wellbeing program are very similar.

And these principles are certainly a good place to start.

They are based on best practice guidelines drawn from a number of national and international resources.<sup>1</sup>



## A successful workplace health and wellbeing program:

1. Is cost effective and doesn't have to be expensive
2. Is closely linked to workplace health and safety
3. Assesses needs to identify health issues in the workplace
4. Involves voluntary participation and achieves high participation
5. Is sustainable and has a long-term commitment
6. Is evaluated and reviewed as required
7. Addresses individual and organisational issues
8. Has management support and senior managers are actively involved
9. Is accessible to all employees, irrespective of their health status, location or role in the workplace
10. Has coordinators who have access to resources and training relevant to health promotion

*For a smaller organisation,* some of these principles may seem unnecessary or overwhelming. Just remember that how you implement them will depend on, among other factors, your workplace culture, size and location.



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# WHAT ARE THE BASICS OF CREATING A WORKPLACE HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM?

## The workplace health and wellbeing cycle

The workplace health and wellbeing cycle illustrates the basic process of creating a health and wellbeing program.

For a smaller organisation just starting to develop a program, these processes don't necessarily have to be formalised or structured. However, a successful and sustainable program will have them in place in some form.

Let's go through each of the steps and see what they mean.

Keep in mind that you don't need to do these steps in a particular order – many organisations start by simply introducing activities that 'sound like a good idea'. From there, they gradually include larger and more sustainable health and wellbeing initiatives that result in long-term business benefits.



Adapted from Public Sector Management Office 2009,  
*Guidelines for implementing a workplace health and wellbeing program*,  
Department of Premier and Cabinet, Tasmania.



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# WHAT ARE THE BASICS OF CREATING A WORKPLACE HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM?

## I. Get the ball rolling

There are two main areas to focus on when getting started – gaining management support and establishing a workplace coordinator.

**Firstly**, it's important that there is commitment and support from senior managers, and that they have a clear understanding of the program's aims and expectations. The management team should also be informed about the need for a coordinator and any other resource requirements. Senior managers will not necessarily participate in all health and wellbeing activities; if they do, however, it will probably encourage other employees to take part in the program (see section 5 'Getting others involved'). In a smaller organisation, management involvement can be easily demonstrated by the owner supporting employees' ideas about making healthy choices easy choices in the workplace.

**Secondly**, the identification of a workplace coordinator will help make sure that there is one key person who can manage all health and wellbeing initiatives. In a smaller organisation, this may be a motivated employee who coordinates health and wellbeing initiatives in addition to their current role. In a larger organisation, this may be someone who already has a human resource or occupational health role.

**The coordinator will be better equipped** to manage the program if they understand issues such as resourcing, communication, networking and the management structure of the organisation. It is also important that an appropriate amount of time is allocated to this coordination role and that this is written into the coordinator's position description. It is important that this person has:

- the support of management
- a good relationship with the organisation's employees, including the ability to handle disgruntled or resistant staff
- a good understanding of health-related issues
- adequate project management experience
- the determination and perseverance to make it happen.



Do you have management support for your workplace health and wellbeing program?



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# WHAT ARE THE BASICS OF CREATING A WORKPLACE HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM?



## 2. Organise your program

Once management support has been obtained and the role of a central coordinator has been established, it's important to create a committee or working group to help implement your program. In a smaller organisation, this may be an informal group of employees who are all motivated and keen. In a larger organisation, you may create a new group, or introduce a new role for an existing group, such as the occupational health and safety committee.

Either way, it's important that the working group has representatives from each team within the workplace that might have an interest, for example, human resources, operations, or health and safety. In an organisation with a formal structure, the committee will also need a clear Terms of Reference.

For a Terms of Reference template, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



Terms of Reference  
for a working group

For more detailed information on establishing a working group, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



Establishing a workplace health  
and wellbeing working group



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# WHAT ARE THE BASICS OF CREATING A WORKPLACE HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM?

## 3. Work out what you need

*Your workplace health and wellbeing program will only succeed* if it meets the requirements of your employees.

How do you find out what your employees want?

In a smaller organisation, it may simply be a matter of asking employees what they would like to see happen. Your employees might have a broad range of ideas covering many aspects of health and wellbeing; it's likely that themes will begin to emerge, such as stress, extended sitting time, or access to good quality food.

In a larger organisation, you may need to conduct a more formal needs assessment, for example, a survey of employees. You can use your survey to collect baseline data about your employees (for example, information about their fruit and vegetable intake at the present time, or their current level of physical activity), and to collect information about what they would like to see in a health and wellbeing program. You'll be able to ask similar questions at a later date and then compare the information you have collected in both surveys. This will help you see if your program is reaching its goals. If you do use surveys, it is important to remove any personal or identifying information in your forms to protect the privacy of your employees.

Keep your program realistic – don't try to 'fix' all the issues at once. You probably already have some existing and well-received health and wellbeing initiatives in place; if these are working, you can incorporate them into your larger plan.



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# WHAT ARE THE BASICS OF CREATING A WORKPLACE HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM?



Any survey you use needs to be voluntary, confidential and anonymous. You don't want your employees worrying that this information will be made public or used for the wrong reasons.

Make sure your survey reaches all of your employees. This may involve using either electronic or paper-based surveys, or a mix of these approaches.

For a survey template, download the following resources from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



Needs survey (simple)



Needs survey (extended)



Workplace environment checklist



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To find out more about the health of your employees in general, try the free online health and wellbeing survey, located at [www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/healthpromotion/survey](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/healthpromotion/survey)

This confidential survey provides the individual employee with immediate feedback on their health, and also provides the workplace with a summary of the survey's findings (if more than 30 employees have completed the survey).

It's important to report the results of these surveys back to both managers and employees, so everyone knows they have been heard.

You might also want to conduct a review of your workplace environment to see what facilities you currently have. You'll probably find there are facilities that you can work into your program (like stairs, showers or a bike rack), and others that need updating or reviewing (such as kitchen facilities or the office layout).

For a workplace environment checklist template, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)

# WHAT ARE THE BASICS OF CREATING A WORKPLACE HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM?

## 4. Develop your action plan

Before you create an action plan for your health and wellbeing program, it's a good idea to develop an overall health and wellbeing policy. This key document will drive and guide all of your health and wellbeing activities.

To get you started, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



Workplace health and wellbeing policy

*Now you know what your employees want* and you have your guiding document complete, you are ready to create an action plan for your health and wellbeing program.

*The first step* is to determine your goals and objectives, based on the key issues that were identified in your needs assessment. Imagine, for example, that your survey identifies that employees only consume about half the recommended daily intake of fruit and vegetables, and you think this is an important area in which to make an impact. Your overall goal may be that employees have access to healthier food options within the workplace, while your specific objective is to increase intake of fruit and vegetables by 20% over the next 12 months.



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When starting from scratch, be realistic and start small – change takes time. Doing something is better than doing nothing at all.

# WHAT ARE THE BASICS OF CREATING A WORKPLACE HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM?



**The second step** is to identify and create strategies and activities to meet these goals and objectives. For example, your strategy could be to organise a cost-recovery fruit and vegetable bowl in the workplace kitchen, and your specific activities might include sourcing a supplier, investigating delivery options and working out how you'd keep track of the quality and freshness of the produce. In a larger organisation with an onsite cafeteria, your strategy might be to include more vegetables on the menu. Your specific activities could include initiating discussions with the cafeteria chef, bringing in a dietitian to discuss your menu and so on.

You can see that strategies can be simple and inexpensive, or require a more significant investment in time and money. Generally, the more comprehensive a strategy, the more activities needed to fulfil it.

**Ideally, there should be a mix** of strategies that target people, places and policies. Strategies that focus on people are aimed at educating employees and raising awareness. Strategies that focus on places target the physical environments or infrastructure in which we work. Strategies that focus on policies usually provide a formal 'back up' to these other two areas.

**It's important to consolidate and acknowledge** what you are already doing. For example, do you already have shower facilities in your workplace? That's a bonus that you can communicate to employees who may want to increase their physical activity during work hours.

**This is also a good time to identify resources, facilities and expertise** both within the workplace and in the community. For example, do you have a room that would be suitable for a yoga class, or are participants better off using the facilities at a nearby yoga school? Which of these strategies will encourage the greatest participation rate? Which will be easiest for your employees? Which will be most cost effective for you?

For some ideas on setting up your action plan, including sample goals, objectives, strategies and activities for each focus area, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



Sample action plan

For ideas and examples of strategies and activities across focus areas, see section 6 'Turning ideas into actions'.



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# WHAT ARE THE BASICS OF CREATING A WORKPLACE HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM?

## 5. Implement your action plan

Once you know what strategies are likely to help you meet your goals and objectives, you can get down to details. For each strategy, identify what is going to take place, who is going to be responsible, when it will happen, how it will be monitored and what resources it will require. Each strategy may target a different group of employees, so you may need to develop a range of promotional material. This is also the time to encourage the involvement of senior leaders in the organisation if they have not already expressed a commitment to the program.

You can also link in with community events and take advantage of promotional activities that are already in place. This might include events such as Diabetes Awareness Week, Mental Health Week or Nutrition Month.



For some ideas on linking community programs with your action plan, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



Sample health and wellbeing program



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# WHAT ARE THE BASICS OF CREATING A WORKPLACE HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM?

## 6. Monitor and evaluate your program

*Keeping track of what your program is doing* is the only way to discover if it's actually working. Evaluating each strategy in the program will allow you to see if it is contributing towards your goals and objectives. This might be as simple as asking participants how they are going, or monitoring participation rates for larger ongoing activities. Ultimately, there is no point wasting resources on strategies that are not achieving your goals.

Your evaluation process may also show you some benefits you weren't expecting. Maybe you didn't reach your specific goal around daily fruit and vegetable intake, but you find that more employees are satisfied with the food provided in the on-site cafeteria, or they are more aware of healthier food options available close by.

Within each focus area in section 6, you'll find more specific information on evaluating your strategies. Refer to the sub-section 'How do I know if our program has been a success?'



For more information on evaluating your program, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



A simple guide to evaluation



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# WHAT ARE THE BASICS OF CREATING A WORKPLACE HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM?

## 7. Update your program

So, let's say you have been running your health and wellbeing program for a year or so and have just done another survey to track your progress. You've compared your results with the survey you conducted when you were first planning your program. Guess what? Fruit and vegetable intake has increased to a level just below the recommended daily intake, and comments suggest that the changes made in this area were very well received. However, many people have noted that workplace stress has increased over the last 12 months.

**This is a great time** to change the focus of your program and concentrate on this new need that has been identified. At this point, you will also need to reconfirm management support for your program, and clarify any new or adjusted management expectations. You can now update your action plan and continue your program cycle.

If you need assistance at this point, remember you can always contact your Health and Wellbeing Advisor. Call **1300 366 322** to request a free visit.



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# WHAT ARE THE BASICS OF CREATING A WORKPLACE HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM?



## Summary checklist

Small organisation

Large organisation

	Small organisation	Large organisation
<b>1. Get the ball rolling!</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Gain management support and commitment	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify a central coordinator	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate role into position description	✓	✓
<b>2. Organise your program</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish a committee or volunteer working group	✓ (small/informal)	✓ (include management)
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish a Terms of Reference for the committee		✓
<b>3. Work out what you need</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Ask your employees	✓	
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct a formal needs assessment		✓
<b>4. Develop your action plan</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop a health and wellbeing policy	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify high priority areas	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Determine goals and objectives	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Create strategies and activities (include a mix of people, place and policy)	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify resources, facilities and expertise	✓	✓
<b>5. Implement your action plan</b>		
For each strategy, identify		
<input type="checkbox"/> What is going to take place	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Who is going to be responsible	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> When it will happen	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> How it will be monitored	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> What resources it will require (budget/time)	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> The promotional material to be developed	✓	✓
<b>6. Monitor and evaluate your program</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Ask employees how they are going in the program	✓ (informal discussion)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Keep record of numbers of attendees	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Repeat needs assessment		✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Compare with initial needs assessment		✓
<b>7. Update your program</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Reconfirm management support for program	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Clarify management expectations	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Allocate additional budget	✓ (if appropriate)	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> Update action plan	✓	✓



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# WHERE CAN I GET MORE HELP?

**WorkSafe Tasmania** offers a free and confidential Advisory Service for Tasmanian businesses looking to develop and implement a health and wellbeing program for their employees. Call **1 300 366 322** or email [workcoveradvisors@justice.tas.gov.au](mailto:workcoveradvisors@justice.tas.gov.au) to be put in touch with someone who can help.

## REFERENCES

1. Public Sector Management Office, Department of Premier and Cabinet 2009, *Guidelines for implementing a workplace health and wellbeing program*, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Tasmania.

