



## Alternative needs assessment methods

You can determine the health and wellbeing needs and wants of your staff and their workplace without a formal survey.

This can be useful if you are a smaller organisation, are low on time and resources or simply wish to have an informal discussion with your staff. Needs assessment responses are used to create your program action plan (Step 3: Healthy Workers – Healthy Futures toolkit).

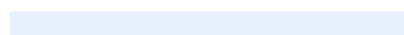
To create an inclusive and relevant program, it is recommended that you:

- Find out the topics and activities of interest to staff
- Discover any health issues of your workplace
- Determine the influencing factors in the workplace environment that are preventing employees from leading or adopting healthy lifestyles
- Determine if broader issues are inhibiting healthy practices; such as a poor culture or unhelpful business practices.

Tools available for download as part of the *Healthy Workers – Healthy Futures* Toolkit are designed to simplify the task of finding out the needs of your workplace. Even if you don't use the tools as they are; gather topics and questions to run your own needs assessment. The available tools are:

- *Employee Needs Survey*: assess areas of interest and activity preferences of your workers
- *Workplace Snapshot*: overview of the characteristics of your workplace
- *Workplace Audit*: assesses the workplace environment (infrastructure), policy environment and culture

Surveys aren't the only methods of capturing information from staff and about the workplace. Here are some suggested techniques which can be used in addition to or instead of the tools listed above.



## Healthy Vision: Culture, social norms and workplace commitment

To determine your site's needs, consider engaging management, and staff on relevant committees such as the Work Health Safety committee (WHS) or social club – these individuals are probably already aware of potential needs and are well placed to work together on potential changes to the environment, practices and programs. The group will also establish the amount and type of policies and procedures to support change.

- Make a list: what is already being done in the area of health and wellbeing at your workplace? Don't forget to seek WHS representative input as leaders of health and safety activities occurring on site.

Consider and discuss general attitudes to workplace health and wellbeing and if the current culture is impacting on health and wellbeing participation. Use the *workplace audit (vision)* to assist you to reflect on potential cultural issues.

- Search for relevant data sources:
  - Workers compensation claims- frequency and claim type
  - Employee complaint sources and actions
  - Sick leave patterns
  - Staff overtime records
  - Worker turnover statistics and trends
  - Participation rate, budget and resourcing for current or past health and wellbeing initiatives.
- Policy review: Assess if current policy or procedure documents could be revised to better support staff health and wellbeing. These documents could include flexi, overtime and leave entitlement policies, general health and wellbeing or return to work policies.

## Healthy Places: Workplace environment

- Start simple: walk around your worksite(s) with a discerning eye, considering factors that might impact on an individuals' ability to be active, sit less, eat healthier, smoke less, feel emotionally supported and actively discourage alcohol consumption.

- Consider the surrounding environment as well as facilities on site. Are there accessible walking paths, transport routes, local facilities (food, social opportunities or activity related)? Map these out and keep a record.
- Add the *workplace audit (healthy places)* questions into the next workplace WHS site audit.
- Chat to local businesses, council and clubs as part of your assessment. Community and council-run activities, events or facilities such as community kitchens, halls and sporting clubs, offer great opportunities to team up with activities happening in the local area.
- Take pictures: They provide a useful and visual exhibit of areas on the worksite requiring attention. Then track progress (before, during and after pictures). Engage employees by getting *them* to take photos of areas/objects that are impacting on their ability to achieve healthy behaviours.

Ask key staff members' questions: throughout the process, either formally or informally; they may have ideas of how to approach environmental and cultural change at your workplace.

## Healthy People:

In order to get staff to take part in your needs assessment, they need to know they are part of something purposeful and well intentioned. Keep employees informed of developments within the health and wellbeing program as it progresses.

It's essential that your colleagues are aware that management are supportive of participation, even at this early stage. Have managers themselves attend discussion groups and actively participating.

- Wishful Pinning: set up a notice board in a common area and get people to pin a picture of what they would like their workplace to do or look like in relation to healthy behaviours. Communicate with employees the purpose of this activity and add examples. Staff can then participate anonymously, which can be motivating to some individuals.



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- Use the more traditional method of a suggestion box.
- Focus groups and discussion groups: this works well if run by a trusted person who is well placed to open up a friendly discussion and keep things focussed and on track. Host a morning tea or add to a general or WHS meeting agenda.
- Run a group vote of preferred health activities, using suggestions in the *Employee needs assessment survey*.
- Conduct targeted interviews with key people. Include a broad range of roles and responsibility levels to maximise relevance of program throughout the workplace.
- If you do conduct a survey: Maximise the number of employees who take part by getting managers, supervisors and workplace champions to support and promote participation. Use frequented communication systems to promote, distribute and collect the survey, such as email, noticeboards, payslips, lunchrooms or staff meetings. Create a system to de-identify participants if able and inform staff that this is the case.

### Sample questions for interviews and group discussions:

- If we could do two things to address health and wellbeing within this organisation, what would they be?
- If there was anything that could happen in this workplace that you feel would encourage you to (be more active, eat healthy foods, reduce smoking, use of alcohol or add to your emotional wellbeing), what would it be?
- At present, what do you feel is the biggest barrier to healthy behaviours being adopted or maintained in the workplace?
- What would be the most effective way of addressing employee (activity, healthy eating, wellbeing, smoking cessation and alcohol reduction) in our workplace? Why do you think this could work?
- Are there specific health topics staff would like to know more about? What format- seminar, paper or online materials, activities or groups with other staff, links to offsite services?
- How often would you like to see activities occur and how can we ensure that the activities encourage most staff to participate?

- When could activities be run that would maximise participation?
- Depending on the program preferences of staff, are staff willing to contribute to the costs of the program? For example, attending a health seminar or participating in an exercise group.

### Acknowledgements Queensland Government, 2013, Workplaces for Wellness Kit

### Further information

To access the toolkit, all of the tools, and associated resources required to plan, implement and evaluate your own workplace health and wellbeing program head to *Healthy Workers – Healthy Futures Initiative* at [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyworkers](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyworkers)

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