

How to conduct a needs assessment

Healthy
Workplaces

This resource has been designed to give you some ideas on how you can conduct a needs assessment that covers the three areas of the healthy workplace model – healthy vision, healthy places, and healthy people.

A needs assessment is an important part of developing a tailored and effective workplace health and wellbeing program action plan. You can determine the health and wellbeing needs of your workplace with or without a formal survey. Informal discussions can be especially useful in smaller organisations or where time and resources are limited.

Healthy vision: workplace culture, policies and practices

- Start talking to management or people on relevant committees such as the work health safety committee (WHS) or social club. They are most likely to know about potential workplace needs and will be well placed to work together on potential changes to the workplace environment, practices and programs. The group will also establish the amount and type of policies and procedures to support change.
- Make a list of what is already being done in the area of health and wellbeing at your workplace? Don't forget to seek WHS representative input as they lead health and safety activities occurring onsite.
- Search for relevant data sources:
 - » workers compensation claims-frequency and claim type
 - » complaint sources and actions
 - » sick leave patterns
 - » overtime records
 - » worker turnover statistics and trends
 - » participation rate, budget, and resourcing for current or past health and wellbeing initiatives.
- Review your policies. Could current policy or procedure documents be revised to support people's health and wellbeing. These documents could include flexitime, overtime and leave entitlement policies, general health and wellbeing policies, or return to work policies.



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Healthy places: workplace physical environment

- Walk around your worksite. Look for factors that could influence people's behaviour. What could help them be active, sit less, eat healthier, smoke less, feel emotionally supported, and discouraged from drinking alcohol.
- 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.
- Chat to local businesses, council and clubs. Community and council-run activities, events, or facilities such as community kitchens, halls and sporting clubs, can offer great opportunities for you to team up with activities happening in the local area.
- Take pictures. Photos can provide a useful and visual exhibit of areas on the worksite that need attention. You can also track progress using before, during, and after pictures. Engage employees by getting them to take photos of areas/objects that impact their ability to achieve healthy behaviours.
- Ask questions. Ask key people 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: workplace team

- Communicate well. Let people know that they'll be a part of something purposeful and well-intentioned if they participate. Keep people informed of developments within the health and wellbeing program as it progresses.
- Show leadership. It's essential that everyone knows that management supports their participation. Have managers attend discussion groups and actively participate.
- 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. Add examples and talk with people about the process. They can then participate anonymously – this can increase participation rates.
- Create a health and wellbeing suggestion box.
- Run focus groups and discussion groups. These can work well if they're run by a trusted person who can start a friendly discussion and keep things focused and on track.
- Host a morning tea to encourage discussion or add health and wellbeing to a general or WHS meeting agenda.
- Hold a group vote on preferred health activities. You can use suggestions from the worker interest survey.
- Conduct targeted interviews with key people. Interview across a broad range of roles and responsibility levels to maximise the relevance of the program throughout the workplace.
- Conduct a survey. Use managers, supervisors, and workplace champions to support and promote participation. Use frequent communication systems like email, noticeboards, payslips, lunchrooms, or staff meetings to promote, distribute and collect the survey. If you can, create a system to de-identify participants and let them know their responses will be anonymous.



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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 would encourage you to (be more active, eat healthy foods, reduce smoking, use of alcohol or support your mental health) 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 (activity, healthy eating, wellbeing, smoking cessation, alcohol reduction, mental health, sleep, and fatigue) in our workplace? Why do you think this could work?
- Are there specific health topics you would like to know more about? What format would suit you best? Seminar, paper or online materials, activities or groups with other people, or links to offsite services?
- Do you feel involved in how decisions about your job are made? Think about whether you feel listened to and trusted, how you are consulted and any opportunities for input.
- What is the level of support like in the organisation?
- Do you feel you understand how work is structured in your department and in the wider organisation?
- What are some of the things this organisation can do to address or help with the issues you have talked about?
- How often would you like to see activities occur and how could we encourage people to participate?
- When could activities be run that would maximise participation?
- Depending on your program preferences, would you be willing to contribute to the costs of a program? For example, attending a health seminar or participating in an exercise group.

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