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# DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING AN EFFECTIVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM

This brochure is provided to assist human resource managers and health and wellbeing coordinators to design and implement effective health and wellbeing programs.

## UNDERTAKE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### Preliminary needs assessment

Organisations are often keen to put new programs and practices in place. However, hasty implementation can result in programs being introduced that do not result in significant benefits to the business. In order to minimise the risk of unnecessary costs, organisations will benefit from careful assessment of their areas of need. By first analysing organisational data (for example, absence data, injury rates, performance rates) organisations can identify the most cost-effective ways in which to invest resources and achieve their strategic goals.

Organisations use a variety of databases to record different types of information that may be useful in determining organisational risks and health concerns. Understanding what information your organisation records, what this information means, and how you can access this data, can significantly improve the impact of a program. Work Health and Safety hazard and incident reports are examples of resources that contain pertinent organisational data.

### Organisational assessment

To determine key risks or organisational issues, an organisational assessment is critical. There are a wide range of organisational assessment tools available, designed to measure different work and personal factors. Because there is no one organisational assessment tool that can provide an organisation with all of the information it needs, the preliminary data analysis is important to ensure that a suitable assessment tool is selected. For example, some of the factors that organisational assessments can measure include job satisfaction, organisational culture, organisational support, work styles, leadership or psychosocial climate.

### Developing a business case

Appropriate resource allocation and senior leadership buy-in are critical for a successful program. A useful way to obtain this is by developing a business case. It is recommended that a business case include the following:

- > the issues that are evident from analysis of organisational data (for example, high number of physical injury claims, high rates of absenteeism, or long return to work durations), and the associated costs of these issues
- > the organisational assessment that was utilised to investigate the underlying causes or related issues, and what this assessment revealed (for example, specific work factors that are related to the high number of physical injury claims)
- > an outline and key details of the health and wellbeing program that has been selected, including the financial, time and other resources required, and a clear explanation of how the program aligns with the organisation's needs and strategic priorities
- > the short and long term goals of the program, and the proposed monitoring and evaluation to be conducted.

## DESIGN

During the design phase it is important to consider:

- > appropriate planning (including how the intervention will be monitored and evaluated)
- > assessment of the alignment between policies, procedures and practices, and the program to be implemented
- > available and necessary resources
- > organisational support and buy-in
- > the assessment and management of potential risks.

It is also important to consider each of these aspects across the lifespan of the intervention. Assessment and management of potential risks is an important step that can sometimes be overlooked, with poorly planned programs more likely to experience negative consequences. For example, if you were planning to implement a yoga program in your workplace you would need to ensure a suitable space was available, free from physical hazards such as tables or chairs.

## CREATE A SUPPORT SYSTEM

It is vital to invest in developing a comprehensive support system. An effective support system encompasses:

- > commitment of senior leaders in the organisation
- > recruitment of program champions or informal leaders who model the desired behaviour and promote interest and engagement in the program
- > a work environment and practices that support the implementation of the program.

Lack of support is often cited as the key setback when health and wellbeing programs fail to produce positive outcomes.

## IMPLEMENT

When putting an intervention into place it is important to:

- > communicate clearly with all staff throughout implementation
- > review organisational procedures and practices and the attitudes and behaviours of staff
- > identify any potential barriers to the engagement and success of the program, and consider actions to mitigate these barriers.

## EVALUATE AND MONITOR

It is vital to monitor the program for the duration it is in place. Monitoring of an intervention refers to collecting and assessing information during implementation to a) understand what is working well and b) identify and address any organisational barriers or issues. Through regular monitoring an organisation can prevent costly problems from arising, by intervening at the earliest possible time.

Appropriate evaluation can often be overlooked, or completed in such a way that the organisation does not gain useful insight into how successful the intervention has been, and in what ways the organisation has benefited. Evaluation should consider a) the way in which the intervention was expected to impact the organisation, and b) the measurement of a range of key indicators.

According to recent research and reports from Australian and overseas organisations that have successfully implemented health and wellbeing programs, hard returns on investment (that is, quantifiable returns, generally financial measures) are unlikely to be seen until the three to five year mark. However, soft returns (that is, changes in attitudes and practices that are leading indicators of quantifiable returns) are often seen earlier on.