

ESTABLISHING A WORKPLACE HEALTH AND WELLBEING WORKING GROUP

To help drive a workplace health and wellbeing program, a working group and/or coordinator may need to be established.

Somebody within the team should take on the role of program coordinator, and then form a working group to assist in running the program.



Whenever possible, the working group should include representatives from all levels and sectors of the organisation.

Benefits of a working group

A well-planned workplace health and wellbeing working group will help ensure:

- best use of resources
- work-sharing among staff
- good coordination of program efforts among departments
- good communication between staff and managers
- sustainability of the program.

Working group membership

The membership of your working group will depend on the nature, size, and structure of your organisation. You might use your existing Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) group as a basis, but make sure you include representatives from all levels and sectors of your organisation (for example, management, production/service delivery, sales, personnel, and health and safety). The following diagram shows an example of a coordinating body in a larger organisation.

This structure may not be appropriate for a smaller organisation; instead, you might seek the support of external resources to strengthen your initiative, for example, a community health centre, a contracted occupational health and safety agency or industry-specific networks.

The following diagram shows an example of a coordinating body in a smaller organisation.



As you establish a suitable structure for your working group, consider:

- your organisational structure
- the human resources available in the workplace
- existing groups within your organisation
- the focus of the program.

Group members can be nominated based on the organisational structure of your workplace and the abilities and strengths of the people who might be involved. You could also merge existing groups (such as employee welfare, OHS, or facilities management groups) into your new workplace health and wellbeing working group structure.

Developing a Terms of Reference document can help to outline the roles and responsibilities of group members and guide the activities of the group.



After you have established your working group, it might be useful to form some project-based subgroups to take charge of specific aspects of your health and wellbeing program, for example, smoking cessation, work stress, providing healthy canteen options, or improving physical activity. Group members could identify colleagues who are passionate and have a special interest in a particular area of activity and nominate them as members of an appropriate subgroup. Using a subgroup system to build a network of health promoters can also help the group to communicate effectively with employees. A subgroup structure can be very useful; however, it is more applicable to larger organisations.

The following table is a useful tool to identify and document the roles and responsibilities of working group members (e.g. publicity, logistics, physical activity, healthy eating initiatives).

Internal members			
	Name	Department/Organisation	Roles and responsibilities
Senior managers/CEO			
Health and wellbeing coordinator			
Human resources manager			
OHS officer/manager			
Worksite doctor/nurse			
Other member of the health and wellbeing department (if applicable)			
Staff representative 1			
Staff representative 2			
External members			
Health promotion professional			
Environmental health professional			
Occupational health professional			

Role of the working group

Once your working group has been established, it should meet regularly to start program planning and preparation. The frequency of meetings will depend on the role of the group and the work to be done, and may change at any point in time.

The role of the working group is to guide the implementation of the workplace health and wellbeing program. One way to do this is to organise members into groups which have clearly understood roles, responsibilities and tasks. The overall responsibilities and tasks of the group include:

- identifying resources, facilities, expertise, networks and groups to collaborate and partner with
- identifying potential barriers to the implementation of a workplace health and wellbeing program in the workplace and provide advice and recommendations
- identifying established management processes that may assist in the planning and implementation of the program
- setting the overall scope, goals and objectives of the program
- conducting a needs assessment in the organisation
- ensuring access and equity for all staff
- prioritising the identified workplace needs
- developing program strategies and activities (developing an action plan)

- disseminating information regarding the program
- implementing the program and monitoring its progress and effectiveness
- evaluating the program
- reporting the outcomes of the program to the organisation's senior managers.

As the work of the group gets under way, keep in mind the following important points:

- if an external health professional has initiated the program, he/she should attend the initial meetings to help the working group address the above issues; the health professional should highlight the important roles each group member may undertake
- the group members should maintain a high profile at activities undertaken in the program
- the group members should be involved in the program evaluation with the following data collected whenever a specific activity is undertaken:
 - attendance records
 - meeting notes
 - promotional material
 - cost
 - feedback obtained from participants.

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