

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING A SMOKE-FREE WORKSITE POLICY

The following step-by-step guide will help you develop and implement a smoke-free worksite policy for your organisation.

A smoke-free worksite policy is a formal, written document addressing the issues relating to smoking in your organisation. Having a policy:

- provides clear direction to all employees as to why their worksite has adopted a smoke-free policy
- specifies the requirements for employers and employees
- alerts all employees, contractors and visitors that the organisation takes a firm stance on the issue of smoking and exposure to environmental tobacco smoke.

There are eight key steps to implementing a smoke-free worksite policy:

1. Getting management approval and support
2. Finding out what's already going on in your workplace and what else you need to know
3. Establishing who is going to make it happen
4. Communicating with others about what's going on
5. Drafting the policy
6. Providing education and training about the policy
7. Modifying documents and processes as appropriate
8. Preparing the worksite for implementation.

At an early stage, it is helpful to choose a date for the introduction of the smoke-free worksite policy. This provides a goal to work towards, and a timeframe for completion of each component of the implementation process. If no completion date is established, the implementation process may become drawn out and lose its focus.



Key factors for the success of a smoke-free worksite policy include:

- ongoing, active management support
- successfully managing negative staff reaction to the policy
- allowing adequate time for the implementation process; your employees will need time to get used to the idea of a smoke-free worksite
- selecting the most appropriate person to manage policy implementation
- clarifying your message; the policy is not about trying to stop people from smoking, it is about eliminating smoking in the worksite.

1. Getting management approval and support (without this, you won't get far)

High-level management support is vital to the successful development and implementation of a smoke-free worksite policy. By demonstrating leadership and a commitment to the policy, managers can influence employee attitudes towards this positive change in the worksite.

It is important:

- to discuss the expectations of managers so that there is a clear understanding of the policy's purpose
- to investigate potential issues and problems associated with the introduction of smoke-free initiatives – this will give the policy its best chance of success
- that managers clearly understand the benefits of a smoke-free environment and the various options available for reducing exposure to environmental tobacco smoke
- to put the consideration of a smoke-free worksite policy on the agenda for your organisation's next management meeting.

It might be helpful to provide managers with useful information, including:

- facts about the health effects of environmental tobacco smoke (see *Health effects of smoking fact sheet*)
- the overall benefits of implementing a smoke-free worksite policy, including the costs and potential savings (See 'Why should I address smoking in my workplace?' in section O6E of the Healthy Workplace Resource Toolkit)
- legislation and legal requirements (see *Smoking-related legislative requirements fact sheet*)
- findings of surveys and reviews conducted in the needs assessment (see point 2 below)
- an example of a smoke-free worksite policy (see *Smoke-free worksite policy template*)
- an outline of the steps involved in the development and implementation of a policy, including a projected timeline and details of any resources required.



Ensure that responsibility for the project is shared by all levels of management. It is important that senior managers 'own' the process, and provide ongoing support to the person responsible for implementing the policy. This will help to reduce the perception by employees that this person is solely responsible for the policy. Senior managers can demonstrate their ownership of the policy through management announcements and by being present in meetings where the policy is discussed. Emails, letters and other documents could be circulated and signed off by senior managers, while they could also make themselves available to discuss and resolve individual or group issues related to the policy.

First-line manager support and cooperation is important to influence the perceptions, behaviour and potential compliance of staff. First-line managers need to understand the benefits of the policy to both the organisation and employees. They will be instrumental in affecting the reaction and developing the cooperation of your employees.

2. Finding out what's already going on in your workplace and what else you need to know

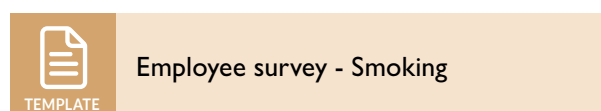
The second step in developing a smoke-free worksite policy is to find out what you already have in place and who would be affected by the policy. The way you do this will depend on the size of your organisation and may include conducting employee surveys and reviews of existing policies and facilities.

Useful questions to ask include the following:

- Does a smoke-free worksite policy already exist and, if so,
 - is it written down?
 - is it enforced?
 - does it need updating?
 - are your employees aware of it? If not, what do employees know of the current codes of practice regarding smoking at work?
- Are smoking practices within your organisation in line with current legislation?
- What do your employees know and think about the health effects of smoking and exposure to environmental tobacco smoke?
- What is the level of support among your employees for a smoke-free worksite policy?
- How many employees currently smoke; who will the policy affect?
- What type of smoking cessation support would your employees prefer?

Conducting an employee survey is a good way to explore some of these questions. If your organisation has already decided to implement a smoke-free worksite policy, think about the best way to present the questionnaire. Don't imply choice about the implementation of the policy, but do offer the opportunity for employees to make suggestions and express their views on what should be included in the policy and how it should be implemented.

The following template will help you create an employee survey on smoking.



In a smaller organisation, it might be more appropriate to do this on an informal basis, through individual conversations with employees or as agenda items in staff meetings.



3. Establishing who is going to make it happen (you can't do it all on your own)

The two key actions that will help make it all happen are to:

- establish a committee or working group, or use an existing group, such as the Occupational Health and Safety Committee or Health and Wellbeing Committee, to oversee the development and implementation of your policy (in a smaller organisation, this step may not be necessary)
- appoint an individual staff member to manage the implementation process.

If you have the resources to establish a committee, ensure a wide range of interests are represented and encourage active participation in the development of the policy – this will help to create a sense of ownership. The principal goal of the committee is to develop the smoke-free worksite policy and to guide its implementation.

Membership of the committee should consist of a wide range of representatives, including management, employees, human resources, union representatives and occupational health and safety staff where possible. Where the policy will have a significant impact on clients it may also be appropriate to include client representatives. It is important to state that smokers are invited to join the committee. The committee will need to meet regularly for some time before the policy implementation date, and continue to meet for a period after implementation to oversee and problem-solve the implementation process.

For a Terms of Reference template, see below and for more information and useful advice, visit <https://nt.gov.au/industry/hospitality/smoking-laws-and-businesses>



Sample Terms of Reference - Smoke-Free Worksite Policy Implementation Committee

Appointing an individual staff member who can consistently manage the implementation process will ensure continuity and minimise the risk of implementation problems or failure. It is vital to select the best person to manage the implementation process, as this may have a significant effect on the outcome of the project. It would be useful if the person you appoint to the role:

- is a non-smoker
- has a commitment to the smoke-free worksite policy
- is willing to take on the role
- has the determination and perseverance to make things happen

- has empathy (to understand the position of smokers)
- is resilient (to withstand any negative reaction to the policy)
- has good decision making and organising skills
- has a good relationship with other employees and is respected by them
- has good verbal and written communication skills
- is experienced in project management
- has conflict resolution skills
- has a good understanding of smoking-related issues, including a belief in the benefits of smoking reduction or cessation.

Some employees who smoke may experience anxiety and uncertainty about their ability to manage their nicotine addiction during working hours. This may be expressed as anger towards the person responsible for implementing the policy. It is important that managers are alert to this possibility and offer support to the person if they experience difficulties. There are various techniques that may help reduce potential conflict. For more information on this topic, read the below fact sheet.



Conflict resolution

Anxiety about smoking restrictions may lead to initial resistance to the implementation of a smoke-free worksite policy. However, other worksites with a similar policy have found that generally, this involves only a minority of employees, and resistance diminishes or evaporates after the policy is introduced.

Implementation of the policy can be time consuming, and the person responsible would benefit from being provided with some adequate and uninterrupted time to devote to the project, even if this means relieving them from some of their other duties during the life of the project.

This person could also consider sharing the implementation tasks among others members of the committee, and identifying and involving others within the organisation who have specific expertise relevant to the project (e.g. media skills, smoking cessation expertise, project management skills, training expertise).

The person responsible for implementing the project will need to have regular communication with the committee, as well as other people who will be affected by the policy.



4. Communicating with others about what's going on

How you communicate with your employees about the policy will depend on the nature and size of your organisation. Smaller organisations may prefer to use more informal means of communication, as managers often have a closer relationship and more frequent contact with employees.

Initially, you will need to identify those who have an interest in, or will be affected by, the implementation of the smoke-free worksite policy.

Effective communication with employees is crucial to gaining support and ensuring the success of the policy over time.

You will need to clarify what you want employees and others who have an interest in the policy to know about. You will also need to decide how you are going to inform them.

From the early stages of policy development, ensure that employees understand the intent of the policy. It is not about trying to coerce smokers into giving up smoking; rather, it is about encouraging healthy lifestyle choices among staff, promoting a healthy organisational image and protecting non-smokers from the harmful effects of smoking. Recognise the rights of smokers to continue smoking if they wish—but not on the premises of the organisation.

Employees need to be:

- involved in the decision-making process; this will encourage employees to take ownership of the process, which will help reduce resistance and promote greater acceptance of the policy
- consulted about the policy; this involves seeking the input and feedback of people affected by the policy at all stages of implementation.

Ensuring that there is consultation between managers and health and safety representatives may assist in gaining employee support and commitment.

Identify existing distribution and communication processes (e.g. staff meetings or staff newsletters) and decide which of these could be used to communicate with employees about the policy.

Using multiple forms of communication is likely to be most effective in getting your messages across to people affected by the policy. You may wish to consider using some or all of the following communication methods:

- agenda items and discussion in staff meetings
- staff information sessions
- emails to employees, contractors and customers
- letters to employees and contractors
- postings on the organisation's intranet and internet sites
- articles in staff newsletters
- agenda items for occupational health and safety meetings
- notices on message boards
- flyers attached to payslips
- posters
- 'on hold' phone messages
- letters and pamphlets included in any customer mail outs, invoices and statements
- movement-triggered voice recordings on entry to the worksite, reminding visitors of the policy.

Consult and communicate regularly throughout the development and implementation of the policy, as well as during the policy evaluation and review process. When the draft smoke-free worksite policy is developed, circulate it to staff with a request for comment and feedback before you finalise the document.

Encourage employees to provide feedback or discuss their concerns about the policy by offering them the opportunity for individual meetings with management and/or the person responsible for policy implementation.

For more information, posters, signs, stickers and useful advice, visit www.smokefree.nt.gov.au

5. Drafting the policy

To help you create your smoke-free worksite policy, use the template located in the Linked Resources folder.

6. Providing education and training about the policy

Prior to the implementation of your policy, hold training sessions for your employees to inform them about:

- your smoke-free worksite policy, including the implementation date, its purpose and contents and details of any smoking cessation support that will be provided
- the health effects of exposure to tobacco smoke and environmental tobacco smoke
- worksite boundaries
- compliance procedures and the location of designated smoking areas, if appropriate
- the responsibility of employees to politely approach visitors who smoke on site, informing them of the smoke-free status of the site and requesting that they stop smoking. It would be advisable for employees to avoid escalating the confrontation if the visitor refuses or does not comply; in this instance, employees could be advised to notify their manager about the situation.

A sample script may go something like:

'Excuse me, sir/madam, you may not be aware that this is a smoke-free area – would you mind extinguishing your cigarette please? You are welcome to smoke outside the boundaries of the premises which are ..., or in the designated smoking area [if appropriate] located at ...'

In a smaller organisation, education and training about the policy may be conducted in staff meetings or informally with a small group of employees.

Larger organisations may consider using experienced internal or external trainers to more effectively engage employees.

7. Modifying documents and processes as appropriate

To reinforce the policy message and bring other documents and processes in line with the new policy, you may need to:

- include the smoke-free worksite policy details in all job advertisements
- update human resources policies to clarify requirements regarding paid and unpaid work breaks
- include smoke-free worksite requirements in job descriptions
- inform all job applicants about the policy requirements at job interviews
- update any employee code of conduct booklets
- include a statement about the policy in the company letterhead and/or logo
- add the policy details to 'on-hold' telephone messages.

8. Preparing the worksite for implementation

Before the smoke-free worksite policy is implemented, consider:

- displaying a countdown calendar to indicate how many days to go before the policy is implemented
- planning a high-profile event or promotional activity to celebrate the implementation of the policy; invite employees, managers, relevant stakeholders, and perhaps political or 'celebrity' figures and include keynote speakers to talk on such subjects as smoking prevalence, health effects of smoking or costs of smoking
- displaying promotional material announcing the implementation of the policy
- erecting appropriate 'no smoking' signage (see signage templates in point 4 above)
- erecting posters identifying your smoke-free status, employee support opportunities, etc.
- removing any smoking paraphernalia (e.g. ashtrays, butt bins)
- clearly identifying the boundaries of designated smoking areas, if appropriate.