



Guide to Promoting Health & Wellbeing in the Workplace



ACT
Government

**healthier
work**

A joint Australian, State and Territory Government initiative under
the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health





A message from the Commissioner

The ACT is not alone in witnessing a significant increase in the burden of chronic disease, with tobacco smoking, alcohol misuse, poor nutrition, physical inactivity and overweight and obesity the main risk factors.

With most Australians spending about one third of their lives at work, health bodies such as the World Health Organization have recognised the workplace as a priority setting for promoting health and wellbeing.

Workplace health promotion is about fostering healthy workplace policies and supportive environments, enhancing positive social conditions, building personal skills and organisational resilience, and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Workplace health and wellbeing programs not only have real potential to positively influence the health of our workforce, they also make good business sense – increasing employee engagement and team cohesiveness in the short-term, and leading to reduced absenteeism, increased productivity and improved corporate image in the longer term.

The national harmonisation of work health and safety laws further validate a renewed focus within workplaces on the health, not just the safety, of workers. Under the new *ACT Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, the person

conducting a business or undertaking has responsibility for the physical and psychological health and safety of their workers. A workplace health and wellbeing program will complement your workplace safety systems.

Healthier Work, a service within WorkSafe ACT, aims to build the capacity of workplaces to develop and implement programs, policies, and practices that lead to healthy environments and sustained employee healthy lifestyle changes. Priority objective areas are: increased physical activity; healthier eating and drinking; smoking reduction/cessation; reduction of harmful alcohol consumption; reaching and maintaining healthy weight; and improved social and emotional wellbeing.

Healthier Work is the result of a joint Australian and Territory Government initiative under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health, which is committed to reducing the risk of chronic disease by embedding healthy behaviours in settings, including workplaces.

This 'Guide to Promoting Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace' is supported by additional resources, tools and templates to help you implement the core elements of workplace health into an effective program. These resources are available on the *Healthier Work* website at www.healthierwork.act.gov.au

"I would like to encourage all employers, managers and staff to lead by example and take an active role in making the ACT a healthier community and a leader in Australia for workplace health."

ACT Work Safety Commissioner, Mark McCabe

Further information is available
at www.healthierwork.act.gov.au.



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Acknowledgements

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A joint Australian, State and Territory Government initiative under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health

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Section 1: Introduction

Today, workplaces
aren't enjoying
the best of health.

It makes
business sense
to find solutions.



Welcome

Workplace health promotion is not just about health education. It's about fostering healthy workplace policies and supportive environments, enhancing positive social conditions, building personal skills and organisational resilience, and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Workplace health and wellbeing programs can range from a simple activity with a small investment to a comprehensive program with a substantial investment for large numbers of employees.

Whether your organisation is about to begin a workplace health and wellbeing program or is looking to build on an existing one, this Guide will provide you with a range of information to assist. You can use the Guide to suit the individual needs of your organisation and workforce as you move through the stages of creating an effective workplace health and wellbeing program.

The health issues covered in this Guide include: physical activity; healthy eating; smokefree; reduced alcohol consumption; and social and emotional wellbeing.

The Guide is supported by additional resources, tools and templates to help you implement the core elements of a workplace health and wellbeing program. These supporting resources are available on the WorkSafe *Healthier Work* website at www.healthierwork.act.gov.au.

When you see this symbol within the Guide, it denotes that you'll find that resource, or more information on that topic, from the *Healthier Work* website.



Healthier Work is also there to help you work through this Guide, connect with other workplaces tackling these issues and refer you to services or resources that may support your program objectives.

Contact **Healthier Work** at www.healthierwork.act.gov.au or by calling (02) 6207 3000.

The remainder of this Section provides an overview of the significant health and business reasons for workplace health promotion. It also identifies the core elements of workplace health and wellbeing programs and how the rest of this Guide can support you to bring life to these elements.

A national perspective on health and productivity

Like many developed nations, Australia is currently witnessing a significant increase in the burden of chronic disease. A 2010 AIHW report found that 96% of working-age Australians had at least one chronic disease risk factor and 72% had multiple risk factors².

The modifiable risk factors causing the greatest disease burden are **tobacco smoking, alcohol misuse, poor diet, physical inactivity** and **unhealthy weight**. As major contributors to chronic disease, these risk factors lead to reduced productivity and participation in the workforce and the community, and place great pressure on the Australian health system. There is also a recognised two-way causal relationship between many of these risk factors and mental disorders such as depression.

Adequate physical activity is at the very heart of good health - promoting emotional wellbeing and assisting in the prevention and management of over 20 medical conditions and diseases.

But the sad fact is, throughout Australia (and internationally), workers are leading increasingly inactive lifestyles. When you add to this an ageing workforce, high employee stress levels, the disturbing growth in the consumption of unhealthy foods and a culture of alcohol misuse, it's not difficult to understand why the general health and wellbeing of our working population is on a serious downhill slide.

From a national business perspective, this situation is cause for tremendous concern; particularly given the well-recognised relationship between poor health and diminished workplace attendance and performance. For example, the estimated cost of absenteeism to the Australian economy is \$7 billion each year³, with the cost of presenteeism⁴ estimated as being nearly five times more at \$34.1 billion in 2009-2010⁵.

Workplaces everywhere are feeling the impact (and daily cost) of the current health of our workforce – reduced productivity, high stress levels, poor job satisfaction, increased sickness, growing absenteeism, high staff turnover and mistakes caused by physical and mental fatigue.

This situation clearly needs to be turned around. With most Australians spending about one third of their lives at work⁶, it simply makes **good business sense** to invest in making the work environment a key setting for promoting positive health and wellbeing.

Leading health bodies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), have recognised the workplace as a priority setting for promoting health and wellbeing.⁷ Australian Governments have also committed to reducing the risk and prevalence of chronic disease in our community through the workplace setting – with the Healthy Workers Initiative under the Council of Australian Governments National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health.⁸

The ACT situation

Recent analysis of the health of Australian Capital Territory (ACT) workers⁹ found that it is comparable to national levels, except in the areas of physical inactivity and overweight where the ACT statistics are slightly better than the national averages. This said, the health statistics of ACT workers are concerning and present opportunities for significant improvement.

Risk factor	Prevalence: ACT Worker	Prevalence: Workers nationally
Smoking	20%	22%
Inadequate vegetable intake	93%	92%
Inadequate fruit intake	48%	51%
Inadequate intake of both vegetables and fruit	46%	49%
Not sufficiently physically active	65%	70%
Overweight or obese measured by Body Mass Index	56%	60%
Alcohol consumption at levels of single occasion risk	48%	47%
Alcohol consumption at levels of lifetime risk	23%	24%
Display at least two of the above lifestyle risk factors	70%	74%
Moderate or higher levels of psychological distress [measured by the Kessler 10 score ¹⁰]	32%	31%
High or very high levels of psychological distress [also measured by the Kessler 10 score].	9%	9%

For information on what constitutes healthy behaviours in these areas, see the health topic tables in Section 3 pages 32-41.

Of note, significantly higher levels of unhealthy behaviours are reported for 'blue collar' workers in the ACT compared to other ACT industries in respect of smoking (double), nutrition, alcohol consumption and multiple risk factors.

The business benefits of promoting health and wellbeing

Already, many ACT employers are implementing initiatives to address and manage these health and productivity issues – not just from the point of view of improving profitability or business performance; not just to embrace their social responsibilities and ‘duty of care’ to staff; but also in recognition of the real ongoing value which flows from creating a workplace culture where people are healthier, happier and enjoy a better work-life balance.

See the **Case Studies** [🔗](#) for examples of workplace health and wellbeing programs happening in the ACT.

Given the serious skill shortages facing ACT organisations, building a reputation as an employer that is focused on the health and wellbeing of staff is now becoming a potent means of attracting and retaining high quality staff. Why? Because it shows a genuine, image-enhancing interest in treating workers as valued assets rather than ‘dispensable items’, which allows companies to stand out as an Employer of Choice.

The business advantages of having fitter, healthier and happier employees on the payroll are many and varied, including:

- Increased productivity;
- Better staff decision making;
- Reduced sick leave and absenteeism;
- Reduced long-term health problems;
- Reduced worker turnover;
- Increased ability to attract and retain new employees;
- Increased return on training and development investment;
- Improved corporate citizenship and image;
- Improved industrial relations;
- Reduced risk of accidents and health-related litigation; and
- Fewer worker compensation claims.

The direct benefits to your employees include:

- Increased morale, job satisfaction and motivation;
- Improved mental alertness, concentration and energy levels;
- Decreased stress and other work-related illness; and
- Improved prevention of chronic diseases.

These benefits are very real – supported by compelling evidence from National and International studies.^{11,12,13} A study undertaken by Medibank Private¹⁴ revealed that:

- Organisations that implement health promotion strategies in the workplace can reduce their workers’ health risk factors by up to 56%;
- Productivity gains of up to 15% can be achieved by upgrading the workplace environment; and
- The average worker is up to 7% less productive because of their health risks.

Other findings from this study, comparing unhealthy to healthy Australian workers, are outlined below.

Unhealthy	Healthy
18 days annual sick leave	2 days sick leave
Self-rated performance 3.7 out of 10	Self-rated performance of 8.5 out of 10
49 effective hours worked (fulltime) per month	143 effective hours worked (fulltime) per month
High fat diet	Healthy diet
Low energy levels and poor concentration	Fit, energetic and alert
Obese or overweight	Normal body weight
Irregular sleep patterns	More attentive at work and better sleep patterns
Poor stress management techniques	Actively manage stress levels

Management within the ACT now has a unique opportunity to establish effective workplace programs that will help to address health and wellbeing problems currently undermining business performance. Support is at hand to assist workplaces to make this happen.

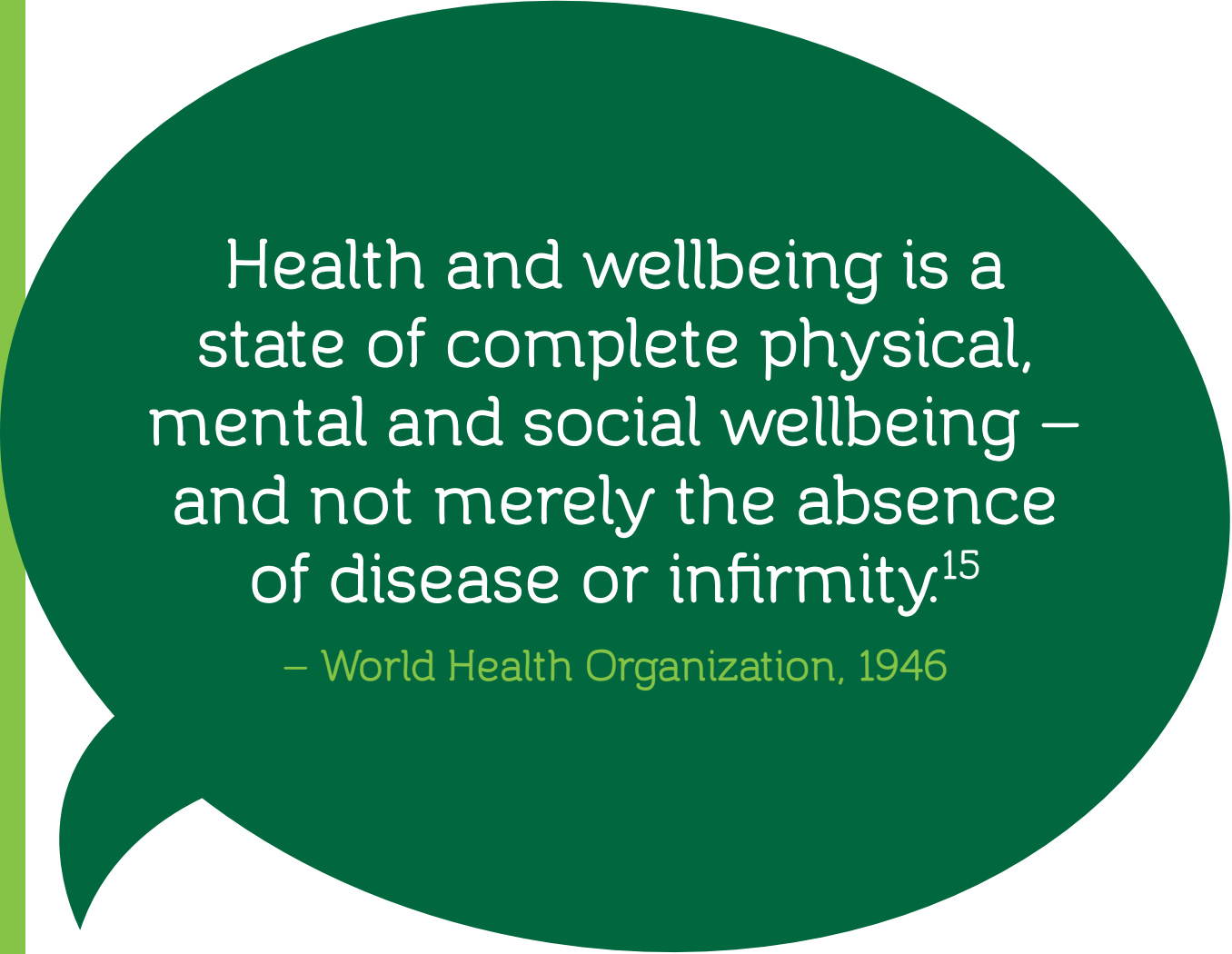
Workplace health and wellbeing programs take time to effect substantial change, particularly in relation to changing workplace culture. You can't expect all of these benefits in the short term, but with time and persistence you can achieve significant benefits for your employees, as well as healthy returns for your business.

The elements for creating a workplace health and wellbeing program

So, what to do? There are many ways to create a workplace health and wellbeing program; there are, however, six core elements of best practice programs.

The elements are designed as pieces that fit together logically and allow you to build a tailored program through a strong, simple process. The elements should be thought of as a cycle, allowing continuous review and improvement.

Each of the six elements is supported by resources on the Healthier Work website, including some adaptable templates and tools, to help you build a program based on best practice. These resources are outlined in the table below.



Health and wellbeing is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing – and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.¹⁵

– World Health Organization, 1946

Core elements of best practice workplace health and wellbeing programs

Core elements	Supporting resources
<p>1. Management Commitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish workplace commitment with management support Where feasible, develop a workplace health and wellbeing policy 	<p>🔗 Health and Wellbeing Policy Example (and companion template)</p>
<p>2. Initial Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain employer and employee involvement Establish coordination mechanisms, including a Committee where feasible 	
<p>3. Needs Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify any existing initiatives Identify priority needs and interests of employees Identify workplace needs 	<p>🔗 ACT Online Employee Health and Wellbeing Survey (for medium to large workplaces)</p> <p>🔗 Individual Version of the ACT Online Employee Health and Wellbeing Survey (for employees)</p> <p>🔗 ACT Healthy Workplaces Audit Tool</p>
<p>4. Action Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy People: strategies and activities to support and promote a healthy workforce Healthy Places: facilities, policies and cultures to support a health promoting workplace Communication and promotion to keep everyone informed and motivated 	<p>🔗 Health and Wellbeing Action Plan Example (and companion template)</p>
<p>5. Program Management</p> <p>Undertake sound program coordination, regular communication and record keeping</p>	
<p>6. Evaluation and Review</p> <p>Evaluate and review progress against your action plan and communicate progress and results</p>	<p>🔗 Workplace Health Evaluation Overview</p>
<p>Additional Resources</p>	<p>🔗 Case Studies</p> <p>🔗 Frequently Asked Questions</p> <p>🔗 Health Promotion Campaigns and Information</p> <p>🔗 Service Providers</p>

The six core elements are discussed in more detail in the following sections of this Guide to provide a clearer understanding.

Overview of guide sections

Section 2 – A Simple Guide – focuses on how to get health and wellbeing initiatives started in your workplace using a simple approach. This approach may be best suited to your workplace if you lack the resources to support a more comprehensive approach, you have a small workforce (i.e. you are a small business) and/or you are still striving to obtain the long-term management commitment required for a comprehensive health and wellbeing program. This Simple Approach incorporates the six core elements in three easy to follow steps.

Section 3 – A Detailed Guide – focuses on how to go about developing a comprehensive and detailed workplace health and wellbeing program to achieve optimal results. Establishing formal organisational commitment and funding support, together with a structured, policy-driven framework is critical to achieving success in such a program. This Detailed Approach expands on the six core elements in six comprehensive steps.

Section 4 – Resources – here you will find an overview of each of the supporting resources identified in the table above, which are available on the *Healthier Work* website – www.healthierwork.act.gov.au

Remember, *Healthier Work*, a service within WorkSafe ACT, is only a phone call away to provide you with additional support with planning and implementing your program.

It's now up to each ACT organisation to reap the rewards of taking positive action. We encourage you to share your experiences.



References

¹Premier's Physical Activity Council – Tasmania (2007). Get Moving at Work: A resource kit for workplace health and wellbeing programs. Accessed 19 March 2012 at http://www.getmoving.tas.gov.au/RelatedFiles/PPAC_Wellbeing%20Kit%20Complete.pdf

²Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2010). Risk factors and participation in work. Cat. no. PHE 122. Canberra: AIHW

³Health Services Australia (2002). Managing Absenteeism Report; as cited in Medibank Private (2005). The Health of Australia's Workforce. Medibank Private: Australia

⁴Presenteeism is employees coming to work in spite of being sick, or being present at work but not performing appropriately.

⁵Econtech (2011). Economic Modelling of the Cost of Presenteeism in Australia: 2011 Update. Report prepared for Medibank Private

⁶Health and Productivity Institute of Australia (2010). Best Practice Guidelines – Workplace Health in Australia. Accessed 26 April 2012 at www.hapia.org.au

⁷World Health Organization, Division of Health Promotion, Education and Communication and Office of Occupational Health (1997). WHO's Global Healthy Work Approach. WHO: Geneva

⁸Council of Australian Governments (2008), National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health. Accessed March 7 2012 at http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/docs/national_partnership/national_partnership_on_preventive_health.rtf

⁹PricewaterhouseCoopers (2011). ACT Workplace Health Promotion Needs Analysis: Summary Report. Prepared on behalf of the ACT Government Health Directorate. Accessed 7 March 2012 at <http://www.health.act.gov.au/c/health?a=sendfile&ft=p&fid=1577587735&sid=>

¹⁰The Kessler 10 score is a 10-item self-report questionnaire intended to yield a global measure of 'psychological distress' based on questions about the level of anxiety and depressive symptoms in the most recent 4 week period.

¹¹Medibank Private (2005). The Health of Australia's workforce. Medibank Private, Australia

¹²Sims, J. Right Management (2010). Wellness and Productivity Management. Presentation to the Health and Productivity Management Congress 2010, www.hapia.com.au

¹³Wright T A, Cropanzano R, Denney PJ, & Loline GL (2002). 'When a happy worker is a productive worker: A preliminary examination of three models'. Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science. (34) 146–150

¹⁴Medibank Private (2005). Op.cit

¹⁵World Health Organization (1946). Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19–22 June 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States (Official Records of the World Health Organization, no. 2, p. 100) and entered into force on 7 April 1948.

Section 2:

A Simple Guide

You can implement a
successful health and
wellbeing program...

...whether your
workplace is
large or small.




This section focuses on how to get health and wellbeing initiatives started in your workplace using a simple approach. This approach may be best suited to your workplace if you lack the resources to support a more comprehensive approach, you have a small workforce (i.e. you are a small business) and/or you are still striving to obtain the long-term management commitment required for a comprehensive health and wellbeing program.

If you are willing or able to invest more into broadening the size and scope of your program, there is a more detailed and comprehensive path you can follow.

See Section 3 – A Detailed Guide.

The more comprehensive and embedded your program is, the more effective it will be in the long-term.



Do not underestimate the benefits of starting health and wellbeing initiatives in your workplace, whatever their size or scope.

Step 1: Establish workplace commitment

1.1 Identify a key leader/leaders

Initial momentum for a workplace health and wellbeing program may be sparked by the interest and enthusiasm of one worker. This person then becomes the leader, providing the energy to encourage management and others within the workplace to get on board and move forward. Without this energy and enthusiasm it is not easy to establish solid commitment from **management and workers** – and without commitment, there is little value in progressing.

1.2 Ensure commitment from management

A program or initiative actively supported by management has a firm foundation and contributes greatly to a positive culture throughout the organisation. Where management is openly seen to ‘walk the talk’ the more likely it is you’ll gain broader engagement and involvement from workers.

All that may be needed to get your program going is a shared belief that implementing simple strategies could go a long way to improving the health and wellbeing of workers. Your organisation’s contribution might be as simple as committing some time to getting

started. Although useful, it is not essential to establish a committee, nor to write a policy under this simple model.

In communicating the rationale behind any initiative be honest about what’s in it for both the company and its workers. From a management perspective, the objective might be about improved productivity, whilst for the workers, it may be about having a better lifestyle and better work-life balance. A well conducted program will achieve both of these objectives.

1.3 Encourage staff to be involved

It is vitally important to involve workers in the initial discussions. Through this, ideas can be formulated about what kinds of programs are needed, how they might be introduced and who would like to be involved. This **participatory approach** will help to ensure your initiative or program is relevant to workers and the environment at your workplace – and also aid in maximising participation. Make sure you highlight the benefits of your intended program for workers to establish WHY the program is valuable.

The most important aspect to remember is to make the program relevant for your workers.

Step 2: Construct your program

2.1 Identify existing initiatives

Before considering what program strategies are needed and wanted by staff, review what initiatives relating to health and wellbeing your organisation may already offer to staff. These might include flu vaccinations, an Employee Assistance Program, flexible working arrangements and/or smokefree policies. Consolidating these existing initiatives under the banner of workplace health and wellbeing is an excellent way to start giving your program a profile, engaging staff and building momentum within your organisation for embracing new initiatives.

2.2 Identify staff issues

Your workplace health and wellbeing program will only succeed if it meets the requirements of your workers.


In smaller workplaces, it may simply be a matter of asking workers what they would like to see happen. Workers might have a broad range of ideas covering many aspects of health and wellbeing. Consider holding a focus group, ask for input through regular staff meetings or establish an anonymous suggestion box in the staff room or cafeteria. It's likely that themes will begin to emerge, such as stress, extended sitting time, or access to healthy food options, which you can then make the focus of your program.

In larger workplaces, you may need to conduct a more formal needs assessment; for example, a survey of employees. You can use your survey to collect both baseline data about your workers (for example, information about their fruit and vegetable intake at the present time, or their current level of physical activity), and information about what they would like to see in a health and wellbeing program. If you do use surveys, it is important to remove any personal or identifying information in your forms to protect the privacy of your workers.

The **ACT Online Employee Health and Wellbeing Survey** [📍](#) (a resource of the ACT Government Health Directorate) is an anonymous online survey for use by medium to large workplaces to inform your workplace health and wellbeing program development. It can then be repeated over time to assist you in monitoring and refining your program.

This online survey asks employees about their health and behaviours around the key areas covered in this Guide, as well as what initiatives they would like to see included in a workplace health and wellbeing program. Employees receive automatically generated individual feedback on their health status, with tips for making changes. Your organisation is then provided with a de-identified, aggregate report identifying employees' broad health needs and program preferences.

To protect the privacy and confidentiality of employees, this online survey will only produce an organisation results report once 30 responses to the survey are attained. Consider your likely response rate when deciding whether or not this resource is suitable for your workplace.


Given this required response rate, this online survey is not intended for use by small workplaces. In addition to the suggestions provided above, smaller workplaces may wish to promote the **Individual Version of the ACT Online Employee Health and Wellbeing Survey**  to workers to assist them in assessing their current health status and providing a starting point for discussions. This individual version of the survey only provides feedback to the employee and does not collate results into an organisation report.

2.3 Identify workplace issues

You may also want to conduct a simple workplace health audit at this stage to identify one or two things that you can change in your workplace to make it more supportive of healthy behaviours. Think about your facilities, policies and workplace culture.

Take a look at the **ACT Healthy Workplaces Audit Tool**  for some ideas.

2.4 Plan your program, identifying simple strategies

Planning is vitally important for ensuring a successful workplace health and wellbeing program. Planning will clarify what it is you are trying to achieve and the strategies you will use to achieve your goals. A plan doesn't have to be formal or highly structured, but it should establish a clear and shared understanding throughout the organisation of the direction the program will take. Take a look at the **Health and Wellbeing Action Plan Example**  to get you started.

In selecting your strategies, the most important thing to remember is to **keep it simple**, using strategies that are tailored to your organisation's needs, workers' interests and available resources.

Be inclusive in your selection of activities. Try to appeal to the majority, while being careful not to alienate others. For example, if you are commencing physical activity initiatives, in addition to the more physical strategies you might consider other low impact activities, like yoga and walking. These types of options can help build a good program mix and encourage broad participation.

Remember to take into account the nature of your business and any relevant health and safety issues. For example, many people already walk long distances during their working day, some are sedentary for extended periods (e.g. office workers), while others involved in shift work may be vulnerable if walking home alone at night.

A simple program might include one, or a combination of, inexpensive strategies that link to issues identified in your workplace. A combination of 'people' and 'places' strategies is most effective. People strategies may look to increase the health knowledge, awareness and positive attitudes of workers (personal development) and/or facilitate their active participation in healthy behaviours (behaviour change). Places strategies are about providing a health promoting workplace environment through facilities, supportive cultures and/or policies.

Think about incorporating some of the possible actions set out on the following page. For a more extensive list of activity examples, by health topic, see Section 3 pages 32-41.

People strategies: to increase health knowledge, awareness and positive attitudes

- Provide educational material and other information on health and wellbeing issues. 📌
- Host on-site visits from organisations such as The Cancer Council ACT, Nutrition Australia – ACT, Diabetes ACT, the Heart Foundation or similar organisations. 📌
- Establish a health and wellbeing notice board or circulate health and wellbeing opportunities to workers via email, newsletters or pay slips.
- Initiate a healthy recipe exchange program.

People strategies: to facilitate active participation in health behaviours

- Provide information about walking and cycling routes – and encourage workers to include some physical activity in travelling part or all of the way to and from work. 📌
- Encourage workers to make active choices where possible by distributing written information and using promotional and motivational posters at strategic points e.g. encouraging using stairs instead of lifts or escalators and walking to external meetings. 📌
- Establish a lunchtime walking group or a simple ‘Walk Challenge’. 📌
- Establish lunchtime activities such as yoga, belly dancing or skating – depending on interest. 📌
- Encourage workers to complete simple stretching exercises during the day.
- Support a workplace ‘lunch club’ – those interested can contribute and share the cost of lunches; or hold a ‘let’s do lunch’ meeting where all bring a healthy dish to share.
- Provide access to smoking cessation supports. 📌

Places strategies: to create health promoting workplace environments

- Provide access to tap water and water bottles to encourage appropriate hydration. 📌
- Establish a time-in-lieu arrangement to support individual or group physical activity.
- When catering for meetings, request the food supplier to provide foods of nutritional value. 📌
- If you have vending machines, stock them with at least some healthy food options. 📌
- Provide a fresh fruit bowl in the meeting or lunch room.
- Provide a dedicated eating area that is clean, comfortable and inviting, to encourage workers not to eat at their desks.
- Provide some standing work stations to reduce sedentary behaviours, if relevant.
- Encourage employee recognition for exceptional efforts, activities supporting a healthier work environment, providing leadership or a team working well together (e.g. host a free healthy staff barbeque, distribute a whole of organisational email celebrating achievements).

You can support your initiatives with relevant health promotion campaigns and services; for example, use the **Find Thirty**[®] campaign and available resources to reinforce your physical activity initiatives, **Go for 2&5**[®] to reinforce nutrition initiatives and **Tap into Water**[®] to support hydration messages. 📌

Step 3: Manage and evaluate your program

3.1 Implement your specific initiatives

During implementation, it is important to communicate your initiatives effectively to workers to encourage and facilitate their participation and to celebrate your achievements. Demonstrating ongoing management commitment to the program through the active participation of managers in activities and regular communication of support can substantially increase worker participation in the program and subsequently improve its overall effectiveness.

Keep good records of program initiatives, participation rates and any identified barriers or enablers in implementation. This will assist in your ongoing monitoring and evaluation of your initiatives and overall program.

3.2 Evaluate your initiatives and program


Evaluation refers to the process of measuring and assessing the impacts and merits of a particular endeavour – whether that be a policy, strategy or program. It is a means of determining the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of the endeavour, and contributing to improvements and innovation.

Ongoing program evaluation can provide valuable insight into how specific initiatives, or your health and wellbeing program overall, are progressing. This can help inform refinement of your program approach and generate ideas for future activities. The outcomes can also be used to justify and promote the benefits of your workplace health and wellbeing program within the organisation.

The key to effective program evaluation is to seek regular feedback from workers. This may involve: repeating the formal survey process you used to identify staff issues; having informal discussions with staff who have participated in particular initiatives; or simple observation.

Remember that workplace health and wellbeing programs can take time to effect substantial change. You may only be able to measure small changes in the short term, such as being able to demonstrate that your program is having an impact on employee engagement and team cohesiveness. However, these small changes may have important benefits and cost-savings for your business in terms of productivity and staff retention.

Changing workplace culture requires persistence, and you may not see all of the possible benefits of workplace health promotion in the short term. It may take 1-2 years after the program is initiated before changes in health knowledge and behaviours, job satisfaction, productivity and corporate image are seen, and it may then take 3-5 years before changes in absenteeism, injuries and workers compensation costs emerge. However, the time periods for which changes are seen may vary from workplace to workplace depending on a range of factors such as levels of management support, staff engagement, staff access and appropriateness of programs.

Take a look at the **Workplace Health Evaluation Overview**  to help you think more about evaluation indicators (i.e. indicators to measure performance against your program objectives), timeframes and data collection methods that you could include in your evaluation planning.

3.3 Refine your program commitment and initiatives

Based on your ongoing monitoring and evaluation, refine your program to ensure its relevance to workers, suitability to the workplace setting and overall effectiveness. Be sure to share your findings with management and staff to continue to create interest and value in the program.

Summary of Simple Steps

Step 1: Establish organisational commitment	Step 2: Construct your program	Step 3: Manage and evaluate your program
Identify a key leader/leaders	Identify staff issues	Implement your specific initiatives
Ensure commitment from management	Identify workplace issues	Evaluate your initiatives and program
Encourage staff to be involved	Plan your program, identifying simple strategies	Refine your program commitment and initiatives

Improving health and wellbeing in the workplace is not a one-dimensional process. It can take time to change the existing culture.

By involving workers and showing a genuine interest in what they have to say, you will be able to tailor a program that achieves greater productivity and job satisfaction.

Section 3: A Detailed Guide

Embed health &
wellbeing into your
workplace policies,
programs and practices...

...to achieve
optimal results.



This section focuses on how to go about developing a comprehensive and detailed workplace health and wellbeing program to achieve optimal results.

If, after reviewing this section, you feel you may not yet be ready to take this optimal comprehensive approach, refer back to **Section 2 – A Simple Guide** for assistance in just getting started. Ideally, you will then continue to develop and embed your program to increase its size, scope, and long-term effectiveness into the future. You can return to this section of the Guide at this stage.



Establishing formal organisational commitment and funding support, together with a structured, policy-driven framework is critical to achieving success in such a program.

Step 1: Establish management commitment

It is critical that a commitment to workplace health and wellbeing is first clearly established within your organisation, especially commitment from senior management. Establishing a management or leadership group to advocate for the workplace health and wellbeing program will help to drive and communicate initiatives.

If you are attempting to establish this commitment, try presenting management with some statistics on the impact of poor health on absenteeism, sick leave and productivity to illustrate the business benefits of introducing a health and wellbeing program. See **Section**

One – Introduction and information on the *Healthier Work* website [P](#) for more guidance in this area.

You might also consider creating a health and wellbeing policy containing:

- A documented declaration of your organisation's commitment to health and wellbeing;
- Clearly defined program objectives that are both realistic and easily measured; and
- An outline of the various responsibilities for key groups, such as management, organising committee, workers and external providers.

Take a look at the **Health and Wellbeing Policy Example** [P](#) to get you started.

It makes good business sense to invest in making the work environment a key setting for promoting positive health and wellbeing.

– ACT Work Safety Commissioner, Mark McCabe

Step 2: Undertake initial planning

2.1 Establish coordination mechanisms

The identification and adequate resourcing of a program coordinator is important. This coordinator must be prepared to provide the energy and motivation to drive the initial impetus and ongoing commitment to the program, as well as undertake administration tasks for the program. This position may sit within your Human Resources, Work Safety or Corporate Services areas, as appropriate.

Within larger organisations, a working party or committee with representatives from different interest groups across the organisation should ideally be charged with the responsibility of program planning and policy development.

2.2 Engage staff

The success of your program will be a direct reflection of the enthusiasm of workers. Staff are unlikely to be interested in (or motivated by) the corporate advantages, so initiatives should always be introduced and promoted from the perspective of the 'benefits to workers'.

Key and engaging messages to communicate include:

- How the program is designed to improve the health and wellbeing of workers;
- How workers are able to access important information on the program and specific initiatives; and
- How you will deliver the flexibility and opportunity to support workers to enjoy becoming more active and healthy.

The better this communication is, the greater participation levels will be.

Step 3: Undertake needs assessment

3.1 Identify existing initiatives

Before considering what new program strategies are needed and wanted by staff, review what initiatives relating to health and wellbeing your organisation may already offer to staff. These might include flu vaccinations, an Employee Assistance Program, flexible working arrangements and/or smokefree policies. Consolidating these existing initiatives under the banner of workplace health and wellbeing is an excellent way to start giving your program a profile, engaging staff and building momentum within your organisation for a more comprehensive program.

3.2 Identify needs and preferences of staff

It is important that your program is designed to address the health and wellbeing issues and needs of your workers.

For medium to large workplaces, conducting the **ACT Online Employee Health and Wellbeing Survey** [🔗](#) (a resource of the ACT Government Health Directorate) at this stage can help inform your program development as well as provide you with baseline data to assist you to monitor and refine your program down the track.

This online survey asks employees about their health and behaviours around smoking, physical activity, nutrition and hydration, alcohol consumption and emotional wellbeing; as well as what initiatives they would like to see included in a workplace health and wellbeing program. Employees can complete this survey anonymously and receive automatically generated individual feedback on their health status with tips for making changes. The survey then provides a de-identified, aggregate report to your organisation identifying employees' broad health needs and program preferences.

To protect the privacy and confidentiality of employees, this online survey will only produce an organisation results report once 30 responses to the survey are attained. Given this required response rate, this online survey is not intended for use by small workplaces. In deciding whether or not this resource is suitable for your workplace, consider your likely response rate.

Conducting this online survey every 12 months is one way of evaluating the progress of your program, helping you to continually improve your content and make sure it is making a difference.

If you are developing your own survey, it should always allow for employees to complete it anonymously to respect employee privacy and protect the confidentiality of personal health information. Anonymity will also encourage honest and open answers. In addition, information obtained from employee surveys (or other measures) must only be used by your workplace to identify issues across the employee group and not used to identify issues for specific individuals.

For smaller workplaces, identifying the needs and preferences of workers may simply be a matter of asking them what they would like to see happen. Workers might have a broad range of ideas covering many aspects of health and wellbeing. Consider holding a focus group, ask for input through regular staff meetings or establish an anonymous suggestion box in the staff room or cafeteria. It's likely that themes will begin to emerge, such as stress, extended sitting time, or access to healthy food options, which you can then make the focus of your program.



You may also wish to promote the **Individual Version of the ACT Online Employee Health and Wellbeing Survey** [🔗](#) to workers to assist them in assessing their current health status and to provide a starting point for discussions. This individual version of the survey only provides feedback to the employee and does not collate results into an organisation report.

3.3 Identify workplace needs

Your existing workplace environment (e.g. facilities, policies and culture) will also play a part in the kinds of activities chosen for inclusion in a workplace health and wellbeing program. There will be areas within the physical environment that make it easy to conduct particular activities. For example, a multi-story building may provide an opportunity for a ‘take the stairs’ program, or the existence of shower facilities may make it easier to promote a ‘ride to work’ initiative.

On the other hand, the absence of these characteristics may make it difficult to include all suggested activities generated from employee surveys. For example, if a large number of workers showed an interest in a ‘ride to work’ initiative or a lunch time walk/run, the existence of bike racks, a shower and change room facilities becomes an important part of the decision making process. Without these, the option is impractical.

Remember to consult with workers in order to identify their preferences. Once you have done this, you will need to find a balance between these preferences and what is practical in your physical environment.

To assist you to consider whether your workplace is a ‘health promoting environment’ and identify changes you can make to your facilities, policies and culture, you should also undertake a workplace audit. The **ACT Healthy Workplaces Audit Tool** [🔗](#) is provided to help you with this.

By revisiting this audit tool down the track, you can monitor and evaluate your progress.

Step 4: Action planning

4.1 Plan your approach

The implementation of a detailed program needs to be well planned in order to function well.

From the outset, you should set some clear objectives on what you want to achieve and how you will know if you have achieved it.

- Your plan should include some timelines and identify the strategies you intend to use in your program.
- Your plan should offer opportunities for both immediate and longer-term implementation, as well as performance indicators to help assess your progress.
- You need to decide on a starting point and make sure this is communicated clearly to workers.
- An official launch will help to create initial momentum and emphasise the support of management.

Take a look at the **Health and Wellbeing Action Plan Example** [🔗](#) to get you started with this program planning.

4.2 Promote your program

Internal promotion needs to be sustained to build interest and participation in your program. Communication should focus initially on the overall health benefits of the program, followed by strategies designed to address specific workplace issues.

4.3 Ensure variety and choice

The program should provide some variety to cater for differing individual interests. A combination of ‘people’ and ‘places’ strategies is most effective. People strategies may look to increase the health knowledge, awareness and positive attitudes of workers (personal development) and/or facilitate their active participation in healthy behaviours (behaviour change). Places strategies are about providing a health promoting workplace environment through facilities, supportive cultures and/or policies.

Many factors will influence worker participation in your program and, within the broader workplace environment a range of issues beyond those discussed in this Guide may need to be taken into account. Always look to extend your thinking and avoid allowing it to be too one-dimensional.

Building Knowledge, Awareness and Positive Attitudes

Building each individual’s knowledge and understanding of the importance of health and wellbeing is vital to changing their attitudes. Promoting a positive outlook that highlights the proven benefits of physical activity, healthy eating and a healthy work-life balance is fundamental to achieving improved awareness and program involvement.

The key is to create educational initiatives that are not only highly informative, but also fun. These can be in the form of ‘guest speaker’ get-togethers, seminars, workshops or simply the dissemination of literature on specific issues such as physical activity, nutrition and hydration, smoking cessation, risky alcohol consumption and social and emotional wellbeing. If you have utilised the **ACT Online Employee Health and Wellbeing Survey** [🔗](#), consider what topic areas to target based on where knowledge levels and/or confidence to change are lowest.

Many ACT based organisations and service providers are available to assist and actively participate in this area. You can also utilise messages and associated resources from current health promotion campaigns. See **Section 4 – Resources** and the *Healthier Work* website [🔗](#) for more information.

Facilitating active participation in healthy behaviours

Initiatives that provide the motivation or support for behavioural changes are likely to have a greater impact beyond the workplace and for longer periods of time. These may include: encouraging using stairs instead of lifts or escalators and walking to external meetings; establishing a lunchtime walking group or a

simple 'Walk Challenge'; providing fruit in staff canteens; ensuring canteens and vending machines have healthy food options; supporting participation in quit smoking sessions.

These initiatives generate behavioural change and promote lifestyle changes. This becomes the driver for making healthier lifestyle choices around issues such as physical activity, healthy eating, smokefree, reduced alcohol consumption, and social and emotional wellbeing.

Again, there are a number of ACT based organisations and service providers that can assist you to plan for and deliver these initiatives. See **Section 4 – Resources** and the *Healthier Work* website [P](#) for more information.

Creating Health Promoting Environments

Initiatives that demonstrate your organisation's commitment to the health and wellbeing of staff and that acknowledge the role that your workplace setting can play in influencing staff health can be extremely effective.

These initiatives may be around: improving access to **facilities** that support healthy choices and healthy behaviours, such as healthy food options in vending machines and staff canteens, as well as provision of change rooms, showers and bike racks; improving the psycho-social **culture** through, e.g. good management practices, promotion of work-life balance, and recognition of staff achievements; or **policies** that support healthy choices and health behaviours, such as smoke-free workplace, alcohol and healthy catering policies.

For information to assist you in progressing these initiatives, see **Section 4 – Resources** and the *Healthier Work* website. [P](#)

Looking beyond the workplace

In considering the broader environment of the health and wellbeing of workers, you may want to think about how to involve the families of your staff in selected workplace strategies.

The lasting value of any workplace health and wellbeing program is its capacity to encourage greater participation, and achieve positive attitude and behavioural change that will extend the program's benefits beyond the workplace.

4.4 Select your strategies

The range of initiatives you might consider including in your workplace health and wellbeing program is unlimited.

Remember, it is good practice to include a combination of 'people' and 'places' strategies. Choose a mix of people strategies that aim to increase the health knowledge, awareness and positive attitudes of workers (personal development) and facilitate their active participation in healthy behaviours (behaviour change). Select places strategies that help create health promoting workplace environments through facilities, supportive cultures and/or policies.

The tables on the following pages provide examples of strategies by health topic – physical activity, nutrition and hydration, smokefree, reduced alcohol consumption, and social and emotional wellbeing.

Physical activity

What is good health?

Physical activity is good for your heart and blood pressure. It helps to control weight, prevent and control diabetes and relieve stress. Yet only about two-thirds of ACT workers are getting their recommended 30 minutes a day of moderate intensity physical activity on at least five days of the week.¹⁶

This physical activity doesn't have to be done in one block of 30 minutes per day. It can be achieved by combining a few shorter sessions of 10 to 15 minutes each, such as walking to and from the bus stop or parking your car further away and walking the last bit.¹⁷

For those workers spending many of their waking hours sitting, emerging research is showing that this is also a risk for poor health, even for adults who are undertaking the recommended 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days.¹⁸

The challenge for employers is to help their employees find at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity each day and to be active in as many ways as possible, including moving more and sitting less.

Workplaces can promote the following **campaigns**, and distribute associated resources to employees, to support initiatives in this area:

- **Find Thirty® (www.findthirty.act.gov.au)**
– supported by the ACT Government Health Directorate
- **Swap It® (www.swapit.gov.au)**
– an Australian Government initiative

Workplaces can also promote the **Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service®** to employees – Ph. 1300 806 258, **www.gethealthy.act.gov.au**. This is a free Health Directorate telephone and web based service staffed by qualified health coaches, aimed at helping adults to make lifestyle changes regarding healthy eating, physical activity, and how to reach and maintain a healthy weight.

For more information on these and other resources, visit the *Healthier Work* website – **www.healthierwork.act.gov.au**. 

Within this table:

This symbol indicates an easy or low-resource activity



This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.



Exercise your right to add your own ideas according to your individual workplace needs.

	Table 1: Examples of physical activity strategies	Healthy people	Healthy places
	Provide information to employees about the benefits of physical activity via factsheets, education sessions, posters and newsletters.	X	
	Promote the use of stairs instead of lifts or escalators using communication methods such as prompts at the lift, posters, flyers, emails, screen savers.	X	
	Remind employees to get out of their chair and stretch.	X	
	Circulate physical activity program opportunities via newsletters, pay slips, etc.	X	
	Set up an information station that provides employees and visitors with access to active transport information, local cycling maps, public transport timetables for frequently used services and active transport activities information.	X	
	Organise talks and seminars about ways to become more physically active.	X	
	Introduce walking groups and other activity groups that meet before, during or after work. There are a number of service providers that can assist in this area.	X	
	Commence a walking challenge, e.g. using the 10,000 Steps program.	X	
	Organise and encourage corporate teams for events such as fun runs/walks.	X	
	Organise a corporate rate at the local gym for staff.	X	
	Encourage 'walking meetings' where space permits.		X
	Promote information about joining local sporting clubs and opportunities to get physically active via email, company intranet or websites, noticeboards and newsletters.	X	
	Provide incentives to promote physical activity, such as flexible work hours or provision of 15 minutes work time to supplement 15 minutes of break time to be physically active.		X
	Target specific groups (e.g. those who are most sedentary, women, men) through tailored initiatives.	X	
	Hold cycling information sessions on safe cycling strategies, cycling road rules and bicycle maintenance.	X	
	Provide bike racks, showers, change room facilities and lockers for walkers, runners and cyclists; or promote access to shared facilities.		X
	Develop a Workplace Travel Plan to make getting to and from the workplace easier for staff and to reduce dependence on private vehicles and parking space.		X
	Develop and implement a policy that supports physical activity at work.		X
	Provide or organise on-site physical activity classes for employees such as yoga, Pilates, swimming (whether free, partially-subsidised or user-pays).	X	

Healthy eating

What is good health?

Healthy eating means eating a variety of healthy foods such as fruit and vegetables, wholegrains, lean meats and low-fat dairy products, as well as limiting the amount of fat, salt and sugar consumed.¹⁹ However, 93% of ACT workers have inadequate vegetable consumption and almost half do not consume enough fruit.²⁰

Adequate hydration is also important. Daily water requirements are around 2.1 litres for women and 2.6 litres for men. This equates to about 8 to 10 cups (a cup being 250ml) of fluid per day²¹. Tap water is the best drink for keeping you hydrated.

What we eat and drink at work can have a major influence on our long term health and wellbeing. There are lots of ways that workplaces can support employees to make healthier food and drink choices.

Workplaces can promote the following **campaigns**, and distribute associated resources to employees, to support initiatives in this area:

- **Go for 2 & 5[®]** (www.gofor2and5.com.au)
– supported by the ACT Government Health Directorate
- **Tap Into Water[®]** (www.health.act.gov.au/c/health?a=&did=11064085) – supported by the ACT Government Health Directorate
- **Swap It[®]** (www.swapit.gov.au)
– an Australian Government initiative

Workplaces can also promote the **Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service[®]** to employees – Ph. 1300 806 258, www.gethealthy.act.gov.au. This is a free Health Directorate telephone and web based service staffed by qualified health coaches, aimed at helping adults to make lifestyle changes regarding healthy eating, physical activity, and how to reach and maintain a healthy weight.

For more information on these and other resources, visit the *Healthier Work* website – www.healthierwork.act.gov.au. 

Within this table:

This symbol indicates an easy or low-resource activity



This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.



Exercise your right to add your own ideas according to your individual workplace needs.

Table 2: Examples of healthy eating strategies		Healthy people	Healthy places
	Put up healthy eating and hydration posters around your workplace.	X	
	Ensure adequate refrigeration is supplied and fridges are cleaned regularly.		X
	Provide comfortable and adequate space for the lunch room – e.g. table and chairs, fridges, hot and cold water, toasted sandwich makers, microwaves, newspapers – and encourage staff to take a lunch break.		X
	Organise delivery of a fruit box e.g. once a month.		X
	Remove the biscuit or lolly jar and replace with fresh fruit.		X
	Provide free water bottles and encourage staff to keep bottles topped up with tap water at their desks/worksite or to take to meetings etc.	X	
	Provide access to tap water to encourage appropriate hydration.	X	
	Provide information about healthy lunch options and healthy eating/hydration.	X	
	Support a workplace 'lunch club' – those interested can contribute and share the cost of lunches. Or hold a 'let's do lunch' meeting where all bring a healthy dish to share.	X	
	Organise a seminar or question and answer session with a dietitian or qualified nutritionist.	X	
	Host workplace challenges e.g. eat well for a week; try a different fruit or vegetable every day; competition to eat more fruit and vegetables.	X	
	Consider hosting a weight management program in the workplace.*	X	
	Host cooking demonstrations and taste testing that showcase healthy options.	X	
	Establish a recipe exchange club and/or produce and distribute a healthy cooking recipe book which includes recipes contributed by employees.	X	
	If you have workers who need to move between sites within the ACT, consider marking out shops, cafes and takeaways that provide healthier options and provide workers with information on making healthier food choices when eating out.		X
	Change vending machines to stock healthier drink and snack options.		X
	Collaborate with nearby shops, cafes, takeaways and other food vendors to offer healthy foods and promote nutritious specials, at reasonable prices.		X
	If you have a staff canteen, consider regular healthy lunch days, e.g. once a week or engage a dietitian to advise on increasing the number of healthy tasty menu options available.		X
	Develop a workplace healthy eating or nutrition policy that covers several aspects of food provision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • internal and external catering for meetings, functions and events • vending machines • food and drinks sold in the staff canteen • fundraising • food safety. 		X

* Some workplaces may consider running competitions between employees that focus on the most amount of weight lost. However, these may be counterproductive because people can be tempted to adopt unhealthy behaviours to lose weight (such as fasting or following fad diets). Such weight loss is usually unsustainable and people can feel bad when the weight is regained. A much better idea is to focus on eating behaviours and healthy living strategies more broadly, rather than on weight loss.

Smokefree

What is good health?

There is no safe level of tobacco smoking. The harmful health effects of smoking include lung and other cancers, coronary heart disease, cardiovascular disease, stroke and chronic lung disease.

Twenty percent of ACT workers report smoking daily. Of significant concern, this rate is double for workers in blue-collar industries in the ACT.²²

The best thing a smoker can do for their own health and the health of family and friends is to quit smoking. Cutting down and quitting at any age is beneficial, increasing life expectancy and improving quality of life.

Cutting down and quitting is much easier if it is supported by the workplace environment, managers and co-workers. Workplace quit smoking programs have shown immediate return on investment, with significant return on investment within as little as two years.²³

Workplaces can utilise information from the Australian Government **National Tobacco Campaign (www.quitnow.gov.au), Quitline – Ph. 13 QUIT (13 7848) and The Cancer Council ACT (Ph. 02 6257 9999, www.actcancer.org)** to support initiatives in this area.

In addition to the Quitline, workplaces can promote the **QuitCoach www.quitcoach.org.au** – a free online interactive site – to support employees to cut down and quit smoking.

For more information on these and other resources, visit the *Healthier Work* website – www.healthierwork.act.gov.au. 

Within this table:

This symbol indicates an easy or low-resource activity



This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.



Exercise your right to add your own ideas according to your individual workplace needs.

	Table 3: Examples of smokefree strategies	Healthy people	Healthy places
	Promote the benefits of cutting down and quitting smoking through brochures, posters etc.	X	
	Promote services from which staff can assess information and support with cutting down and quitting smoking.	X	
	Display and make quit resources available within the workplace, for example, in tea rooms, foyers, hallways or waiting areas. Order free resources from the Quitline.	X	
	Remind employees that they can seek advice, support and referral from their General Practitioner, other health professionals or workplace Employee Assistance Programs.	X	
	Arrange peer support groups for employees who are trying to cut down, quit smoking and stay smoke-free.	X	
	Provide access to counselling through individual, group or telephone counselling programs on-site.	X	
	Create and implement a comprehensive smoke-free workplace policy which helps create a physical environment and culture that supports non-smoking and employees who wish to quit.		X
	Promote a smoke-free workplace – update your knowledge about ACT tobacco laws and display no-smoking signs where it's illegal to smoke.		X
	Provide access to nicotine replacement therapy for employees, such as patches or gum, through financial incentives or subsidies.	X	
	Consider extending workplace quit programs to employees' families and household members where feasible.		X

Reduced alcohol consumption

What is good health?

Alcohol is the most widely used drug in Australia. Risky alcohol consumption can result in alcohol dependence, cancers, road trauma and other injuries, as well as assaults and death.

For healthy men and women (not pregnant or breastfeeding)²⁴:

- drinking **no more than two standard drinks** on any day reduces the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury; and
- drinking **no more than four standard drinks** on a single occasion reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion.

In pregnancy it is advisable to drink no alcohol at all.

Almost half of ACT workers consume alcohol on a single occasion at harmful levels, and almost a quarter consume alcohol at levels that are harmful on a long-term basis.²⁵

Workplaces can influence the alcohol consumption of staff by making changes in the workplace culture.

Workplaces can utilise information from the Australian Government **Alcohol Campaign** (www.alcohol.gov.au) to support initiatives in this area.

For more information on these and other resources, visit the *Healthier Work* website – www.healthierwork.act.gov.au. 

Workplaces can also promote or seek further advice and information from the following programs and services to support employees to reduce their risky alcohol consumption:

- **ACT Government Health Directorate Alcohol and Drug Program** – 24 hour helpline (Ph. 02 6207 9977, www.health.act.gov.au)
- **Directions ACT** – alcohol and other drug information, counselling and referral service (Ph. 02 6122 8000, www.directionsact.com)
- **CounsellingOnline** – free 24 hour online alcohol or drug related counselling service (www.counsellingonline.org.au)

Within this table:

This symbol indicates an easy or low-resource activity



This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.



Exercise your right to add your own ideas according to your individual workplace needs.

	Table 4: Examples of reduced alcohol consumption strategies	Healthy people	Healthy places
	Provide information and resources on responsible alcohol use to employees.	X	
	Promote services and programs that provide information, advice, counselling and referral to treatment services for staff who may be concerned about their alcohol use, or that of family or friends.	X	
	Remind workers that they can seek advice, support and referral from their General Practitioner or other health professional.	X	
	Offer education and training to employees about safe consumption of alcohol.	X	
	If you're hosting work functions, follow the Australian low risk alcohol guidelines. Make sure to provide non-alcoholic drink options.		X
	Organise social and other team building functions that do not include alcohol; e.g. physical activity challenges.		X
	Develop and implement a workplace policy that encourages responsible alcohol use at work related events.		X
	Offer workplace Employee Assistance Programs to help employees reduce their alcohol intake.		X

Social and emotional wellbeing


What is good health?

Social and emotional wellbeing is essential for our overall health and wellbeing. Being socially and emotionally well means being able to realise your abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and contribute to your community.

Of concern, almost a third of ACT workers report at least moderate levels of psychological distress, with 9% reporting high levels of psychological distress.²⁶

Stressful work environments, long work hours and low morale contribute to absenteeism, presenteeism and sick leave and can have a negative effect on our social and emotional wellbeing. Recognising and promoting social and emotional wellbeing within the workplace can have a positive impact on employees.

Workplaces can utilise information from campaigns such as **beyondblue** (www.beyondblue.org.au) to support initiatives in this area.

For more information on these and other resources, visit the *Healthier Work* website – www.healthierwork.act.gov.au. 

Workplaces can also promote or seek further advice and information from the following programs and services to support employees to improve their social and emotional wellbeing:

- **Mental Health ACT** – for information on local services (**Ph. 1800 629 354**, www.health.act.gov.au)
- **Lifeline** – 24 hour telephone counselling service (**Ph. 13 11 14**, www.act.lifeline.org.au)
- **Headspace ACT** – support, information and assistance for young people aged 12 to 25 years who are experiencing emotional or mental health issues and/or a substance use issue (**02 6201 5343**, www.headspace.org.au/act)

Within this table:

This symbol indicates an easy or low-resource activity



This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.



Exercise your right to add your own ideas according to your individual workplace needs.

Table 5: Examples of social and emotional wellbeing strategies		Healthy people	Healthy places
	Circulate information such as brochures, fact sheets, intranet sites and posters that promote positive mental health.	X	
	Promote and encourage employees to participate in local recreation and community clubs and activities such as book clubs, walking groups, art and craft groups, relaxation and yoga classes.	X	
	Promote telephone support services throughout the workplace.	X	
	Organise staff presentations, seminars, workshops or lunchtime guest speakers on various stress management topics (e.g. the causes of stress, conflict resolution, resilience, leadership, signs and effects of stress and strategies for self-care, time management, personal financial planning).	X	
	Organise social functions within the workplace for employees and their families, to help build social networks.		X
	Allocate a space for a staff lounge with books and magazines on healthy lifestyles.		X
	Encourage employee recognition for exceptional efforts, activities supporting a healthier work environment, providing leadership or a team working well together (e.g. host a free healthy staff barbeque, distribute a whole of organisational email celebrating achievements).		X
	Address bullying behaviour where this is an issue to improve workplace stress, productivity and wellbeing.		X
	Conduct a staff satisfaction survey to gather feedback on areas of concern and ideas about how to create a workplace that supports positive mental health.		X
	Review policies and practices to ensure they promote positive mental health, and support workers with a mental health issue (e.g. policies concerning worker privacy or return to work programs).		X
	Establish an Employee Assistance Program to provide employees with access to confidential counselling services.		X
	Create, promote and support a work environment where there is recognition of work-life balance. Include policies that accommodate family/employee medical appointments, urgent family issues and flexible work schedules.		X
	Develop a workplace policy that addresses ethics, diversity and code of conduct in the workplace.		X
	Provide training for managers for understanding the impact of the work environment on social and emotional wellbeing.		X
	Provide critical incident support for managers and individuals.		X

Step 5: Manage your program

The size of an organisation, the capacity to allocate resources and the scope of the program are all variables that will impact on the level of management a program requires. For smaller companies wishing to adopt only a few targeted strategies, the resources required will obviously differ substantially from a larger organisation looking to introduce a comprehensive workplace health and wellbeing program.

However, regardless of the variables, sound administration and program coordination are important to the ultimate success of your workplace program's design, delivery and management.

You will need to maintain a sound **record-keeping system**. This includes the maintenance of program records such as initiatives conducted, levels of interest, outcomes and general details. Such information is valuable as an ongoing management tool and for future program evaluation purposes, particularly in larger organisations conducting more sophisticated programs over multiple sites.

You will need to adopt **risk management strategies**. These include safety and emergency procedures and risk minimisation associated with the delivery of the program. Although a totally risk-free environment is not possible to achieve, you can manage the risk associated with your workplace health and wellbeing program just as you would with other aspects of your organisation.

Effective management of your program requires energy, enthusiasm and regular communication. Leadership is required to manage workplace health and wellbeing program activities, including timing, roll-out and recruitment of participants.

See the **Case Studies** [🔗](#) for inspiration on how other ACT workplaces are managing their programs. Program coordinators and/or champions in your workplace may also benefit from belonging to a network of individuals who are similarly pursuing and progressing programs in their workplaces. Contact *Healthier Work* [🔗](#) to find out how to connect to such a network.

Staff health and wellbeing programs should not be viewed as a cost to the organisation, but rather as a long term investment.

Step 6: Evaluate and review your program

Evaluation refers to the process of measuring and assessing the impacts and merits of a particular endeavour – whether that be a policy, strategy or program. It is a means of determining the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of the endeavour, and contributing to improvements and innovation.

A variety of strategies may be used to evaluate your workplace health and wellbeing program and its components. Data source you may utilise to inform your evaluation may include findings from initial employees survey (such as the **ACT Employee Health and Wellbeing Survey** [🔗](#)) and/or workplace audits (such as the **ACT Healthy Workplaces Audit Tool** [🔗](#)), as well as ongoing program satisfaction surveys, discussions with staff and activity evaluation forms. You may also choose to evaluate your program against benchmarks for participation, productivity, sick leave or worker turnover.

Typically, regular program evaluation will allow you to:

- Determine if the program has been implemented as planned;
- Identify opportunities for improvement;
- Assess if the program is attracting the intended range and volume of participants;
- Document changes in health and wellbeing attitudes;
- Assess the perceived value of the program;
- Assess the overall level of worker and management satisfaction;
- Identify the health outcomes of the program against measurable criteria;
- Determine the cost benefit of the program;
- Determine if the program has met its quality assurance criteria; and
- Establish whether an ongoing commitment to the program is justified.

Remember that workplace health and wellbeing programs can take time to effect substantial change. You may only be able to measure small changes in the short term, such as being able to demonstrate that your program is having an impact on employee engagement and team cohesiveness. However, these small changes may have important benefits and cost-savings for your business in terms of productivity and staff retention. Changing workplace culture requires time and persistence.

As a guide, the change process is likely to be as follows:

- Within a few months – improvements in employee engagement and team cohesiveness
- Within 1-2 years – improvements in health knowledge and behaviours, job satisfaction, productivity and corporate image
- Within 3-5 years – reductions in absenteeism, injuries and workers compensation costs.

Of course, the time periods for which changes are seen may vary from workplace to workplace depending on a range of factors such as levels of management support, staff engagement, staff access and appropriateness of programs.

Remember, undertaking an initial employee survey and workplace audit, and repeating these over time, can help you to establish baseline data and monitor progress.

Take a look at the **Workplace Health Evaluation Overview** [🔗](#) to help you think more about evaluation indicators (i.e. indicators to measure performance against your program objectives), timeframes and data collection methods that you could include in your evaluation planning.

Be sure to share your findings with management and staff to continue to create interest and value in the program. Make the most of opportunities to share good news stories and celebrate successes. We would encourage you to share your experiences using the **Healthier Work Case Study Template**. [🔗](#)

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Section 4: Resources

The resources
to assist you...

...with running
your program



This section provides an overview of a range of resources available to assist you in successfully implementing and operating a workplace health and wellbeing program within your organisation – available from the *Healthier Work* website – www.healthierwork.act.gov.au. 



Health and Wellbeing Policy Example

This resource provides your workplace with information to assist in the development of an organisational health and wellbeing policy, including an example policy.

Such a policy allows your organisation to document its commitment to health and wellbeing; clearly define program objectives that are both realistic and easily measured; and outline the various responsibilities for key groups, such as management, organising committee, workers and external providers.

This resource also includes a link to a downloadable policy template (in word format) for workplaces to use as a starting point in developing their own health and wellbeing policy.

ACT Online Employee Health and Wellbeing Survey

This tool, developed by the ACT Government Health Directorate, provides medium to large workplaces with an easy to use online survey to help identify and monitor the current health status and program preferences of staff. It can help inform your program development as well as provide you with baseline data to help you monitor and refine your program down the track.

The survey acts as a mini health check for staff. On completion of the survey, individual staff obtain an automatically generated tailored report on their current health status, with ideas on how to address areas of risk. Once your workplace closes its survey, it receives an automatically generated organisation report with de-identified aggregate information on the health status and program preferences of staff.

To protect the privacy and confidentiality of employees, this online survey will only produce an organisation results report once 30 responses to the survey are attained. Given this required response rate, this online survey is not intended for use by small workplaces. In deciding whether or not this resource is suitable for your workplace, consider your likely response rate.

A pdf version of this survey (together with scoring information) can be found on the survey website. This pdf version is provided for the information of workplaces using the online survey only – not for hard copy use by workplaces.

Individual Version of the ACT Online Employee Health and Wellbeing Survey

This individual version of the ACT Online Employee Health and Wellbeing Survey is for use by individual employees to assess their health and wellbeing and receive individual feedback, including ideas on how to address areas of identified risk.

Workplaces for which the ACT Online Employee Health and Wellbeing Survey is not suitable may wish to promote this individual version to workers to assist them in assessing their current health status and/or to provide a starting point for discussions about what staff want and need from health and wellbeing programs.

ACT Healthy Workplaces Audit Tool

This tool can assist your workplace to establish a baseline against which improvements in its readiness and capacity to be a health promoting environment can be measured. The audit asks questions about key dimensions of the workplace environment which contribute to the health and wellbeing of staff, including:

1. Commitment
2. Provision of activities
3. Facilities and infrastructure
4. Accessing external resources
5. Resourcing
6. Planning
7. Administration and evaluation
8. Inclusiveness and participation

Health and Wellbeing Action Plan Example

This resource can assist your workplace to effectively plan for the implementation of your program by identifying:

- Clear goals and objectives for what you want to achieve;
- The strategies you intend to use in your program and the activities that will be required to implement these strategies;
- Timelines and required resources for implementing your strategies;
- Who will be involved in the implementation;
- How you will measure how successful your strategies have been.

A clear action plan example is provided – which identifies both ‘people’ and ‘places’ strategies - to help guide the development of your own action plan. This action plan would be signed off by your senior management and communicated effectively to staff to build momentum for your program and encourage staff participation.

This resource also includes a link to a downloadable action plan template (in word format) for workplaces to use as a starting point in developing their own health and wellbeing action plan.

Workplace Health Evaluation Overview

This resource can assist your workplace to consider appropriate program data collection processes and develop an evaluation plan for your program that considers processes, as well as short, medium and long term outcomes.

Remember that workplace health and wellbeing programs take time to effect substantial change. Changes in employee engagement and team cohesiveness should begin to emerge over a few months. Changes in health knowledge and behaviours, job satisfaction, productivity and corporate image are then likely to emerge within 1-2 years, and in 3-5 years you should see changes in absenteeism, injuries and workers compensation costs.

Case Studies

These case studies can provide your workplace with examples of how other organisations – big, small and from various industries – have effectively initiated, implemented and refined staff health and wellbeing programs.

It may be useful to share these case studies with your management to demonstrate how other organisations are benefiting from having a workplace health and wellbeing program and to provide ideas and inspiration for initiating your own program. The case studies also provide contact information for the organisation being show-cased so that you can speak directly with their program coordinator to seek further information, ask for advice or troubleshoot problems.

There is also a case study template available for you to submit your own experiences to be shared with others.

Frequently Asked Questions

This information provides answers to frequently asked questions in terms of how you can best plan for and implement your program, including how to build a business case, engage management and encourage employee participation.

The core elements discussed in this Guide are covered in these FAQs, and troubleshooting tips are provided to help you refine or improve your program to achieve optimal outcomes.

Health Promotion Campaigns and Information

This information provides links to a range of health campaigns and services that your workplace may wish to draw on to reinforce health promotion messages and initiatives - including **Find Thirty[®]**, **Go for 2&5[®]**, **Tap Into Water[®]**, **Swap It[®]** and the **Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service[®]**.

Details are also provided on a range of information sources on the health topics discussed in this Guide – i.e. physical activity; healthy eating; smokefree; reduced alcohol consumption; and social and emotional wellbeing.

Service Providers

There are a range of health and wellbeing service providers in the ACT and surrounds that your workplace may wish to consider utilising to support your program. A list of such providers is available by the health topics discussed in this Guide – i.e. physical activity; healthy eating; smokefree; reduced alcohol consumption; and social and emotional wellbeing.

This listing is provided for the information of workplaces only. Service providers are in no way endorsed by *Healthier Work* or the ACT Government, nor are their services or prices warranted or guaranteed in any manner.

Information is also provided to guide workplaces in their selection of appropriate service providers, taking into account issues such as quality assurance and provider capacity.

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