

How to consult with staff

Why is staff consultation important?

A healthy workplace is easier to achieve when there is open communication in your organisation. During the development of your program it is important to speak to staff and listen to their wants, needs and potential concerns about workplace health strategies. Staff will also have great ideas. By engaging them early on, you create a feeling of ownership and can collect information that will allow you to make better decisions about what approach to take.

Assessing needs

Before consulting staff, consider what health initiatives are already in place in your workplace. These might include flexible working hours, bicycle racks or a smoke-free policy. From here you will be more easily able to identify gaps and priorities.

What needs to assess

Many workplaces choose to assess health issues and behaviours through a staff survey. This can have limited use as you may find that only workers who are already interested in their health respond. It is likely that your workers' health behaviours and issues are similar to the general population. This means the main behaviours that you should be targeting are physical inactivity, unhealthy eating, smoking and alcohol consumption.

You may also like to consider the risks associated with your industry to help identify your target areas. The following table highlights four priorities industries for each risk factor and compares them to the national average. For more information on the health of your industry visit the *Healthy Workers* portal.

Current smokers Avg. 22%	Inadequate fruit & vegetable intake Avg. 49%	Alcohol consumption Avg. 24%	Physical inactivity Avg. 71%
Manufacturing (30%)	Accommodation & Restaurants (56%)	Construction (40%)	Transport & Storage (79%)
Transport & Storage (29%)	Manufacturing (55%)	Communication Services (30%)	Communication Services (77%)
Accommodation & Restaurants (27%)	Transport & Storage (54%)	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (30%)	Manufacturing (75%)
Personal & Other Services (26%)	Retail Trade (54%)	Manufacturing (28%)	Health & Community Services (75%)

Source: Adapted from the 2008 National Health Survey

Supported by:



Government of Western Australia
Department of Health





You may like to use this information when consulting with staff. For example, if you are working within the transport and storage industry, physical inactivity will be a priority area. You could ask, 'What could our workplace do to support you to be more active, use active transport or sit less?'

Get workers to think about these things in the context of:

- » Workplace policies and procedures e.g. active transport policy
- » Education e.g. presentation on cycling skills, road rules and safety
- » Physical environment e.g. bike racks and shower facilities
- » Activities e.g. lunchtime bike rides or bike to work breakfasts

How to assess needs

For smaller workplaces, consulting with your workers may be as simple as speaking to them. You could also ask for suggestions by email, at regular staff meetings or by creating an anonymous feedback box.

For medium to large sized workplaces getting feedback will take more time. You could speak to existing staff groups that meet regularly and are representative of all staff. This ensures that you are not just getting the opinions of workers with an interest in health. Asking questions in a meeting in an open way provides you with much richer information than multiple choice questions on a survey.

Surveys can be useful in some situations, for example:

- » To identify the number of current active transport users prior to putting in bike racks so you can see if the number increases over time
- » To identify times that people are more likely to be available to attend activities to maximise participation
- » To provide feedback on a pilot education session to ensure they are meeting the objectives and needs
- » To gain feedback on a draft action plan or policy
- » To gather new ideas

Seeking ongoing feedback

Getting feedback from staff throughout your program will allow you to easily determine if your strategies are working or not. Listening to staff concerns and suggestions and making necessary changes will make sure more people get involved in your program.

Supported by:



Government of Western Australia
Department of Health

