

CONSULTING WITH STAFF

The aim of this document is to provide you with guidance on how to effectively consult with staff so that you can make informed decisions about the direction of your new or existing workplace health and wellbeing program. Workplaces vary greatly from one to the next and there is no 'one size fits all' approach to workplace health promotion. In order to create a program that is specific to your organisation, you need to:

- » Consult with staff prior to creating and implementing your program,
- » Understand the health risks that exist in your workplace,
- » Understand your staff's needs, wants, perceived barriers and enablers to being healthy.

Staff will provide valuable insights into what strategies will and won't work in the workplace, and what they believe will make a difference to their health. In addition, by engaging them early you will create a feeling of ownership which will assist with participation rates.

Collecting the information – who, how and what

Before you begin to consult with staff, you'll need to consider three things: who to consult with, how to collect the information, and what to ask staff.

Who

To begin with, it's important to determine who you wish to consult with: the workforce as a whole or a specific group within your working population. Staff from different areas of your organisation may require different strategies to get them engaged, or assist them in achieving healthy behaviour changes. For example, what works for your office workers, might not work for your warehouse staff, and vice versa.

How

The next thing you will need to determine is how you will consult with staff and collect this information. It is important to ensure that your method of collecting information is suited to your workforce and produces the information you require. Many workplaces choose to assess health issues and behaviours through an online staff survey. However, this method may result in a low response rate and not accurately represent your whole workforce as:

- » Some of your staff may not have computer access, for example, on-the-road workers,
- » You may find that only workers who are already interested in their health respond.

When selecting your methods for consultation, consider strategies to engage workers that are typically harder to reach. Offering healthy incentives for staff to participate in consultation might result in better response rates. Whatever the consultation method, timely and accurate feedback is crucial. People want to know that their opinions are valued and that action is being taken.

Table 1 provides some common and useful consultation methods.

Table 1 – Methods of consultation	
<p>Online survey</p> <p>A great option for staff based at a computer (there are lots of survey tools that you can access for free online).</p>	<p>Paper based survey</p> <p>If staff aren't based at a computer, hand your survey out or leave copies in a high traffic area, such as a lunch room, with a ballot box for completed copies.</p>
<p>Face-to-face chat/informal discussions</p> <p>For a small workplace, or a hard to engage group of workers, try gaining insight informally via a casual catch up or chat.</p>	<p>Focus group</p> <p>Larger workplaces might find focus groups useful. Gather staff from different departments, levels, and/or locations to ensure you get a good snapshot of representatives.</p>
<p>Compulsory meetings</p> <p>For a greater response rate, have staff complete a survey during a staff or prestart meeting. If there are literacy issues, read the questions out to the group for ease of completion.</p>	<p>Existing groups</p> <p>Use existing work groups such as occupational health and safety committees, or social clubs as a focus group, by attending one of their scheduled meetings.</p>
<p>Other staff members</p> <p>If there are members of staff who are natural leaders and well liked within your workplace, get them on board to seek feedback from their colleagues.</p>	

What

Finally, you need to identify what you will ask your staff. Effective consultation should cover:

- » Strategies (including policies, environment changes, education and activities) that employees would like to see implemented in the workplace,
- » Measurement of staff awareness levels, attitudes and current behaviours regarding health (example questions can be found in Appendix A),
- » Barriers in the workplace that are preventing staff from engaging in healthy behaviours,
- » What motivates staff to participate in healthy behaviours.

Gathering this information will provide you with a good understanding about the current health status of your workforce and guide the selection of program strategies. Thorough consultation also allows you to collect baseline measurements which will help when you are evaluating your program.

To assist you with identifying which risk factors are most relevant to your workplace, refer to the National Healthy Workers Portal: [How Healthy is your Industry](#) or contact Healthier Workplace WA.