

CONSULTING WITH STAFF

Consulting with staff helps you to make informed decisions about the direction of your new or existing workplace health and wellbeing program. Workplaces vary greatly and there is no 'one size fits all' approach to workplace health promotion. To create a program that is specific to your organisation, we encourage you 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 provide valuable insights into what strategies will and won't work in your workplace, and what they believe will make a difference to their health and wellbeing. In addition, by engaging them early you will create a feeling of ownership which can 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

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 in the program. What works for your office workers, might not work for your warehouse staff and vice versa. For this reason, it's important to consider speaking to different groups within your workplace.

How

The next thing you will need to determine is how you will consult with staff and collect this information (Table 1). 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, as is ensuring anonymity. People want to know that their opinions are valued and that action is being taken. See Table 1 below for different consultation strategies.

Table 1 provides some common and useful consultation methods.

Table 1 – Methods of consultation	
<p>Online survey*</p> <p>A great choice for staff based at a computer. Contact Healthier Workplace WA for options.</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.</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>	<p>Incentives</p> <p>Using healthy incentives may assist in an increased response rate. Host a healthy morning tea or offer a chance to win a prize for providing feedback.</p>

*Consider literacy levels and language differences when deciding on consultation strategies.

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 ([pre-evaluation](#)) which will help when you are evaluating your program.

See [Appendix A: Consulting with staff](#) for example consultation questions. For assistance with staff consultation, contact Healthier Workplace WA on 1300 550 271.