

Foreword

Following an open tender process Quorus Pty Ltd was contracted by the Australian Government Department of Health (the Department) to develop a Quality Framework for the Healthy Workers Initiative. The project involved the establishment of a Project Advisory Group with membership from the Australian Government Department of Health, the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Fitness Australia, Health and Productivity Institute of Australia, Council of Small Business of Australia, Diabetes Australia, Comcare and the Healthies Steering Committee.

The Healthy Workers Quality Framework was the culmination of extensive stakeholder consultation and pilot testing, building off the Quality Framework developed under the Healthy Communities Initiative.

Introduction

The Australian Government Department of Health is implementing the Healthy Workers Initiative (HWI), which is one component of three setting based approaches to reduce the number of Australians at risk of lifestyle-related chronic disease. These initiatives (Healthy Communities, Healthy Workers and Healthy Children) are occurring under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health.

The Australian Government is providing funding to the states and territories to facilitate the delivery of healthy living programs in workplaces in their jurisdictions. The Initiative is focusing on reducing smoking rates, improving nutrition – particularly fruit and vegetable intake, increasing rates of physical activity and reducing alcohol consumption. Funding for the states and territories began on 1 July 2011. To find out more about what is happening in each of the states and territories see the implementation plans for each jurisdiction available at www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/health_preventive.aspx.

The Australian Government is further supporting the states and territories through the development of a national awards program, a national healthy workers portal for employers, a national Joint Statement of Commitment to promote good health through workplaces and the Healthy Workers Quality Framework.

The development of this Quality Framework follows extensive consultation with stakeholders including healthy lifestyle program providers, corporate wellness providers, academics, government representatives, peak bodies, employers and employee representatives.

The Healthy Workers Initiative Quality Framework

- Occupational Health & Safety legislation requires workplaces to be safe and healthy which may have some overlap with this non-mandatory initiative.
- The programs and activities will complement and not detract from Occupational Health & Safety legislation requirements and obligations.
- Workplace parties will have the ability to choose programs that are suitable to their workplaces.
- A supportive environment based on engagement, consultation and the subsequent agreement of workplace parties will be the basis on which programs in a workplace are initiated.

Successful healthy worker programs comprise of three essential mechanisms: Information and awareness; behaviour and environmental change; and workforce engagement. These mechanisms will be best achieved by workplace commitment and action, and the provision of evidence informed programs by quality providers (internal or external to workplaces). Consequently there are three components to this Quality Framework. Each of these components has been developed based on the available evidence and expert input. Provider Registration and Program Registration under the Healthy Workers Quality Framework is described in detail in a separate guide. The three components are shown in Figure 2 and are:

Principles for Healthy Workplaces – for organisations and employers

Healthy Lifestyle Provider Registration – for providers of healthy lifestyle programs to organisations and employees

Healthy Lifestyle Program Registration – for developers of stand alone programs

Figure 2: Components of the Healthy Workers Initiative Quality Framework



Development of the Quality Framework

The development of the Quality Framework has taken into account the context and policy environment in which the initiative is currently funded. This includes the focus on physical activity, nutrition, smoking and alcohol consumption, noting that mental health is not currently explicitly included in the Healthy Workers scope. The Healthy Workers initiative is taking a population based approach to change lifestyle behaviours to reduce the risk of chronic disease; it is not imposing these programs on workplaces, rather using the workplace as a setting to reach a large proportion of the population. The Healthy Workers Initiative must also co-exist synergistically with workplace health and safety obligations. The Quality Framework for the Healthy Workers Initiative:

- supports the use of health promoting approaches recognising the need to balance individual behaviour change, organisational culture with environmental improvements
- recognises existing relevant accreditation, professional registration and credentialing schemes
- recognises existing quality improvement frameworks that program providers/employers may currently follow
- promotes the use of the current evidence base to ensure culturally, geographically, demographically and socio-economically appropriate and effective programs and interventions
- supports capacity building and continual improvement
- acknowledges different levels of risk and supports risk identification and appropriate risk mitigation
- recognises and attempts to minimise the administrative burden (where possible) and streamline administrative requirements
- recognises the need for review and evolution of the Framework.
- is voluntary
- covers workplaces, programs and providers
- recognises and complements existing workplace health and safety requirements.

Which component is for me

Implementing the Healthy Workers Initiative requires engagement and action by employers, a strong private provider sector and programs that are endorsed by experts. Consequently the Healthy Workers Quality Framework comprises three components as shown on the previous page in Figure 2:

- **Principles for Healthy Workplaces.** A set of principles for employers wishing to establish, maintain and improve healthy lifestyle programs within their workplaces. These principles are supportive in nature and will not be formally assessed. The Principles are intended to provide the basis for workplace policy, programs and activities in this area but are not intended to provide the 'how to' instructions. Further resources on the practical application of the principles are contained on the Healthy Workers Portal at www.healthyworkers.gov.au

- **Program Registration on the Healthy Living Network** based on an assessment of programs against the Quality Framework (see Figure 3). This component is for those program developers who wish to have discrete programs formally recognised and/or make their programs available for use by others. A guide is included for those wishing to have their programs registered explaining the basis for the criteria and requirements for registration.
- **Provider Registration** based on self-assessment and third-party desk-top audit against criteria that are grouped in eight domains. This component is for those providing healthy lifestyle programs directly in workplaces or to employees. The Healthy Lifestyle Provider Registration guide is an extensive document for providers detailing the standards and criteria and outlines the justification, resources, templates and required evidence for each criterion. This guide can be found in the resources section on the Healthy Living Network portal.
- **Licensee Registration** is for individuals or organisations licensed to deliver programs and would like to have their activity listed and searchable on the Healthy Living Network. Licensees are required to first complete a short online registration application and attach supporting information relevant to the program they are licensed to deliver, such as a current training certificate.

Licensee Registration will only be able to be completed if there is an approved program that has undergone the HWI Quality Framework Registration process. If the program that is to be delivered is not listed on the Healthy Living Network, the provider and/or the Healthy Living Network can be contacted to discuss registration options.

Program providers or sole providers that intend to deliver other programs which do not operate under a licensing agreement will need to complete Provider Registration and Program Registration.

If you are unsure about whether you should register as a Licensee or Provider contact the Registration Body.

- **Activity Registration** In order to have an activity listed on the Healthy Living Network registration portal the online Activity registration process will need to be completed for each activity.

Activity registration is for...

- An occurrence of a previously approved program that is to be delivered locally can be listed and searchable on the Healthy Living Network, and/or
- A licensee that has completed Licensee Registration and would like to have the delivery of their activity listed and searchable on the Healthy Living Network.

Note: If an activity is delivered at more than one location, Activity Registration is required for each location so that every occurrence can be listed on the Healthy Living Network. If the activity is delivered at the same location, but aimed at a different target audience or delivered by a different person, then you need to complete Activity Registration for each individual activity. This enables activities to be searched by particular criteria relating to attributes and location.

The online Activity Registration is a short questionnaire, which asks for contact information, location, target audience and a brief description of the activity which will be listed and searchable by workers, workplaces and health professionals on the Healthy Living Network. Activity Registration is a short online process that should take approximately 5 to 10 minutes for each listing.

Programs listed on the Healthy Living Network have been assessed against the HWI Quality Framework Program Registration criteria and as such are deemed appropriate according to the submitted program outline.

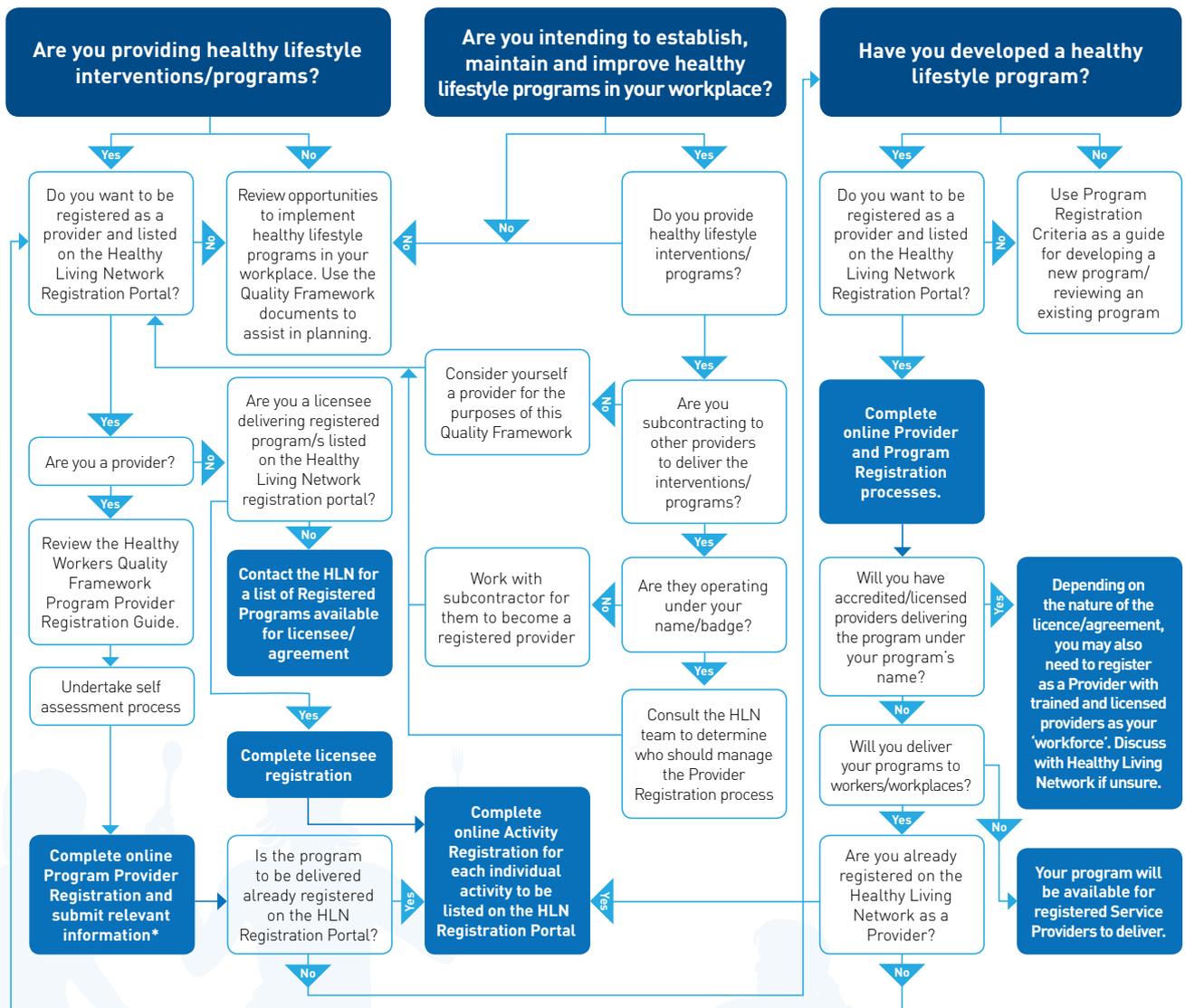
Unless specified, activities cannot be varied from the submitted program outline. When completing the online Activity Registration questionnaire, certain information regarding the program will be pre-populated and cannot be varied.

To vary the registered program, contact the Registration Body to discuss. If the Program Registration has already been submitted, a resubmission of changes may be required. The licensee will need to contact the Program Provider to discuss changes.

In some situations more than one component will apply. For example program providers may wish to promote good health in their own workplaces and therefore will use both the Provider Registration and Principles for Healthy Workplaces. An employer may use all three components. They may have developed a program that they want to have registered in its own right, provide activities and programs directly to employees, and are using the Principles for Healthy Workplaces to assess the comprehensiveness of their approach.

For providers that operate a license, franchise or contracted model, discussions with the Healthy Living Network will confirm your organisations registration requirements. This will depend on the nature of the arrangement with respect to issues of branding, training, quality control and risk liability.

Figure 3: Registration Decision Tree



*Note: If you are intending to apply for Provider Registration under both Healthy Workers and Communities you need to submit evidence for Standard 7.1 – see Healthy Communities Provider Registration Guide.

Workplaces are encouraged to use the Healthy Workers Portal to access the tools, templates and reference material they require to progress their journey in supporting healthier lifestyles in their workplaces.

These Principles are provided for the benefit of workplaces and comprise one of three components of the Healthy Workers Quality Framework. There is no formal quality assessment requirement for this component. It is intended as a guidance document for workplaces. An audit tool (Checklist for Workplaces, p.14) is included here for the workplaces to undertake a rapid assessment of their workplaces against the Principles.

Understanding the context

Key Elements

- Need
- Aims
- Workplace culture
- Resource availability

No two workplaces are the same. Understanding the specific context and aims of each workplace is an important part of the healthy workplace jigsaw. There is no one approach. Each workplace needs to determine their:

Need – Successful approaches are those that are matched to what each specific workplace needs, what the staff need, and what is relevant, appropriate and acceptable to that workplace. The assessment of need should take into account both individual healthy lifestyle profile and environmental considerations.

Aims – Aims need to be specific, measurable and time limited. Knowing the need will assist in developing relevant aims. Aims allow what can be diverse needs to be refined into priorities and specific focus areas.

Workplace culture – A supportive workplace culture will help participants of workplace health programs achieve more and sustain those achievements. Understanding workplace culture will assist in tailoring the program appropriately.

Resource availability – Resources can include staff time, freely available health promotion material, local community organisations, physical facilities, private providers, dedicated workplace units. Knowing the market place and what resources are available and the level of resource available internally will assist in planning an appropriate approach.

Engagement and Collaboration

Key Elements

- Promotion
- Communication
- Champions
- Respectful
- Partnerships

Key to successful outcomes is the level of engagement and participation by workers and business owners/senior executive. Engagement and collaboration both internally and externally will enhance the success and reach of any health promotion approach. The following key elements should be considered by all workplaces.

Promotion – Workplaces will need to discuss the mutual benefits with employers, management, employees and with any established health and safety representatives/committees. Promotion of program activities will support higher levels of participation and engagement. Promoting the successes and lessons learnt will promote continuous improvement and sustainability.

Communication – As with all programs communication is key. Open discussion should be encouraged and take account of the different needs of people in workplaces. Communication needs to be repeated regularly to improve its effectiveness. Communicate the what, why, how, where and who.

Champions – The use of workplace champions is associated with higher levels of success. Champions are those who are committed and passionate about workplace health promotion and healthy lifestyles and can help motivate others. They can act as role models and lead specific engagement strategies.

Respectful – Programs must be respectful of individual choice, cultural beliefs and business requirements. They should also reflect any legal requirements.

Partnerships – Collaborative approaches use partnerships effectively to harness like minded groups and individuals to achieve similar goals. There are many possible partners available to support workplaces including Workplace Health and Safety teams, local community groups, state and territory government departments, local businesses, not for profit and non-government groups and private providers. The Healthy Worker Registration process will assist workplaces in selecting quality providers, if they chose to use external providers.

Commitment

Key Elements

- Leadership
- Policy/philosophy
- Planning resources
- Action

Positive outcomes will only occur as the result of action. Action can be demonstrated in the following ways.

Leadership – Leadership is a critical success factor for workplace health promotion. Ideally the leadership will come from all levels: senior executives, business owners, managers, supervisors and employees themselves. Effective leadership will make things happen, commit resources, and remove barriers and obstacles.

Policy/philosophy – A statement about what the workplace wants to achieve will be useful in guiding action.

Planning and Resources – Promoting healthier lifestyles in the workplace does not necessarily need to cost much. However at a minimum it will take some time and effort to promote and coordinate. Providing dedicated resources is the most demonstrable way of committing to doing something.

Action – The planning process should identify the first actionable steps. Taking action will allow workplaces to start to achieve their stated aims.

Tailored

Key Elements

- Responsive to need
- Balanced
- Resource appropriate
- Variable
- Risk managed

Programs and approaches need to be tailored to address the diversity of each workplace and can range from simple to more detailed approaches.

Responsive to need – The most successful approaches will be those that consider the range of needs and the local aims identified under Understanding the Context. Programs that are relevant to the specific workplace needs are more likely to have higher levels of participation and success.

Balanced – There will always be competing priorities in delivering programs. Workplaces need to not only balance the various identified needs but also consider a balanced approach to improving healthy life choices by workers, the culture of the workplace and the workplace environment to help to reduce risk factors for chronic disease.

Resource appropriate – Programs need to match available resources. Tailored programs meeting the needs of workplaces can be developed on a range of budgets and resource availability.

Variable – The diversity of need and wants within a workplace would indicate that a variety of approaches will be more successful. Workplaces will need to consider variations in the way information is provided, the types of activities that are supported, the places where activities occur and the times that activities occur.

Risk managed – The risks of each approach need to be assessed and managed accordingly. This should be done in line with Workplace Health and Safety obligations.

Continuous Improvement

Key Elements

- Plan
- Assess
- Implement
- Monitor
- Evaluate
- Improve

A simple and methodical approach to workplace health improvement that focuses on continual improvement will be most effective and efficient.

Continuous Improvement:

A continuous improvement cycle involves planning, assessing need, implementing action, monitoring progress, evaluating and improving. These key processes bring together the practical application of the Principles for Healthy Workplaces and will assist in achieving sustainable, effective approaches to promoting healthier lifestyles in workplace settings.

There are high quality publications which provide evidence based, detailed approaches for employers to follow. Many have a particular focus such as a specific state or territory, industry or size of workplace. Some notable examples include:

- Best-Practice Guidelines – Workplace Health in Australia. (HAPIA. 2010.)
- Healthy Workplace Guide – Ten steps to implementing a workplace health program. (Heart Foundation, Cancer Council NSW, and PANORG Sydney University. 2011)
- Get moving at Work. A Resource Kit For Workplace Health & Wellbeing Programs. (Premiers Physical Activity Council – Tasmania. 2007)
- Healthy lifestyle program for the Queensland Public Service – Guidelines for Government Agencies. (Workplace Health and Safety Queensland.)
- Healthy Workplace Kit. (WorkSafe Victoria)
- Consultation obligations – Legislative Fact Sheet Series (Safe Work Australia)

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www.workhealth.vic.gov.au/workplace-programs/healthy-workplace-kit

Wellness Council of America – www.welcoa.org

Checklist for Workplaces

| | Criteria | Meets | Partially Meets | Doesn't Meet | Comments |
|------------------------------|---|-------|-----------------|--------------|----------|
| Understanding context | Has the need been assessed and articulated? | | | | |
| | Have the aims for the healthy workplace program been defined? | | | | |
| | Has the workplace culture to support a healthier workplace been assessed? | | | | |
| | Have resources been identified that can support the program? | | | | |
| Engagement and Collaboration | Has the program intent, benefits and approach been promoted with managers, employees and health and safety representatives? | | | | |
| | Is there a communication plan? | | | | |
| | Have champions been identified and co-opted to support the program? | | | | |
| | Is the program design and implementation approach respectful of the different views and needs across the workplace? | | | | |
| | Have partnerships been considered and progressed? | | | | |
| Commitment | Is leadership for the program visible? | | | | |
| | Is there an espoused policy or philosophy to support the program? | | | | |
| | Have resources been allocated to support the program? | | | | |
| | Are there actionable steps with assigned responsibility? | | | | |
| Tailored | Are aims clearly linked to the identified need? | | | | |
| | Do they meet the SMART ¹ criteria? | | | | |
| | Is there a balanced approach to activities? | | | | |
| | Is the program capable of being resourced? | | | | |
| | Is there variation in program options? | | | | |
| | Have program risks been identified and mitigated? | | | | |
| Continuous Improvement | Is there a process to review and improve the program? | | | | |

1. Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time limited

Healthy Living *Network*

www.healthylivingnetwork.com.au

Email: info@healthylivingnetwork.com.au

Telephone: 1300 456 000

Facsimile: (02) 9283 7545

Quality Management Services

Suite 10, Level 1

104 Bathurst Street

Sydney NSW 2000

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