

**Healthier
Work.**



Work Design

June 2023



**ACT
Government**

What is work design?

It's about organising and delivering work for employee and business success.

Be clear about how your employees' tasks are structured and organised. Give them the opportunity to provide input to how their work is organised. Can the work be meaningful and give people the opportunity to build their skills? Can you promote autonomy and foster positive relationships?

When designing individual job roles and responsibilities, seek a balance between meeting your organisational goals while considering the demands you place on your employees. Well-defined and consistent systems, processes and procedures are the backbone to workplace design.

Become a healthier workplace

This information sheet is designed to explain how to build your work design in a practical way, offering a variety of strategies and actions you can take to achieve a healthier workplace. The breadth of options is extensive. Not all suggested activities will be relevant to your workplace, but it's important to cover work design deficiencies identified in your Gap Assessment Report.

Suggested actions and strategies listed in the following pages are labelled with icons to show what aspects of healthier work they address.

Take an integrated approach



Protect

Prevent and minimise physical and psychological harm



Support

Provide services, interventions and resources



Promote

Build a positive and meaningful health culture

Look at complete health



Physical

Create physically safe environments



Mental

Create psychologically safe environments



Place

Make your workplace safe and healthy



People

Build awareness of healthy behaviours



What you can do (actions and strategies)

Roles and responsibilities

Clarify employee tasks, work methods and priorities. Make sure they're aware of their role within the organisation.

	PROTECT	SUPPORT	PROMOTE	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	PLACE	PEOPLE
Be clear about what's required of each role: tasks, work methods, priorities and how a role fits within the organisation.		  					
Give employees access to a current position description outlining role purpose, expectations/duties, and reporting relationships.		  					
Review and update job descriptions regularly to reflect any changes. Involve employees in these reviews. Check they understand any additional duties or responsibilities, if necessary.		  					
Clarify reporting relationships so employees know who they are directly accountable to. Avoid making employees accountable to more than one immediate supervisor to reduce potential work demand conflict.		 					
Capture the emotional demands of a role, if applicable, in the position description and inform applicants of this at the pre-selection stage (for example, at interview).		  					



Workload and job demands

Aim for a balanced and motivational approach to workload. Encourage employees to shape their work to suit their style.

	PROTECT	SUPPORT	PROMOTE	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	PLACE	PEOPLE
Review your employee workloads regularly - at team meetings, informal check-ins or a worksite assessment. Make sure they have what they need (time, admin support, equipment) to get their job done.				  			
Ask employees to provide input to how they go about their tasks. They may have valuable suggestions on the pace, order and method for completing tasks.				  			
Give employees the opportunity to make their work more meaningful, challenging and stimulating.				 			
Try to make workload predictable and consistent. Adequately prepare for and resource fluctuations in workload.				  			
Seek input from employees about realistic and achievable performance targets based on their workload.				  			
Allow employees to take breaks or 'time out' from emotionally demanding work.				 			
Allow employees to take regular breaks from physically demanding or repetitive tasks.				 			
Help employees to create their own personal work plans to prioritise tasks, know their objectives and expected outputs.				   			
Don't ask employees to regularly stay after hours without prior consultation.				  			
During periods where deadlines are tight, talk to employees about the reasons behind the deadlines and why it is important they are met.				  			
Backfill roles or redistribute work when employees are out of the office or away on leave.				  			



Workload and job demands (cont.)

Aim for a balanced and motivational approach to workload. Encourage employees to shape their work to suit their style.

	PROTECT	SUPPORT	PROMOTE	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	PLACE	PEOPLE
Give employees autonomy to determine how to complete their workload, especially where tasks require high levels of concentration or multiple procedures/connections.				 			
Make sure employees have adequate time for breaks that meet your obligations as an employer and the demands of the role.			  				
Establish a practice where managers and employees can negotiate reasonable deadlines.			  				
Implement organisational and role changes over a considered period that considers the level of change and the preparedness of employees.				 			
Involve employees in the allocation of responsibility for tasks within teams, determining work objectives and anticipated outputs, roles, timeframes and resourcing.			  				
Limit giving employees tasks that under-utilise their skills as they may feel frustrated and unmotivated if not being challenged.			  				
Manage mental workload by allocating work that allows employees to switch tasks after periods of extremely high or very low mental effort.				 			
Monitor workloads so all employees can create a comfortable work-life balance.			  				
Provide practical assistance for employees doing work that is mentally challenging.				 			
Rotate tasks and schedules so that employees are not always assigned jobs that require extreme focus or attention.			  				



Workload and job demands (cont.)

Aim for a balanced and motivational approach to workload. Encourage employees to shape their work to suit their style.

	PROTECT	SUPPORT	PROMOTE	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	PLACE	PEOPLE
Strive to make working hours regular and predictable.				  			
When assigning work, negotiate objective and reasonable standards to increase an employee's perception of ownership and fairness.				  			
Add meaning and context to work, especially process work, by combining tasks to form new and larger modules of work.				  			



Resources

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Make sure your employees have what they need to do their job well, including equipment and support.

PROTECT	SUPPORT	PROMOTE	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	PLACE	PEOPLE
Give employees all the resources, information and support they need to make decisions and perform tasks competently.			   			
Give sufficient financial, people and information resources to meet deadlines and outcomes.			   			
Make sure employees are covered while on annual or sick leave. If overtime is necessary, try to minimise the impact on employee work-life balance by providing enough notice.			  			
Check your team size is appropriate to deliver the workload.			  			
Offer support systems during periods of high demand.			   			
Consider the type of attention a task requires, such as sustained attention for accuracy or divided attention for multiple demands and accommodate for this by providing the necessary resources.			   			
Provide additional assistance when employees are undertaking challenging tasks, such as new duties or roles.			  			
Make additional resources available during peak periods of demand (such as Christmas, school holidays or seasonal peaks) and when needed.			  			
Give teams adequate resources to continue to support their work goals while a team member is injured or unwell.			   			
Ask employees to agree to shift rosters and consult with them when designing or changing rosters.			  			



Systems, processes and procedures

Clearly define processes and procedures and review your systems regularly (together with your employees) for optimal results.

PROTECT	SUPPORT	PROMOTE	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	PLACE	PEOPLE
Create a formal system or program to share information across all departments and levels.			 			
Design processes and procedures (for rostering, recruitment, performance reviews, recognition and so on) so they can be applied consistently across the business. For example, use consistent criteria for performance reviews.			  			
Make it easy for employees to speak up early if they feel their task demands are excessive. Encourage them to ask their manager about re-prioritising based on available resources.			  			
Review procedures regularly to check they are effective and meeting objectives.			  			
Create a performance indicator system for employees to get regular feedback on successes or areas for improvement. Be specific about what has been done well and offer practical advice on areas that need improvement.			  			
Give employees the opportunity to have input to decisions about their role tasks and procedures.			   			
Clarify management structures and reporting lines so employees understand who they are accountable to.			 			
Use systems, such as team meetings, for employees to raise concerns about any conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.			 			
Make sure all employees and managers are aware of the organisation's policies on fatigue management, including overtime, rosters and shift work			  			



Systems, processes and procedures (cont.)

Clearly define processes and procedures and review your systems regularly (together with your employees) for optimal results.

PROTECT	SUPPORT	PROMOTE	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	PLACE	PEOPLE
Provide a flexible working environment that supports safe work practices and arrangements. Have a system to review and manage flexible working arrangements.		  				
Use a workload management system.		  				
Use time and attendance systems to assess workload for resource allocation.		  				
Create a system to notify employees of unplanned tight deadlines or any exceptional need to work long hours.		  				



Tools and resources

Templates

- » How to build a healthier work team
- » Healthier Work achievement/plan template
- » Healthier Work Gap Assessment Survey
- » Health and Wellbeing Policy Template

Helpful resources

Find resources and information relating to workplace health, safety and wellbeing recommended by Healthier Work. Use the Resource Finder or go directly to resources relating to workplace categories.

- » **Resource Finder** – search for resources by topic, subtopic, type and industry
- » **Work Design** – Recommended resources that address Work Design
- » **Work Environment** - Recommended resources that address the Work Environment
- » **Workforce Capability** - Recommended resources that address Workforce Capability
- » **Workplace Engagement** - Recommended resources that address Workplace Engagement
- » **Workplace Support** - Recommended resources that address Workplace Support
- » **Workplace leadership** - Recommended resources that address Workplace Leadership
- » **Healthier Work Booklet** - Learn more about the Healthier Work program

Get help

The Healthier Work Program is a free ACT Government initiative for Canberra businesses. Get in touch to ask a question or organise a free site visit from our Healthier Work team.

All category worksheets in this series



Work Design



Work Environment



Workforce Capability



Workplace Engagement



Workplace Support



Workplace Leadership





Healthier Places. Healthier People. Healthier Work.



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For further assistance, please
contact the Healthier Work team.

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