



3.0 Getting Started

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Below are some steps to get a comprehensive health initiative started in your workplace.

3.1 Assemble Key Players

- Get senior management commitment
- Use the background information in this toolkit to build your case to management
- Establish a physical activity committee or a workplace wellness committee

When senior management's commitment and involvement is visible, employees are more likely to commit to and participate in creating a healthy workplace. Building a business case allows owners and managers to see the importance of physical activity and understand the short and long-term impact of a comprehensive approach.

Key indicators to include in your business case: ⁴⁶

- Current employee turnover
- Employee job satisfaction
- Absenteeism
- Disease rates
- Number of musculoskeletal injuries
- Health care claims data (current and past)
- Stress-related illnesses
- Employee demographics
- Current physical activity levels of employees



For more information about building your business case:

Alberta Centre for Active Living – Physical Activity @ Work – Gaining Support from Management - <http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/workplace/steps/planning/step1.html>

Heart & Stroke Foundation of New Brunswick – Wellness at Heart Toolkit - http://www.heartandstroke.nb.ca/site/c.kplPKZOyFkG/b.4835889/k.95A2/Workplace_Wellness_Toolkit.htm

Public Health Agency of Canada – Active Living at Work – Business Case Studies and Template - <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alw-vat/studies-etudes/index-eng.php>

Project Health - webpage dedicated to many links to sample business case resources - <http://www.projecthealth.ca/understanding-workplace-health/making-business-case>

3.2 Establish a Baseline/Conduct a Needs Assessment

The goal of the assessment is to determine how and when employees would like to be active and what they would expect from a physical activity program.

- Measure current physical activity practices and identify areas that need to be addressed. Determine their readiness for change if they are currently inactive.
 - There are a variety of different methods that can be used (e.g., small group discussions, a suggestion box, surveys), alone or in combination to collect information from employees.
- Use an environmental support checklist to identify opportunities for improvement.
- Determine staff support.

Once you have the results of these assessments, it is important to prioritize each need and any supporting pieces that might be required, for example, if a group of employees wanted to bike to work on a regular basis, bike racks, showers and changing facilities should be given priority.

For more information and sample employee surveys and needs assessments:

Alberta Centre for Active Living

- Physical Activity @ Work – Finding Out What’s Possible in Your Workplace - <http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/workplace/steps/planning/step3.html>
- Physical Activity @ Work – Finding Out What Employees Want or Need - <http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/workplace/steps/planning/step4.html>
- Workplace Physical Activity Framework – See section titled “Audit Tool” http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/publications/researchandreports/2003_workplace/WPFramework.pdf

British Heart Foundation – Sample Employee Needs Assessment Questionnaire and Sample Workplace Assessment -

http://www.bhf.org.uk/HealthAtWork/getting_active_at_work/resources/download_now.aspx

U.S. Centre for Disease Control and Prevention – Workplace Walkability Audit -

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/toolkits/walkability/index.htm>

Project Health – webpage dedicated to links to many samples of needs assessments and surveys – <http://www.projecthealth.ca/understanding-workplace-health/assessment/survey-tools>

Heart & Stroke Foundation of New Brunswick – Wellness at Heart Toolkit -

<http://www.heartandstroke.nb.ca/site/c.kpIPKZOyFkG/b.4835889/k.95A2/WorkplaceWellnessToolkit.htm>

3.3 Create a Work Plan

Using this *Active Employees, Active Workplaces* Toolkit, choose the areas (i.e. awareness raising, skill building, supportive environment, policy) and tools, that you feel will have the most impact in your workplace and are the most realistic.

- In your work plan, remember to consider how you will engage employees when implementing the tools.

Effective work plans include:

- Description of key issues
- Goals and objectives which are Specific, Measurable, Acceptable, Realistic and Timely (S.M.A.R.T.)
- Key strategies for how you will make the work plan happen
- Committee members roles and involvement
- Resources required
- Specify responsibilities and designate individuals to actions
- Expected timelines
- Indicators of success

For more information about creating a work plan:

Alberta Centre for Active Living – Physical Activity @ Work – Developing an Action Plan <http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/workplace/steps/planning/step5.html>

Project Health – a webpage dedicated to links to many resources related to creating workplace work plans <http://www.projecthealth.ca/understanding-workplace-health/developing-workplace-wellness-plans>

Heart & Stroke Foundation of New Brunswick – Wellness at Heart Toolkit http://www.heartandstroke.nb.ca/site/c.kpIPKZOyFkG/b.4835889/k.95A2/Workplace_Wellness_Toolkit.htm

3.4 Implement and Evaluate

Long-term successes can be difficult to measure due to confounding factors (i.e. age, gender, genetics, and environmental factors) and the fact that it may take decades for problems related to inactivity to appear. Therefore, consider process indicators and short-term outcomes measures that will indicate if your program has been successful.

When evaluating any health promotion activity there are two types of success indicators that are commonly used – process and outcome. Determine what should be measured to tell if your initiative is successful.

Process indicators include successes such as: representation from all stakeholder groups, how the program was implemented (e.g., designated people were able to carry out their assigned activities), participation rates and satisfaction with the program. Try to identify what worked and what did not work in your workplace.

Outcome measures show whether the program met its objectives such as: increased physical activity knowledge, intentions of behaviour change, participation rates in physical activity initiatives, positive environmental changes, physical activity policy development and implementation, as well as improvements in absenteeism rates, disability claims, WSIB claims, prescription drug costs and other relevant measures.

Evaluation of your workplace wellness initiatives is a very important step in your wellness programming cycle that should not be overlooked. This information will help you identify your successes, modify your future wellness strategies to best meet the needs of your employees and may help to justify continuing or expanding your activities.

For more information about implementation and evaluation:

Alberta Centre for Active Living – Physical Activity @ Work – How do you know when you are successful?

<http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/workplace/steps/evaluating.html>

Heart & Stroke Foundation of New Brunswick – Wellness at Heart Toolkit -

http://www.heartandstroke.nb.ca/site/c.kplPKZOyFkG/b.4835889/k.95A2/Workplace_Wellness_Toolkit.htm

Project Health - a webpage dedicated to links to many resources related to evaluating your workplace health program -

<http://www.projecthealth.ca/understanding-workplace-health/evaluation>

Don't forget to celebrate your successes! Even if things didn't work out as you expected them to, your wellness committee gained insight into what worked and what didn't which will help you move forward with future programming!



3.5 If We Know It's Good for Them, Can't We Just Make the Changes?

Each workplace is unique. No one solution will work for all workplaces. When making decisions that have an effect on employees, it is important to conduct a needs assessment to ensure the employees in your workplace have an opportunity to indicate what is important to them. By involving employees and other stakeholders you may be able to reduce barriers and resistance to health initiatives.

A Committee Approach

A committee approach is useful when creating a needs assessment as well as when developing health promotion strategies. A health committee should involve representation from all stakeholders including: management, health promotion staff, employees, and if applicable, union representation.

Studies have shown that employees appreciate workplace health promotion programs. Successful initiatives often indicate program acceptance was achieved using a health committee approach.⁴⁷⁻⁵⁰

Ideas for Engaging Employees

- Choose a program that addresses issues people are interested in
- Identify and invite employee 'health champions' to be a part of your initiative
- Involve employees in the decision-making process
- Consider what will make it easy for employees to participate
- Use marketing strategies
- Use incentives, competitions and social support

Canadian Fact

A Canadian study found 81% of responding companies with 50 or more employees stated that the physical activity behaviour of employees is a matter of interest and responsibility for both the employee and the employer.

But, 66% of responding companies indicated that employees have little or no input in the development of physical activity policies, programs or opportunities in their workplace.

Reference: Canadian Fitness & Lifestyle Research Institute (2008). Valuing an active workplace. Working to Become Active Bulletin 7.

For more information about engaging employees and forming employee committees:

Alberta Centre for Active Living – Physical Activity @ Work – Forming an Employee Committee - <http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/workplace/steps/planning/step2.html>

Canadian Council on Health and Active Living at Work - Making it Work: Active Living in the Workplace (see Appendix E, page 54 for a sample Terms of Reference for an Employee Committee) - http://www.cchalw.ca/english/info/Making_It_Work_Eng%20_2.pdf



