

Section 4: Tools for developing activities and programs

This section contains information that may be useful when creating and developing activities or programs. When you start working as a Healthy Lifestyle Worker, you are not likely to do these tasks on your own but may be asked to help. As your skills develop, you may be asked to organise and do these things yourself.

Topics include:

- conducting a needs assessment and an environmental scan
- running a community meeting
- running a workshop
- getting your message across
- confidentiality and trust
- report writing
- managing your time
- occupational health and safety



Conducting a needs assessment and an environmental scan

It is important to consult with your community members to find out what programs or interventions they *want*. It is also important to know what they *need*. To get this information you may have to do a needs assessment.

What is a needs assessment?

An example of a needs assessment would be to identify a specific health problem in your community, the extent of the health problem (how many people suffer from it), the characteristics of the community or target group that may impact on the problem, and any health needs of that group.

A needs assessment may also focus on strategies needed for running a specific program. For example, you have been asked to run a nutritional program for your community. Your needs assessment will determine how much nutrition knowledge the community members already have; whether they need basic nutrition education or whether they need to learn skills like cooking and reading food labels. Your needs assessment should also include your needs - whether you have the skills to run a nutrition program and where you could get help.

How to do a needs assessment

To find out the needs of your community, you can do one or a combination of the following:

- look to see if up-to-date reports are available (for example from the Australian Bureau of Statistics) - these can tell you what local health professionals and the community have found to be important
- talk to professionals both inside and outside your health service - they may know of unpublished information that is relevant
- consult with individual community members - for example Elders can provide valuable wisdom and leadership
- consult with groups within the community - for example women and young people

Various methods can be used for community consultations, such as:

- surveys and screening tools to identify risk factors and chronic diseases (but you would probably need help in using these for the first time)
- focus groups and forums, which can assist in learning about issues from the community
- participant observation - this method involves active participation in community activities and gradually acquiring local knowledge.

The *Yambacoona diabetes program* ran regular social meetings which encouraged discussions on diabetes, changing eating habits and activity levels. The program leaders were able to identify the interventions that would best suit that community.

What is environmental scanning?

Environmental scanning includes identifying the social aspects of the community, such as the strengths and assets of the community. For example, an environmental scan may identify that a community has a high unemployment rate, and there are lots of parks and community facilities, but they're not being used. A solution may be to target unemployed people - encouraging them to become more physically active, using the free community parks and facilities.

An environmental scan will help you to identify the community resources, strengths and disadvantages that may affect your programs.

Community resources are of two types:

- facilities that can be used in health promotion, such as: social clubs, meeting places, community stores, schools, church groups, community gardens, sporting facilities
- people who can guide and inform program development, such as: community Elders, women's or men's groups, school groups, children's activity groups and certain professionals.

Community strengths can take many forms. Here are some examples:

- strong cultural and social connections between members of the community
- strong spiritual connections to the land and environment
- positive social attitudes and community values, such as the community electing to go 'dry'.

Community weaknesses present challenges to those wanting to promote healthy lifestyles, such as:

- lack of financial resources
- lack of educational or employment opportunities
- lack of adequate environments and facilities (for example, to cook and store food)
- few role models.

The results obtained by a needs assessment and the information gathered in an environmental scan can guide you in developing programs that are relevant, achievable and responsive to community needs.

Guidelines for managing the needs assessment and environmental scanning

Participation

Try to involve the community as soon as possible, paying particular attention to how people interact and to the involvement of Elders or influential community members at all stages of program planning.

Resources

The availability of resources is an important item of information collected in a needs assessment and environmental scan. Resources can include funds available, staff, venues for community activities, volunteers and equipment.

Information gathering

- Maintain your focus:
 - » on strengths and capacities - not just problems and deficits
 - » on the 'determinants of health', not just regarding health as the absence of disease (see 'An introduction to health promotion' Section 5 page 3).
- Gather and analyse a variety of data:
 - » for specific and individual health problems use surveys or screening tools
 - » for health patterns or general health needs of a community, use focus groups or forums, and consultations with individual Elders
 - » other community members.
- Determine who already has data that are useful to you and how you can contact them.
- Identify and describe any information gaps.

Decision making (in consultation with key stakeholders, for example Elders and influential community members)

- Identify the factors that support the program.
- Identify the factors that block the program.
- Consider whether early information collected supports the aims and goals of the program, and modify the program if necessary.

Running a community meeting

Working with a community usually involves a lot of meetings. These are time consuming but important. You get to know the community and its health needs better, and the community gets to know you better and have a say in the health program you are developing. Later, as your program develops, the community meeting should include all those with a stake in its success. Separate meetings may be necessary for different interest groups. This allows information and ideas to be shared, resources and participants to be identified, and program goals and action plans to be developed and monitored.

Things to consider before calling a community meeting

- Be clear on the reason for the meeting and what you want to achieve.
- Take the time to tell community leaders and key stakeholders the purpose of the meeting and seek their participation.

Prepare thoroughly for the meeting

Have an agenda for the meeting

An agenda is a list of items to be discussed at a meeting. An agenda keeps a meeting focused. The key is making sure everyone approves the agenda before you start. The agenda should be sent out to all participants before the meeting so they know what will be discussed. You can call for agenda items when planning your meeting, or on the day ask if anybody has items they want to include (providing there is time available). A basic agenda should include:

- purpose of the meeting
- date and location of the meeting
- the start time and finish time of the meeting
- the items to be discussed.

Please note: reports or information that meeting participants need to consider before the meeting should be sent out with the agenda.

(An agenda template is provided in Section 4 page 10)

Choose a venue that is comfortable for participants

The choice of venue is important. In some Indigenous communities it may be important to use a neutral venue, not associated with any particular group within the community. The meeting space should be comfortable and set up to allow everybody the opportunity to be seen and heard.

Running the meeting

Starting time

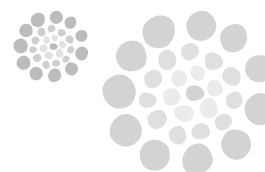
Try to start on time because this is a courtesy to those who get there at the nominated time, and it sets the tone from the start that your group means business. But you also need to be attuned to an Indigenous community's sense of time. Above all else you want community members to feel their attendance is welcome.

Introductions

If appropriate, acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which the meeting is being held. Introduce people, including speakers and community leaders and any new people, at the start of the meeting. In a small meeting it may also be useful to ask people to tell the group a little about themselves (providing people are comfortable speaking in public).

Chairing the meeting

It is important for the chairperson to keep the meeting on track. Stop unrelated discussion by reminding people of the agenda. Watch the clock and keep people to time so you cover all agenda items and finish the meeting on time. Ensure everybody has an opportunity to talk. Summarise and confirm key decisions. You may need to be more flexible if participants need extra time to feel comfortable in the meeting, or see the meeting as an opportunity to share stories that relate to the health issue you are discussing.



Make sure everybody has an opportunity to participate

It is worthwhile hearing from different sections of the community you are working with, so try to draw out those who are shy about expressing their opinion. It is important that everyone at the meeting feels they are involved.

Meeting minutes

Ensure minutes are taken so that there is a written record of the meeting. The minutes would include a list of everyone who attends the meeting and the 'apologies'. If you are chairing the meeting, ask somebody else to take the minutes. If there are action items, record who will be responsible for carrying them out and when. If there are to be regular meetings, the participants will get a copy of the minutes and they can confirm acceptance before or at the next meeting so there is a shared understanding of what was discussed.

Set a date and time for the next meeting

This should be the last item on any agenda. It provides a reporting deadline for action items. It is also easier to decide on a convenient time when everybody is in the same room.

After the meeting

It is important to understand that a meeting is the middle part of a process involving preparation and follow-up. Others who have a stake in your program, but who were not at the meeting, need to be kept informed. So let them know about the outcomes of the meeting. Also, keep in touch with those participants who took responsibility for certain tasks. You can then provide support, if necessary, to make sure the actions are carried out.



Example Agenda

Date: 12 March 2011

Time: 10 am - 12 pm

Location: Community Centre, 20 Long Road, Werribee

Agenda

Meeting purpose: To establish a community garden in Werribee

Introductions

Apologies

1. Business arising from the previous meeting 2 February 2011

No business arising

2. New Business

2.1 Garden location (Ben)

Where should the garden be located? See attached report of possible locations, which lists the benefits and possible problems of each location.

2.2 Participants (Evelyn)

Who needs to be involved? How do we get them involved?

2.3 Supplies (Ada)

What do we need for the garden? Where can we get the supplies from?

2.4 Budget (Darryn)

How will we pay for the garden? See attached report which estimates the costs of the garden.

3. Other business

4. Next meeting

Running a workshop

Why run a workshop?

If run well, workshops provide an active, engaging style of learning. They are great for brainstorming, interactive learning, practising skills, building relationships, and problem-solving. But they can also be difficult to do well, and preparation is important. There are three steps to running a workshop: before, during and after. You will need to plan and prepare for each step.

Before the workshop

Decide the purpose of the workshop

The first thing to do is work out what you want your workshop to achieve and what the main messages are. For example, do you want your participants to become more aware of a particular health issue in the community, such as poor nutrition and its consequences, or do you want them to develop a plan of action for tackling a health issue of concern such as heavy drinking? You should decide the purpose in discussion with key stakeholders from the community.

Develop a workshop program and select presenters

After deciding on the purpose of your workshop, you need to work with community stakeholders to develop a workshop program that suits the community members and the health issue to be addressed. Plan the content of the workshop and any activities you could use to enhance the participation and learning of your attendees. Consider who you could ask to present at the workshop and help facilitate group activities. Plan the workshop timetable and always allow for plenty of breaks, with refreshments, as workshops can be very intense for participants. The breaks also provide an opportunity for informal contact, which can be valuable for participants.



Plan the day

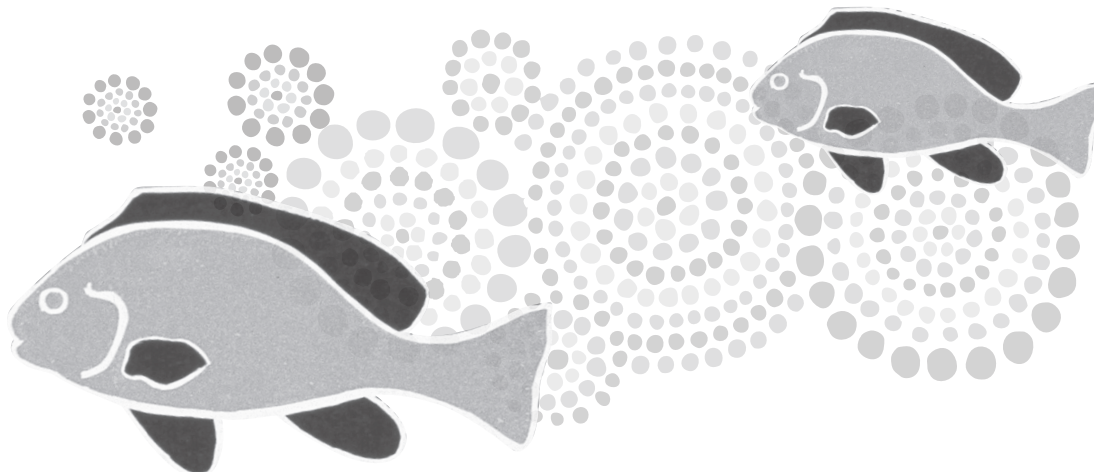
There are many ‘housekeeping’ type decisions you will have to make as part of planning for the workshop. These include:

- date, time, and duration of the workshop
- a setting best suited to the participants
- estimated expenses
- welcome to country
- anticipated number of participants
- catering (always provide good food that is low in fat, salt and sugar as an incentive to attend)
- equipment and resources such as projectors, white boards, butchers paper etc.
- transportation and childcare

Consider drawing up a planning timetable, along the lines of the example below, to help you monitor progress.

Workshop planning timetable

Task	Person responsible	Date for completion	Current status
Book venue	Me	12 April	Negotiating with the cricket club and hotel
Welcome to country	George	18 April	Local Elder has agreed to do the welcome to country

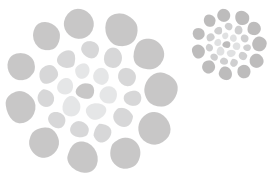


Here are some questions to help you prepare for your workshop

- Where would be the best place to hold the workshop? Do people have a way to get there? Are the facilities suitable? Is childcare available? Is it 'neutral' territory or will some participants feel uncomfortable?
- Would it help to have other facilitators? Do I need facilitators who can offer a different perspective, or who have particular expertise in the workshop topic? If so, who can I get from within the community?
- Is the setting comfortable? Can participants see and hear each other? Are there any distractions that would interfere with the workshop process?
- How well do participants know each other? Do I need name tags? During introductions, what might participants need to know about the venue (for example, location of the toilets) and each other to help them feel comfortable? What icebreaker exercises would make participants feel more comfortable?
- Does my workshop format give everyone a chance to participate? Is the workshop group so big that some people will feel too intimidated to speak? Should I plan some small-group activities? Do I need to provide activities that are not discussion based?
- Have I planned the event in a way that respects the social and cultural background of participants and allows for issues to be raised by participants?

During the workshop

When the workshop takes place, you will need to ensure that the event runs smoothly. You may also be the facilitator or do a presentation. To help stay organised, make a checklist of all the things that have to be done. If there is a lot to do, assign some tasks to other people if possible. The following is a basic checklist suitable for most workshops, but you may need to add other items for your circumstances.



Workshop checklist

- Make sure there are direction signs to the venue, especially if it is part of a larger complex
- Check that the audiovisual equipment works
- Confirm catering arrangements two days before the event
- Set up the chairs and tables
- Prepare a sign-in sheet and name tags
- Make sure that all handouts are available

When conducting the workshop, set out some ground rules for how the event will run. The ground rules could include:

- try to keep to the workshop topic
- try to keep to time
- everybody's contribution is valued
- no one may interrupt someone who is speaking.

Facilitating the workshop

There are a number of things to consider when facilitating a workshop.

- Establish a relationship with the group by learning their names, making eye contact or acknowledging their presence in other ways, and encouraging participation. Create a non-threatening environment where participants feel comfortable expressing their views.
- Use interactive techniques that engage participants; invite opinions, views, feedback, suggestions and questions. Consider playing games, particularly with participants who may have difficulty talking in a group. Games can be used to encourage participation, illustrate issues, develop skills, and they are a lot of fun.
- Record any outcomes or actions of the workshop, including the names of people who are responsible for them and deadlines for the actions.
- At the end of the workshop check whether participants' needs and expectations have been met. This could be done through a short feedback session. Or you may choose to ask participants to fill out a feedback form. This should be anonymous and easy to complete by everybody attending.

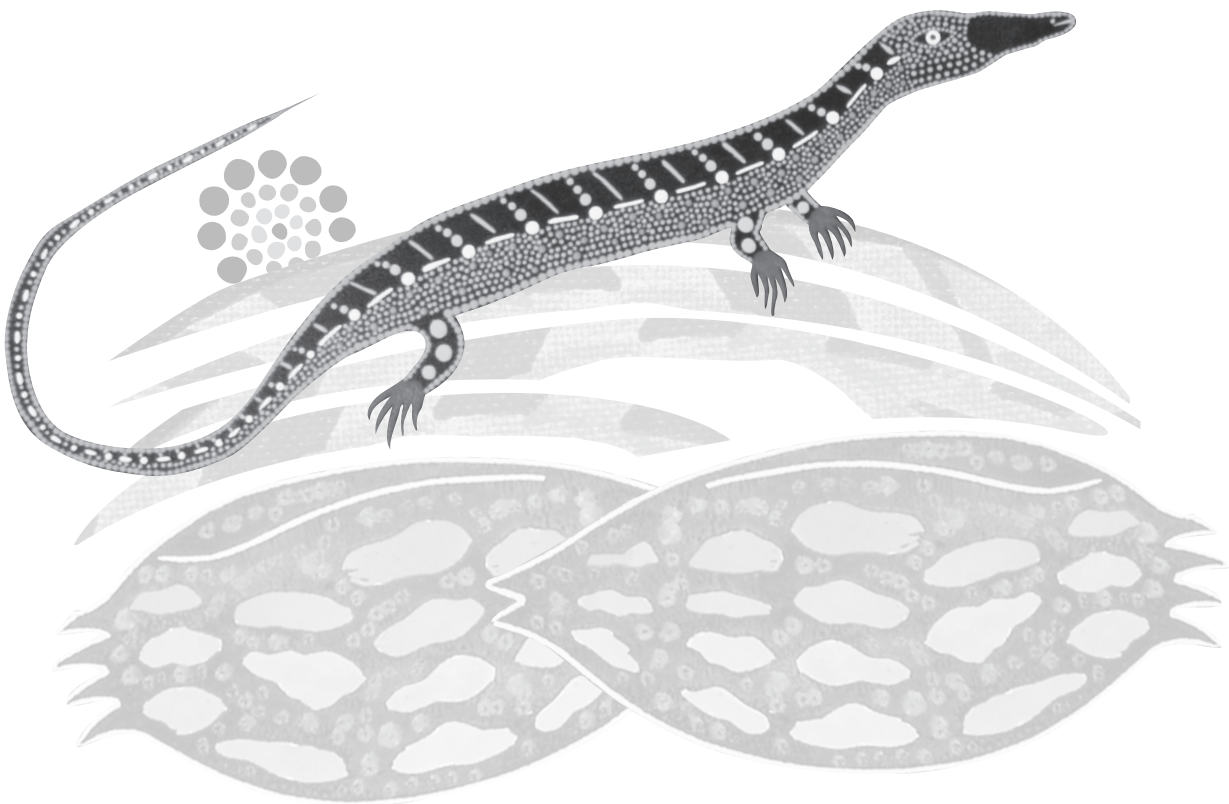
At the end of the workshop

Thank all contributors and participants. This is important for maintaining goodwill and future participation in community health activities.

Prepare a short report on the workshop, which you can use for a number of purposes such as to:

- document what was learnt from the workshop
- help in the planning of future community events
- give feedback to stakeholders, participants and the community
- prepare a report to your employer.

You should also consider publicising what the workshop achieved as a way of raising the profile of the participants and/or health issue being tackled. You could do this through an interview on local radio, an article in the local paper, a notice in the local store window or an item on an Internet health bulletin board.



Getting your message across

Getting your message across to the general community can help you gain support and increase people's knowledge about an issue. It can also assist with getting funding and improving or changing health services. The message could be to people in the community, health organisations and local government. Here are some ways to get your message across:

- talk with other community members about what matters to them and their community
- go out and speak to other people in the community, for example to the manager of the local food store to talk about healthy food supplies
- talk to the media - they may want to send your message out to the whole community
- write to the local paper, and specific Indigenous newspapers such as the National Indigenous Times or Koori News; this could be about a specific health program or activity
- ring the local radio station - to inform the local community about an issue, or to advertise a community meeting
- put up flyers, for example in local shops, to raise awareness of a particular health issue or to organise an activity such as a walking group or health checks
- add your issues to an agenda list at the local community-based meeting
- host a meeting with other community members at a local venue, for example, a community hall or school, to discuss health needs for the local area
- send letters or emails to local governments or organisations to ask for support or funding for a local health program such as a community garden
- create a petition, for example, to get support from community members who support a particular cause
- if you have access to a computer and the Internet, you could spread your message by creating a community/organisation page on Facebook (www.facebook.com) or a twitter account (www.twitter.com) to promote your message and gain support. These social networking sites are becoming very popular and have the advantages of providing up-to-date information to a wide audience and free promotion/advertising.

Some ways of getting your message across will be more suitable than others, depending on the area you are living in and what particular health message you are trying to get across. The easiest and best way to start getting your message across is to ask people in the local area for their advice on what has worked before. Sharing knowledge and getting your message across can help to promote good health for all Indigenous Australians.



Confidentiality and trust

Confidentiality is an essential moral issue in the context of health in the community. Confidentiality means keeping safe another person's personal information by not talking about it to others without permission. Confidentiality is also important in developing trust: people feeling they can speak openly and honestly about issues because their comments are anonymous (cannot be recognised or identified by other community members).

Developing trust in a community can help to encourage people to be more open and direct about issues, increase the amount of discussion about issues, and help with getting people to participate in programs.

Below are examples of different situations where confidentiality is important.

- When meeting with people in a group to talk about health issues that matter to them and their community (such as a meeting in a community hall or school), you may wish to include in your introduction to the group that anything discussed in the group is to remain between the people in the group, and ask people to agree to this. However, in this type of environment it is difficult to ensure confidentiality and people need to be made aware of this.
- When information about a program or activity is written up, it is important that the people involved cannot be identified unless they choose to be. This could mean assigning a fictitious name or number to a person's comments, rather than using their real name, such as 'Participant 1 said they would like to see more healthy foods available in schools'. Be careful that you don't use identifiers such as their age, sex or location. For example, the description 'female, aged 37' may apply to only one woman in the community.

The consequences of not ensuring confidentiality could mean that a community member loses the trust of family and the community and even becomes isolated from the community. They may lose trust in the current program or health worker, as well as future programs or workers. In situations where confidentiality cannot be ensured, it is important that people are given the option to not participate. In some instances, where appropriate, participants may be required to sign a form or tick a box to show that they give consent for you to use their information. This involves participants being fully informed of the project, and their right to withdraw from the project at any time.

If you need to ensure confidentiality, you could ask people in the local area for their advice on what has worked before, and what they feel is acceptable.

Report writing

You will probably need to write reports about some of the work you do as a Healthy Lifestyle Worker. Reports can be useful for:

- keeping your work colleagues informed
- letting the community know about what has been achieved
- being accountable to your manager(s) and funding bodies
- informing future policy and programs.

How often you need to report, and who to, will depend on your circumstances. Also, the information in your report will depend on who is to receive it. For example, a report to the community will be different from a report to your manager. Here is a list of the people you may need to report to:

- your manager
- the community
- the program participants
- your advisory group
- your program team.

Types of reports

For small programs there are usually two main types of reports:

- activity or progress reports — an update on what has been done so far
- final reports — a summary of the whole program.

A basic report structure

You will need to structure your report so that the information is easy to find. This means providing information in sections that are clearly labelled with headings. In longer reports you may also need sub-headings.

The usual parts of a report are listed below.

Table of contents If your report is longer than a few pages, provide a table of contents to help the reader find information quickly. It also gives the reader an overview of how your report is structured. A table of contents should have its own page and include all section headings and sub-headings, worded and numbered exactly as they appear in the report.

Summary This provides the reader with a brief account of the report's essential information. It is likely to be read by people who do not have time to read the whole report. The summary appears at the front of your report, but you should write it last so that it reflects all the important points. Try to limit the summary to less than one page.

Introduction The purpose of the introduction is to outline what your report is about. The introduction should provide the following:

- the background to the issues
- an overview of the issues covered in the report
- the purpose of the report

Body of the report This contains the main information and is usually the longest section of the report. It could include sub-sections like 'Activities undertaken', 'Outcomes' and 'Discussion' (for more information see Section 4 page 22). It should describe the specific aims of the program, the activities undertaken, any findings or outcomes, and provide some discussion. Try to use photographs, graphs, and diagrams to illustrate your findings and make the report more interesting to read.

Conclusion This is the final section of the report, which should give the reader an overall sense of 'what it all means' by summarising your findings and their implication for future work in this area. You may also want to make recommendations about what should be done (or not done), based on your findings. You could include these in a separate section headed 'Recommendations' to make them stand out. It is important that any recommendations are based on findings presented in the body of the report.

This report outline is very general and may not suit all circumstances. Don't be afraid to use a different structure that will suit your intended readers. One way of adapting your report for a particular purpose may be to draw on formats used by other groups reporting similar issues.

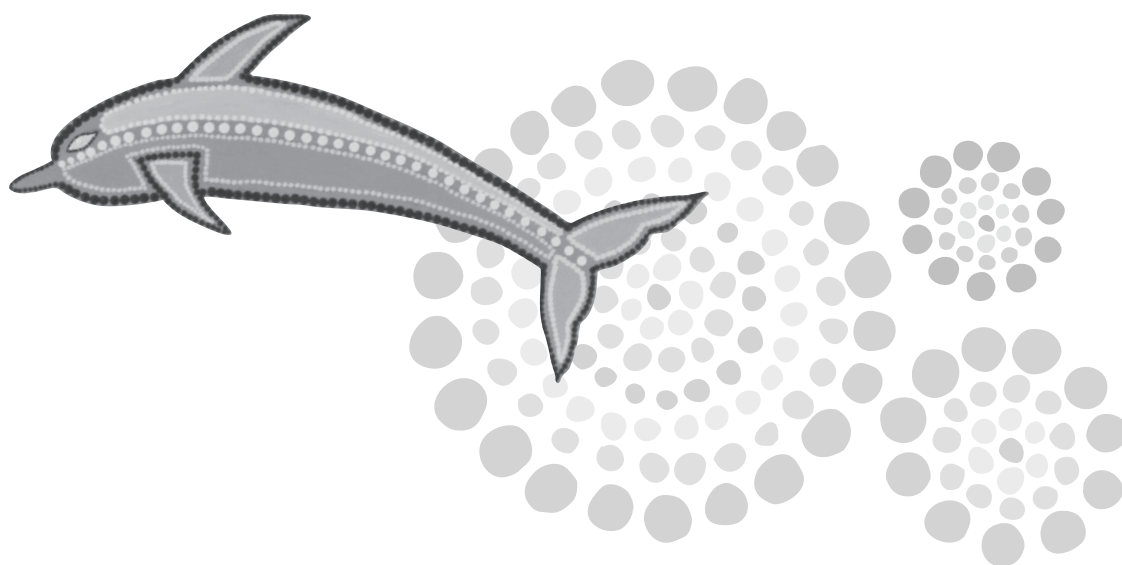
Sometimes you might need to write two reports about the same program. For example, a report prepared for a funding body may not be appropriate for your community – it may contain too much technical information and jargon.

Releasing a report

If your report is work-based you will probably need to get permission to release it, from your organisation's manager or board. How you release a report and how it is distributed will depend very much on your reasons for writing it in the first place. You will need to exercise judgement on this issue, but the views of key stakeholders and affected communities will be important in any decision. It is particularly important to maintain trust when you are reporting sensitive information.

Here are some possible ways of releasing your report:

- send the report to key decision makers
- hold a community meeting where you release and talk about the report
- send out a press release on key findings
- make the report available in electronic form on a website



Summary of what could be included in a progress report and a final report

Main component / section	Section / sub-section	Progress report (may not be needed)	Final report
Title page		name of organisation program name date of report name of contact person	name of organisation program name date of report name of author(s) and/or contact person
Contents		may not be needed	list of sections, and possibly sub-sections of the report, with page numbers
Summary		may not be needed	a brief description of the main points
Introduction		brief background to the program content and structure of the report purpose of the report	background to the program content and structure of the report purpose of the report
Main body of report	Program aims	brief description of program aims	brief description of program aims plus any other relevant information
	Activities undertaken ('method')	briefly summarise: what work was done how the work was done findings what remains to be done any delays or barriers	describe: the program plan community and other consultation what was done or not done (using stated objectives and strategies) how the evaluation was done (if any) any delays or barriers
	Outcomes / results	include any indicators you are using to evaluate your program	Include what has been achieved
	Discussion		outcomes / results of this program in relation to those expected program challenges lessons learnt implications for your community (and other communities)
Conclusions		conclusions about progress to date future directions	conclusions about the success of the program
	Recommendations	may not be needed	recommendations for future programs how outcomes could be used elsewhere

Managing your time

It is sometimes difficult to juggle work with home, family and community commitments. These time management tips will help you increase your efficiency and to stay calm.

To help sort tasks, and decide when they need to be done, here are some questions that you can ask:

- does it need to be done?
- does it need to be done now?
- can it be done later and, if so, when would be a good time?
- should someone else do it? (Learn how to delegate tasks to other people.)

Plan your day

If you plan your day, it is more likely to go smoothly. Allocate blocks of time to a particular task and try to focus on that task. Learning how to deal with interruptions and distractions may also help. For example, if someone comes into your office/work-space for a yarn, maybe say: 'I'm really busy at the moment, but can we catch up for a yarn this afternoon?'. Follow routines when you can. For example, do your filing at the end of the day before leaving for home.

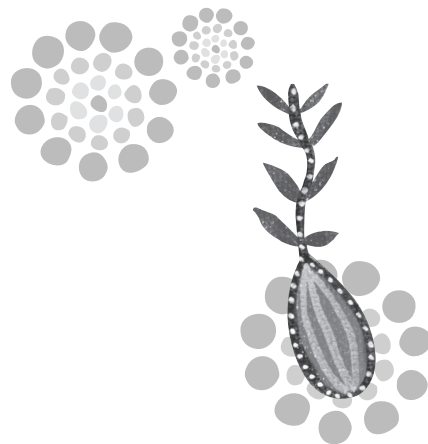


Tips for priority setting

Here are some tips that may be useful.

Organisation

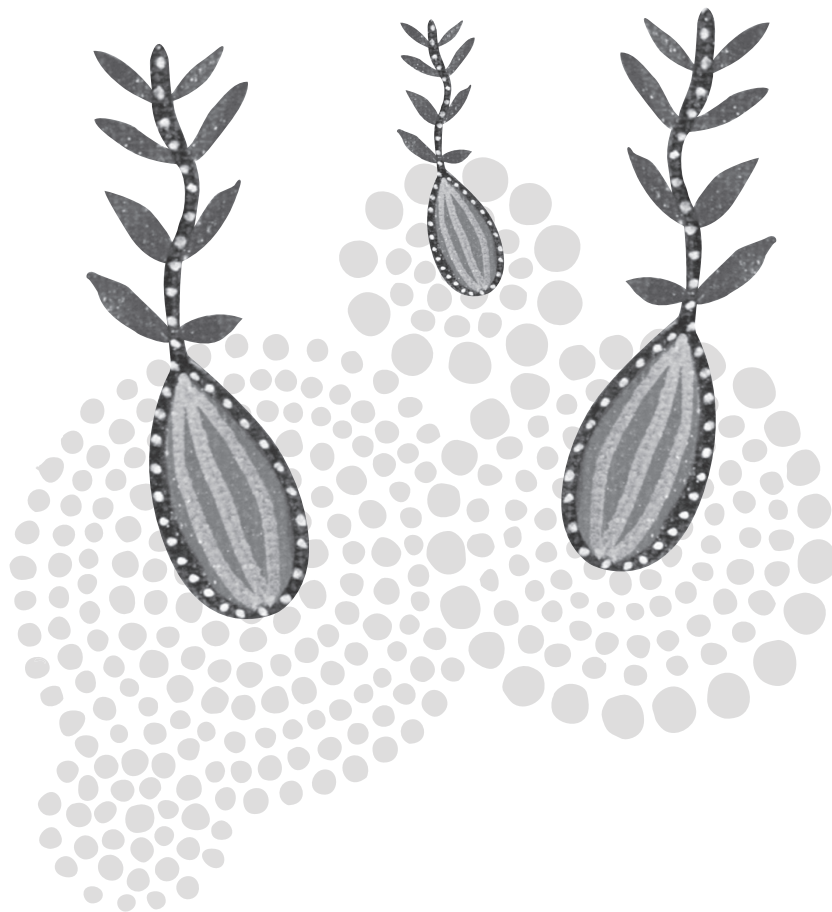
- Try and keep your paperwork in order and use files.
- Try to organise folders and files on your computer so that you can find things when you need them. Get rid of things that you no longer need, or, if you think you may need to access an item in the future, put it in a folder called 'archive'.
- Use trays on your desk to sort documents into an order of priority, and possibly number them.
- Keep a log on how you have spent a day (for example, two hours planning an event, one hour in a meeting, two hours visiting another organisation, and two hours answering emails and telephone calls). Then ask yourself: 'Was that the best way of spending my time?'. If not, think about how you could improve on it.
- Try not to hop from one job to another.
- Think of the steps in a complicated task and write them down in the order in which they need to be done.
- Try to not put off unpleasant tasks; get them out of the way, then you can do the ones you enjoy!
- Make a 'to do' list and cross off things that you have done.
- Use a calendar to mark any events that you need to be aware of for your work.
- If you have to wait for a period of time, take something along to do. For example, take a report you need to read, take your mobile phone so you can make a phone call, or take a blank pad of paper that you can use to plan your next healthy lifestyle activity!



Communication

- Learn how to ask someone else to help with tasks when you can't handle them all yourself.
- Telephone calls and emails can be major distractions; use voicemail when you are busy.
- Learn how to use your email system using rules, folders and colour coding. Limit the time you spend in a day for reading and answering emails - some people try to 'batch' their attention to emails.
- Learn how to say 'No' when you really don't have the time to take on something else!

Remember: time is precious.



Occupational health and safety

Occupational health and safety (OHS) is a specialised area of importance to all workers. The information in this section is very general and does not provide specific information on your workplace.

Your employer may require you to attend an occupational health and safety course that will give you specific information and guidance as part of your workplace induction.

If you have any concerns or questions about your health and safety at work, the first thing you should do is speak to your manager or your employer. You may also wish to talk to your OHS representative, if your workplace has one.

Definition of 'occupational health and safety'

Occupational health and safety refers to the processes and procedures that are designed to manage risk of workplace injury and minimise hazards (dangers or risks) in the work environment.

Who's responsible for OHS?

Under OHS legislation, workplace health and safety is *everyone's responsibility*. This means employers, employees, self-employed people, manufacturers, designers, importers and suppliers all have a duty to maintain workplaces free of health and safety hazards. This is called the 'general duty of care'.

OHS arrangements in Australia

There are a number of agencies, at Commonwealth, state and territory levels, with responsibility for enforcing OHS laws in Australia.

The Australian Government agency is Safe Work Australia, established in 2008 (www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au). Each state and territory has its own OHS regulations. Safe Work Australia is working towards the introduction of uniform laws across Australia, and these are expected to be in place in all states and territories by the end of 2011.

Identifying safety and health hazards

Employees are required to report any hazards to their employers and to participate in any process that collects information about hazards.

Definitions used are:

- **hazard** is something that could cause harm to a person
- **risk** is when harm is likely to result from a hazard
- **risk assessment** is the process of evaluating whether harm is likely to result from a hazard, and how severe that harm could be.

What are the most common workplace injuries and diseases?

According to Safe Work Australia, the most common types of injuries are:

- sprain/strain and chronic joint or muscle conditions (about 25% of all work-related injuries and the most common injury type in the health and community services sector)
- cuts and open wounds (about 12% of all injuries in the health and community services sector)
- fractures, crushing injuries, internal organ damage or amputations (contribute to nearly 20% of all injuries in the health and community services sector).

A variety of diseases can occur from exposure to workplace hazards, particularly:

- musculoskeletal disorders
- mental disorders
- noise-induced hearing loss
- infectious and parasitic diseases
- respiratory diseases
- contact dermatitis (see explanation Section 4 page 28)
- cardiovascular diseases (see explanation Section 4 page 28)
- occupational cancers (see explanation Section 4 page 28).

What are the most common causes of workplace injuries and diseases?

According to Safe Work Australia, common causes of workplace injury are:

- lifting, pushing or pulling objects - causing nearly one-third of all injuries among health and community services workers (these are known as manual handling injuries)
- hitting or being hit or cut by an object - causing nearly one-quarter of injuries among health and community services workers
- exposure to workplace stress - causing mental and physical ill health and burnout, as well as some physical injuries
- motor vehicle accidents - causing serious fractures, crushing injuries, internal organ damage or amputations.

The common causes of workplace disease are:

- musculoskeletal disorders - muscular stress while lifting, carrying or putting down objects; stress from physical activity without lifting, carrying or putting down an object; and stress from making repetitive movements
- mental disorders - exposure to a traumatic event; exposure to violence; harassment; bullying; or work pressure
- noise-induced hearing loss - exposure to excessive sound (above an average daily exposure of 85 decibels) damaging the inner ear
- infectious and parasitic disease - exposure to infectious agents, such as hepatitis B and C and HIV
- respiratory disease - exposure to airborne contamination (for example, tobacco smoke, asbestos, chemical, gases, fumes and vapours); and infectious agents (such as legionella from contaminated air conditioners and acute respiratory pathogens)
- contact dermatitis - exposure to substances that dry and irritate the skin (such as acids and alkalis) or may have a cumulative effect on skin (such as soaps, detergents and solvents)
- cardiovascular disease - exposure to chemicals (such as carbon monoxide and carbon disulphide); environmental tobacco smoke; and psychosocial stress (particularly as result of having little job control, but also noise and shiftwork)
- occupational cancers - exposure over time to carcinogens (around 400 substances are believed to be able to cause cancer).

The types of workplace injury that are most likely to affect Healthy Lifestyle Workers are discussed in more detail here.

Manual handling

Manual handling is the primary cause of sprains, strains and chronic joint or muscle injuries. It is also the cause of some cuts, hits and open wounds.

Manual handling in health and community work usually means the following:

- carrying heavy loads, such as packages, boxes or luggage (be careful when moving the Healthy Lifestyle Worker Resource Pack)
- storing and collecting heavy objects, particularly above shoulder height
- moving furniture
- helping people with a disability
- working at the computer for long periods of time, particularly if the workplace design - seating, computer desk and computer position - are not suitable (the science of designing the workplace environment to fit the user is known as ergonomics)
- performing tasks in poor visibility, on slippery surfaces, or in temperature extremes (hot or cold).

Exposure to workplace stress

Workplace stress is one of the more common workplace hazards. If stress is not properly dealt with, it can lead to serious effects (such as mental and physical ill-health, extreme tiredness or burnout).

Workplace stress can mean a few different things:

- stress from doing the job
- stress from work relationships
- stress from working conditions.

Driving long distances and/or driving frequently

Fatigue, or tiredness, is a factor in a large number of car crashes, particularly in areas of Australia where workers are required to travel long distances.

Risk factors include:

- working long hours, possibly in different jobs
- averaging less than six hours sleep a night
- poor overall quality of sleep
- excessive daytime sleepiness
- frequent night-time driving
- some medications
- driving after being awake for more than 15 hours
- driving for long periods of time
- driving after sleeping less than five hours the night before

Employees can reduce the risk of, or prevent road injury and deaths by:

- taking a 10-minute break for every two hours of driving time - preferably get out of the car
- taking short naps and breaks
- sleeping regularly and soundly on a regular basis
- sticking to the road rules
- not driving when tired or taking medication
- reporting any driving-related incidents
- carrying out any routine vehicle checks prior to driving a vehicle