Implementing a *Work Design for Health* Approach:

A Step-By-Step Guide to Creating a Healthier Workplace

HARVARD
T.H. CHAN
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

MIT
MANAGEMENT
SLOAN SCHOOL

Implementing a Work Design for Health Approach:

A Step-By-Step Guide to Creating a Healthier Workplace

Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

June 2024

Authors: Meg Lovejoy, PhD, Lisa Berkman, PhD, Erin Kelly, PhD, Laura Kubzansky, PhD, Aishah Winter, MPP, and Jessica Bolin, MA

Acknowledgments
This implementation guide was supported by a grant from the **American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).**

Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies
9 Bow Street, Cambridge, MA 02138

Contents

Introduction

The first four modules of this toolkit introduced the features of our *Work Design for Health* approach, and described promising practices for workplace change that can help employers create an overall culture of health in their organizations. If you are interested in taking the next step in your organization, this module offers evidence-based guidelines for effectively implementing these kinds of organizational changes.

This guide presents a five-step participatory approach to improving worker health and well-being using a *Work Design for Health* framework**.** A participatory approach involves seeking input from employees and managers at all levels of the organization as part of the process of organizational change for worker well-being. In this guide, you will learn how to launch an effective change initiative for improving worker well-being and organizational health, with tips on how to keep the initiative sustainable and relatively low-cost. The five steps in creating positive change are: **1. Start the conversation; 2. Identify the problem; 3. Make a plan; 4. Take action; and 5. Review your results** (See Figure 1.)

Rooted in the latest research from organizational and implementation science, this toolkit's strategies are derived from a comprehensive review of evidence-based practices for the design and implementation of participatory workplace interventions. Studies have consistently shown that employee participation, leadership commitment, strong communication, and interventions that are integrated into the environment and tailored for fit support the effective implementation of organizational change for worker well-being (See Figure 2).[1] Our guidance integrates these insights, offering a structured yet adaptable framework for initiating meaningful changes in your workplace.

Figure 1: Five Implementation Steps

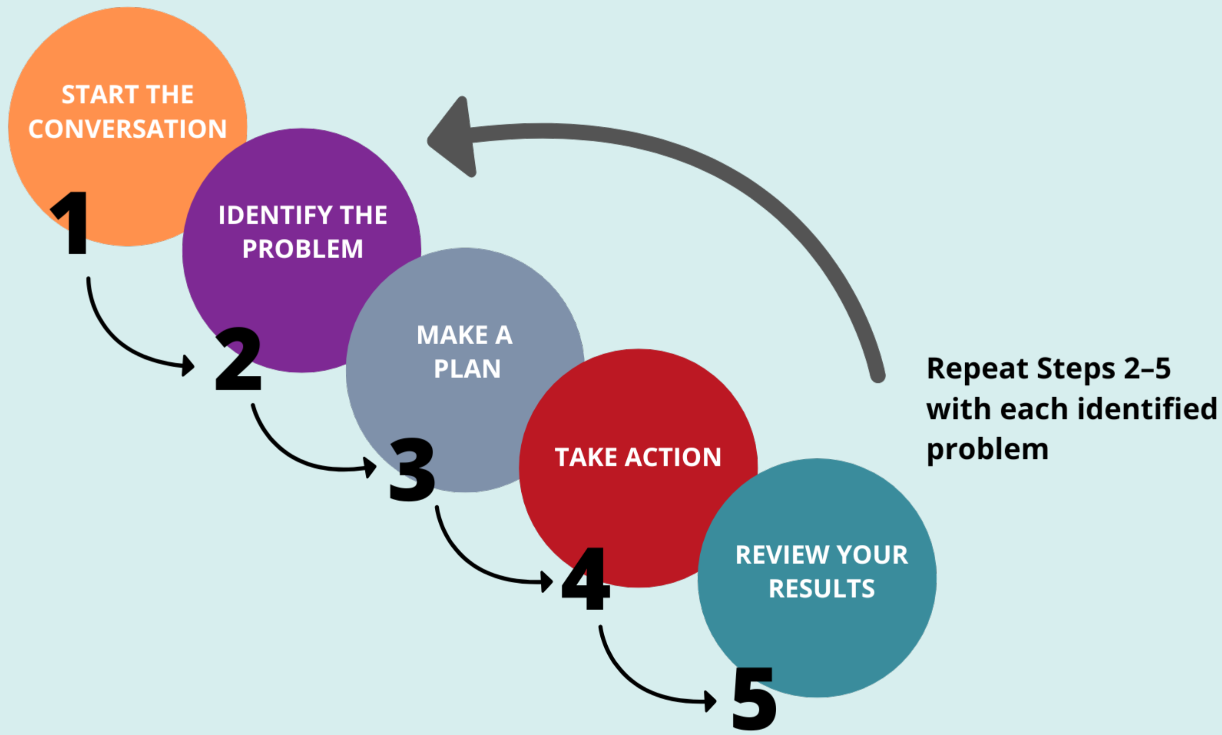
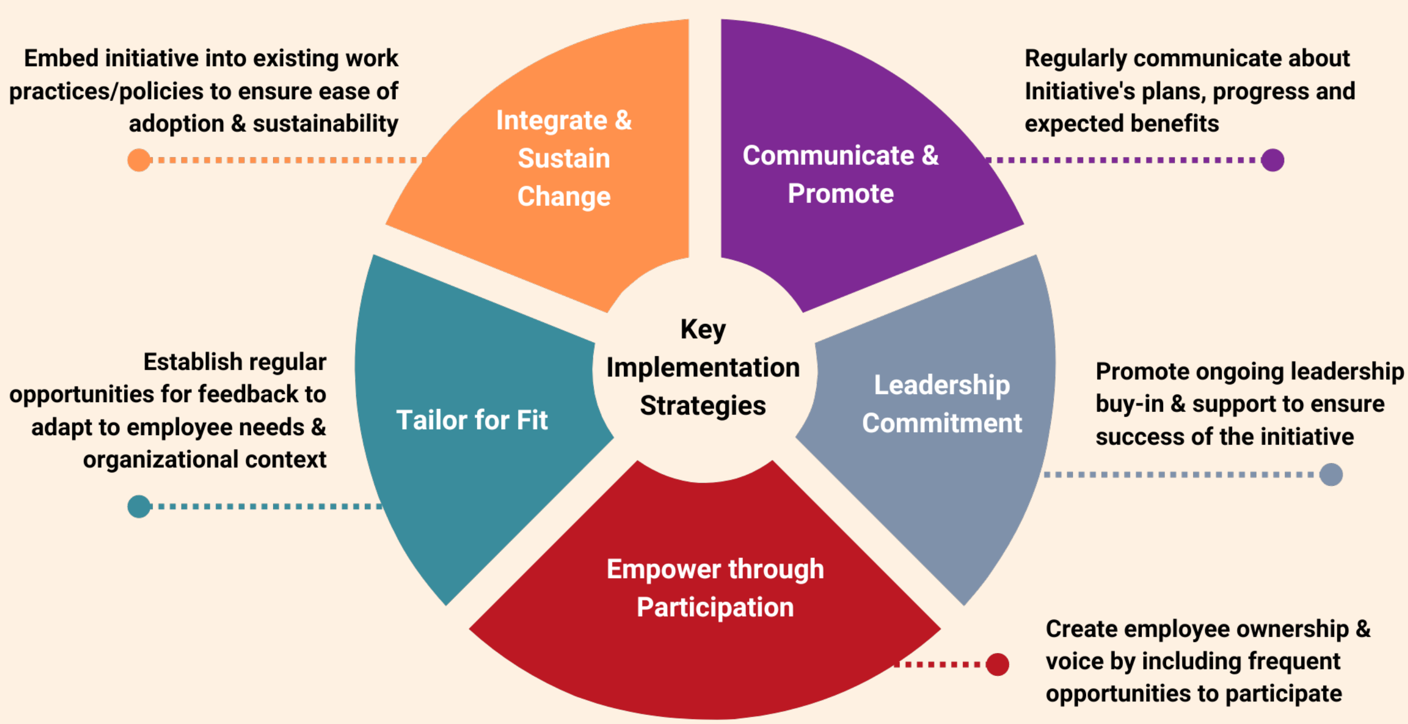


Figure 2: Key Implementation Strategies



Step

1

Step 1: Start the Conversation

Setting up a *Work Design for Health* initiative in your workplace requires some preparation. Some organizations may already have well-established guidelines or mission statements concerning workers' health and well-being, while others may be just starting out. Wherever you are in the journey, this section will guide you through the process of initiating conversations with key stakeholders and launching your initiative.

Start Small

Starting the conversation about organizational change for employee well-being in your workplace can occur in many ways. However, if your organization does not have an existing infrastructure to support workers' health and well-being, or a track record of supporting this kind of initiative, you may want to start small. Starting small is a strategic approach because it allows you to test ideas and gradually build leadership buy-in. One way to do so is by identifying a champion—an individual or group of employees passionate about health and well-being and respected by their peers—to pilot a small-scale intervention or change. Select one or more issues that can have a meaningful impact on worker well-being but are relatively low cost and easy to implement. Gather feedback on impact and adjust your strategy as necessary. Then use these demonstrations of successful change to sell the case for launching a more robust, organization-wide initiative to the larger organization, including leadership.

Is Your Organization Ready for Change?

Organizations are more effective in creating positive workplace change when they possess a basic level of readiness for change, including having the necessary resources and knowledge to implement organizational change.[1,3] The timing of change is also important for the success of your initiative. Avoid launching your initiative during a period of major organizational instability or change (for example, in the wake of a company merger or a major policy change that has stressful consequences for many staff members). Adding more organizational change on top of existing change may lead to “change fatigue” and staff resistance, potentially undermining your initiative before it has a chance to take root.[4,5] Resources at the end of this section can provide guidance in assessing your organization’s readiness for change.

Seek Leadership Buy-in

Even if you start small, ultimately gaining senior and middle management support will be critical for launching and sustaining a successful organization-wide initiative.[1,2] Senior management can serve as a driving force behind the initiative, offering a vision for how workplace well-being fits the organization’s larger mission, committing resources, communicating about the initiative, and incentivizing middle management and front-line employees to prioritize it. Depending on your organization’s structure, leadership can include the company owners, the CEO, and other senior managers from finance, human resources, operations, and so on. If your organization has a union, start a conversation with your elected union leaders, as their support and buy-in will be highly valuable in promoting employee interest and participation in the initiative. Whether the desire for change starts with workers or leaders (or both), gaining leadership commitment is ultimately a key step in your path to success.

Make the Case for Change Within the Company

In some organizations, leaders will be eager to make changes that may improve health and well-being because those investments seem consistent with the company’s values, identity, or mission. In other organizations, it is important to provide evidence that investing in employee health and well-being is good for the business. Remind leaders that the cost of inaction is also high and may be showing up in the form of high turnover, low engagement, absenteeism, presenteeism, or high health-care or worker compensation costs. When making your case, consider what’s in it for them, whether that involves lowering health care costs, improving retention, or being perceived as an employer of choice. The linked resources provide useful ideas for how to make the business case.

To ensure sustainability of commitment, consider persuading leadership to write a mission statement (or add to an existing one) that connects worker health and well-being with larger organizational goals. An effective statement will include an identification of key leadership strategies that will be pursued to fulfil those goals, including the proposed *Work Design for Health* initiative.This strategy will prevent any potential disconnect between aspirational goals for the initiative, and the organization’s operational realities and constraints.

Involve Frontline Employees and Line Managers

Motivating buy-in and participation from employees across your organization is vital for achieving effective implementation[2,6,7] and improved health and well-being outcomes.[3,8,9] Employee participation can involve multiple points of entry, including providing input about sources of workplace stress, being involved in the problem-solving process, and engaging directly in the workplace redesign effort.

Involving front-line workers is essential because they are experts on the daily experience of work stress and the workplace dynamics that drive it. If given the opportunity, they can offer critical insights and creative ideas for interventions to improve health and well-being in the workplace. Providing frontline employees with opportunities to provide such input is giving them a form of job control, which research shows can have powerful beneficial health impacts in itself.[10] Furthermore, interventions co-created by employees are more willingly accepted than top-down initiatives and provide employees with a sense of ownership over the process of workplace change.[11] To ensure inclusive representation and equitable outcomes, be sure to give lower-wage employees and those from historically marginalized backgrounds a stake in the change process.[12]

Line managers and frontline supervisors are key stakeholders that must be brought in early in the launch process to promote successful implementation.[4,13,14] They often play a critical role in successfully implementing the initiative because they manage workflow, and their practices directly impact employee productivity and stress levels. To create buy-in from line managers, communicate how support for worker well-being and stress mitigation aligns with their managerial goals, and make sure these managers are given the time and resources they need to provide such support.

Solicit frontline employee and supervisor buy-in for your *Work Design for Health* initiative by clearly communicating its purpose and vision and why their participation will be crucial for success. If your workplace has employee groups or a union, these can also be promising places to start sharing your message and promoting employee involvement.

Form a Steering Committee

To provide direction and impetus for your *Work Design for Health* Initiative, you'll need to form a steering committee to lead the charge in designing, planning, implementing, and assessing your workplace well-being projects. To maximize your organizational resources, you may consider building on an existing health and safety or well-being-related committee (if one exists) by expanding its scope to include a *Work Design for Health* agenda. Either way, research shows that building an effective steering committee is important for successful implementation.[1]

Depending on the size and culture of your organization, in addition to a steering committee, you might also consider forming smaller working groups or employee teams responsible for different functions or implementing projects specific to varied local work environments in the organization. Although there is no one-size-fits-all method for structuring your Work for Health Design committees, below are two different possibilities:

A Single Committee

Building a single, centralized steering committee tasked with launching and implementing the initiative may be the simplest and most efficient design for smaller organizations. The steering committee may comprise diverse members representing different work areas, social backgrounds, roles, and organizational management levels. Ideally, the committee should include both mid- and senior-level managers with the power to authorize changes in organizational policies and practices relevant to employee health and well-being, as well as non-supervisory staff. Consider staffing at least half of your committee with frontline workers to ensure an environment where they feel empowered to speak candidly about on-the-ground staff concerns.

WHO SHOULD BE INVITED TO JOIN THE COMMITTEE?

Engage a wide range of stakeholders, including frontline employees, human resources or occupational health and safety leaders, health and wellness champions, as well as union or other employee representative groups, if your organization has them.

Successful implementation depends on aligning the goals and visions of an organization's key stakeholders.[15] Effective committee members will be enthusiastic about improving worker health and well-being, positive about organizational change and innovation, and well-regarded by their peers. Finally, develop an informal succession plan to address possible leadership turnover, as losing a leader can disrupt committee continuity and efficacy.[7,16]

Multiple Committees

Larger organizations with diverse departments and functional roles might consider forming multiple committees or teams with different functions. This type of design might involve building a single steering committee composed of mid- and senior-level managers. The committee is tasked with launching and supporting the initiative, overseeing the assessment process, approving, and resourcing action plans, and communicating about the initiative to the organization. Additionally, smaller unit- or department-based committees or teams may consist of frontline employees and a department supervisor or an external facilitator. These local committees are charged with identifying well-being concerns specific to their work areas and designing and implementing solutions with regular input and support from the steering committee.

A multiple-committee approach provides frontline employees a separate, safer space to candidly discuss everyday concerns and possible solutions while also promoting interventions which are more customized to local (department- or unit-level) work environments.

The guidance in this toolkit is geared toward either a single committee design or a multiple committee design in which the steering committee provides oversight for each of the five steps in close communication with department- or unit-based teams. For a multiple-committee design, teams should meet periodically with the steering committee to receive support and guidance on project planning and implementation.

One example of a multiple-committee approach is called a **"two-committee design."** This approach, created by the Center for the Promotion of Health in the New England Workforce (CPH-NEW), consists of a single "design team" of frontline workers who develop interventions combined with a management-level steering committee that provides oversight and resources. Read more about the two-committee design here.

Develop your Communication Strategy

Once you have garnered senior managers' support for the initiative, encourage them to publicly communicate this support and the expectation of strong employee engagement. Communication during the initial phase of the initiative is vital to ensure effective implementation.[1] Frontline workers and line managers who have a clear understanding of how the initiative fits with larger organizational goals, its potential benefits, and their expected role in the process are more likely to engage with and perceive the change process positively.[4,17] Clear and consistent communication about the goals and value of the intervention is also important to address potential skepticism or fear of change and to promote staff receptivity and readiness for change.[18] Consider using multiple channels of communication (town halls, staff meetings, flyers, newsletters, etc.) to reach different groups of workers in their preferred modality.

COMMUNICATION AS A VEHICLE FOR OVERCOMING RESISTANCE TO CHANGE: AN EXAMPLE

A large Danish company[20] faced significant challenges in launching a worker well-being initiative due to employees' previous experiences with failed change efforts. Many staff members expressed reluctance and change fatigue, comparing the new initiative to past unsuccessful efforts. Senior managers on the steering committee took a transparent approach by openly communicating about the reasons behind previous failures and how the current approach was designed differently. They focused on lessons learned, emphasizing improvements in planning, support, and execution to prevent past mistakes. This openness helped rebuild trust among the workforce, ensuring that the new intervention was met with renewed commitment and enthusiasm. By acknowledging and learning from past failures, the organization fostered a more positive and receptive environment for implementing new changes.

Provide Resources: Empower Staff to Make Changes

A successful *Work Design for Health* initiative is powered by people. To sustain momentum and deliver well-being results, you must consider the resources your staff requires to make positive workplace changes. The most precious resource senior leadership can offer is dedicated on-the-job time to participate in the initiative so that an employees' participation does not increase their work hours or unduly add to staff workload. Consider negotiating a written agreement with senior leadership about how much staff time committee meetings and activities will involve per month. The agreement can be reviewed and reassessed periodically to ensure it delivers results without undermining organizational goals. Allocating a dedicated budget for health and well-being initiatives demonstrates organizational commitment. It ensures that resources are strategically utilized to address the most pressing health and well-being issues, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of the intervention.

When line managers do not understand the importance of stress management for employee well-being or do not properly prioritize it, implementation can be negatively impacted.[13,19] Therefore, senior management should strongly signal support for the initiative as an important aspect of company performance and health so that supervisors perceive active well-being involvement by their direct reports as contributing to rather than competing with organizational performance.

STEP 1 CHECKLIST

Ask yourself whether you have accomplished the following:

- ☐ Garnered the support of leadership for your initiative by making the case for change.
- ☐ Assessed readiness for change by evaluating organizational resources and timing.
- ☐ Solicited support and buy-in from frontline employees and supervisors.
- ☐ Established a steering committee (and/or department-based teams) with diverse membership.
- ☐ Developed a communication strategy spanning multiple channels.
- ☐ Negotiated agreement with leadership to allocate resources for initiatives and participation.

Helpful Resources

Organizational Readiness

Good Jobs Strategy Assessment – A quick survey from the Good Jobs Institute to assess your company's urgency and leadership's inclination for change, with results that provide a metric score and links to additional resources.

Survey on Organizational Readiness – A survey from the Center for the Promotion of Health in the New England Workforce (CPH-NEW) designed for employees in a leadership position to assess organizational readiness for change.

Organizational Readiness Survey Guide from the Ohio Department of Administrative Services. Provides tips on how to develop and analyze a readiness survey.

Making the Case for Change

Why Invest in Employee Wellbeing? from What Works Wellbeing

Making the Business Case for Employee Well-Being from the Urban Institute

Gather Management Input and Support – from CPH-NEW. This guide provides useful communication tools for making the business case, including a program marketing flyer, sample Powerpoint presentation materials, talking points, and a training video.

Business Case for Racial Equity from the W.W. Kellogg Foundation

Business Costs of Unhealthy Work from the Healthy Work Campaign

Cost of Turnover Tool – A calculator tool from the Aspen Institute designed to help business representatives understand the direct and indirect costs of turnover on the bottom line.

Good Jobs Resources from the MIT Institute for Work and Employment Research – A compilation of resources about adopting a good jobs strategy.

Making the Business Case for Total Worker Health from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)

Construct a Business Case from Thrive at Work

Cultivating Worker Wellbeing to Drive Business Value from Indeed and Harvard Business Review Analytic Services

Step

2

Step 2: Identify the Problem

The next step is to identify the problem or issue your committee or team will address by assessing key workplace conditions that may drive poor employee health and well-being. Tailoring your initiative to the specific needs and context of your organization is critical for effective implementation,[3,21] and this can be best achieved by encouraging staff engagement and input in the assessment process. Your initial assessment will also establish a baseline for comparison with any later evaluations, enabling you to determine the effectiveness of your initiative and whether any adjustments are needed.

Gather Input

To identify and address the key drivers of stress and poor health in your workplace, you'll need to gather data about the organization in strategic ways. Conducting a baseline assessment is widely recommended as an effective strategy for tailoring your intervention to your organization's specific needs.[3]

Consider the Three Principles of Work Design for Health:

As you approach the assessment phase, consider the three principles of *Work Design for Health* as a way of centering your data-gathering efforts. As outlined in the first three modules of this toolkit, strong evidence suggests that three work dynamics—job control, job demands, and social relationships at work—are root drivers of worker health and well-being.[10] By focusing data collection on assessing these psychosocial conditions in your workplace, you will target factors that can have substantial impact on worker well-being. Be sure to identify areas of strength, not just concern, since existing workplace resources can be used to build solutions to workplace stressors.

Remind yourself of the work design principles by reviewing Table 1 below. This table outlines the *Work Design for Health* principles in abbreviated form as well as provides multiple examples of problems and solutions corresponding to each principle. You can refer to this table throughout your implementation process to remind yourself of the core work dynamics you should target to achieve your employee well-being objectives. For an in-depth review of these principles and their basis in research evidence refer to the previous three modules. Also, review the linked resources in the "Helpful Resources" section to locate survey tools for assessing these three work design dynamics and relevant employee well-being outcomes.

Table 1: Work Design for Health Principles — Examples of Problems and Solutions

PRINCIPLE 1:
GIVE EMPLOYEES MORE CONTROL OVER THEIR WORK

Control is about how much say people have at work about the way they do their jobs

PROBLEM	SOLUTION
Lack of Autonomy: *Employees have limited say over how they do their work; they draw on the same limited skills repeatedly.*	**Offer employees more autonomy and task variety.**
EXAMPLE: Workers in a call center have highly scripted encounters with customers and limited authority to problem solve in customized and creative ways.	EXAMPLE: Employer offers employee training on how to address different customer scenarios that permits workers to go "off-script" and engage in autonomous problem-solving.
Lack of Schedule Control: *Employees have unstable, unpredictable, or inflexible schedules*	**Offer employees more control over their schedules.**
EXAMPLE: Restaurant workers are given only two-day advance notice of their schedules, which interferes with their work-life balance and ability to juggle other jobs.	EXAMPLE: Management identifies a new scheduling app that allows supervisors to coordinate employee schedules two weeks in advance and enables waitstaff to swap shifts without supervisor involvement.
Lack of Employee Voice: *Employees have little input or influence over their work conditions.*	**Create opportunities for employee voice.**
EXAMPLE: Warehouse associates who pick and pack items have little say about their work conditions, despite observing inefficiencies in the workflow that create stress and frustration.	EXAMPLE: After consulting with associates, management creates a Lean committee which includes rotating worker representatives who advise management on processes to improve workflow.

PRINCIPLE 2:
TAME EXCESSIVE WORK DEMANDS

Demands are the physical, mental, and emotional requirements of the job

PROBLEM	SOLUTION
Long hours, heavy demands: *Work that involves very long hours or consistently intense mental or emotional demands, without sufficient support.*	**Provide resources to ease demands on employees**
EXAMPLE 1: Doctors in a group practice are working very long hours and experiencing high rates of burnout.	EXAMPLE 1: The medical director hires an extra medical assistant to assist practice physicians with processing patients and routine paperwork.
EXAMPLE 2: Professional in a PR firm are expected to be available on their email and mobile phones outside of business hours.	EXAMPLE 2: A new policy is implemented outlining when employees have the right to "switch off."
Workflow Inefficiencies: *Cumbersome work processes that create excessive demands*	**Streamline work to reduce demands**
EXAMPLE: Professionals in an insurance company are required to attend twice weekly department meetings which often include business items that only concern specific teams or groups of people.	EXAMPLE: Department meetings are reduced to once every other month to address only "all-department" business.

PRINCIPLE 3:
IMPROVE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORKPLACE

Positive social relationships at work include supportive interactions with supervisors and coworkers, a sense of social belonging and effective teamwork.

PROBLEM	SOLUTION
Lack of supervisor support: Supervisors do not adequately support the work-related needs of employees.	**Foster supportive supervisor relationships**
EXAMPLE: Supervisors in a retail store fail to consistently communicate important information to employees about changes in work procedures and schedules resulting in confusion, stress, and lower productivity.	EXAMPLE: A new rule is instituted that supervisors must hold daily startup meetings to provide updates on store changes as well as encouragement for employees to engage in dialogue with supervisors about the changes.
Lack of co-worker support: Workplace culture does not support positive coworker relationships or social belonging.	**Foster supportive coworker relationships and social belonging.**
EXAMPLE: Nursing assistants in a hospital avoid seeking help on certain challenging patient care tasks from nurses due to a sense that nurses will not be sympathetic or won't make the time to listen. As a result, nursing assistants feel stressed and isolated and make mistakes.	EXAMPLE: Organize social activities or workshops that promote camaraderie, trust, and collaboration among nursing assistants and nurses. These could include team-building exercises, problem-solving challenges, or social events outside of work hours.
Exclusion or discrimination: Employees from marginalized or underrepresented groups do not feel accepted at work or are discriminated against.	**Foster support and social belonging for marginalized and underrepresented employees.**
EXAMPLE: African American and Latinx employees in a mid-sized law firm see few people like themselves in leadership positions and feel underrepresented, isolated, and marginalized.	EXAMPLE: Leadership is persuaded to support and resource the formation of affinity groups for employees of color. These groups serve as a safe space for mentorship and peer support, and as a platform for advocating for DEI initiatives in the organization.
Lack of teamwork: Employees working in teams are not collaborating effectively.	**Create conditions for effective teamwork.**
EXAMPLE: In a software development company, engineers are struggling to collaborate effectively against a tight deadline, leading to delays, frustration, and high stress levels.	EXAMPLE: Project-specific cross-functional teams are formed to create opportunities for employees from different departments to collaborate, share updates, insights, and best practices.

Table 2: Examples of Work Conditions and Employee Well-Being Outcomes to Assess

WORK CONDITIONS	EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING OUTCOMES
JOB AUTONOMY	STRESS LEVELS
SCHEDULE PREDICTABILITY	BURNOUT
SCHEDULE STABILITY	WORK / FAMILY CONFLICT
EMPLOYEE VOICE/INPUT	JOB SATISFACTION
SUPPORTS FOR DIVERSITY AND EQUITY	MENTAL HEALTH
WORK INTENSITY	SOCIAL BELONGING
WORK HOURS	FEELS APPRECIATED / VALUED
SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISOR	ENGAGEMENT
POSITIVE CO-WORKER RELATIONSHIPS	JOB MEANING AND PURPOSE

Types of Data to Gather:

Many different types of data can be effective for determining the health and well-being needs of your workforce, including the following:

- Informal conversations with key organizational stakeholders or frontline employees
- Anonymous comments in employee suggestion boxes
- Information from exit interviews
- Employee surveys
- Focus groups (facilitated small group discussions on a focused topic)
- Administrative data on worker's compensation claims, sick leave patterns, worker turnover, absenteeism
- Policy and procedure documents relating to worker health and well-being.

Whether you use a survey or more informal methods for collecting data, you'll want to gather information about employee well-being and related factors (for example, high stress levels) as well as the underlying workplace conditions that may be driving these outcomes (for instance, long working hours or unpredictable schedules). Review Table 2 for examples of workplace conditions and employee well-being outcomes you might consider targeting in your assessment. Consider measuring outcomes that are beneficial both to employee well-being as well as organizational health, since such outcomes will demonstrate the value of the initiative to both employees and leadership. Survey measures for most of these items can be found in the "Helpful Resources" section of this step.

Scale your assessment to fit the organization's size and needs. If an organization is relatively small, it may be sufficient to use informal methods such as one-on-one or small group conversations with employees and other key stakeholders. However, medium or large employers may want to consider using more formal methods such as surveys and/or focus groups to capture variation in employee experience across different parts of the organization. Even with limited resources, an assessment can provide valuable insights that help develop evidence-based, actionable improvement plans.

If you decide to use survey methods, we suggest reviewing the "Helpful Resources" section below to identify tools for assessing workplace conditions and employee well-being outcomes. These tools can be used to build on an existing company survey or to create a new standalone one.

AN ALTERNATIVE USE OF ASSESSMENT DATA

Some organizations launch their health and well-being committees in response to a specific, well-recognized, yet pressing problem. In this case, it might make sense to use the assessment phase as a springboard for exploring the root causes of the target concern rather than as a broad-ranging needs assessment tool. In this scenario, assessment tools such as surveys, focus groups, or informal conversations can be used to define the breadth and nature of the problem and its underlying causes more carefully. In either case, the steps taken to conduct an assessment and action plan are very similar.

Use diverse data sources and feedback channels

Regardless of which types of data you choose, drawing on multiple sources of information in this phase is important to ensure a more holistic picture of workplace stress and well-being. Recognize that different employees may prefer different methods of communication by offering diverse feedback channels. For instance, setting up comment boxes in key locations around the workplace to collect anonymous employee comments about workplace concerns may elicit more candid feedback from employees who might otherwise be reluctant to share their opinions in other contexts.

Draw on existing assessment practices

Consider repurposing and/or expanding existing quality improvement or data collection practices, such as annual employee surveys, to include questions about employee health, well-being, and workplace conditions.

Encourage broad and inclusive participation

Ensure that you hear from a broad cross-section of your employees, including those from different roles, departments, social backgrounds, and organizational ranks. This will guarantee an inclusive understanding of workplace concerns and the ability to tailor change to issues most important to a large segment of the workforce. As mentioned earlier, communications from senior management about their support of assessment efforts are important. Still, frontline employees and supervisors, particularly those who are steering committee members, can also be valuable sources of peer influence in getting the message out. Build employee trust and motivation to participate by reminding staff about the goals of the assessment, how it will be used, and why their feedback is critical for creating positive change.

Ensure confidentiality

To create an environment where people are comfortable sharing concerns candidly during the assessment phase, communicate to staff that their feedback is confidential and that findings (whether you use formal or informal methods) will only be presented in aggregate form. Efforts should be made to limit the collection of identifying information, and it must be carefully de-identified before results are presented in any public forum. One study of a participatory intervention found that staff fear of identification during assessment prevented them from fully participating in the survey.[6] Communicating clear procedures for ensuring confidentiality will build employee confidence in the assessment process and increase the likelihood of broader participation and candid responses.

Review Data and Identify Key Areas of Concern

Work as a team or committee to identify themes or patterns that are common across the data and which correspond to one or more of the three work design principles. Use Table 1 to identify themes you are seeing in the data that correspond to the three principles of *Work Design for Health*. The table provides many examples of the types of workplace concerns that may surface in your assessment, as well as possible solutions. Consider organizing your findings according to the three major areas of concern outlined in the *Work Design for Health* approach: 1) lack of employee control over work; 2) excessive work demands; and 3) lack of social support in the workplace.

Larger companies should consider analyzing assessment results separately for groups of workers operating in different work roles and environments to capture potential variations in employee workplace conditions and concerns. Related to this strategy, you might also consider comparing departments doing similar work but which have different well-being outcomes (higher vs lower stress levels or burnout) and look for patterns in your data on workplace conditions that might help explain why one department is faring better. These kinds of comparisons can help you understand the source of the problem and potential solutions. If you use a multiple-committee approach, the steering committee may oversee the data collection process, but the unit- or department-level teams are best suited to identify relevant key themes and patterns.

Getting Help with Your Assessment

For more detailed guidance on conducting surveys and focus groups, see the linked resources in the "Helpful Resources" section below. Medium to large organizations may be able to consult with their Human Resources or Occupational Health & Safety departments for help with using more formal assessment methods like surveys and focus groups. Or you may choose to use an outside vendor—a for-profit or not-for-profit service provider of worksite health promotion or occupational safety and health—to design and perform your workplace assessment. Although the latter involves added expense, an outside vendor can increase confidence in your results and reduce the burden of implementation.

Communicate Key Areas of Concern

Organizational leaders can demonstrate their investment in workers' well-being and build support for the initiative by sharing assessment results, as well as the key areas of concern that emerged, with the wider workforce. Sharing this information can help employees feel included in the intervention process and communicates that their input is being heard and taken seriously. A potential risk with this strategy is that it may create unrealistic expectations for an immediate response and resolution to the concerns raised. Therefore, expectations must be managed carefully by emphasizing that not all concerns can be addressed immediately and that change takes time and staff engagement.

STEP 2 CHECKLIST

Ask yourself whether you have accomplished the following:

- ☐ Designated responsibility for assessment with the steering committee or external consultants.
- ☐ Gathered input on employee experiences of stress and and their levels of health from a broad, inclusive range of employees using multiple methods.
- ☐ Considered the three principles of *Work Design for Health* in your data-gathering efforts.
- ☐ Analyzed the data for common themes or patterns of workplace stressors and strengths, as well as variation across work areas, using the *Work Design for Health* principles to guide your analysis.
- ☐ Communicated results to employees and leadership across the organization.

Helpful Resources

Assessment Tools (Company Level)

Good Jobs Strategy Diagnostic – A survey from the Good Jobs Institute that was designed for CEOs, executives, and managers; it identifies strengths and areas for improvement in your current people strategy.

Good Jobs Scorecard – A tool from the Good Jobs Institute that assesses your company's performance by examining the experience of your employees and customers as well as operational metrics.

Workplace Integrated Safety and Health (WISH) Assessment – An assessment tool from Harvard's Center for Work, Health & Well-Being that measures workplace policies and practices that focus on working conditions and worker health.

The B Impact Assessment – An assessment tool from B Lab to help companies measure and compare their practices in relation to their workers, the community, and the environment.

Assessment Tools (Employee Level)

CPH-NEW All Employee Survey – designed to provide organizations with an overall assessment of employee attitudes related to health, safety and wellness. The user manual provides guidance on how to administer and score the survey results.

CPH-NEW Focus Group Guide for Workplace Safety, Health and Well-being – a script for running a focus group to gather perspectives from employees about issues they see as important for well-being in the workplace. The guide also provides helpful tips for how to facilitate focus groups.

CPH-NEW training video – This webinar provides guidance on how to use the CPH-NEW all-employee survey and focus group tools to identify health and safety priorities in your workplace.

NIOSH WellBQ – The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health Worker Well-Being Questionnaire provides an integrated assessment of worker well-being across multiple spheres, including individuals' quality of working life, circumstances outside of work, and physical and mental health status.

Quality of Worklife Questionnaire – A questionnaire from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) that covers work hours, workload, worker autonomy, layoffs, job security, and job satisfaction.

What Works Wellbeing Question Bank – A bank of validated questions from What Works Wellbeing that can be used by employers to measure employee well-being; includes advice on choosing questions, adapting the questions or response scales, and understanding survey results.

Employee Wellbeing Snapshot Survey – A short, 13-question survey from What Works Wellbeing that is intended to capture a snapshot of employee wellbeing at regular intervals.

HERO Health and Well-Being Best Practices Scorecard – A survey from Health Enhancement Research Organization that allows employers to receive emailed feedback on their health and well-being practices and assigns an individual score relative to a national database.

Assessment Tools (Employee Level)

CPH-NEW planning guide for evaluations – provides guidance on how to carry out both outcome and process evaluations and includes an evaluation plan template to track your progress.

Step

3

Step 3: Make a Plan

You've studied the problem; now it's time to develop a plan. One of the most important steps is strategizing what changes you want to make and how you will create change to improve employee well-being. This involves prioritizing concerns and designing an effective action plan.

Prioritize a Concern

Once your steering committee has identified key themes in the assessment relating to workplace stressors and well-being, it is time to prioritize which areas of concern you will address. (For those employing a multiple-committee design, department-based teams will be responsible for completing this step with periodic support from the steering committee.)

To gain momentum, consider prioritizing a concern that is both impactful and a relatively "easy win" for your first project. An easier win may include a project that is not likely to require major resources or time to implement and may be less controversial. In each improvement cycle, you may want to identify a longer-term project and a few short-term, "quick action" projects that can be implemented immediately with little effort. These short-term, quick actions will demonstrate ongoing results and visibility for your committee's work. Through discussion, group your themes into those that are considered high, medium, and low priority. If there is a lack of consensus, consider taking a group vote on which concern to prioritize. Record the identified problems or concerns to return to later for possible future committee action.

Make an Action Plan

An action plan involves developing a concrete strategy for addressing your target problem; your action plan should outline goals, solutions, and the actions you will take to achieve these endpoints. An effective plan serves as a roadmap and a means of tracking your progress and communicating with your organization about your accomplishments. In other words, it lets people know the "who," "how," "why," and "when" of your project. At the end of this section there is an example describing an action plan one company devised to respond to elevated levels of employee stress and work-family conflict. This example illustrates how this organization's health and well-being committee used the three principles of *Work Design for Health* to identify the root causes of the problem in workplace conditions and to devise an action plan to address it.

Designing a successful strategy for addressing workplace change to improve worker well-being can be approached in many ways. However, it may be helpful to bear in mind the research-tested "key principles of effective action planning" described at the top of the next page (see page 22).

Using a visual management tool like a Kaizen or Kanban workboard to display and track progress through the different action planning steps described below can be helpful. A visual management board is a tool that helps teams and organizations manage the continuous improvement process. Boards typically have columns representing different phases of the action process (for instance, "to do," "doing," and "done") and team members track and visualize progress towards their project goals by writing action steps on sticky notes or notecards and moving them across the board as they are implemented and completed. Research has demonstrated that these boards are highly effective in enhancing participants' awareness and ability to manage the action-planning process, and their use is associated with improved employee well-being outcomes.[17,22] Refer to the linked resources at the end of this section for specific templates and examples of Kaizen and other action planning resources.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE ACTION PLANNING

- **Prioritize primary prevention, or the root causes of worker stress and poor health.** This means addressing workplace conditions, policies, and practices that drive stressors rather than only treating their symptoms.[3] Consult the three principles of *Work Design for Health* and Table 1 for detailed information and examples of key root causes to consider and promising practices to address them.
- **Align your action plan with both employee needs and organizational goals.** Your plans are more likely to succeed if they are tailored to "hot spots" in your needs assessment while also being framed in terms of organizational priorities, such as performance or reduced turnover, that will motivate leadership support.[23,24] Revisit the ways in which improving employee well-being can be good for business, (See linked resources on making a business case in Step 1).
- **The committee planning the action should contain employees and managers with hands-on experience with the problem.** Those with local knowledge of the problem and its related context and work processes will likely have the most insight into causes and solutions. If these staff members are not already on your committee, consider inviting them to provide input and consultation in the action planning phase.
- **Integrate action plans with existing company norms, practices, and daily routines.**[1,25,26] Tailoring the plan this way (whenever possible) makes the workplace change more relevant, acceptable, and readily adopted, boosting its effectiveness and long-term success.[18] Moreover, drawing on existing tools and practices that are widely perceived as effective to shape your action plan will avoid duplicating efforts or reinventing the wheel and ensure greater sustainability of your initiative. For instance, if your organization already uses continual improvement processes to enhance performance (i.e., Six Sigma, Lean, or PDSA), consider adapting these processes to use in your own approach.

Do a Root Cause Analysis

If the problem you are trying to address has many different dimensions or is more complex, conducting a root cause analysis as a first step in the action planning process can be helpful. (A root cause analysis is a process for identifying all the underlying causes of a concern.) As the *Work Design for Health* approach highlights, solutions that address the root causes of a problem will be more impactful than those that only address the symptoms. The process involves breaking down a problem or concern into its key component parts and then exploring the causes of each element until you identify the root causes or drivers of the problem. Consider the three principles of *Work Design for Health* in identifying what conditions may serve as root causes. Remember that the results of your assessment (for example, survey results, feedback from focus groups, and informal conversations) may also help to inform and enrich your analysis of root causes.

Not all root causes can be practically addressed once identified (for instance, large capital expenses to replace an existing piece of technology may not be feasible). You may have to prioritize which root cause or near-root causes you can more readily address in the present. Root causes that are likely to be overly complex or expensive to address may require a separate advocacy process, more long-term planning, and greater involvement by senior management. But the process of defining the problem clearly and identifying the root cause can be useful, even if it may take longer to address an underlying issue that is hard to remedy. In the meantime, the steering committee may identify helpful steps to explain the challenge and the possibility for future changes to employees.

See the "Helpful Resources" section for linked resources describing how to use different visual tools to map out your root cause analysis, including "the Fishbone Diagram," "the Five Why's," and "the Drilldown Technique."

Identify Goals, Brainstorm Solutions

Once you have identified a primary or root cause of the problem, reformulate it into a goal that is specific and measurable so that you'll know if your strategies to improve the problem are working and when the goal has been achieved. (An example of a specific, measurable goal is to increase by half the proportion of workers who say they feel supported and appreciated by their supervisor.) The facilitator or chair can lead the group in a brainstorming session about possible solutions to achieve your goal. Try not to jump immediately to a solution before considering alternatives that may be more effective in addressing the root cause identified. If there are several root causes that the group deems are equally important to address, you may need to identify several solutions. Finally, consider whether your solutions may inadvertently create disparities between different groups of workers (for instance, across social backgrounds, departments, shifts, etc.) either in access to a new resource or in your solutions' health and well-being effects. If you suspect your plan may create disparities, now is the time to adjust your solution to ensure more equitable outcomes for different groups of employees.

Define your actions: What? When? Who? How?

Once you have identified a set of solutions, you'll need to identify concrete action steps to implement the solution, a timeline, who will be responsible for carrying out specific action steps, and the resources you'll need to implement it. Consider identifying criteria for evaluating steps in your plan so you will know when actions and solutions have been achieved and whether the initiative has worked as intended. Check your plan with relevant senior-level managers for any necessary authorizations or to request needed resources.

KEY STRATEGIES IN THE ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

- Design the intervention with multiple opportunities for staff outside the committee to provide input and get involved in implementation; this will boost their engagement and ownership in the workplace change process.
- If your plan involves coordination across multiple departments or units, consider setting up a meeting (or periodic meetings) with key stakeholders in these areas to clarify roles and logistics.
- Consider whether training sessions are needed for supervisors and managers who will be supporting implementation, and if so, incorporate these steps into your action plan.
- If solutions are large-scale or more complex, consider pilot testing smaller-scale versions of the change in specific departments or groups first to see how well it works and to adjust and make improvements more quickly.

See the "Helpful Resources" section for linked resources describing different action planning templates you might want to consider as you develop your goals, solutions, and action steps.

Addressing work-family conflict: An example of the action planning process

One health and well-being committee in a mid-sized marketing firm assessed their workforce and discovered that their employees, especially parents with young children, were experiencing elevated stress levels and struggling to balance their work responsibilities with family obligations.

The health and well-being committee prioritized this concern and, in their next meeting, conducted a root cause analysis of the problem. The committee reviewed focus group and survey material from their assessment to inform the analysis. The group drew on *Work Design for Health* principles, including considering schedule control and the firm's work-life flexibility policies (*Work Design for Health* Principle #1), to identify possible root causes in their organization's workplace conditions. The group's root cause analysis revealed that despite the company's existing policies on workplace flexibility (which included flextime, paid parental leave, and hybrid work options), many employees either were unaware of the policies or perceived that they would be penalized for taking advantage of them.

As a result of this analysis, the committee developed the measurable goal of reducing employee work-family stress by half over the next year. After brainstorming, they developed the following solutions: 1) increase employee's awareness of company workplace flexibility policies through a series of HR communications and workshops on the topic; and 2) promote employee use of existing company workplace flexibility policies by training supervisors to provide emotional and practical support for doing so. Finally, the group established a timeline, committee roles, and a series of action steps for accomplishing these solutions (including initial pilot tests of some of the ideas) and tracked their progress over time using a Kaizen board.

Communicate your Plan

Once completed, communicate your action plan to the broader workforce (or your department, if using a department-based approach), including a narrative about why you chose the goals and solutions you did and the intended impact. Also, explain what employees can expect regarding how the plan will be carried out, the timing, and how they may be asked to participate. Communication at this stage is important to enhance staff awareness and receptiveness to the change, and it also provides an opportunity to receive feedback and respond to potential staff concerns.

STEP 3 CHECKLIST

Ask yourself whether you have accomplished the following:

- ☐ Prioritized areas of concern starting with an impactful, "easy win" issue.
- ☐ Developed an action plan that outlines goals, solutions, and actionable steps.
- ☐ Solicited support and buy-in from frontline employees and supervisors.
- ☐ Considered using a visual management board to track your progress.
- ☐ Identified criteria for evaluating completion of goals in your action plan to confirm the initiative is effective.
- ☐ Designated roles and responsibilities for carrying out specific action steps.
- ☐ Communicated the action plan to staff, including a narrative about goals and intended impact.

Helpful Resources

Action Planning Templates

The Government of South Australia, Healthy Workplaces, provides an action plan template to document your strategies, time frame, resources and measures of success.

CPH-NEW offers a template for documenting your well-being objectives, intervention tasks, and task status.

Visual Management Boards

Kanban Board Template – A visual management tool from the website, Project Manager, that enables you to track workflow (with columns for "to do," "doing," "done") as you implement and complete action projects.

Kaizen Report Template – A visual management tool from Continuous Improvement Toolkit (KIT) that documents and summarizes continuous improvement activities in your action project to share improvements across an organization.

Root Cause Analysis

Root Cause Analysis Guide - CPH-NEW provides resources to identify root causes of a health and well-being concern including a guide to conducting different types of root cause analyses, including fillable templates.

The Five Whys – is a simple type of Root Cause Analysis. This slideshow from Continuous Improvement Toolkit (KIT), provides an overview of how to perform The Five Whys to understand the root causes of the identified problem.

Other Action Planning Resources

Action plan with your assessment tool results from Thrive at Work – This part of the assessment tool guides you through the process of identifying your focus, developing a well-being strategy, and planning specific actions based on your assessment results.

What Is the Plan-Do-Check-Act Cycle (PDCA)? – A project planning resource from the American Society for Quality (ASQ) that consists of a four-step model for instituting change. Explore the "Resources" tab for other useful continuous improvement project planning tools.

Quality Improvement Essentials Toolkit – Provides tools to help you launch a quality improvement project and manage performance improvement; includes a cause-and-effect diagram, failure modes and effects analysis, run charts and control charts, and a Plan-Do-Study-Act worksheet.

Intervention Design and Analysis Scorecard (IDEAS) – A seven-step tool from The Center for the Promotion of Health in the New England Workplace (CPH-NEW) that guides a collaborative process for identifying root causes of a specific health-related concern and designing appropriate changes in workplaces.

Step

4

Step 4: Take Action

You have your action plan in hand. Now it's time to make it a reality. This is an exciting moment! But remember, your action plan is just an initial road map for change. Once you start making changes, it's important to monitor your progress to identify and troubleshoot unexpected challenges in the implementation process and course correct, as necessary.

Track Your Progress

During the action phase, it is important to find time in committee or team meetings to review your plan regularly and track the implementation process for several reasons. Periodically checking that agreed-upon actions are happening will ensure that changes are implemented as planned and that you maintain fidelity to your objectives. Also, routinely monitoring your progress, including soliciting feedback on changes as they are implemented, will allow you to adapt more nimbly to unforeseen challenges on the ground and make slight adjustments as necessary. Creating this kind of continuous learning feedback loop as you go will enable you to tailor your initiative to better fit your organization's people and environment, which research demonstrates is critical for effective and sustainable implementation.[1,27] As part of this continuous learning feedback loop, it can be helpful to start with a pilot test or a small-scale version of the proposed change and make adjustments as necessary before scaling up. Tracking progress also enables you to increase project visibility and buy-in by regularly sharing updates with leadership and staff. Finally, monitoring the implementation process will allow you to better understand why you were or were not able to achieve some or all your objectives once you get to the evaluation phase (Step 5).

What types of processes should you track?

Ask yourself how you will know your implementation is on the right track to achieving your short- and long-term objectives. Some relevant questions might include: Have action steps been taken as planned? If part of your plan involves workshops or other events, how many staff have attended? If you have provided resources to reduce stress (for example, extra scheduled breaks or a new leave policy), are all staff who need these new policies or practices able and willing to access them? How satisfied are staff with the new resources or workplace changes? What barriers or resistance are you encountering in the change process, and why? Does your action plan need to be adjusted given changes in the organization that were not anticipated?

At this stage, the three overarching questions you will want to track include:

1. Are action plans being implemented as planned?
2. If not, what are the key barriers to implementing your plans?
3. How do stakeholders (those who will be affected by or responsible for the change) appraise the intervention?[1]

The following are specific examples of key questions and issues falling into these areas that you might consider tracking and that research has shown are important for successful implementation:

KEY IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES TO TRACK

- **Is senior leadership still on board and providing resources and support for implementation?** Leadership support is key not just in the launch phase but also during implementation when authorization is needed to allocate staff time and resources to projects, and to change workplace policies or practices.[2,7]
- **Do people who are directly responsible for implementing changes need clarification on their roles and responsibilities?** Those who are involved in the change effort need to be clear about their roles and responsibilities to stay motivated, involved, and accountable as the changes unfold.[28,29]
- **Are line managers supporting and implementing the changes in their departments or units?** For effective implementation to occur, line managers must be adequately resourced and motivated to support their staff in carrying out the day-to-day tasks of the initiative.[13,15] If implementation is not happening in some departments or units, what can be learned about the challenges or competing priorities?
- **Are frontline staff involved in implementation efforts where it seems relevant?** Implementation is more effective and sustainable when employees are actively involved in the process.[12,23,30] Frontline staff have on-the-ground experience, which can provide key insights into problems and solutions, and actively involving them gives them a voice and a stake in the interventions' success. Of course, not all actions can feasibly involve employees in the implementation process (for example, instituting a new policy or hiring new staff to reduce workload), but consider involving employees where it makes sense to do so.
- **Are the action steps well-integrated into everyday work processes?** When workplace changes for worker well-being fit easily into existing, effective work routines and forms of accountability they are more likely to be sustainable and effective.[7,25] For instance, if your project involves training supervisors to be more supportive of employee work-family needs, you might consider adding a training module on this topic to an existing annual management training event and/or adding the proposed supervisor support activity to existing job descriptions and performance reviews.

How to Monitor Your Progress

After identifying a few key process areas to explore, think about how you will track them. The methods you use do not have to be rigorous or formal, but they should enable you to get the insights you need. For instance, to monitor fidelity to your plan, create a column in your action planning sheet, Kaizen board, or other visual management tool, and check off each action as it is completed. Track attendance and collect feedback on participant satisfaction after key workshops or events. Do observations of relevant work areas or informal check-ins with key employees or managers to identify what is or isn't working about the implementation process.

Troubleshoot and Course Correct

What did you discover by tracking your process? Put your insights into action quickly in this phase to troubleshoot and correct, as necessary. Based on what you discover while monitoring your progress, your committee or team should identify key barriers to progress and then troubleshoot and adjust action plans as needed. For instance, if you discover that line managers in your unit or certain departments are discouraging staff from using one of the initiatives' new policies for worker well-being or from taking time off the floor to participate in the work change project as previously agreed upon, check in with these managers to identify and address the perceived barriers. Don't forget to update your action plan to ensure that any key changes are recorded and tracked going forward.

Communicate Often and Invite Feedback

Communicating regularly with leadership and frontline staff about the initiative is important for effective implementation. Clear and engaging communication about the initiative can increase employee and leadership awareness, interest, and buy-in, reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings and resistance to change.[19,31] You can build your project updates into existing communication channels like newsletters, weekly staff meetings, emails, table toppers in the breakroom, or staff meetings. Consider how best to reach diverse groups of employees in your communications (such as, Spanish-speaking employees or workers who do not have company emails) to promote more inclusive participation in the implementation process. [7,12]

Consider creating opportunities for employee feedback in your project communications. Providing interactive forums for project updates, such as staff meetings or town halls, can create valuable opportunities for understanding how the workforce is experiencing workplace changes and the intervention process itself. A smaller, more intimate forum, such as small group listening sessions, may offer a more effective and safe space for eliciting candid feedback and reaching workers who may otherwise feel less comfortable or less entitled to voice their opinions.[12,32]

STEP 4 CHECKLIST

Ask yourself whether you have accomplished the following:

- ☐ Designated time in team meetings to review progress and track implementation.
- ☐ Regularly monitored implementation by gathering informal feedback on the process.
- ☐ Identified barriers or challenges in implementation and course corrected as necessary.
- ☐ Regularly communicated to staff about progress, including interactive forums (staff meetings, listening sessions) for project updates that invite candid employee feedback.

Helpful Resources

Track Your Progress

Activity and Event Log – this resource is from the Government of South Australia, Healthy Workplaces. It can be filled out following any event or activity in your action plan (for instance, a training or a key meeting) to help you monitor and reflect on it's contribution to your Initiative's health and well-being goals.

Manager Interview Guide – this guide from CPH-NEW can be used by the steering or department committee to collect information about management's experience with the Initiative and its action projects.

Step 5

Step 5: Review Your Results

Now that you have implemented your action plan, it's time to step back and evaluate whether you have achieved your goals and how to design your next steps.

Assess Your Outcomes

Periodically, you should assess whether you are achieving the objectives identified in your action plan. Benchmarking your progress towards target goals is important to:

- Enhance your understanding of what you have or have not achieved
- Identify areas of your plan which need further adjustments or course corrections
- Provide concrete evidence demonstrating the value of the initiative to leadership and other stakeholders to help motivate continuing support and sustainability
- Identify new areas of need for the next cycle of improvement.

You may review your results formally or informally depending on your organization's culture, size, and resources. Either way, you will need to develop a process for assessing project outcomes that is sustainable and effective.

When to Gather Data

Plans for organizational change often take significant time to impact working conditions and employee well-being.[6,33] Therefore, the timing of your assessments should be strategic. Waiting at least a year before evaluating effects to allow changes to manifest fully is wise for ambitious, long-term goals. To capture trends over time, consider conducting these assessments annually, ideally at the same time each year, to control for seasonal variations.[6] In contrast, frequent and informal assessments may be appropriate if your goals are oriented toward quick wins or short-term improvements. The main objective is to tailor the timing of your data collection to align with your initiative's specific needs and scale.

How to Gather Data

Begin your evaluation by repeating the assessment you conducted during the problem identification phase, applying the same benchmarks and tools to ensure consistency and accuracy. (Revisit step 2 for guidance.) To keep costs low and enhance sustainability, leverage existing data sources wherever possible and tailor your assessment methods, whether formal or informal, to match the scale and resources of your organization. For more complex evaluations in larger organizations, consider integrating assessment responsibilities into existing job roles (such as occupational health or HR specialist roles) to help sustain the initiative.[21]

A key element of effective assessment is to examine the "chain of effects." This involves assessing both targeted well-being outcomes as well as the changes in workplace conditions that you expect to positively impact well-being.[1] This will help you to understand if the targeted workplace changes occurred, and if they did, whether they can plausibly explain improved outcomes. For instance, if your action plan aimed to reduce employee stress and burnout by streamlining work to reduce overtime, your baseline and outcome assessments should measure both stress and burnout (employee well-being outcomes) as well as perceived overtime demands (workplace conditions) to determine if your objectives have been met.

If your baseline assessment involved a broad evaluation of workforce needs, and time and resources are tight, consider tailoring your follow-up assessment to a more essential subset of questions specifically relevant to the workplace conditions and outcomes you targeted in your action plan. Explore the resources at the end of this section for more detailed guides on conducting outcome assessments, including an evaluation plan template for tracking outcomes.

Whether you are employing a single or multiple committee design, the steering committee should oversee the follow-up assessment process. For smaller organizations using informal assessment methods, members of your committee or team can gather the data and/or enlist the help of interested employees outside the committee. Larger organizations using formal evaluation methods, might consider enlisting help from their HR or OHS departments to conduct and analyze results from surveys and/or focus groups, or consulting with an outside vendor.

Review Your Results

Whether you use external consultants to gather data or do it internally, it's crucial that your steering committee or department-based team actively participates in reviewing and interpreting the results. Together, analyze patterns and compare the new data to your baseline assessment to discern changes in both workplace conditions and the health and well-being of employees. Larger organizations should consider analyzing results by department or worker group to determine the intervention's effectiveness across different areas or sectors. Ensure data confidentiality by aggregating results and avoiding detailed reports on small groups.

Additionally, use the process data you tracked in Step 4 to help you understand potential barriers and supports to implementation that might explain why you were or were not able to achieve your objectives. Consider the following example. A steering committee in a busy restaurant sets the goal of reducing work-life conflict and stress among waitstaff by offering a new scheduling app that enables staff to swap shifts without supervisor involvement. However, the outcome assessment shows little or no improvement in either schedule flexibility or staff work-life stress. Review your data collected in Step 4 to identify possible problems in the implementation process. If it shows that few supervisors communicated about the availability of the app or employees indicated that they believed they might be penalized for using it, this may help to explain the lack of change in perceived schedule flexibility and well-being outcomes. Understanding these barriers to implementation can help you adjust and improve your action plan going forward.

Communicate Your Results

The primary goal of the review process is to understand the efficacy of your intervention, why it was or was not effective, and to make conclusions and recommendations for the next steps. Secondarily, you might consider identifying any new or continuing problem areas from your assessment that you would like to prioritize in your next project improvement cycle.

Once you have completed your review, you will be ready to present your findings to organizational or departmental leadership and staff. This is an important opportunity to showcase the value of your initiative and secure ongoing support. For larger organizations, be strategic about how you communicate your results. Consider whether to present to different stakeholders separately, such as senior management and employee groups, or together. Tailoring your message to each group can make your communication more effective. For example, you might discuss business impacts like cost efficiencies with senior leadership while focusing on enhancements in the work environment and well-being with employee groups. For a more compelling presentation, frame your findings as a story with illustrative examples. Use forums such as town hall meetings or routine management meetings to convey these results. These gatherings also provide a chance to collect informal feedback, which can guide future improvements to the initiative. Eliciting broad-based feedback in this way enhances implementation by giving workers greater ownership and involvement, which is crucial for creating healthier and more effective working environments.[12]

Adjust, Sustain, and Start Again

Creating positive workplace changes is an ongoing cycle. If you have achieved your goals, take a moment to celebrate this milestone. But then begin the process again. Remember that organizational change is an ongoing and sometimes incremental process, and it is rare to achieve resounding impact right away. Reframe frustrations and barriers to success as opportunities to learn about the work environment and improve. Use the data you collected in Steps 4 and 5 to adjust your action plan accordingly to incorporate new strategies or strengthen existing ones. For instance, one company's initiative to train supervisors to support employee work-family life failed to reduce work-family conflict in key departments. By examining their process data (Step 4) the steering committee discovered that attendance at supervisor training sessions (a key component of their action plan) had been poor in departments where a supervisor staff meeting had conflicted with one of the three training meetings. With this knowledge in hand, they scheduled additional training sessions for these departments and over time were able to improve perceived work-family conflict in the workforce as a whole.

Work Design for Health **is an iterative process which helps you build on past experiments with change to continually identify and generate improvements in the workplace. Whether or not your first project succeeded as planned, you now have a process for identifying and creating positive workplace change!**

STEP 5 CHECKLIST

Ask yourself whether you have accomplished the following:

- ☐ Conducted a follow-up assessment to determine whether you have achieved your target workplace conditions and well-being outcomes.
- ☐ Analyzed the results looking for patterns and comparing new data with baseline metrics.
- ☐ Solicited support and buy-in from frontline employees and supervisors.
- ☐ Presented findings to leadership and staff whether collectively or tailored to groups.
- ☐ Made adjustments to your action plan as necessary.
- ☐ Celebrated your progress and are ready to start again!

Helpful Resources

Evaluation Guidance

CPH-NEW planning guide for evaluations – provides guidance on how to carry out both outcome and process evaluations and includes an evaluation plan template to track your progress.

Monitoring and Evaluation Quick Guide – from the Government South Australia, Healthy Workplaces provides an at-a-glance guide to benchmarking your outcome and process evaluation over time.

Selecting an Appropriate Evaluation Design from Education Development Center

Non-Researcher's Guide to Evidence-Based Program Evaluation from the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices, part of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Evaluation Standards from the Centers for Disease Control's Program Performance and Evaluation Office

The Step-by-Step Guide to Evaluation from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

References

1. Nielsen K, Noblet A. Introduction: Organizational Interventions: Where We Are, Where We Go From Here? In: Nielsen K, Noblet A, eds. *Organizational Interventions for Health and Well-Being.* Taylor & Francis; 2018. doi:10.4324/9781315410494-1

2. Schelvis RMC, Wiezer NM, Blatter BM, et al. Evaluating the implementation process of a participatory organizational level occupational health intervention in schools. *BMC Public Health*. 2016;16(1):1212. doi:10.1186/s12889-016-3869-0

3. Nielsen K, Randall R, Holten AL, González ER. Conducting organizational-level occupational health interventions: What works? *Work & Stress*. 2010;24(3):234-259. doi:10.1080/02678373.2010.515393

4. Nielsen K, Fredslund H, Christensen KB, Albertsen K. Success or failure? Interpreting and understanding the impact of interventions in four similar worksites. *Work & Stress*. 2006;20(3):272-287. doi:10.1080/02678370601022688

5. Abildgaard JS, Nielsen K, Sverke M. Can job insecurity be managed? Evaluating an organizational-level intervention addressing the negative effects of restructuring. *Work & Stress*. 2018;32(2):105-123. doi:10.1080/02678373.2017.1367735

6. Lee S, Pasquarella FJ, De La Peza D, Lizano EL, Santoro K. Planning and Implementing an Organizational Health Assessment in a Community Mental Health Setting. *Community Ment Health J*. 2023;59(4):693-702. doi:10.1007/s10597-022-01052-3

7. Roodbari H, Nielsen K, Axtell C, Peters SE, Sorensen G. Testing middle range theories in realist evaluation: A case of a participatory organisational intervention. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*. 2022;15(6):694-710. doi:10.1108/IJWHM-12-2021-0219.

8. Fox KE, Johnson ST, Berkman LF, et al. Organisational- and group-level workplace interventions and their effect on multiple domains of worker well-being: A systematic review. *Work & Stress*. 2022;36(1):30-59. doi:10.1080/02678373.2021.1969476

9. Nielsen K, Randall R, Albertsen K. Participants' appraisals of process issues and the effects of stress management interventions. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. 2007;28(6):793-810. doi:10.1002/job.450

10. Karasek R. *Healthy Work: Stress, Productivity, and the Reconstruction of Working Life*. New York: Basic Books; 1990.

11. Lines R. Influence of participation in strategic change: resistance, organizational commitment and change goal achievement. J*ournal of Change Management*. 2004;4(3):193-215. doi:10.1080/1469701042000221696

12. Huong L, Nielsen K, Noblet A. The well-being and voice of migrant workers in participatory organizational interventions. *International Migration*. 2022;60(3):52-71. doi:10.1111/imig.12885

13. Tafvelin S, Thiele Schwarz U, Nielsen K, Hasson H. Employees' and line managers' active involvement in participatory organizational interventions: Examining direct, reversed, and reciprocal effects on well-being. *Stress and Health: Journal of the International Society for the Investigation of Stress*. 2019;35(1):69-80. doi:10.1002/smi.2841

14. Randall R, Nielsen K, Tvedt SturleD. The development of five scales to measure employees' appraisals of organizational-level stress management interventions. *Work & Stress*. 2009;23(1):1-23. doi:10.1080/02678370902815277

15. Sorensen G, Peters SE, Nielsen K, et al. Implementation of an organizational intervention to improve low-wage food service workers' safety, health and wellbeing: findings from the Workplace Organizational Health Study. *BMC Public Health*. 2021;21:1-16. doi:10.1186/s12889-021-11937-9

16. McGilton KS, Profetto-McGrath J, Robinson A. Implementing the Supportive Supervision Intervention for Registered Nurses in a Long-Term Care Home: A Feasibility Study. *Worldviews on Evidence-Based Nursing*. 2013;10(4):238-247. doi:10.1111/wvn.12004

17. Augustsson H, von Thiele Schwarz U, Stenfors-Hayes T, Hasson H. Investigating Variations in Implementation Fidelity of an Organizational-Level Occupational Health Intervention. *IntJ Behav Med*. 2015;22(3):345-355. doi:10.1007/s12529-014-9420-8

18. Anderson J, Sice P. Evaluating the possibilities and actualities of the learning process: How a school pilot wellbeing programme worked as an organisational learning process intervention. *Learning Organization*. 2016;23(2-3):94-120. doi:10.1108/TLO-02-2014-0004

19. Biron C, Gatrell C, Cooper CL. Autopsy of a failure: Evaluating process and contextual issues in an organizational-level work stress intervention. *International Journal of Stress Management*. 2010;17(2):135-158. doi:10.1037/a0018772

20. Abildgaard JS, Saksvik PØ, Nielsen K. How to Measure the Intervention Process? An Assessment of Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches to Data Collection in the Process Evaluation of Organizational Interventions. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 2016;7. https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01380. Accessed December 4, 2023.

21. von Thiele Schwarz U, Lundmark R, Hasson H. The Dynamic Integrated Evaluation Model (DIEM): Achieving Sustain-

ability in Organizational Intervention through a Participatory Evaluation Approach. *Stress and Health*. 2016;32(4):285-293. doi:10.1002/smi.2701

22. von Thiele Schwarz U, Nielsen KM, Stenfors-Hayes T, Hasson H. Using kaizen to improve employee well-being: Results from two organizational intervention studies. *Human Relations*. 2017;70(8):966-993. doi:10.1177/0018726716677071

23. von Thiele Schwarz U, Nielsen K, Edwards K, et al. How to design, implement and evaluate organizational interventions for maximum impact: the Sigtuna Principles. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*. 2021;30(3):415-427. doi:10.1080/1359432X.2020.1803960

24. Albertsen K, Garde AH, Nabe-Nielsen K, Hansen ÅM, Lund H, Hvid H. Work-life balance among shift workers: results from an intervention study about self-rostering. *Int Arch Occup Environ Health*. 2014;87(3):265-274. doi:10.1007/s00420-013-0857-x

25. What Works Wellbeing. workplace-wellbeing-briefing-June2020.pdf. https://whatworkswellbeing.org/. https://whatworkswellbeing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/workplace-wellbeing-briefing-June2020.pdf. Published June 2020. Accessed January 31, 2024.

26. Christensen M, Innstrand ST, Saksvik PØ, Nielsen K. The Line Manager's Role in Implementing Successful Organizational Interventions. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*. 2019;22:E5. doi:10.1017/sjp.2019.4

27. Larsson R, Stier J, Åkerlind I, Sandmark H. Implementing Health-Promoting Leadership in Municipal Organizations: Managers' Experiences with a Leadership Program. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*. 2015;5(1):93-114. doi:10.19154/njwls.v5i1.4767

28. Aust B, Rugulies R, Finken A, Jensen C. When workplace interventions lead to negative effects: Learning from failures. *Scand J Public Health*. 2010;38(3_suppl):106-119. doi:10.1177/1403494809354362

29. Shulman C, Hudson BF, Kennedy P, Brophy N, Stone P. Evaluation of training on palliative care for staff working within a homeless hostel. *Nurse Education Today*. 2018;71:135-144. doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2018.09.022

30. Edwards NC, Smith Higuchi K. Process Evaluation of a Participatory, Multimodal Intervention to Improve Evidence-Based Care in Long-Term Care Settings. *Worldviews on Evidence-Based Nursing*. 2018;15(5):361-367. doi:10.1111/wvn.12313

31. Nielsen K, Marzocchi I, Di Tecco C, et al. Validation of the Intervention Preparedness Tool: a short measure to assess important precursors for successful implementation of organisational interventions. *Work & Stress*. July 2023:1-19. doi:10.1080/02678373.2023.2241417

32. Coffey M, Dugdill L, Tattersall A. Designing a stress management intervention in social services. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*. 2009;2(2):98-114. doi:10.1108/17538350910970192

33. Landsbergis PA, Vivona-Vaughan E. Evaluation of an occupational stress intervention in a public agency: Summary. *Journal of Organizational Behavior (1986-1998)*. 1995;16(1):29.