

Applying a Quality Framework

This document and *Selection of Suggested Actions* are companion documents to the *Suggested Responses* documents.

Aim: this document and the *Selection of Suggested Actions* document will help you select suggested actions to undertake for areas in which your organization (or work unit) has concerns, as identified by the Assessment Resources. In order to select suggested actions to undertake, you will need the results of your Organizational Review and/or Survey.

We recommend that you complete both the Organizational Review and the Survey before selecting and undertaking suggested actions.

A. Use a Quality Framework

A common approach to selecting action strategies in organizational settings involves the use of a *Quality Framework* (a best-practice approach to determining feasible actions organizations can take to remedy areas of concern).

Six key dimensions should guide your organization's selection and decision-making process:

1. **Appropriateness** (relevant to user needs and based on accepted or evidence-based practice)
2. **Acceptability** (respectful and responsive to user needs, preferences and expectations)
3. **Accessibility** (obtained in a timely manner, in a suitable setting, within a convenient distance)
4. **Effectiveness** (based on scientific knowledge to achieve desired outcomes)
5. **Efficiency** (resources are used optimally in achieving desired outcomes)
6. **Safety** (risks are mitigated to avoid unintended or harmful results)

Reviewing actions in terms of these Quality Framework dimensions makes it easier to weigh benefits and risks and to anticipate difficulties before you commit to a particular action.

Let's consider each quality dimension in more detail:

Appropriateness (*relevant to user needs and based on accepted or evidence-based practice*). An action that is relevant to user needs must be highly *flexible*, modifiable to reflect the particular requirements of a work setting. For example, the action must be scalable to the size and resources of the particular company, rather than being suitable only for large corporations with specialized occupational health staff. Each workplace has unique challenges and a unique set of resources – when it comes to psychological health and safety, the occupational health department of a large corporation may be very helpful, but then so may the friendly environment of a small company. An appropriate action will also be widely accepted or well-tested.

Acceptability (*respectful and responsive to user needs, preferences and expectations*). There are two kinds of users for the workplace action: the employer or organizational representative, and the employees who are the focus of the action. An essential feature of acceptable actions is their *simplicity*: actions should be readily explainable to decision-makers, easily communicated to employees and straightforward to implement. Actions that are overly complicated or difficult to understand may eventually be rejected by decision-makers and employees. Another aspect of acceptability is that employees should perceive the action as *respectful* of their needs, opinions and work demands.

Accessibility (*obtained in a timely manner, in a suitable setting within a convenient distance*). A high-quality workplace action will be timely and available conveniently. For example, if the action includes attending a training workshop, this training would be provided at or near the workplace. If it is held at a distance from the workplace, employees should be supported to attend. Language may also be a barrier to accessibility: if brochures or other materials are provided as part of a workplace action, they may require translation into other languages.

Effectiveness (*based on scientific knowledge for achieving desired outcomes*). Although formal research literature is often in short supply when it comes to identifying effective organizational actions, it remains important to check the research so that your approach is at least *consistent with available evidence*. Be aware that recent research may highlight the relative ineffectiveness of a particular action. Note that useful information may be available in corporate reports or other “informal” literature.

Efficiency (*resources are used optimally in achieving desired outcomes*). If the action is to be delivered to all employees, it should be relatively low in cost to reflect its wide application. Alternatively, the action might be more costly but targeted to a particular subset of employees.

Safety (*risks are mitigated to avoid unintended or harmful results*). You might not think of workplace mental health actions as raising safety concerns, but unintended consequences at an individual or organizational level can occur.

B. Identify the Benefits and Costs/Risks of each Selected Action

Write down the Advantages (Benefits) vs. Disadvantages (Costs/Risks) of each action you are considering, using the **Quality Framework**. Noting the advantages and disadvantages of particular actions is a quick and efficient way to achieve an overview of the relevant issues when selecting an action.

Example:

Action: Provide employees with a lunch-and-learn seminar on stress management skills and distribute relevant resources (i.e., workbook on self-management of low mood and depression).	
Advantages (Benefits to employees & employer)	Disadvantages (Costs or Risks to employees & employer)
Appropriateness: Can help employees recognize and take responsibility for early signs of mood problems, and guides them to take preventive action or seek help.	Acceptability: Employees may be uncomfortable or unwilling to discuss personal experiences.
Efficiency: Relatively inexpensive; if even one mood-related work leave is averted, this will pay for itself many times over.	Accessibility: If worksites are scattered, multiple deliveries will be required.
Effectiveness: Research indicates the usefulness of mood self-management skills.	Safety: If an employee were to disclose a mental health problem, possible negative impact on reputation or advancement could follow – precautions are needed to ensure confidentiality and to prevent the violation of privacy, as well, possible negative impact on psychological well-being could follow – providing an option for confidential follow-up with a healthcare service is advisable.

C. Create a Program Logic Model

You've selected actions that you think will be helpful in addressing the psychosocial factors you've prioritized, but implementing an action in a corporate setting can be complicated. Many different players must be considered, especially in mid- or large-sized companies. It helps to map out your action approach, making a diagram that shows how the actions will fit into the existing company structure. Mapping your actions can help prevent unpleasant surprises in the future. This kind of mapping is known as Program Logic Modeling. It involves graphically presenting the various components of an initiative (including the inputs, activities, outputs, interim outcomes and target outcomes), as well as describing the linkages between the components.

A Program Logic Model looks like this:

