SOUTH AUSTRALIAN
LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Leading through
COVID-19

MANAGER
TOOLKIT

Government
of South Australia

Office of the Commissioner
for Public Sector Employment

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented disruption. The impact within the Public Sector has been varied depending on the nature of work being conducted and the types of services being delivered. This has required rapid response and we should be proud of how we have adapted.

As the pandemic continues to evolve, the role of a leader has never been more important.

This toolkit outlines key leadership considerations for managers to help them navigate through COVID-19.

It also contains a series of resources on how to effectively lead through uncertainty, and helps managers develop the mindset, knowledge and skills to manage themselves and their teams – to deliver for South Australia.

Links within this document will be updated and may change regularly – each time you use it, be sure to access it via the Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment website.

Some resources in this toolkit will take you to sites that are maintained by third parties who are solely responsible for their content. The Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment provides this toolkit as a support resource only.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

Every leader experiences unprecedented challenges to personal and working conditions in their own way. This toolkit contains some resources that will help you connect with what you might need.

Think about what might help you most from the topics included and revisit the toolkit for more guidance and inspiration as and when you need it.

HOW TO NAVIGATE AROUND THE TOOLKIT

Click the blue arrow icon to jump to the relevant page

Click on the pink resource icon to access the relevant resource

Click on the South Australian Leadership Academy icon to jump to the Key Topics page

What to focus on as a leader during disruption

Whilst core leadership skills continue to be required during COVID-19, there are some areas that require a stronger focus that need to be reframed or reconsidered. For leaders, the challenge is:

"How do I balance elements of employee safety, wellbeing, engagement and productivity?"

How well you do this will depend on four things:

1 **Ability to anticipate and adapt to the critical stages of COVID-19**

2 **Knowing the different support needs of your team members**

3 **Ensuring you self-regulate your emotions and wellbeing**

4 **Knowing the needs and capacity of your stakeholders**

Critical Stages of COVID-19

There are three stages of the pandemic that you will need to navigate through:

Stabilise

Leadership teams have rapidly adjusted to new ways of working. We need to establish communication flows and create leadership alignment around areas of focus. This is a time where teams need to be strongly connected.

➡ Click through to Stablise — Leadeship Considerations

Refocus

Leaders have been challenged to drive performance through new ways of working. There will be a greater need for reflective leadership to ensure leaders are working on the right things. They must be turning their minds to planning for the post-virus environment.

➡ Click through to Refocus — Leadeship Considerations

Transform

As the Public Sector emerge from the crisis, there will be greater sense of its strengths and vulnerabilities. Leaders will work to establish the next normal for the Sector. Strategy, purpose and culture will be revisited as leaders begin the task of building a more resilient Public Sector.

➡ Click through to Transform — Leadeship Considerations

You need to be working across all three stages simultaneously.

It is helpful to consider each stage through the lenses of people, place and productivity.

Executives will need to apply an increased weighting to the refocus and transform agendas.

Critical Stages of COVID-19

Below are specific leadership considerations to help you transition through each stage to manage the challenges and seize the opportunities the disruption presents.

Stablise — Leadership Considerations

PEOPLE

Promote practices that support mental health and wellbeing within your team.

Build high levels of trust within your team during the pandemic.

Raise people issues or concerns to HR and senior levels as appropriate.

Reinforce COVID-19 key messages, communication and advice from executive levels with your agency.

PLACE

Plan for new working environments (e.g. hybrid, on-site or remote) and how to organise work and deliver services.

Support employees' to embrace and adapt to new ways of working.

Communicate to employees, contractors and visitors on new processes for entering and using the workplace.

PRODUCTIVITY

Assess the disruption impact on output, engagement and productivity.

Set your remote workers up for success.

Embrace new technology to maintain and improve productivity and team collaboration.

Set short term goals for team output.

Under increased times of pressure and disruption, reinforce the Code of Ethics and South Australian Public Sector Values.

Critical Stages of COVID-19

Below are specific leadership considerations to help you transition through each stage to manage the challenges and seize the opportunities the disruption presents.

Refocus — Leadership Considerations

PEOPLE

Implement a workforce transition plan:

- Stage a safe return to the workplace where applicable
- Assess worker needs and encourage remote where possible
- Prepare for additional adaptions as COVID-19 restrictions change.

Prepare response and adaptions for future outbreaks:

- Maintain motivation and wellbeing in the new 'normal'
- Manage and measure safety and wellbeing risks
- Demonstrate flexibility with employees' needs and circumstances.

PLACE

Embed new behaviours to support additional changes to facilities and physical ways of working including:

- Physical distancing advice
- Operation protocols (e.g. meetings and service delivery)
- Maintaining health and hygiene in the workplace.

PRODUCTIVITY

Optimise the use of technology to support worker wellbeing and productivity.

Establish processes that provide greater visibility of team output.

Resist the temptation to return to business as usual mindsets:

- Embed reflective practice in your teams' work routines and capture/respond to lessons learned
- Share and learn experiences with leadership networks and peers
- Encourage a positive mindset and celebrate progress and wins.

→ Click back through to Critical Stages of COVID-19 home page

Critical Stages of COVID-19

Below are specific leadership considerations to help you transition through each stage to manage the challenges and seize the opportunities the disruption presents.

Transform — Leadership Considerations

PEOPLE

Engage and align team to agency vision for new ways of working and service delivery.

Build the team's capability and mindset to adapt to future disruption.

PLACE

Consider future workplace space requirements for the 'new normal' work life.

Integrate remote workplaces with traditional workplaces.

Engage and align employees to the new sense of 'place' in the future workplace environment.

PRODUCTIVITY

Revisit and re-assess strategy, purpose and culture to align to new ways of working and stakeholder expectations.

Embed continuous improvement/business agility and normalise successful innovation.

Different Support Needs

Stages of Life

Just as each stage requires specific consideration, support or focus, it is important to also recognise that employees' experiences of COVID-19 may have been shaped by a variety of individual circumstances. This may include job role, life stage, cultural expectations or caring responsibilities. All of these factors contribute to different support needs stemming from COVID-19.

The table below provides an example of how life stages may impact individual experiences during COVID-19.

	18-28 YEARS	29-45 YEARS	45+ YEARS
What's happening	• Job uncertainty/financial concerns • Adapting to working from home (possibly in a share house) • Perceive themselves as more removed from the virus	• Trying to find routines • At home, dealing with young kids • Concerned about the impact of the virus on parents and family members	• Dealing with business and economic implications of the virus • Concerned about the impact of the virus on parents and family members
Thinking	• "What will happen with my job?" • "I'm over this apartment"	• "I'm exhausted" • "My days have no structure"	• "Some really hard decisions are going to have to be taken" • "What impact will this have on my team?"
Feeling	• Uncertain • Bored • Somewhat ambivalent	• Overwhelmed • Tired, unproductive	• Concerned • Reflective • Pragmatic
Doing	• Adapting to their new reality	• Scrambling to manage themselves and their teams	• Understanding the ramifications of the situation
Needs	• To feel like they are learning and upskilling • Sense of purpose • Re-assurance	• Re-set in expectations • Support in managing and coaching others • Understanding	• Guidance from the Executive Team • Advice from peers and externally (e.g. coaching, sounding board) • Support and backing

Different Support Needs

Worker Type

Job roles and responsibilities have been differentially impacted and also result in different support needs. For example:

'FRONTLINE' WORKER

Essential workers that are continuing in their existing role in their usual place of work (e.g. SA Police, Health Workers, Emergency Response Workers, Teachers, Education Support Workers).

Main workforce concerns:

- Keeping people safe and well
- Capacity planning and changes to shifts as service volumes vary
- Managing stress and fatigue.

'REMOTE' WORKER

Workers who can continue their existing role, but away from their usual place of work (policy/project, finance/admin support, other service providers).

Main workforce concerns:

- Transitioning to remote and/or new ways of working/re-entering the workplace
- Technology capacity uplift
- Feelings of isolation, lack of inclusion/connectedness/collaboration
- Lack of productivity, accountability and performance
- Managing working hours/ability to switch off.

'RECONFIGURED' WORKER

Role required to be delivered in a very different way or allocated to an alternative role/task, either remotely or in the new role's usual place of work.

Main workforce concerns:

- Transitioning to remote and/or new ways of working
- Feeling of displacement when moving to new ways of working
- Change experience while transitioning to new delivery models
- Maintaining productivity through transition to new ways of working.

'CLOSURE OR REDUCED SERVICE' WORKER

Workplace closed due to Government restriction. Service not in demand and work not able to be deployed to other activities (could be taking a period of leave or simply not have meaningful work at current time).

Main workforce concerns:

- Feeling of displacement, loss of purpose
- Eager to return but no certainty when able to re-engage
- Concerns re exhaustion of leave balances
- Feeling uncertain due to potential impact of future outbreaks.

Key Topics

➡️ Non negotiables of leadership during disruption

➡️ Enhancing DAC

➡️ Fostering Trust

➡️ Communication

➡️ Wellbeing

➡️ Workplace Re-entry

➡️ Managing Hybrid Teams

➡️ Productivity and Performance

➡️ Remote Working

➡️ Virtual Collaboration

➡️ Collaboration Contract

➡️ Managing Service Delivery Impact

➡️ Business Agility

➡️ Technology Basics

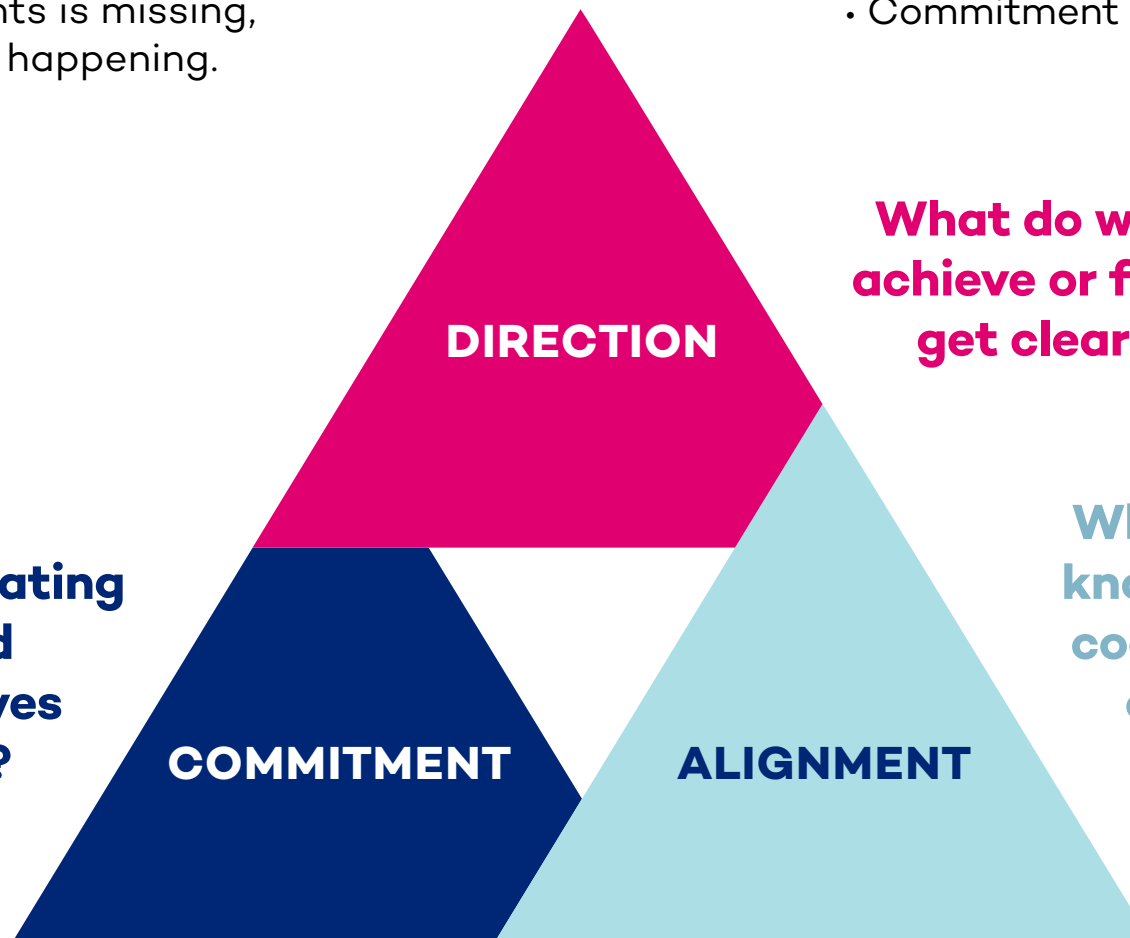# Non-negotiables of leadership during disruption

This 3-part model from the Center for Creative Leadership is a useful reference for balancing safety and wellbeing, engagement and productivity in your team. If one of these elements is missing, then leadership is not happening.

In times of change, it is important to reinforce and increase the intensity of each of these three components:
- Direction
- Alignment
- Commitment (DAC).

DIRECTION

What do we need to achieve or focus on or get clear about?

COMMITMENT

ALIGNMENT

How are we motivating ourselves and keeping ourselves accountable?

What do we need to know or do, to better coordinate our work or continuously improve?

Enhancing DAC

Direction needs strengthening if…	To enhance **Direction…**
• There is a lack of agreement on priorities • People feel as if they are being pulled in different directions • There's inertia; people seem to be running in circles	• Focus on priority issues and competition between interests • Clarify goals, objectives and involvement • Monitor progress and provide correction
Alignment needs strengthening if…	To enhance **Alignment…**
• Things are in disarray; deadlines are missed, rework is required, there's duplication of effort • People feel isolated from one another • Groups compete with one another	• Develop or reinforce the team structures and collaborative interfaces • Share and create knowledge, information, feedback, help and robust discussion • Re-establish meeting structures, meeting culture, responsibilities and roles • Revisit or implement processes and procedures to support changing operating environments
Commitment needs strengthening if…	To enhance **Commitment…**
• Only the easy things get done • Everyone is asking "what's in it for me?" • People are not "walking the talk"	• Build mutual accountability, ensure that celebrations, recognition and accountability/disciplinary actions are carried out • Create relationships, networks, trust and loyalty • Deal with well-being, doubt, frustration, insecurity and reservations

Fostering Trust

You need to inspire confidence in your people that they will not only survive the chaos, but thrive in the face of it. The key to doing this is fostering trust.

Connect

Personal connection enhances trust, and good connection requires an investment in time and effort. It sounds counterintuitive, but this is especially important as we practise physical distancing. Fortunately, we have the technology to stay connected. This means we should:

- Make virtual connections with others and be fully present when doing so; turn on your camera, when possible.

- Take interest in people as individuals. Reach out to someone new. Devote time at the start of virtual or hybrid meetings to allow people to share how they are doing.

- Relinquish control and allow for collaborative discourse on what your people need right now to feel supported.

- Honour others' viewpoints and listen to their thoughts and concerns without judgement.

Be Real

Authenticity and straight talk are a necessity during these times, as are consistency and reliability. In times of crisis, people are more sensitive to demonstrations of trust like:

- Share all information that is relevant, even when it's not good news. People can handle (and expect) the truth.

- Keep your promises about how you can support your people right now.

- Don't over commit. Be realistic about what you can do.

- Never lie, conceal or exaggerate.

FURTHER RESOURCES

📄 The 13 behaviours of high trust

📄 How leaders can support remote trust building

📄 Conversations that connect, now, next and beyond

📄 What good feedback really looks like

📄 What empathy centred leadership look like

Fostering Trust

Be human

Leaders sometimes get wrapped up in the idea of projecting strength, and mask their own concerns about the uncertainties ahead. When they do that, they come off as less authentic, less human and less trustworthy. By finding constructive ways to demonstrate your humanity and vulnerability, you will increase trust. Here's how:

- Tell people what you know, and what you don't know. You can't know everything in this case, so be honest about that.

- Be authentic and let your values show.

- Get personal by sharing your thoughts and feelings, and really listen to theirs.

- Recognise that everyone's coping curve will be different, and demonstrate grace and patience with those who need it.

Be kind

Trust flourishes in an environment of safety, and it's up to you to create that sense of safety right now. If you are unpredictable, uncaring or uninterested in how others are weathering this storm, they will be fearful and skeptical about your intent. Demonstrate kindness by doing the following:

- Show care and concern and encourage others with positive affirmations.

- Speak kindly and listen generously.

- Be available and present for others.

Communication

Use consistent messages that **set clear direction,** enable people to **make sense** of decisions and **demonstrate empathy.**

To **make sense,** employees need access to **information** and to be able to ask **questions.**

INFORMATION

Information is powerful because it:

- reduces emotional distress caused by the unknown
- diminishes fear
- provides tactical guidance
- demonstrates to employees that you are concerned involved, knowledgeable, and on top of the situation

Handle key information with the 3 'R's:

Review, Repeat, Reinforce.

When information is shared only once, it cannot be assumed everyone has received it — or if they did, that they understood it.

Repeating and reinforcing information on a daily basis and through multiple delivery methods helps it to sink in and be retained.

QUESTIONS

Ensure you have the answers to the questions that really matter e.g. how will you help employees when they can't cope?

Communicate, even when you don't know the answer. When information regarding what is happening is scarce or non-existent, people revert to gossip and rumours and also tend to 'MSU' it. That is: Make Stuff Up. Generally, what they make up will be worse than reality, no matter how bad reality is.
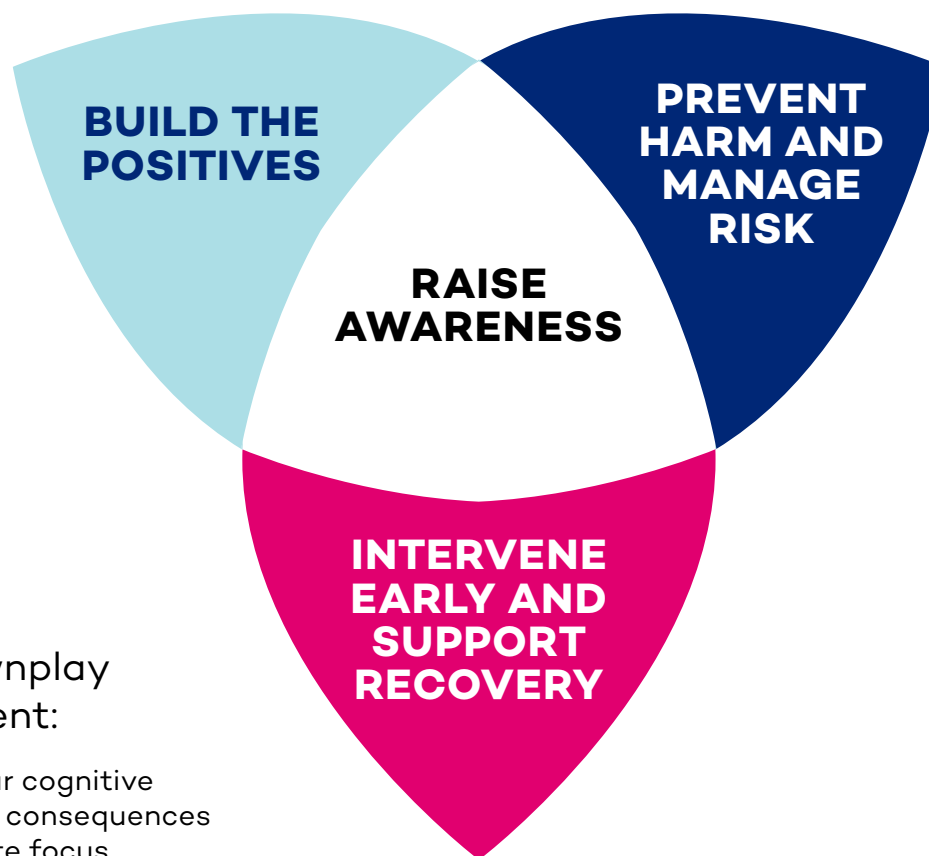
Wellbeing

Managing Stamina for the Long Term

The challenges from COVID-19 present critical wellbeing issues. You must ensure team members are physically safe, and psychologically, financially and socially supported to manage themselves successfully through the different stages of COVID-19. You need to manage your own wellbeing and energy first to enable you to effectively lead and support others.

You must also work to minimise the risk of long-term repercussions on employee wellbeing.

To support wellbeing for the long-term, focus on the four key areas:

BUILD THE POSITIVES

PREVENT HARM AND MANAGE RISK

RAISE AWARENESS

INTERVENE EARLY AND SUPPORT RECOVERY

Overcome your bias to downplay the crisis or to be complacent:

This is a period that plays against our cognitive biases. We need to think through the consequences of this and ensure we give appropriate focus.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Mentally Healthy Workplaces Toolbox

Guide to applying the Mentally Healthy Work Places Framework

Support employees' mental health while working from home

COVID-19 –Domestic and Family Violence

Wellbeing SA – Open your world

SAHMRI – Be Well Plan

Beyond Blue – Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service

Performance Management and Development – COVID-19 Manager Guide

South Australian Leadership Academy Webinars

Fostering Trust

Looking After Yourself

Through the South Australian Leadership Academy's webinars, many managers have reported an increase in stress by at least 20%. Interestingly, research shows that a 20% increase in stress diminishes empathy by 70%* - yet empathy is more important than ever during times of disruption!

Some of you would have also found yourself in a "task positive state" more regularly and for longer durations – this is when you are doing attention-demanding tasks: those that require a more conscious level of focus.

This can be problematic, as your rational brain functioning decreases, and cortisol and adrenaline levels increase. Prolonged periods in this state can negatively impact your mental and physical health, and in turn, affect your ability to lead your team effectively.

We know that you know the basics about looking after yourself physically and mentally, but doing an intentional stocktake of your own personal wellbeing is even more important during times of significant disruption.

Fariselli and Ghini (2008)
as sourced from www.6seconds.org

The following four techniques that have been scientifically proven to decrease stress and increase well-being (making headway in any of these areas requires no more than 20 minutes a day — and often, as few as 3 minutes will do the trick):

1 Increase your sleep both in terms of quality and quantity.

2 Increase your movement with exercise throughout the day.

3 Develop your mindfulness skills (via various meditation techniques).

4 Foster a culture of gratitude, at work and at home.

Wellbeing

Quick Stocktake

Mental Wellbeing

Are you doing things that give you joy?

Are you generally feeling optimistic?

Are you recognising your achievements or progress on things?

Are you feeling relaxed?

Are your energy levels okay?

Are you dealing with problems well?

Are you thinking clearly?

Are you feeling confident?

Are you feeling supported?

Are you feeling cheerful?

Are you connecting enough with family, friends and colleagues everyday in order to strengthen a sense of belonging?

If you identified that you need to improve your wellbeing:

- Use the resources in this toolkit
- Look out for training offered by the Leadership Academy.
- Seek your manager's support
- Use your Employee Assistance Program

Physical Wellbeing

Are you truly eating healthy meals?

Do you need to bolster your immune system – take vitamins, eat vitamin dense foods, go outside for vitamin D?

Are you really drinking plenty of water (around 8 glasses a day)?

Are moving your body enough?

Are you getting enough sleep (7-9 hours each night)?

Are you taking enough time out or disconnecting completely to recharge?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Mentally Healthy Workplaces Toolbox

Build your resilience in the face of a crisis

The key to mindfulness at work is being in 3 places at once

18 daily affirmations that help you overcome any hurdle

Staying calm, building resilience

TED Video - Martin Seligman – The new era of positive psychology

TED Video – Shawn Achor – The happy secret to better work

Never take a bad work day home, using these 3 steps

Wellbeing

Team Care

To Know/Remember

Personal and connected leadership will optimise feelings of assuredness.

Communication needs to be agile, regular, timely and provide clarity as to next steps and support, addressing true concerns of your team members.

The existence of trust maximises safety in sharing information about wellbeing – review Fostering Trust resources.

Connection to colleagues can provide an important buffer for some employees to stop them experiencing social isolation and disconnection.

Remote work during COVID-19 may increase the frequency and severity of domestic and family violence.

There are a lot of useful support services and resources available, including:

- Employee Assistance Program
- SA Leadership Academy's Webinars
- Wellbeing SA – Open your world
- Beyond Blue – Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service
- SAHMRI – Be well plan.

To Do
Revisit regularly especially with new changes to the operating environment

Provide structured, organised and regular opportunities for team members to 'check-in' with you and their colleagues.

Help team members structure their day.

Use a tool such as Polly in Teams to run regular, quick polls to check on and drive wellbeing.

Actively support your employees' mental health while working from home by using the resources provided.

Target refined approaches to performance management and development to foster productivity and keep employees engaged in meaningful work.

Familiarise yourself with the Mentally Healthy Workplaces toolbox to promote practices that support mental health and wellbeing.

Ensure employees know where to find ongoing information, guidance and support.

Maximise workforce wellbeing and immunity through monitoring work hours and enforcement of breaks.

Continue to support employees to grow and develop and remain nimble in the face of change.

Have team members complete the quick stocktakes and identify one thing they can do to improve wellbeing.

Workplace Re-entry

As restrictions ease, you will need to plan for a safe, efficient and effective return of your team to the workplace. Every team is unique, but the guiding principle should be: How do I take care of my team members and safeguard their health and wellbeing?

Key Considerations

Team members may be concerned and anxious about being in workplaces or travelling to workplaces. Others may be very keen to return after many weeks of working in isolation.

Even if employees have carried on working and participating in remote meetings, they will still need to readjust to working in a shared environment with colleagues. Some may take more time than others and it's likely that most employees will need a period of readjustment.

Those employees that have remained in the office environment will also need to re-adjust to more employees returning.

The risks to employee's health from this pandemic are psychological as well as physical, so you need to be aware of and sensitive to any underlying tensions and deal with them in a timely manner. These might include:

- anxiety about the ongoing health crisis
- fear of infection
- social isolation
- challenging domestic situations, such as juggling childcare or caring for a vulnerable person
- financial worries if a partner has lost their income.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- South Australian Public Sector COVID-19 Safe Workforce Return Toolkit – this is pitched at agencies, but contains useful information

- Roadmap for easing COVID-19 restrictions – SA Government

- National COVID-19 Safe Work Principles

- Safe Work Australia – the single source of information for workplace health and safety advice

- SafeWork SA – for specific guidance for South Australia

- Government of South Australia health advice – for important information in relation to COVID-19

- For Executives – A guide to returning to the workplace

- Returning to the workplace in the age of COVID-19

Workplace Re-entry

Each agency will have an on-site response team which will manage all considerations for a safe return to the workplace. Familiarise yourself with all the protocols and raise any concerns immediately.

Top Tips

Assure team members that you are placing their wellbeing at the forefront of decisions and re-emphasise how you will continue to do this as advice and restrictions change.

Provide a re-orientation or re-introduction process for employees returning to the workplace - include information on new safe work practices or controls that have been introduced.

Ensure that you provide the same information to employees in the office and those working remotely.

Foster an inclusive culture, so that every employee feels they are returning to a supportive and caring environment.

Remind employees of the Employee Assistance Program services they can access and provide opportunities for employees to raise their concerns.

Continue to be guided by South Australian Government health advice and be proactive in identifying and actively combatting misinformation.

Any employee who feels unwell should be encouraged to stay home and not enter the workplace.

Ensure you know the process for indicting if a team member is suspected of being unwell, or the process for a suspected case of COVID-19 in the workplace including guidance on self quarantining.

Encourage team members to download the COVIDSafe app and help protect themselves, their friends and family.

Managing Hybrid Teams

Coming out of COVID-19 restrictions, many employees will find themselves part of a hybrid team—where on any given day you will have some employees working in the office—or their normal place of work—and others working remotely.

Bringing together a hybrid team will take some planning and adjustments but if done well, will provide a great foundation for increased flexibility and high performance.

Key Considerations

Decisions about who works in the office and who works from home will be guided by a combination of factors, including business need, team requirements, individual circumstances and personal preference. Vulnerable employees, such as those with chronic health conditions or employees affected by domestic and family violence, may have needs that should be prioritised.

It's important that employees work in conditions where they can thrive. For some, that's working in the office surrounded by the buzz of other colleagues, while for others it is working from home in a more quiet and focussed setting. For others, it may involve a combination of both modes of working.

These factors should be discussed openly with all team members. Implementing a hybrid model will work best when teams decide together what could work for them, when options are trialled, when feedback is open and considered, and where adjustments are made as needed.

HYBRID TEAMS → KEY CONSIDERATIONS → THE DYNAMICS → SETTING UP FOR SUCCESS → PRACTICAL TIPS

Managing Hybrid Teams

The Dynamics

A key to managing hybrid teams is greater awareness that remote and physically present employees have different experiences of work. Being aware of unconscious biases that might play out or imbalances is the first step towards overcoming them and levelling the experiences for all employees regardless of where they are working.

POTENTIAL UNCONSCIOUS BIAS FACTORS

Distance bias
A tendency to favour people who are closer to us in time and space. Overcome it by taking distance out of decisions.

Similarity bias
A tendency to favour those who are like us. Overcome it by finding similarities with those having different experiences.

Communication imbalance
Serendipitous communication may occur in the workplace during meetings or outside meetings that remote workers miss out on. Create communications for everyone and consciously share updates when this occurs.

Connection imbalance
Relates to those who work together creating greater connections. Overcome it through virtual connections (e-coffees, chatrooms, group catch ups, team sponsored activities).

Perceived fairness imbalance
Relates to a feeling of injustice in how we are treated. Overcome it in transparent decision making and listening to employee feedback.

Managing Hybrid Teams

Setting up for Success

Hybrid teams can operate effectively, when a few simple strategies are put in place:

Team goals
Use technology to communicate the team's priorities, including what needs to be done each week, so that everyone is on the same page. Priority work should be discussed as a group and in one-on-one meetings.

Individual roles
Showing how each team member fits into the bigger team and organisational picture will help maintain motivation and engagement. Communicate the importance of each team member's role and how they will complement and support each other.

Culture through collaboration
Working from different locations and across varying schedules requires a concerted effort by everyone to build a sense of community. Create opportunities and spaces where people can share information about their non-work lives – hobbies, kids, pets – to build more personal interaction.

➡ Create a virtual collaboration contract. What team norms did you have in place and how might they change now that the team is working in the office and from home?

The right resourcing
Equip your team with the technology and resources they need to work safely and effectively, regardless of their location. This means designated online spaces to chat, host video meetings and share documents, and ergonomic work spaces in the office and at home.

Lead by example
Actively demonstrate just how effective hybrid teams can be, by combining working in the office, with periods of working from home.

Managing Hybrid Teams

Practical tips

There are some unique challenges that come with managing hybrid teams. Strategies are required to ensure that, regardless of where and how people work, everyone feels informed, included and connected as a team and as individuals. Success requires leaders and managers to establish new routines for priority setting and promoting a shared culture of purpose and accountability.

Manage by outcomes
Everyone has a job to do and it's important to monitor and assess performance consistently, regardless of where an employee is working. This means focusing on the quality of outcomes, and not whether employees are 'visible' in online forums or at their desk.

Culture
What makes a team a team? Related projects, common goals and shared experiences are all important. Regardless of where we work, teams need to be able to collaboratively build their own values and ways of working. Make sure there are plenty of shared opportunities for teams to connect and create their own team 'story'.

Communication
Hybrid teams require a special focus on communication, to ensure everyone has the information they need. Think through different communication patterns and methods, and harness technology to make sure you are communicating with everyone equally. Increase virtual touch-points but decrease the length of these meetings.

Turn off from work
The ability to disconnect is just as important for those working remotely as it is for those who physically leave the office. Just as office-based employees will take the time to chat with a colleague or get a coffee, let remote employees know it is okay to be offline for short breaks and take time for lunch or to clock off at the end of their work day.

Context
Consider your availability, and the way you distribute work, reward high performance and share information—these issues shouldn't be influenced by whether a person is in the office or working remotely.

Engagement
This is key in identifying ways to support everyone. Strong relationships and trust come from getting to know an employee as a whole person. Create a space where people can share information about hobbies, kids, or other aspects of their lives. Giving your team the ability to know one another in more than a work capacity will allow more personal interactions and boost morale.

Productivity and Performance

Finding the energy to sustain productivity and performance across the stages of COVID-19 will be challenging, especially when some of the most basic human needs such as safety and security are being threatened, and ways of working have changed. Whilst processes and systems (including procedures and policies) can enable or hinder the 'new Business as Usual', galvanising your team's motivation will be a key to success.

If you want your team members to be engaged in their work, you have to make their work engaging.

Give people the opportunity to experiment and solve problems that really matter. Ask: Where can we deliver amazing service to our stakeholders? What's broken that our team can fix? Why are these problems critical, valuable, and interesting?

Ensure the team's weekly routines are not focussed only on the tactical work (the concrete plans you need to execute). Some of your week should also be <u>focused on adaptive performance</u>, where there is no plan to follow, but instead, experiment and problem solve.

What you measure is the single strongest signal to your people of what you care about. To show you care about their motivation, measure it using an online tool or Polly in Teams. Then, have a discussion with them about what might be driving their motivation up or down, and what would be helpful to maximise their motivation and experimentation in the weeks to come.

Plan and prepare for a future crisis - If cases spike and restrictions are put back in place, will you be prepared?

Realign capability and capacity so that the team has the skills, confidence and capabilities required to embed the new ways of working. Is further training/practice required?

Productivity and performance relies on effectively adapting processes and systems.

Target refined approaches to performance management and development to foster productivity and keep employees' engaged in meaningful work.

Provide recognition, such as sending an eThanks for those who are living the values during this time.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Performance Management and Development – COVID-19 Managers Guide
- Microsoft Teams platform walkthrough
- Microsoft Teams Community for 'how to' discussions and sharing best practice
- Visual management tools
- Virtual Collaboration
- eThanks – SA Government's system for sending electronic thank you notes
- South Australian Leadership Academy training and resources
- Leading high performance in disruption
- Inclusive Leadership in times of crisis

Remote Working

Top Tips

Put yourself in the right frame of mind by sticking to your normal morning routine.

Find an appropriate space for working with minimal distractions and appropriate ergonomics.

Structure your day as you would when working in your normal physical location.

Ensure you build appropriate breaks into your day.

➡ Ensure your personal productivity by focusing on your psychical and mental wellbeing

Set your remote workers up for success by promoting the working from home guides.

Continue to maintain social connections with your team – use video calls where possible.

Create a virtual collaboration contract for your team – what are your team norms and how might they change.

➡ Develop your skills and capability to effectively manage a hybrid team.

➡ Develop your skills and capability to effectively lead virtual collaboration

KEY RESOURCES

📄 5 ways to support people working from home

📄 5 top tips for working from home

📄 Remote Working for Productivity – Managers Guide

➡ Wellbeing

➡ Managing Hybrid Teams

➡ Virtual Collaboration

FURTHER RESOURCES

📄 5 tips to balance remote working while your family is also at home

📄 A guide to managing your newly remote workers

📄 15 questions about remote work, answered

📄 Why remote workings time has come

📄 How to stay focused when your working from home

Virtual Collaboration

With the need to work as virtual teams or a hybrid of people working in the physical workplace, and others from home, we need to take extra care to treat one another as human beings, and to respect and celebrate diversity of thoughts/preference.

Top Tips

Slow Down to Speed Up - take the time to set expectations, to focus, to create processes on how the team will interact, and to put the appropriate tools in place. Use the collaboration contract (link to page) to set expectations within your team.

Put extra time and planning effort in when hosting virtual meetings - ensure everyone has a voice and promote mental/emotional connection with one another.

➡ Create psychological safety by fostering trust and encourage team members to speak up.

Maximise the opportunity to express non-verbal cues: turn on video, explicitly check-in on the sentiment of the participants, communication is key

Make people feel like they are physically together: invite people to share where they are, what they see outside the window. Talking about physical spaces creates "togetherness".

Choose from a range of collaboration technologies to keep the virtual team connected. Consider both live and asynchronous collaboration tools. E.g. keep a chat room open for team members to hang out anytime.

Make feedback more frequent and less formal. Set expectations with the team that this is something you all deliberately practice. Consider meetings with a celebration section on both work and personal milestones.

FURTHER RESOURCES

➡ Collaboration Contract

➡ Fostering Trust

📄 What it takes to run a great virtual meeting

📄 How to run a great virtual meeting

📄 How to get people to actually participate in virtual meetings

📄 Virtual team building ideas

📄 Gender, power and virtual meetings

Collaboration Contract

A collaboration contract can be thought of as a "service level agreement" that you make amongst the team that describes how you will work together and what tools you will use. It helps engage your team for optimum results, and can lead to a common understanding, shared expectations and comfort using the tools.

What should be in your collaboration contract?

Consider the following as possible elements:

- We will not send e-mails with attachments to one another – we will send links to the documents

- We will make sure that all our documentation is stored in the document repository [insert name of your tool]

- We will use the following naming conventions for files/folders/channels

- We will tag content with the metadata we agreed to as the content is added, even if attributes are not mandatory

- We will use this specific folder/library structure to organise our team documents

- We will let the team leader/owner know if the metadata or folder/library structure needs to be adjusted

- We will use [insert name of your tool] for all internal team conversations

- We will use [insert name of your tool] for all wider agency, SA Government or external conversations

- We will use [insert name of your tool] for our meeting minutes

- We will use [insert name of your tool] to record task status

- We will hold each other accountable to follow the contract.

You can also add additional elements that are applicable for your team.

Make a collaboration contract work for you

Understand your common goals, and your shared deliverable. What tools are available for us?

Agree what you are trying to accomplish and then think about which tool to use.

Get everyone to self-assess things like comfort level with the tools, priorities, expectations for group collaboration etc.

Document which tools that you will be using.

Learn what tools are available (your agency's ICT team will be able to help), how to use them as a group and attend the training as a group at the same time. Use the time not just to learn about the tool, but also to evaluate how the tool might benefit the team.

Talk to each other about what makes sense, what you want to try, and what might not work. Use these critical conversations to establish shared expectations.

Share tips and best practices with your team.

If someone is not living up to the expectations/contract, help/coach/guide them.

If it's not working, get together and adjust the contract.

Managing Service Delivery Impact

The impact of COVID has varied greatly from agency to agency, and from business unit to business unit, with some being impacted more than others and requiring a shift in their strategic focus. It is important to consider:

- What service changes are required to align to changing community needs/public value?

- Identify which services need to be rescaled due to increase/decrease in demand

- What services will need to be re-designed to accommodate for ongoing restrictions or efficiency of delivery? Has the community accessed services in a different way – should this continue?

- What have the financial impacts been on your agency/team e.g. loss of revenue or overspend and what does this mean for your team?

- How has the increase in technology adaption and capability changed the way work is delivered?

- Do team structures need to change to align with a change in your agencies strategic direction?

- How will your team or the community transition to new operations or ways of working?

Managing Service Delivery Impact

Service delivery impact on teams

How we manage our team structure and capability will be critical to sustain and deliver services.

Services that will be re-designed

Key considerations:

- How do the changes impact on organisational/business unit structure?

- Will this result in a reduction or increase of employees?

  – If a reduction, what is the predicted volume of reduction? Can displaced employees be redeployed within your agency?

  – If an increase, how will you secure the additional resources?

- Will this result in the requirement to retrain employees? Is this a complete new skill set or partial modification to skills?

Services that will not change in delivery design or demand

Key considerations:

- Which services will be unaffected? These are services that will continue to be delivered in the same way as pre COVID-19, and there is no significant change or impact on the number of employees or skills required to deliver the service.

Services that are expected to increase in demand

Key considerations:

- Identify roles that you expect will increase in demand and the volume of predicted increase

- How will these increases be met – redeployment from within your own agency, redeployment across the sector, new recruits, other (contract, casuals etc.)?

Services expected to decrease in demand or cease

Key considerations:

- Identify roles that will be directly impacted

- What is the predicted workforce reduction?

- How will these decreases be managed - redeployment within your own agency, redeployment across the sector?

Business Agility

Being able to implement change consistently will determine your future success through the upcoming phases of COVID-19 – and beyond!

Business agility is about being more adaptive, creative and resilient. It is not an all or nothing quality – it should be considered on a continuum, and as a systems based capacity.

Top Tips

Think about the mindset you want to cultivate in your team, and what you can do to send the message that innovation/continuous improvement is valued.

Build your own capability to ask disruptive questions and seek out disconfirming information.

Strengthen organisational learning and connections across functions, not just within your team. Set up a joint team meeting with another team to share learning, processes and understand different perspectives and skill-sets/knowledge you can leverage.

Encourage everyone to scan the environment and look for what stakeholders and colleagues are doing.

Have a "go and see" philosophy. Base decision-making on an in-depth understanding of what's actually happening "on the shop floor", rather than on what you think might be happening.

Value high quality thinking which will result in meaningful action, and view problems from many different angles.

Devolve appropriate power and authority - people work best when they are enabled, engaged and energised.

Celebrate and recognise risk taking, or when processes are simplified, quality improved or ease of use is increased. Consider using eThanks - SA Government's system for sending electronic thank you notes.

Try to mitigate your, and your team's unconscious bias.

Find out from the team what stops them from bringing you great new ideas.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Why growth mindset matters for organisational agility

How the virus illuminates our VUCA world

How the pandemic challenges decision making

Slow down to make better decisions in a crisis

eThanks – SA Government's system for sending electronic thank you notes

South Australian Leadership Academy training and resources

Business Agility

Questions to Foster Business Agility

Asking different questions and looking for different angles is a great way to change your perspective or to find a way forward. From time to time, read through the following list and answer a question or two and lift your and your team's agility.

What services, products or processes are we over-defending or clinging to?

What is the most useful tool out there, that we know nothing about?

What would this look like if it was easy?

Who have we surrounded ourselves with, that will give us generous feedback?

If we had a clean slate, what would we do?

What will cause me or the team to become extinct or irrelevant?

What would we do if we couldn't fail?

What would we do if we weren't afraid?

What if we had to do it 10x better? 10x bigger?

What is our blindspot?

How inclined are we to challenge the status quo to improve products, services, processes and plans in support of the overall goal?

How safe is it to express new and different ideas, to be different and to take risks?

How consistently do we demonstrate the self-discipline and determination to see change through to completion?

How able are people to manage their own physical and emotional needs, with support from colleagues and leader?

Consider your go to 'catch phrases' (e.g. a stitch in time saves nine, we don't do mediocrity etc.) and unintended consequences they may have on agility, culture and process.

Technology Basics

Top Tips

1 Ensure you are still working securely when working away from the office, always lock your device and report suspicious emails, SMS or phone calls to your agency's ICT help desk.

2 For remote working, ensure your personal Wi-Fi network is password protected and secure.

3 Reduce additional load on your home broadband (E.g. streaming from smart TVs or other devices) to maximise your connection to work.

4 Go to www.sa.gov.au for up-to-date information on South Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the latest data on the spread of COVID-19 in the state.

5 Find all of your agency-related information quickly and easily at home by accessing your agency intranet site.

6 Use Office 365 apps like Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and OneDrive and more. Communicate to your team members with Microsoft Teams and keep up to date with functionality to improve your digital experience and collaboration.

7 Bring teams and external stakeholders together through WebEx. Schedule meetings, share presentations or use a telephone line to invite people into the conversation.

8 If you require any additional applications or platforms, please contact your agency's ICT help desk to discuss their suitability and to check any security concerns.

9 If you are planning consultation with the community, reach out to the Strategic Engagement Team within DPC via www.bettertogether.sa.gov.au for assistance to use the online consultation hub 'YourSAy'.

FURTHER RESOURCES

📄 Microsoft Teams platform walkthrough

📄 Microsoft Teams Community for 'how to' discussions and sharing best practice

📄 Microsoft Office Cheat Sheets

📄 YourSAy online consultation hub

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