

REVIEW OF WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY STRATEGIES

Introduction

The purpose of this review is to analyse workplace health and safety strategies from different countries and regions, to contribute to the development of such a strategy for New Zealand. These countries and regions include Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Britain and America. Strategies have been selected from English speaking developed countries.¹ Each strategy is summarised and recommendations are provided, about what could be included in a strategy in New Zealand. The main influence of this review will be on the proposed structure of the Workplace Health and Safety Strategy (WHSS).

Context

Strategies or strategic plans are a key feature of strategic management. The proliferation of strategic management over the last few years has been influenced by the development of managerialism in Western countries. In New Zealand, this is also influenced by the Government's focus on:

- whole of government approaches, that cross the boundaries between government agencies
- involvement of the wider community. This results in more stakeholders being involved in strategic design, more prominence being given to consultation, and greater emphasis on democratic processes
- emphasis on co-ordination mechanisms to mitigate against the fragmentation of Government
- the Review of the Centre. This emphasises the development of public sector capability to achieve long term goals
- emphasis on outcomes and reporting strategically, for example, in the new Statement of Intent process.

¹ The strategies reviewed in this paper can all be accessed from www.nohsc.gov.au/nationalstrategy

Australia

Three strategic documents from Australia include the:

- National OHS Strategy 2002-2012
- National OHS Strategy National Priority Action Plans 2002-2005
- National OHS Improvement Framework (1999)

All these have been produced by the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC), which is a federal organisation based in Canberra.

Purpose

The *OHS National Improvement Framework* was developed in 1999 as the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission's first step in leading the systematic improvement of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS). The *National OHS Strategy 2002-2012* builds on the direction provided by the OHS national improvement framework, and adds some new aspects, such as a focus on prevention at the design stage, and an action plan. All of the documents provide a mechanism for co-ordinating approaches across the federal states in Australia. Each state currently has different legislation and compensation systems. The strategy provides a forum for national agreement about future priorities, and co-ordination of implementation.

Method

The methodology used to develop the strategy is not described.

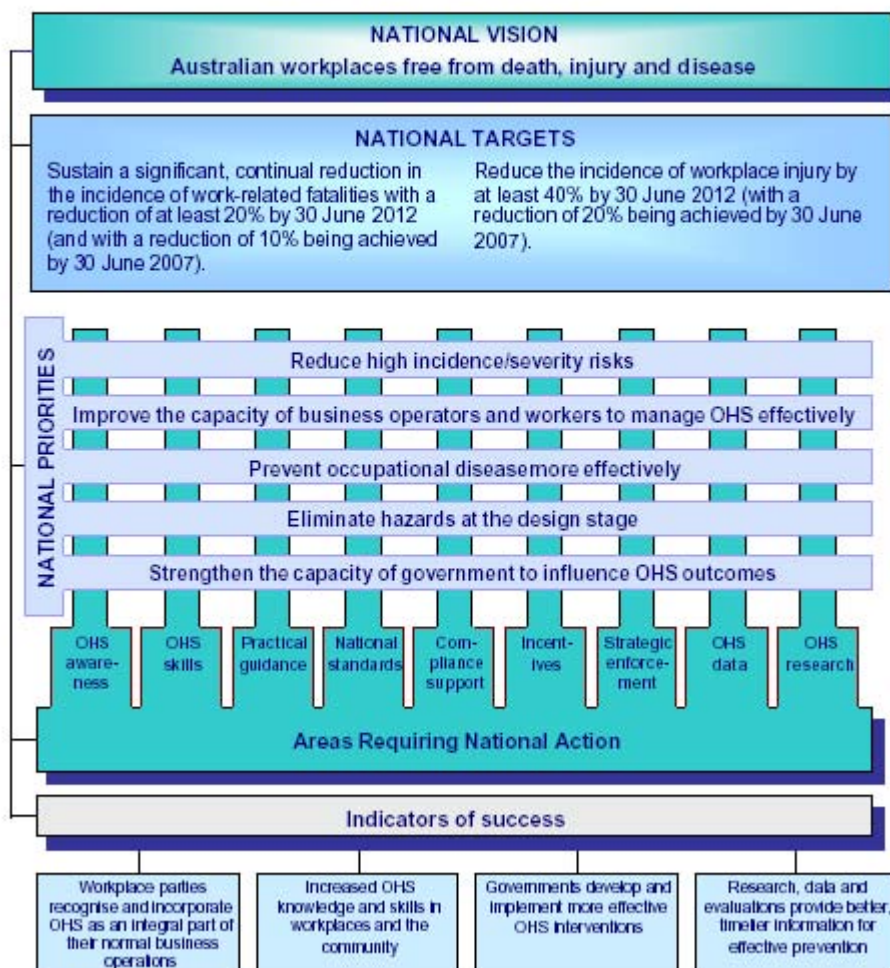
However four components for implementation are outlined. These are:

- development of an action plan, including indicators (To date indicators have not been developed)
- monitoring of achievement of the strategy through annual reporting to Ministers
- evaluation
- review of the strategy.

Structure

The diagram below provides a strong framework for the strategy. The key aspects of the strategy are clearly described, and visually presented for greater emphasis.

NATIONAL OHS STRATEGY 2002 - 2012



A vision statement is underpinned by five national priorities. These priorities are pitched at a high level. In some areas, this does not provide very strong direction, for example, it is not clear how increasing capacity moves beyond 'business as usual', and the elimination of hazards at the design stage is very broad (the Action Plans also do not provide strong guidance about this priority).

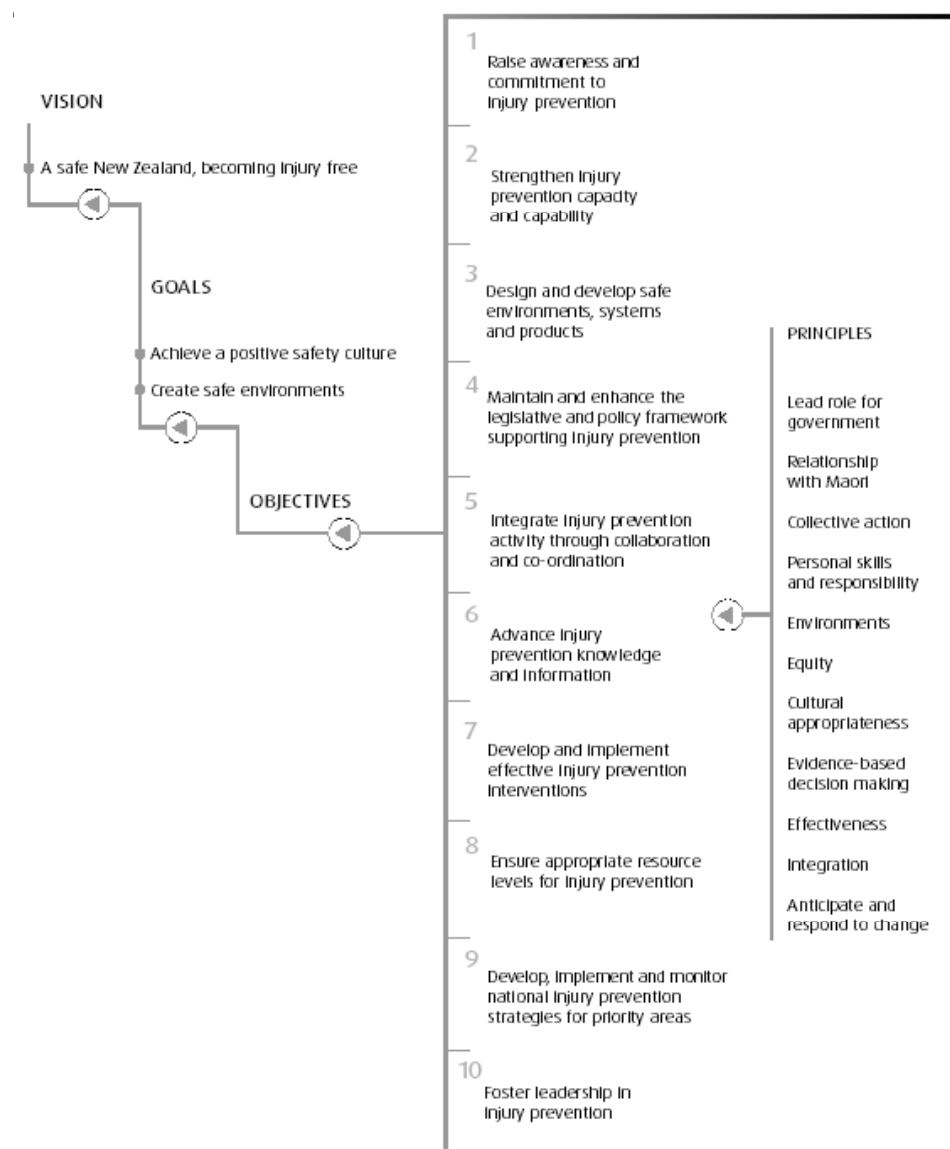
The implementation plan breaks the priorities down into key focus areas and major areas of action. A strength of this approach is the hierarchical approach to implementation. The priorities are broken down and described, first into focus areas, then into areas for action. Most of the actions are still not SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound) and one more breakdown into more specific milestones may have been useful. The nine areas of national action from the *OHS National Improvement Framework* represent the necessary infrastructure for implementation.

Some high level outcomes or expectations are set for each national priority. These provide a proxy rationale for the strategy, as well as defining the aspirations for the strategy. No methods for assessing progress towards these outcomes are provided. No principles are articulated in the strategy.

There are two overarching quantitative targets. These are to reduce the incidence of work-related fatalities, and workplace injuries by specified percentages. The difficulties in defining and collecting this data are not canvassed. No qualitative national targets are provided.

New Zealand

The New Zealand Injury Prevention Strategy (NZIPS) was launched in June 2003.² This document covers work and non-work injuries. It provides the mandate for the Workplace Health and Safety Strategy (WHSS). An implementation plan has subsequently been developed to support the strategy. The following diagram summarises the NZIPS.



Purpose

The NZIPS received strong sponsorship from the Minister for ACC. The strategy has a functional approach, and is intended to improve the performance of agencies operating in the sector. It is intended to have a broad influence, and has been developed to include perspectives of central and local government, non-government agencies, businesses, communities, families/whanau and individuals.

² The NZIPS can be accessed through www.nzips.govt.nz

Method

The method used to develop the strategy reflects the commitment to inclusion of the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders. Three advisory groups were utilised, including a Stakeholder Reference Group, an Expert Advisory Panel and a Government Interagency Steering Group. Consultation was conducted with different stakeholder groups. The WHSS will replicate this process.

Implementation components for the NZIPS include:

- the development of an implementation plan
- annual reporting to Government against this plan
- publication of a biannual status report including measures of safety culture and safe environments, and key injury statistics and trends

Structure

The NZIPS provides a vision and a high-level set of agreed principles, objectives and actions. These can be used by agencies to guide their own organisational development. For example, the Maritime Safety Authority and the Health Research Council have used this document to guide their business planning. It shows similarities to other New Zealand strategies, which emphasise a set of values or ideals, such as the New Zealand Disability Strategy. The NZIPS has also been influenced by the structure of the Australian National OHS Strategy.

A strength of this approach is that it enables a systemic assessment of a range of different factors that contribute to injury prevention. It is also forward looking, and the strategy is phrased in language that depicts desired results or outcomes. It focuses on solutions rather than problems.

The implementation plan describes key activities, expected results, timelines, the lead agency and key partners. The activities are linked to the NZIPS actions and objectives. The intervention logic for the strategic selection of these activities is not clearly articulated. Not all of the objectives and actions follow through clearly into key activities.

The relationship of the key partners to the actions is not clear, for example, how they will be involved and what their responsibilities are for some of the results. This is particularly the case for the non-government stakeholders. This is significant because the strategy describes the role of non-government stakeholders as critical for its implementation to be successful.

No quantitative targets are set, although goals provide a basis for monitoring performance.

The principles are not explicitly integrated within the document.

United Kingdom

The *Revitalising Health and Safety Strategy Statement* was launched in June 2000. This is operationalised by the Health and Safety Commission Strategic Plan 2001-2004.

Revitalising Health and Safety Strategy Statement

The purpose of the strategy statement is to improve the standard of workplaces, reduce spending on health and safety failures, and control harmful substances.

Method

An interdepartmental steering group was established and interviews held with select stakeholders. Submissions were received on four consultation documents, which targeted different groups.

Structure

A strength of the strategy is that it is very clearly written and has very accessible layout and language.

The commitment to public consultation is emphasised through the structure of the strategy. A section at the front describes the consultation findings, and includes diagrams to summarise the findings. More detail is provided in an appendix.

Some quantitative targets are set.

Ten strategic principles are described with short sections for each. These are:

- promotion of better working environments characterised by motivated employees and competent managers
- regulation that recognises and promotes the contribution of a workforce that is 'happy healthy and here' to productivity and competitiveness
- occupational health being a top priority
- positive engagement of small firms
- motivation of employers to improve their health and safety performance. This includes rehabilitation
- cultivating a culture of self-regulation
- partnership on health and safety issues
- Government leading by example
- education at every level
- designing health and safety into processes and products

The largest section describes forty-four action points. These stretch beyond improving government agency capability and include industry and union involvement, improved governance of government and the private sector, and regulatory relationships. They are far-reaching and emphasise the arrangement and relationships between the parts of the sector. They are generally actions, and are more specific than implementation objectives. The macro level of this approach is a strength of this strategy.

Not all the strategic principles are fully carried through into the action points.

Health and Safety Commission Strategic Plan

This plan operationalises the strategic statement and sets a work programme for the Health and Safety Commission, to improve health and safety in workplaces.

Its purpose is to:

- inject impetus under the health and safety agenda
- identify approaches to reduce further rates of accidents and ill health caused by work, especially approaches relevant to small firms
- ensure that their approach to health and safety regulation remains relevant for the changing world of work over the next 25 years
- gain maximum benefit from links between occupational health and safety and other Government programmes

Five hazards and three sectors are prioritised. These were selected because large numbers are employed, the incidence rate of injuries or ill health is high and there are levers to bring about change or success. The hazards or sectors include:

- falls from height
- workplace transport
- musculoskeletal disorders
- work-related stress
- construction sector
- agriculture sector
- health services sector
- slips and trips

Work programmes are then set within the framework of:

- compliance
- continuous improvement
- knowledge
- skills
- support

Other areas of work are also planned, for major hazard events where the health and safety of many people are affected.

Reporting on the implementation plan for the *Revitalising Health and Safety Strategy Statement* is provided. This is an excellent example of monitoring of an implementation plan because it identifies the:

- action point
- lead agency
- others involved
- achievements
- next steps

America

The research and the enforcement functions of occupational safety and health have been separated in America. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is responsible for enforcement and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is responsible for research.

OSHA Strategic Management Plan 2003 - 2008

This is a business plan for OSHA, and is intended to enhance the performance of this business. OSHA provides services across the United States.

It presents some overall goals, which are:

Strategic Goal 1:

Reduce occupational hazards through direct interventions

Strategic Goal 2:

Promote a safety and health culture through compliance assistance, cooperative programs and strong leadership

Strategic Goal 3:

Maximize effectiveness and efficiency by strengthening capabilities and infrastructure

They present a mission and a vision that *every employer and employee in the nation recognises that occupational safety and health add value to American businesses, workplaces and worker's lives.*

Five environmental challenges are described, such as injury trends and the changing nature of work.

Three strategic directions are presented as well as benchmarks for fatalities, injuries and illnesses. This strategic plan is strong on performance measures, but the number of high-level vision type statements is confusing.

The plan culminates in a set of performance measures to assess three operational goals.

NIOSH Strategic Plan 1997- 2002

This is another agency specific plan.

It includes a vision, mission statement and four goals to:

- conduct a targeted program of research to reduce morbidity, injuries, and mortality among workers in high-priority areas and high-risk sectors
- develop a system for surveillance of major occupational illnesses, injuries, exposures, and health hazards

- increase occupational disease and injury prevention activities through workplace evaluations, interventions and recommendations
- provide workers, the public, and the occupational safety and health community with information, training, and capacity to prevent occupational diseases and injuries

These goals are supported by implementation objectives. These are fairly high level and are not specified into an implementation plan.

A strength of this plan is the interpretation of the effectiveness of the strategy, and the development of better targets for intervention. There is an overall emphasis on evaluation of effectiveness and improvement. Evaluation is not just added on as another task for the whole strategy, but is integrated within the objectives.

NORA (National Occupational Research Agenda)

NORA is a co-ordinated approach to research in occupational health and safety that was developed by NIOSH. A wide range of stakeholders, including scientists, external researchers, NIOSH, health professionals and other members of the public, reached agreement about 21 research priorities. The agenda was published in 1996. It has a ten-year implementation timeframe.

Committees were established to implement NORA, evaluate its effectiveness and procure funding. A partnership approach is emphasised across government, and between government and other stakeholders.

An update report was published in 2001, which evaluates the success of NORA at the mid point of its implementation. It tracks indicators such as the amount of research funding.

International

SafeWork is the prevention arm for health and safety in the International Labour Organisation (ILO). It has produced a strategic statement for a *Global Program on Safety, Health and the Environment*. This has an international focus.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is an important influence on the development of safety and health measures in New Zealand. The ILO has traditionally concentrated on setting standards for safety and health. Recently they have moved towards broader policy setting including the encouragement of national strategies.

ILO SafeWorks Global Program

SafeWork has provided a short strategic statement. There are four overall goals. These are that:

- preventive policies and programmes are developed to protect workers and hazardous occupations and sectors
- effective protection is extended to vulnerable groups of workers falling outside the scope of traditional protective measures
- governments and employers and workers organisations are better equipped to address problems of workers well-being, occupational health care and the quality of working life
- the social and economic impact of improving workers protection is documented and recognised by policy and decision makers.

Some worldwide trends are described to set the scene for intervention in occupational safety and health. A short rationale is also provided for each of the goals.

These goals are linked to their current work program to provide a strategic justification for their current outputs. A list of the major outputs are provided.

This strategic statement is not cross-sectoral and has focused on SafeWork's current work program.

European

The Commission of the European Communities has produced a strategic document called *Communication from the Commission. Adapting to change and work and society: a new Community strategy on health and safety at work 2002-2006*.

Communication from the Commission of the European Communities

This strategy is written like a policy document. It is discursive and provides dense text about different features of the strategy.

An introductory section describes environmental trends, including an increasingly feminised society, an ageing active population, changes in forms of employment and changes in the nature of risks for health and safety.

There are seven objectives. They describe target populations (who), for example, women, small businesses, and types of risks (what), the example, stress and harassment.

These feed into four themes including:

- strengthening the prevention culture
- planning instruments for building partnerships
- preparing for enlargement of the European Union
- developing international co-operation

The first of the two themes are broken down further into subheadings, which lead into actions.

The structure is complex, and there is not a strongly articulated rationale for the form of the paper and the relationship of the parts. There is no strong visual structure to this approach. This results in the key points of the paper being difficult to remember. It also does not provide a strong direction, because of the breadth of the topics, and the lack of internal coherence. Some of the themes are not carried through into the implementation list.

Content

The content of the reviewed strategies include a focus on:

- Why – rationale for intervention
- How – for example, development of capability, at a government and/or business level, or development of motivation of employers
- When – for example, emphasis on prevention
- What – for example, an increasing emphasis on health, as well as safety and a broadening of the scope of health and safety into psycho-social areas such as stress
- Who – different industry groups, for example, construction, small business, government or community.

In the strategies with the clearest structure there is a logical separation and development across these topics. For example, you do not find why, when and what mixed together in one section.

Features of Strategies

Some features warrant further discussion.

Outcomes and Targets

All of the strategies focus on outcomes, to some extent. Some of them have a greater emphasis on infrastructural improvement, on the assumption that this will influence outcomes. Some of the strategies identify quantitative targets, to be achieved over a period of time (usually at least 10 years). The use of quantitative targets has been very significant in some New Zealand strategies, for example the Mental Health Strategy. This strategy set a target of services for three percent of the population and this has been a significant tool to influence funding. The development of these quantitative targets was resource intensive and a whole infrastructure for the ongoing collection of data was built.

The development of quantitative targets for the WHSS would take a large commitment of resources, unless the targets were derived from existing data collection, such as the fatal and non-fatal injury data. An advantage of outcome analysis is that it may enable progress to be measured on the basis of achievements, rather than inputs. If the quantitative data is supported by qualitative information, this would provide a depth in information about the performance of the sector. Some sectors are investing in the development of this kind of analysis, for example, the Social Report. This is consistent with the new outcome based reporting framework for individual departments in their Statement of Intent. It is also consistent with international trends in Public Sector Management. However the disadvantages of outcome analysis are that it is expensive and it is difficult to achieve accuracy in data.

Implementation Plans

The advantage of having an implementation plan is that it explicitly prioritises tasks, and may allocate resources. It is also tangible, and allows responsibility to be allocated to key stakeholders. This can be monitored and reported to the owners of the strategy, such as Ministers. There should be an articulated intervention logic, which indicates why activities have been included in the implementation plan. They should have a strategic logic, and not just be a listing of current operational business. The evidence base for inclusion of activities may be introduced at this stage. *“An intervention logic is an evidence-based, systematic and reasoned description of the links between outcomes and outputs. It helps management relate their organisational activities to agency outcomes, and confirm their business approach is sound.”*³

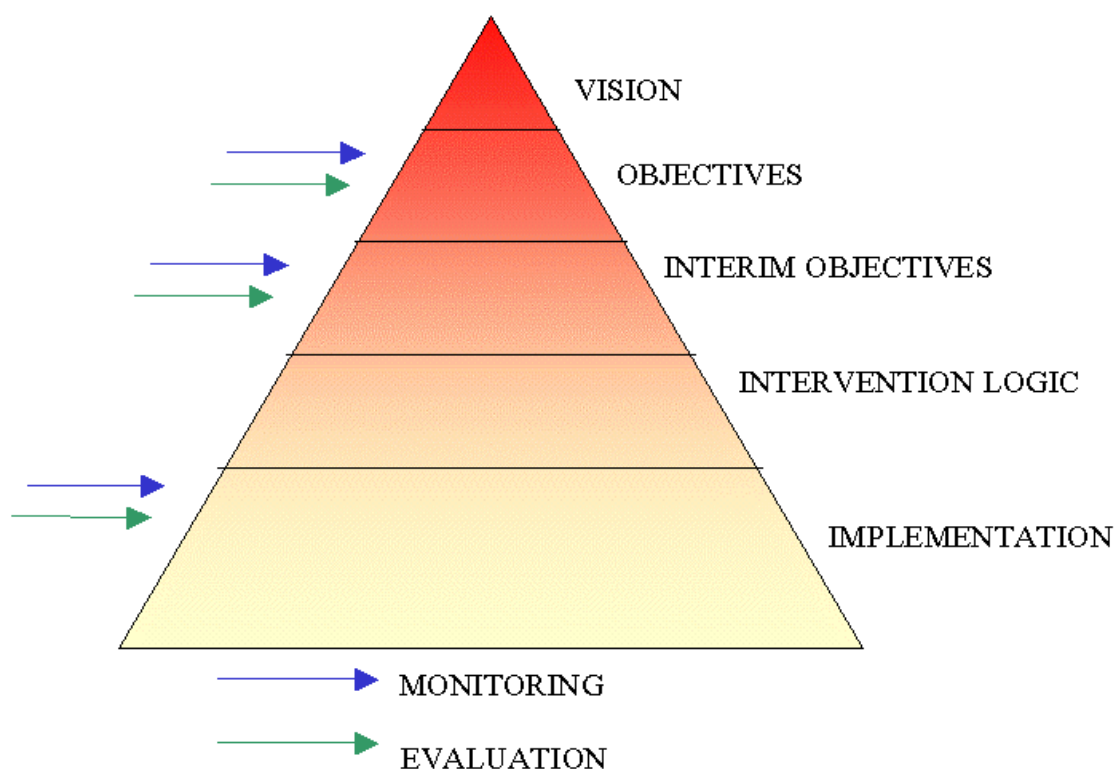
If the implementation plan is developed concurrently with the strategy, this may contribute to an iterative process, and the refinement of the strategic objectives. However, it may be more appropriate to develop the implementation plan after the commitment of stakeholders has been achieved for the broader principles in the strategy.

³ Pathfinder. *Guidance on Outcomes Based Management*. Building Block 2: Intervention Logic, p 5. <http://.io.ssc.govt.nz/pathfinder>

Summary of Structure

The following diagram summarises the features of the proceeding strategies. (Each strategy had some, but not all of these components.) Components of this model could be used in the WHSS.

FEATURES OF STRATEGY



- The vision is high level and inclusive, but captures the audiences attention. It serves to inspire people to action.
- Objectives provide focus and direction
- Interim objectives set achievable targets, or stages in reaching the objectives
- Intervention logic supports the strategic selection of activities. This will include the evidence base, if available, for activity selection.
- Implementation is the prioritised set of actions. Implementation plans and performance measures may be introduced at this stage.
- Monitoring and evaluation can take place at different stages

Overall features:

- The strategy should provide a direction
- Each level should be interrelated and have a logical consistency. Each level is derived from the one above. Strategic selection or prioritisation happens at each level.
- The components of the strategy increase towards the bottom of the pyramid. For example, one vision may be supported by two objectives, six interim objectives, and eighteen implementation activities. A strategy that is top-heavy will become unmanageable at the bottom.
- The components become more specific towards the base of the pyramid.

This diagram provides a conceptual structure for a strategy. In reality this approach will probably be adapted, for example, to achieve buy-in of key stakeholders, and build on current momentum for change. However this framework provides a guide for the development of the WHSS.

Once the conceptual stages have been worked through, the strategy may also be simplified for the purposes of final presentation and communication to a wider audience.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided as a 'mental checklist' to be used as a guide during the development of the strategy:

- The audience is identified. Language, content and structure are chosen to appeal to this audience.
- Few objectives. The objectives will be prioritised and will not cover every aspect of workplace health and safety
- Diagram to summarise strategy, which is clear and easy to remember
- If principles are included, they are explicitly integrated across the strategy
- Objectives and interim objectives provide 'stretch'. They are specific enough to provide strong guidance to the people who will operate the strategy.
- Objectives and interim objectives do not include core business, without an explicit reason for an emphasis on this aspect of business.
- All aspects of the strategy are aligned. There is clear continuity between any objectives, implementation plan and indicators.
- If an implementation plan is developed, decisions are explicitly made about the:
 - a) Level of specificity
 - b) Level of measurability and use of indicators
 - c) Responsibility for delivery
 - d) Rationale for prioritisation or selection of actions
- Integration of how and when evaluation will take place
- Integration of how and when monitoring and reporting will take place