



Australian Government

Department of Social Services

Staff Engagement Action Plan 2023-24

Introduction

This action plan has been developed in response to staff feedback from the 2023 APS Employee Census. The actions have been informed and developed through a broad consultation process with SES and EL2 staff.

This plan is complementary to branch and state/territory local action plans. It is the responsibility of all staff, managers and the executive to champion the actions in this plan and promote the department's commitment to continuous improvement.

Our Integrity

The current APS reform agenda includes a significant focus on a pro-integrity culture. To ensure we embed a culture of integrity and deliver better outcomes for the community, we will continue to develop an adaptive workplace culture that supports the contemporary operating environment through having staff that demonstrate:

- **Curiosity** by seeking to understand what is happening in their role and how to improve what they do
- **Contestability** by respectfully challenging and enhancing ideas and proposals
- **Collaboration** with others to achieve more comprehensive, integrated outcomes
- **Courage** to put forward advice and ideas because it is the right thing to do.

Areas of focus identified from the 2023 APS Employee Census

Our key areas of focus over the next ten months relate to:

1. **Clarifying team priorities**
2. **Empowering middle managers**
3. **Managing risk**



Clarifying team priorities

We heard you would like clarity from our senior leaders

To address this, the actions in the Plan will:

- Define roles and responsibilities within teams while encouraging collaboration
- Encourage innovation and curiosity within acceptable risk parameters
- Instil greater autonomy within teams and recognise not everything can be a key priority
- Enable staff to contribute to branch business plans and recognise and understand how these link strategically to the department's Corporate Plan
- Implement wellbeing practices which increase staff resilience and adaptability through times of change
- Foster a culture of contestability across the department by encouraging staff to have open, respectful debates encouraging every voice to be heard and considered

Empowering middle managers

We heard you would like middle managers to have greater responsibility

To address this, the actions in the Plan will:

- Empower and encourage middle managers to continue to build capability to lead effective teams and develop collaborative networks
- Use EL2 Forums to showcase how the 4Cs are being embedded in our culture
- Provide opportunities for greater transparency of information sharing and nurture curiosity
- Have the courage to take action when something appears wrong, unprofessional or working against a pro-integrity culture

Managing risk

We heard you would like robust management strategies to drive risk-based decision making

To address this, the actions in the Plan will:

- Articulate the broader environmental context for the department, understand and contest, where appropriate, why safeguards are in place based on lessons learnt
- Regularly review risk mitigation strategies to ensure they are appropriate for the current level of risk and adapt where necessary
- Understand the risk landscape the department operates within
- Encourage opportunities for streamlining processes where possible



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Action item	Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe
1	Continue to hold a series of leadership forums to facilitate learning through sharing lived experiences. Topics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifying team priorities Empowering middle managers Managing risk Target group: managers and supervisors.	People Services Branch, Corporate Communication and Media Relations Branch and Audit and Assurance Branch	November 2023 February 2024 April 2024
2	Develop and implement a manager toolkit with resources and training to support managers foster respectful, high performing and dynamic teams.	People Services Branch	June 2024
3	Aligning with the APS Strategic Commissioning Framework, develop a recruitment and retention strategy to ensure we attract and retain employees with critical skills into the department.	People Services Branch, Corporate Communication and Media Relations Branch, Community Grants Hub and Portfolio Governance Branch	May 2024
4	Workforce planning capability uplift to support the department's workforce and business planning capability to ensure all staff understand their group/branch priorities and direction for the immediate, emerging and future needs of the department.	People Services Branch, Communication and Media Relations Branch and Portfolio Governance Branch	May 2024
5	Review key administrative processes to reduce excessive administrative burden and ensure decision-making occurs at the right level including a review of human resources and financial delegations.	People Services Branch, Financial Management Branch and establish a Delegation Working Group	June 2024
6	Refresh our mandatory training/induction package and consider aligning with the broader APS Academy approach.	People Services Branch	June 2024
7	Continue to build change management capability, at the executive level, through targeted training and opportunities to share learnings from lived experience.	People Services Branch	May 2024
8	Review wellbeing initiatives to promote resilience and adaptability through psychologically safe, respectful workplace practices and culture.	People Services Branch	April 2024