



## **Pacific Immigration Development Community**

2019 Regular Annual Meeting

4 – 6 June, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

PIDC(19)RAM.29

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### **Agenda item 29:      Workshop 2: Workplace Wellbeing**

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#### **Proposed Recommendation:**

The PIDC Regular Annual Meeting is invited to **note** and **consider** the proposed best practises for workplace wellbeing to implement at the organisational level.

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#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to provide Members with proposed best practises and practical approaches for supporting workplace wellbeing within PIDC agencies.

#### **Background**

2. The establishment of best practises for workplace wellbeing is in line with the PIDC 2019 – 2021 Strategic Plan and coincides with Key Activity Area Four that addresses institutional strengthening and capacity development where Members collectively set best practises that contribute to security and socio-economic outcomes. Organisations with a fit and healthy staff will normally function better. On this basis, Members are recommended to implement simple and effective activities that promote lifestyle changes in the workplace to improve health and productivity of staff contributing to a productive and efficient workforce.

3. The pursuit of a healthy, efficient and productive staff also contributes to strengthening institutional capacity and having a strong professional corporate culture which is another key objective found in Key Activity Area Four of the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan. Workplace wellbeing is often a major factor in organisational performance and impacts staff satisfaction, morale and productivity. Understanding the risks to workers in relation to stress and wellbeing is an increasingly important responsibility for all organisations.

#### **Recommended activities**

4. The Secretariat has developed some possible activities for Members to consider which are attached as Attachment One. Members will be invited to consider the activities in a workshop setting that will be coordinated by the Secretariat.

## Workplace Wellbeing: Healthy Lifestyle changes<sup>1</sup>



The following activities form a basic outline of what organisations can adapt to help prevent and reduce stress, and by implication, to protect and foster wellbeing among staff. The list is not definitive or exhaustive, merely a few suggestions. The activities described offer reduced stress levels, which logically helps to create a more positive work environment.

### Nutrition

Nutritional deficiency otherwise known as a poor diet impairs the health of the body and the brain. If the brain is affected, so are our thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Certain vitamins and minerals are required to ensure a healthy brain and neurological functionality. Since certain deficiencies relate directly to specific brain and nervous system weaknesses. A properly balanced diet is clearly essential, both to avoid direct physical stress causes via the brain and nervous system and to reduce stress susceptibility resulting from poor health and condition. Toxins such as alcohol, tobacco smoke, excessive salt, steroids, other drugs and other pollutants work against the balance between minerals, vitamins mind and body. As such, excessive toxins from these sources will increase stress susceptibility and stress itself.

As with workplace environment all individuals are to have a balanced diet. A recommended diet should include the following:

- Fresh fruit and vegetables;
- Fish especially oily fish like mackerel. Battered fish from the chip shop, cooked in hydrogenated cooking oil is not so good for you; and
- Tea especially green tea.

Processed foods are not as good as fresh natural foods. Always check the chemicals listed first on the packaging before purchasing the product.

- Canned baked beans often have extremely high salt and sugar content. The beans are good for you, but the sauce isn't if it contains too much salt and sugar;

<sup>1</sup>Table sourced from <https://www.morganlovell.co.uk/knowledge/checklists/what-is-employee-wellbeing/>

- Canned and bottled fizzy 'pop' drinks contain various chemicals, including aspartame, which has been linked in several studies with nervous system disorders. Many squashes and cordials also contain aspartame;
- Too much coffee is bad. Interestingly espresso coffee contains less caffeine than filter and instant coffee, because it passes through the coffee grounds more quickly; and
- Pills and tablets are not good for you, avoid them if you can. For example, next time you have a headache, don't take tablets, go for a run, or a walk in the fresh air to relax naturally.

Irrespective of your past choices, the challenge isn't in knowing what's good and bad, it is more a matter of commitment and personal resolve.

### **Exercise**

Movement of the body is an excellent way to reduce stress and promote wellbeing. Exercise helps to dispel the hormones produced during the stress response, allowing the body to normalize. It warms and relaxes cold, tight muscles and tissues which contribute to stress feelings. It develops and maintains a healthy body which directly reduces stress susceptibility as well as increases blood flow to the brain, releases hormones, and stimulates the nervous system in ways that are good for us. Exercise produces chemicals in the body such as beta-endorphin, which is proven to have a positive effect on how we feel. For many people, serious exercise produces a kind of 'high'.

Scientists still don't fully understand how exactly these effects happen, but we do know that exercise produces powerful feelings of well-being and a physical glow, both of which directly reduce stress feelings. Exercise of all types (muscle-building and stamina-building) relaxes tense muscles and tight connective tissues in the body, which directly contribute to stress feelings and symptoms (particularly headaches). Running and cycling can be quite easily incorporated into the working day for many people. The biggest obstacle is a matter of personal commitment. For beginners, the most simple and easy step is to start small, like walking up and down the stairs instead of taking the elevator or walking home. Physical exercise is immensely beneficial in managing stress and like a balanced diet, is simple to adopt when there is personal commitment.

### **Incorporate motivation, nutrition and exercise activities**

The key to successful workplace wellbeing in the office stream from motivation by Management. Once Management is on board, willing and active to not only initiate the programme but also participate will further motivate and be taken seriously by staff. The following are suggestions on how to incorporate motivation, nutrition and exercise activities:

- *Start eating healthier:* encourage staff to introduce fruits and vegetables for meals that they have. Push to avoid fried food, junk food and processed food in the office;
- *Encourage daily exercise that takes less than 10 minutes:* Individuals can use their own time but the office can provide either an early finish to work. Recommend 1 hour to 2 hours per week for early close off; and
- *Implement simple changes that can lead to significant outcomes:* drink three litres of water a day – this makes you less hungry and more likely to be full a day. It also contributes to overall health, as well as clear skin, shiny and healthier hair.

**Weight-loss Challenge**

Commit your staff to taking up a weight loss challenge in the office. The office can decide on the length of time, prize and number of winners or biggest losers. It can go from 3 months up to a year, prizes can range from monetary, days of leave, and gift vouchers to suit either gender. This challenge suits all age and size groups as staff decide how best to carry out their own nutrition and exercise. Other than judging a person's appearance the easiest way to measure weight loss is by weighing a person. Other challenges can include by encouraging staff to enter a local marathon, canoeing or sports club available on island, joining a gym, and bringing along family members to participate.