

Principles to guide how you support small business owners and their mental health



Supporting small business owners and their mental health

The six principles will help you understand the mental health and business needs of small business owners to guide how you can support them better.

If you develop policy for small business owners or provide services to them, then you have an opportunity to support both their mental health and business health. Or you may be able to help educate the broader community on how to support them.

Supporting a small business owner doesn't mean providing counselling or therapy. Being mindful of the impacts your decision making has on small business owners and having a process to get feedback from small business or their peak bodies, will help ensure new policy or regulation keeps their needs in mind.

The Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, in collaboration with key stakeholders including mental health organisations and small business peak bodies, has developed some principles to guide policy makers, policy implementers and the broader community, in considering and supporting small business owners' wellbeing and business health.

These principles will foster a greater understanding of the mental health and business health needs of small business owners, while encouraging genuine collaboration between all key stakeholders.



Explore the six principles and see how they impact small business owners.



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1. Normalise perceptions of mental ill-health

- Identify opportunities to normalise mental ill-health and encourage help-seeking behaviour relating to business and mental health.
- Utilise business touch points and leverage existing small business initiatives to promote mental health.
- Target language and messaging to reduce stigma associated with mental health terminology.

3. Integrate mental and business wellbeing

- Take into account the interaction between mental health and business health.
- Consider the dynamic interactions between the business life cycle and individual circumstances.
- Ensure there is a balance of targeted and general support and services.

5. Consider diversity

- Develop policies and programs that address the common threads across the small business cohort.
- Ensure that diverse factors, including business, demographic, individual and environmental factors are considered, both in developing specific policies.
- Engage in evidence-based research to understand the changing landscape and the diverse needs of small business owners.

2. Build capabilities

- Educate small business owners in relation to business capability and mental health capability.
- Identify opportunities to empower small business owners to build their internal capacity.
- Utilise networks, including trusted advisors, the business community and family and friends.

4. Mitigate or reduce external factors

- Consider key stressors for small business owners including money, time, people, the environment and lack of networks.
- Identify opportunities through existing and new policies to mitigate impact of regulation.
- Make it easier for small business owners to do business with all levels of government, big business and the service industry.

6. Take a flexible and collaborative approach

- Leverage existing initiatives, build complementary policies and coordinate messaging to be consistent, relevant and targeted.
- Focus on the lived experience of small business owners.
- Evaluate effectiveness of existing and previous policies, and apply lessons learned to future policy development.

This toolkit is part of recommendations made by the Small Business Wellbeing and Support Policy Team (Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources), following collaboration with small business and mental health representatives.

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