

NSW Health Culture and Staff Experience Framework in Practise



Secretary's foreword

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Each day, our people work diligently to deliver great experiences of care and outcomes that matter most to patients and the community. Our aim is for a NSW Health culture that prioritises staff wellbeing and provides our dedicated and passionate workforce with a positive experience.

The *NSW Health Culture and Staff Experience Framework* follows the development of the NSW Health Workforce Plan. It will help enable our Future Health strategy, in addition to our objective of *building positive work environments that bring out the best in everyone*.

At NSW Health, our culture is deeply rooted in our CORE values: collaboration, openness, respect, and empowerment. These values guide and underpin every interaction every day including between colleagues, but also with patients, their families, carers and the wider community.

This Framework sets out the elements that contribute to culture and staff experience. It is designed to support and enhance the cultural aspects and endeavours of the many individual workplaces across the NSW Health system.

It features a focus on culture and staff experience levers. These are the key elements that influence and enhance organisational culture, including: psychological safety; culture focused leadership; diversity, inclusion and belonging; and sustainability.

Unlocking the power of these elements is crucial for enhancing our staff's wellbeing, engagement, satisfaction and retention. It provides further opportunity for all parts of NSW Health to enhance their workplaces, and embed a consistently vibrant culture to enhance our current ways of working. Greater investment across these areas also aligns with our *Elevating the Human Experience* strategy.

Thank you for your commitment to making NSW Health a great place to work. Together, we will continue shaping an inclusive, human-centered workplace where teams enrich health in millions of ways every day.

See the *Culture and Staff Experience Framework* for the full message from the Secretary.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which all NSW Health staff live and work and pay our respects to elders past and present. We extend that respect to NSW Health staff who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

For Aboriginal people, Culture is the foundation upon which everything else is built. While significant diversity exists across and within Aboriginal peoples and nations, there are some common characteristics that unite all Aboriginal cultures. The values of kinship, community, connection and sharing create a holistic approach where everyone is seen as important, with a specific role to play within the family, community, kinship network and land. Importantly, a person and community's cultural wellbeing is linked to their physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs and overall wellbeing.

The experiences and meaning of culture to Aboriginal people is at the heart of our thinking as we build and maintain the culture of NSW Health.

Purpose of the Framework

The *NSW Health Culture and Staff Experience Framework in Practise* is a condensed version of the more expansive *NSW Health Culture and Staff Experience Framework*. The purpose is to guide, build and maintain the culture of NSW Health. It allows for nuances within local cultures, while maintaining alignment with the broader system.

Culture outlines the expected behaviour of our staff and is informed by shared values, norms and beliefs.

Staff experience is how staff feel about our organisation, from the time they are recruited to the time they leave.

Future Health

The *NSW Health Culture and Staff Experience Framework* (Framework) was identified as a priority in outcome 1.4 of the NSW Health Workforce Plan, and as a key deliverable in Future Health, enabling us to meet *objective 4.1 – build positive work environments that bring out the best in everyone*.

Our CORE Values guide the way we work

Collaboration, Openness, Respect and Empowerment continue to define us. These CORE Values, first introduced to NSW Health in 2011, remain relevant to the way we work and interact with one another. Staff across our organisation have come together to refresh the CORE Value definitions so they reflect what is important to each of us in how we work together, and to express it in contemporary, accessible language .

Collaboration

We work together, recognising the contributions of everyone, to create supportive workplaces that produce the best health outcomes.

- Setting clear expectations on working together to achieve shared goals.
- Giving staff the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them.
- Seeking to understand and discuss without judgement.
- Using inclusive language.



Openness

We seek to understand new perspectives to learn, grow and continuously improve. We communicate transparently to create a safe and inclusive workplace that values diverse experiences.

- Demonstrating vulnerability by openly talking about and learning from mistakes.
- Providing transparent and timely communication.
- Being fair, approachable and reasonable.
- Adapting to change and innovation.



Respect

We value one another and recognise that everyone has talents, ideas and skills to contribute. We are considerate and listen to understand.

- Demonstrating kindness and compassion for each other's lived experience.
- Acknowledging that people are the experts in their own lives.
- Taking accountability for what we say and how we say it.
- Listening and making the effort to understand different perspectives.



Empowerment

We are trusted and enabled to take ownership of our work and goals, make decisions and contribute our unique talents and ideas to advance NSW Health.

- Promoting accountability in decision making.
- Enabling learning as part of our daily work.
- Knowing what matters to staff, patients, families and carers and working to achieve it.
- Speaking up on issues, including safety concerns, through appropriate channels.



The Culture and Staff Experience Levers

The Framework identifies nine key areas, described as Levers, that impact staff experience and drive culture. Each lever is a focus for action to create and sustain a constructive, inclusive workplace culture where our people can thrive while delivering exceptional health care.

The effort we put into each Lever will shape our culture and staff experience. We strive for a safe and inclusive culture that brings out the best in everyone and recognises the unique reasons why our people choose to work in NSW Health. Our NSW Health Employee Value

Proposition (EVP), *'the team enriching health in millions of ways every day'*, recognises that, at its heart, NSW Health is the people who directly and indirectly contribute, in millions of ways, to the delivery of excellent patient care across our vast and complex system.

A [Culture and Staff Experience Portal](#) provides practical tools and resources aligned to the CORE Values and Levers. This will support leaders and managers and their teams to design culture initiatives to meet their unique needs.

Culture Focused Leadership



Leaders understand their role and influence in setting their team's culture.

While culture is everyone's responsibility, leaders are accountable for setting the overall cultural direction. Leaders at all levels should actively work with their teams to design an effective team culture.

Culture-Focused Leadership is:

- Taking a moment to compose. Openly discussing the issues respectfully and showing understanding. Guiding the conversation towards what we can do better next time.

Culture-Focused Leadership isn't:

- Blaming others, showing anger, and raising voices. Disregarding other people's feelings and not providing opportunities to learn.

Kindness and Compassion



A kinder, more compassionate healthcare system has a significant impact on staff and patient experiences.

For staff, compassion and kindness builds resilience, engagement and a sense of belonging. When we are free to be ourselves at work we are motivated to perform better.

Kindness and Compassion is:

- Showing interest in your colleagues through active listening and empathy, seeking to understand other perspectives, being non-judgemental.

Kindness and Compassion isn't:

- Speaking in a dismissive or rude manner, ignoring others, acts of micro-aggression, bullying and exclusionary behaviour.

Psychological Safety



Feeling safe to freely express your opinions at work without fear.

Making people feel welcome to speak up and appreciating diverse perspectives, enables rich discussion and collaborative problem solving. This allows us to proactively identify risks and enables innovations and improvements in the way we work and deliver care.

Psychological Safety is:

- A team member raising an alternative view and the manager welcoming and exploring this contribution.

Psychological Safety isn't:

- Apportioning blame and shame when mistakes are made; dismissing a comment or email because you don't agree.

Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging



An inclusive culture means we are more likely to be at ease and perform to the best of our abilities.

Diversity refers to the presence of differences within people including physical, emotional, social and cultural aspects. **Belonging** occurs when people can be their true selves without fear of judgement.

Inclusion is:

- Asking people what they are comfortable sharing, what their preferred pronouns are, what they want to celebrate and what they prefer to keep private.

Inclusion isn't:

- Making jokes that relate to diversity e.g. cultural background, language, or traditions.
- Making assumptions around someone's capability and needs.

Moments that Matter



Enhancing and investing in moments that have the biggest impact on our staff journey.

Interactions like interviews, returning from leave or staff rotations can impact the staff experience – both positively and negatively. These ‘moments that matter’ offer key opportunities to reinforce workplace culture and values.

Acknowledging Moments that Matter is:

- Welcoming staff on rotations and supporting their transition by taking time to understand their own lived experience and designing an onboarding support with them.

It isn't:

- Not introducing them to their team members or making them feel welcome.
- Assuming they will know what to do and get on with it without thorough onboarding.

Wellbeing



Our staff are actively involved and well supported, enjoying a workplace that embeds wellbeing into the way we work.

Wellbeing means our staff feel emotionally and practically supported to achieve their professional goals while protecting their personal needs. By prioritising workforce wellbeing, NSW Health can improve the way we attract and retain the skilled workforce we need now and in the future.

Supporting Wellbeing is:

- Providing time to check in with how staff are coping and asking what barriers you can help remove. Making time for social conversation, sharing a cup of tea, and encouraging staff to make leave plans where possible.

Supporting Wellbeing isn't:

- Consistently expecting unreasonable discretionary effort; ignoring work-life balance conversations.

Safety Culture



Where safety is seen as everyone's responsibility and compassionate behaviours are evident at all levels of the system.

Safety culture involves ongoing recognition that the way we act towards one another and our environments enables a positive, safe workplace. It enables proactive resolution of challenges, incidents and errors.

Safety Culture is:

- Openly discussing risks and challenging the way things are usually done to see if there is a better way.

Safety Culture isn't:

- Taking short cuts to save costs, leaving risk of injury or harm exposed. Ignoring the root cause or overlooking unsafe practices because it is the ‘status quo’.

Learning Organisation and Growth Mindset



Recognising that there is always more to learn and that we can grow our skills and knowledge over time.

As a learning organisation, NSW Health prioritises continued learning to develop our abilities and innovate and reshape practices to meet current and future demands. A growth mindset is the belief that abilities can be developed through curiosity, feedback and recognising learning opportunities.

A learning organisation and growth mindset:

- Coaching in the spirit of support and growth. Encouraging others to use their strengths and being open to changing the way we do things.

It isn't:

- Shutting down concerns or ideas raised in an attempt to improve the way we work.

Sustainability



Valuing, enabling and promoting sustainable practices to shape the way we do things.

Sustainability means considering the long-term impact of the decisions we make on our workplace, environmentally, economically and culturally. NSW Health aims to ingrain environmental, economic and social sustainability into its core purpose and operations.

Sustainability is:

- Correctly labelling resources with expiry dates and implementing a stock-control process.
- Seeking out suppliers who use sustainable practices.
- Installing recycling bins in our facilities.

It isn't:

- Throwing away unused in-date resources while waiting for new orders to arrive.
- Leaving equipment running when it is not being used.



What does success look like?

A positive, safe and inclusive culture is embedded in everything we do. Across the system we have initiatives that promote our CORE Values for all staff. We consider our people in all our decisions, knowing this also directly impacts the patient experience. Our leaders model a culture that provides a pathway to success and empowers staff to be their best and contribute to decisions that affect them. Our staff know they belong here and are free to speak up respectfully, to build new ideas and challenge old ones.

As a system, we will know we have achieved this when our people can confidently demonstrate:

People

- ✓ I feel that I belong.
- ✓ I feel safe to speak up.
- ✓ I can thrive personally and professionally.
- ✓ I know my strengths and am valued for my contributions to the outcomes of my team, organisation and NSW Health.
- ✓ I can be myself.
- ✓ I am accountable for my own behaviours.
- ✓ I experience kindness and compassion from my colleagues.

Teams

- ✓ We plan, create and celebrate as a team.
- ✓ We ensure our culture is safe and respectful for everyone.
- ✓ We foster innovation and continuous improvement.
- ✓ We connect our work and performance to staff and patient experience.
- ✓ We value diversity and the experiences of our colleagues and patients.
- ✓ We discuss the behaviours we want to see.

Leaders

- ✓ I create an environment that promotes cultural safety.
- ✓ I have open conversations with my team to promote behaviours we support and manage behaviours we don't.
- ✓ I understand that what I say and do as a leader is pivotal in creating my team's culture.
- ✓ I am committed to developing my people-management and leadership skills.
- ✓ I lead with kindness and compassion.
- ✓ I set clear expectations and accountabilities for my team.
- ✓ I support career development and learning opportunities for my team.

Organisation

- ✓ Our organisations put kindness and compassion at the centre of everything we do.
- ✓ We encourage people to speak up for high standards without fear.
- ✓ Our policies, processes and strategies reflect a commitment to valuing the experience of our staff.
- ✓ Our leaders prioritise the staff and patient experience through their actions and words.
- ✓ Prioritising safety is reflected in our policies, processes and measures.
- ✓ Our staff are proud to work in NSW Health, actively promote the CORE Values and feel valued for their contributions.

