Change Management Toolkit

Enabling the South Australian public sector to effectively lead and manage change

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Government of South Australia
Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment

Acknowledgment of Country

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment acknowledges and respects Aboriginal people as the state's first people and nations, and recognises Aboriginal people as traditional owners and occupants of South Australian land and waters.

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Contents

The toolkit

This toolkit is a practical guide to help agencies plan, deliver and embed change. It provides recommended activities, considerations and tools that can be scaled so that actions are proportionate to the size, complexity and scope of the change.

What is change?

Change is an action or project that alters how work is done, where something starts, stops or happens differently. It may involve changes to organisational structure, roles and responsibilities, skills and capabilities, business processes, work location, technology, culture or performance.

Download the Types of Change resource here

Everyone within the South Australian public sector plays a part in change. Change can affect many areas, including workforce and workplaces, structures, leadership, strategy, culture, processes, systems, legislation, and requisite skills.

The quality of how we manage change affects outcomes, service delivery, and people's experience at work.

The toolkit can be used across the sector, and may be particularly helpful for:

- leaders implementing change
- change managers allocated to projects
- project sponsors and project managers
- people managers and supervisors responsible for implementing change.

This toolkit supports small, medium, and large changes and provides guidance to support sustainable change through:

- communicating a clear vision
- engaging stakeholders
- building capability
- reducing avoidable resistance and maintaining productivity and engagement
- being scalable to the size, complexity, and scope of the change, noting that even minor changes can still be high impact if the impacts on people are significant
- tailoring it to agency context – read this toolkit alongside relevant industrial instruments and agency specific material.

About change management

Change can be positive, and it can also be challenging. The goal is to lead change in a way that is respectful, inclusive, transparent, and supportive so the change is adopted and benefits are realised.

Change management is the structured, practical work of helping people move from the current way of working to the new way of working so the change is adopted, benefits are realised and the new approach becomes business as usual (BAU).

People respond differently to change. Uncertainty, perceived or actual loss of control, workload changes and role ambiguity can increase stress and resistance.

Good change management:

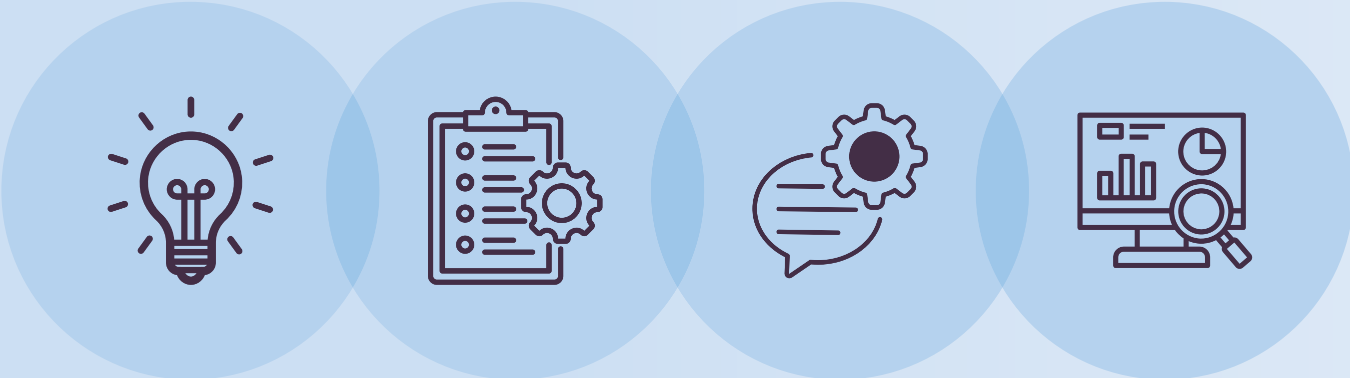
- creates clarity
- supports people to understand what the change means for them and what to do next
- provides practical support
- involves people in shaping how change is implemented
- supports performance, service delivery and the wellbeing of people doing the work.

Psychosocial risk and change management

Psychosocial hazards and risks arising from the design or management of work must be identified and managed. Psychosocial hazards can cause psychological harm and may also cause physical harm.

In the context of workplace change, poor organisational change management is recognised as a psychosocial hazard. This can include change that is poorly planned, communicated, supported or managed, including where workers are not given genuine opportunities to be consulted or provide feedback. Poor change management can also introduce other psychosocial hazards such as increased workload, lack of role clarity, low job control, poor support and lack of organisational justice.

Change management



1. Understanding the change and its impacts

- Impacts may include: what changes for people, processes, systems, stakeholders and service delivery.
- Understand the organisation's readiness, including psychosocial risk drivers and change load (the cumulative impact of multiple changes occurring at the same time on a team or stakeholder group).

2. Setting the scene

- Clarify the vision and the case for change.
- Confirm governance, decision-making and accountability arrangements.
- Establish clear principles and measures of success.

3. Bringing it all together

- Engage stakeholders and meet consultation requirements (a genuine process of seeking and considering the views of people affected by a proposed change before decisions are finalised, and responding to those views).
- Communicate clearly and consistently through two-way channels.
- Equip leaders and managers and build capability (training, job aids, coaching and time to learn).

4. Making it stick

- Monitor adoption, including whether people are using the new way of working as intended.
- Monitor issues and outcomes, including wellbeing signals such as fatigue, increased conflict, disengagement or unplanned leave.
- Adjust approaches as needed based on what is working and what is not.
- Capture lessons learnt to inform future change.
- Confirm ongoing ownership to support sustainability over time.

A psychosocial risk is the likelihood that exposure to a psychosocial hazard will cause harm, and the potential severity of that harm.

Managing psychosocial risk during change means identifying potential hazards and putting practical controls in place (for example clarifying role expectations, workload planning, time-to-learn, consistent two-way communication and accessible support pathways) and monitoring indicators that psychosocial risk may be increasing (for example reports of fatigue, increased conflict, disengagement, increased errors or unplanned leave) so you can adjust early during delivery and transition.

This means psychosocial risk controls should be considered from the start and monitored throughout the change process.

For more information see the resources at the [Safe Work Australia website.]

Making the most of the toolkit

Use this toolkit as a guide for any workplace change that impacts employees — including service improvements, technology or system upgrades, changes to policy direction or ways of working, organisational restructure, role changes and location adjustments.

Change management is not linear. Steps may be undertaken in parallel and revisited as information changes. Think of this toolkit as a set of practical tools that can be used to help you plan, test assumptions, engage people, manage risks and embed change. Use the tools and prompts that suit the context and scale of the change.

You may not always control what is changing (for example external drivers, policy decisions, legislative reform or Machinery of Government changes), but you can control how change is managed and implemented.

The Change Management Overview is a quick map of what to do. It summarises the purpose, actions and tools that can be used in each change step and aims to help you navigate change management with clarity and confidence.

Download the Change Management Overview here

Other resources

This toolkit should be used alongside other relevant frameworks, including:

- your agency's project management framework (where the change is delivered as a project)
- HR/People and Culture advice (industrial and workforce considerations)
- work health and safety (WHS) guidance (including psychosocial risk management)
- specialist methodologies in some business units (for example ICT), where this toolkit should complement rather than replace existing processes
- Commissioner's Determinations.

Where your change is being managed as a project, align change activities with project planning and governance so delivery and adoption are managed together.

Machinery of Government (MoG) changes

MoG changes can create unique challenges: tight timelines, public discussion and uncertainty, and employees strongly identifying with the purpose of the agency or unit they are transitioning from. Even when you do not control all levers of change, MoG changes can still be done well. Prioritise early engagement, practical support and role clarity, and use the Machinery of Government Change Handbook as your starting point.

Download the 2022 Machinery of Government Handbook here

ICT, digital or cyber security service change

Where a change impacts across-government ICT, digital or cyber security services, you must follow the Across-Government Change Enablement Standard. The standard sets out the required process and controls for planning, assessing, approving, scheduling and implementing changes that could affect whole-of-government infrastructure and services, including links to incident and major incident management where relevant. Use the standard early to confirm whether your change is in scope, align governance and approvals, and coordinate effectively with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) and relevant suppliers.

Download the Across-Government Change Enablement Standard here

Co-design with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

When changes to policies, programs or services impact Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, co-design is the preferred approach.

Co-design must be undertaken as a genuine partnership where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a leadership role, understand what is being proposed, and can see how their feedback has informed decisions.

Co-design should be grounded in principles such as self-determination, participation in decision-making, free, prior and informed consent, cultural safety, equity and transparency. As your starting point, use the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's guidance on co-design for engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Download the Co-design for Engagement resource here

A common starting point

Successful change starts with a clear understanding of what is changing, who is affected and what it will take to implement well.

Assessing impacts and readiness early helps you scale your change effort to match the size, complexity and scope of the change. It also reduces avoidable rework, resistance and unintended consequences, while supporting targeted engagement and support.

Change Impact Assessment

Change impact is a clear view of what will change in practice, who will be affected and how significant the impacts will be. This insight helps you plan targeted engagement, communications and support, and scale effort to the scope of the change. It also surfaces psychosocial risk drivers early (such as uncertainty, workload impact or role ambiguity) so you can put controls in place and monitor wellbeing signals during implementation.

A Change Impact Assessment identifies what will change, how it will change and how significant the change will be across roles, processes, systems and stakeholder groups. Use it to inform your engagement, communications and implementation approach.

A Change Impact Assessment helps you to:

- assess the scale of change across roles and processes
- identify likely people impacts to inform consultation, communications and support
- provide project and people leaders with a clearer view of where support will be needed
- capture a factual, shared view of what is changing and what is not.

Download the Change Impact Assessment here

Change Readiness Assessment

Change readiness is the organisation's capacity to implement change. It is influenced by factors such as strategic alignment, the strength of your change approach, leadership and management capability and the organisation's capacity to absorb change.

Before commencing any new change initiative, it's important to assess organisational change readiness. This helps identify existing strengths and areas where further support or resources may be needed, ensuring the organisation is well placed to navigate obstacles and lead change effectively.

A Change Readiness Assessment confirms whether people and the organisation are prepared to implement the change and adopt the new way of working. It is most useful as a pre-implementation check, and it can be repeated if circumstances change.

Depending on the size of the change, a readiness assessment may involve:

- a survey or structured pulse check for larger changes, or
- targeted conversations and small group check-ins for smaller changes.

Use the results to identify where you need to make any adjustments to the approach before implementation.

Download the Change Readiness Assessment here

Mapping stakeholders

Stakeholder mapping helps you understand who is affected by the change, and how much interest and influence they may have over outcomes.

A stakeholder is any person, group or organisation that is affected by a change, can influence the change, or has an interest in the outcomes. This may include employees, managers, unions, customers/clients, community members, partner agencies.

Start by identifying the full range of stakeholders, not just the primary recipients of change. This may include leaders, frontline practitioners, corporate support functions, partner agencies, policymakers, citizens and communities, and employee associations.

Each stakeholder group will bring different perspectives, expectations and information needs.

Use the Mapping Your Stakeholders guide as a quick reference to identify and understand your change stakeholders.

Download the Mapping Your Stakeholders guide here

Use the Stakeholder Register in the Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan resource to record your stakeholder mapping.

Download the Stakeholder Engagement Plan here

Map stakeholders by:

- impact (how much the change will affect them)
- influence (their ability to enable or hinder the change)
- interest (how engaged they are likely to be)
- what they need (key concerns, likely questions, preferred channels, accessibility needs).

Setting the scene

Successful change starts with clarity, a shared understanding of the direction, expectations and how decisions will be made. When leaders are aligned and consistent at all levels, stakeholders experience less uncertainty and confusion and are more likely to engage productively.

1. A clear case for change explains why the change is needed, the problem or opportunity being addressed, and what success looks like.

2. A clear vision describes the future state and helps people understand what it means for them and their role in making it happen, reflecting the South Australian public sector's commitment to serving employees, customers and the broader community.

3. A small set of change principles provides an agreed framework for decision-making and trade-offs during delivery. Principles should be communicated early and referenced throughout the work, particularly when plans need to be adjusted. The level of detail and effort should be proportionate to the size, complexity and risk of the change.

Developing your change principles

Change principles help to sharpen the approach, guide decisions and target effort and engagement. They provide a consistent basis for decisions about engagement, communications, capability building, resourcing, risk management and how the change will be implemented.

Principles are particularly useful when:

- competing priorities require trade-offs
- the approach needs to be revised as information changes, or
- multiple initiatives interact or overlap, creating a high change load.

Keep principles short and practical. For most changes, three to five principles are enough (or if more required for complex change, group them into themes).

Use the Developing your Change Principles resource to agree tailored principles with your sponsor and team, including practical prompts and examples.

Download the Developing your Change Principles resource here

Developing the case for change

To succeed with change, people need a shared understanding of why the change is needed and what it will achieve. A clear case for change builds understanding and support, supports approvals and provides a foundation for consistent engagement and communication.

When building a case, address both:

- the rationale – what will improve (which could be outcomes, service delivery, risk, efficiency, compliance)
- the emotional response– what the change will feel like for people and what support will be provided during transition.

Involve key stakeholders in shaping the case for change, particularly the sponsor and leadership team. A short workshop or structured discussion is often the most efficient way to build alignment.

Keep the case for change succinct. Start with a version for the sponsor and project team, then tailor it for different audiences as part of stakeholder engagement.

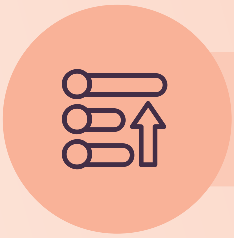
Use the Case for Change resource for a practical structure, prompts and examples (including how to test and refine your case).

Download the Case for Change resource here

Aligning the work to strategic priorities

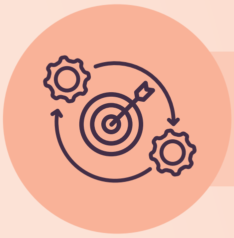
Change is easier to understand and accept when people can see how it contributes to strategic priorities. Aligning change with strategic priorities, regardless of the scale of the change, helps people understand that changes are part of a coherent direction, rather than a set of disconnected initiatives.

How to do it



Identify the relevant organisational and government priorities

Define the outcomes the change will contribute to



Explain, in practical terms, how the change will help deliver those outcomes

Success measure

You are succeeding if you can clearly explain the link between the change and relevant strategic priorities.

If the link to strategic priorities is not immediately clear, clarify the intended benefit of the change. This may include improved service outcomes, better employee experience and wellbeing, increased efficiency and productivity, reduced risk, stronger safety and security, or meeting legislative or Machinery of Government requirements.

Bringing it all together

To deliver change well, translate strategic intent into a practical, coordinated approach that supports adoption and protects employees through implementation.

This brings together engagement, communications and capability building into your approach. You will also need to provide time-capped support after the implementation period to resolve issues quickly and build confidence.

Before moving into detailed planning, take a moment to confirm the foundations are in place. This means that the key impacts and readiness insights are understood, the sponsor's expectations and decision pathways are clear and realistic timeframes are proposed. This helps ensure the engagement, communications and support activities that follow are targeted, proportionate and achievable.

Develop your Change Plan

Once the impacts and readiness of your change are understood, bring the people-side activities together in an integrated Change Plan.

This plan should:

- set out actions, owners, milestones and timeframes
- identify dependencies and constraints
- include mitigations for anticipated challenges, including psychosocial risks
- align to project governance and reporting rhythms.

Use your Change Impact Assessment, readiness insights and stakeholder mapping as key inputs. If the change is complex, use additional tools to target effort where it will make the biggest difference.

Use the Developing your Change Plan resource for practical guidance, a set of plan stress tests and examples of how to scale your approach.

Download the Developing your Change Plan resource here

Plan stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement is critical throughout change. Translate your stakeholder mapping into a **Stakeholder Engagement Plan** that sets out:

1. Who you will engage

- by stakeholder group

2. The purpose of engagement

- inform
- consult
- involve
- collaborate
- empower

3. How and when engagement will occur

- channels
- cadence

4. Who owns key relationships and how issues are escalated

- clarity about roles and processes

5. How you will demonstrate how input has influenced decisions

- "you said, we did"

Where the change involves significant impacts on employees, ensure consultation meets obligations under Commissioner's Determination 4: Employment Relations, relevant industrial instruments and WHS requirements.

Localised initiatives help change land well across metropolitan and regional sites and diverse work contexts. A localised engagement plan can allow local teams to tailor implementation while remaining aligned to the core change.

Use the Developing your Engagement Plan resource for practical guidance and examples of engagement techniques you can select based on purpose, scale and stakeholder needs.

Download the Developing your Engagement Plan resource here

Plan consultation (where required)

Agencies must meet their consultation obligations under Commissioner's Determination 4: Employment Relations, relevant industrial instruments and the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)*. Where significant change is being considered, employees and relevant unions / employee associations must be consulted as soon as possible. Consultation must provide a meaningful opportunity to contribute to decision making. Consultation does not require agreement.

Set timeframes early and allow sufficient time for meaningful discussion. Consultation processes should take account of cultural, language and accessibility requirements. Where changes may affect WHS, consultation must also occur in line with WHS requirements, including involving Health and Safety Representatives where appointed (and noting consultation may extend beyond employees to contractors and volunteers where relevant).

Plan communications

Leaders and managers are the primary change communicators. Plan communications proactively to understand what needs to be said, to whom, when and through which channels. Consistent, timely information reduces uncertainty and supports people to make sense of what is changing and why.

Wherever possible, speak to employees face-to-face about changes that will affect them.

Managers need to be supported to communicate well and consistently. For larger change programs, communications teams should provide leaders and managers with regular briefings and information packs so they can engage employees with confidence and respond to queries.

Remember: communication is part of engagement, but engagement also includes listening, involving people early and showing how input has influenced decisions.

Support people through implementation and stabilisation

Set people up to succeed by identifying what employees will need to adopt the change in practice and providing the right supports — for example training, coaching, practical job aids, check-ins and role modelling. Where the change involves shifts in mindset, behaviours or culture, plan targeted actions to reinforce what 'good' looks like and support teams during the adjustment period.

Poor organisational change management is a psychosocial hazard. During change, psychosocial risks can increase when people experience sustained uncertainty, workload spikes, role ambiguity, loss of control, poor support or a lack of genuine consultation.

Build psychosocial risk controls into the change approach from the start. This may include clear role expectations, workload planning, time-to-learn, consistent two-way communication, accessible support pathways and regular check-ins, and monitor wellbeing signals during the change process so you can identify issues early and adjust the approach as needed.

Use the Managing Individual Reactions to Change resource to help leaders recognise common responses to change (for example denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance) and apply practical strategies to support employees through the transition.

Download the Managing Individual Reactions to Change resource here

Making it stick

To ensure a change becomes embedded as business as usual (BAU), plan for follow-up and review after implementation.

Provide clear pathways for support, prompt triage of issues and regular check-ins to resolve issues quickly and build confidence. Define upfront who is responsible for stabilisation support, how issues will be managed, and the criteria for transitioning to BAU ownership.

Sustained adoption requires active learning from feedback and monitoring progress against success measures. Maintain support for as long as needed and use post-implementation review findings to strengthen future changes.

Use the Common Problems and Solutions guide as a quick reference when issues arise during change to identify practical actions to get the change back on track. Use this resource to anticipate common responses and respond with practical strategies.

Download the Common Problems and Solutions guide here

For smaller changes, an informal post-implementation review may be sufficient. For larger changes, undertake a more thorough review or evaluation.

You can use the Post-Implementation Review resource to assess success against agreed measures, capture lessons learnt (including psychosocial and operational insights) and confirm BAU ownership and ongoing monitoring.

Download the Post-Implementation Review resource here

Reviewing the success of your change

Organisations should learn from their successes and opportunities for improvement. Post-implementation reviews help to:

- Clarify what worked and what didn't
- Identify improvements to embed in BAU
- Capture lessons to improve future changes
- Communicate successes and benefits to employees and stakeholders

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