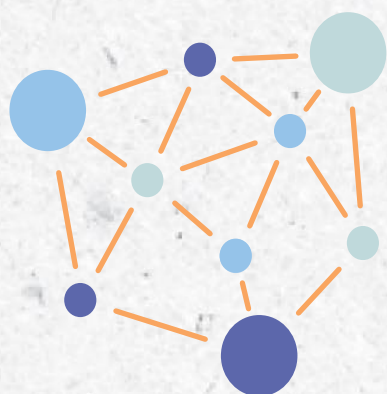


ACT PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM



WORKPLACE CULTURE FRAMEWORK

A summary of the research on an
evidence-based approach to
workplace change

November 2020



Culture Review **Implementation**
our journey of positive change



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Background

The ACT public health system (the system) provides a broad range of services that benefit the community every day. The community trusts the system to deliver these high-quality healthcare and services. For the workforce, that means putting in their best efforts in a workplace where they feel safe, supported and valued.

Across the ACT public health system, there has been a commitment made to drive culture change that benefits the workforce and the community. This commitment acknowledges there is a need to address certain factors that underpin organisational culture.

From review to action

There has been significant inquiry undertaken to understand the culture across the system. This includes the [Final Report: Independent Review into the Workplace Culture within ACT Public Health Services](#) (Culture Review Report) undertaken in 2019 and the associated 20 recommendations.

Through the independent review, it was identified that several of the recommendations were directly linked to the key workplace culture factors of organisational behaviour, workforce and leadership. To improve these factors there was recognition that a consistent strategic approach is required across the ACT public health system.

The **Workplace Culture Framework** puts this into action.

Informed by evidence, the Framework has been developed to guide approaches on the key cultural changes required to enable the system to continue to deliver the highest level of care for the community.

Based on evidence

Every day in healthcare, decisions are made using evidence. The Framework has been designed using a similar approach to an evidence-based practice model.

Changing culture takes time. The Framework is about supporting the system with a purposeful approach that's sustainable. It's focused on setting the ACT public health system up for success in the long-term with the most appropriate actions.



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Why another report?

The Culture Review Report made clear recommendations relating to improving workplace culture across the system.

As an outcome from the partnership, The Workplace Culture Framework (the Framework) was developed. The Framework provides a roadmap, informed by evidence and provides a system-wide overview of the required change journey, including desired outcomes.

The Framework isn't designed to be the sole driver of culture change, rather, it works to complement and inform workplace culture-related projects across the system.

Culture matters

All workplaces have a culture. Workplace culture sets the tone for how things get done, and how people interact and engage with others. It guides appropriate and acceptable behaviours in the workplace.

Why does this matter? Because when organisations create a workplace culture that values employees and builds work relationships high in trust, the organisation does better. For the system, that means a culture that supports its workforce in delivering the best outcomes for the community.

A collaboration with the Australian National University Research School of Management

To establish the foundation for long-term culture change that sticks, the system needed to engage an external with relevant expertise and experience. The Australian National University, Research School of Management (ANU-RSM) and the Center for Evidence-Based Management (CEBMA) are leaders in evidence-based management practices. Together, they have conducted research on people leadership and management in many different organisations.

Being a local Canberra-based institution also meant ANU-RSM had knowledge and insight of factors unique to the ACT jurisdiction.

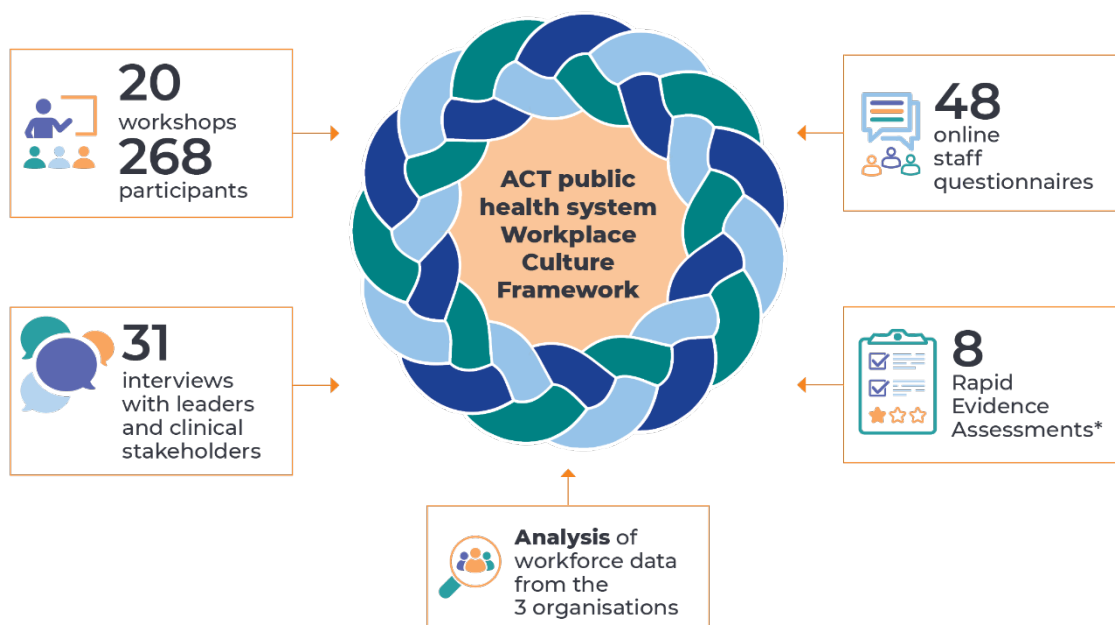
The Framework is based on research and insights conducted by ANU-RSM and CEBMA, and a process of co-design across the system.



How the Workplace Culture Framework was developed

ANU-RSM gained a greater understanding of the situation across the system by consulting with both internal and external stakeholders. This identified key workplace themes, which were then tested and consolidated with further research.

ANU-RSM outlined their findings in a report *Investing in our people: A system-wide evidence-based approach to workplace change*, which includes the Workplace Culture Framework.



Exploratory phase

To gain an understanding of the system and the organisations within it, ANU-RSM conducted interviews and workshops with key stakeholders and analysed organisational data. Insights from these identified key workplace change priorities. Taking this approach, allowed ANU-RSM to gain an understanding of the culture challenges within the system and ensures that the issues most pressing to our workforce are addressed.



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Interviews

Thirty-one interviews with senior managers and external stakeholders were based around the following two questions:

1. What do you see as the underlying causes of the problems outlined in the Independent Review into Workplace Culture?
2. What are your preferred solutions to these problems?

Workshops

A total of 268 stakeholders across the three ACT public health system organisations took part in a series of co-design workshops. The solution-focused workshops were designed to gain insight from participants relating to the changes required at different levels of the organisation (co-worker, supervisor and organisational). For organisational change to be sustained, all levels of the organisation need to be involved in its planning and implementation.

Online Survey

Staff members unable to attend a workshop and workshop participants who wanted to provide additional input were given the opportunity to complete an online survey.

Organisation Data

Numerous forms of organisational data were reviewed and analysed by the ANU-RSM team including:

- Workforce data,
- Staff survey data from Canberra Health Services and the ACT Health Directorate,
- HR policies, and
- Data from incident reporting systems.



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Key themes

Taking insights uncovered in the workshops, online surveys, analysis of workforce data and interviews, ANU-RSM was able to group the results into the following key workplace change priorities:

- Workplace incivility,
- Psychological safety,
- Team effectiveness,
- Leadership skills, and
 - Motivating individual performance and development,
 - Cognitive and decision-making skills, and
- Transparency and measurement of workplace behaviour and outcomes (now known as Organisational Trust).

The key themes were identified and prioritised based on:

1. The number of times the issue was raised;
2. Urgency (the issue was considered very important and needing immediate attention); and
3. Being within ANU-RSM's area of expertise: organisational behaviour, leadership and human resources management.

Further testing of key themes

To further test the themes, ANU-RSM engaged the CEBMa to undertake eight Rapid Evidence Assessments (REAs). CEBMa is world renowned as an authority on evidence-based practice in leadership, management and organisational behaviour.

The REAs are summaries of trustworthy global scientific research to define the issues in each theme.

The REA's provide evidence for solutions that have been successfully put into practice by other organisations. These initiatives are proven to have the greatest positive impact on the workforce.

The findings from the REAs were used to distil the themes into **five key workplace change priorities**. These are central to the Workplace Culture Framework.



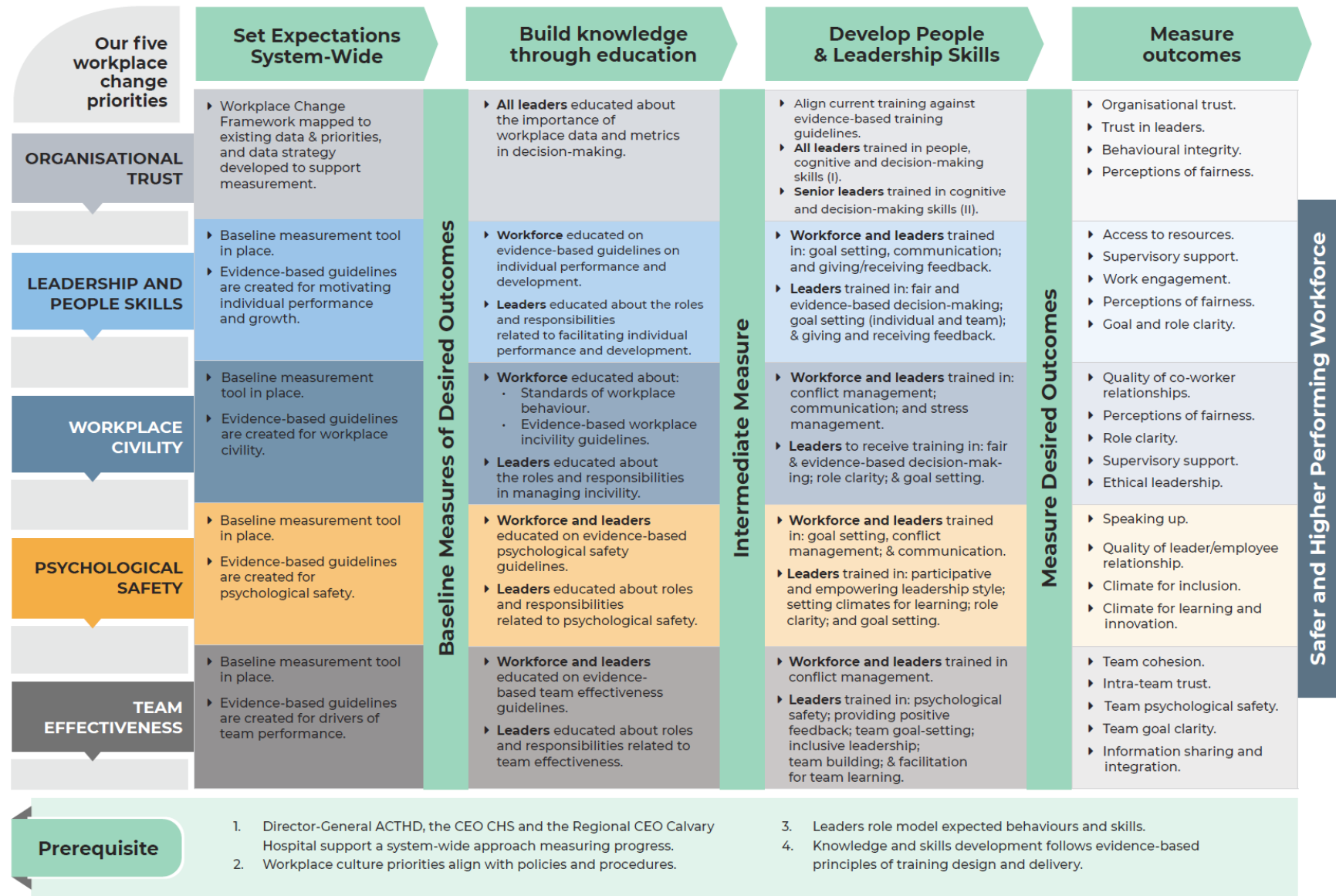
Full summaries are available on all eight [REAs](#) conducted:

- Impact of line and/or middle managers on workplace performance,
- Individual performance,
- Employee recognition and non-financial rewards,
- The effect of feedback on workplace performance,
- Drivers of workplace incivility,
- Psychological safety,
- Drivers of team effectiveness, and
- Effectiveness of leadership training.

The ACT public health system Workplace Culture Framework

The Framework brings together the priorities identified in the exploratory research and translates the scientific evidence with a high-level representation of the desired outcomes, and how to achieve these outcomes for each of the key workplace change priorities.

ACT Public Health System: Evidence-Based Workplace Culture Framework





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Organisational Trust 	We need to improve the trust in our organisations, and decisions must be fairly and transparently made and applied.
Leadership and People Skills 	We need to build our people skills at work, as well as investing in specific people management and leadership training to support us all.
Workplace Civility 	We need more inclusive workplaces with respectful interactions between each other.
Psychological Safety 	We need to be able to raise concerns and suggest new ideas in open, supportive, safe and accepting work environments.
Team Effectiveness 	We need more clarity in our roles and to develop our skills to do our jobs effectively. We need to ensure that workloads are more balanced within teams.

The priorities provide focus and set the expectation for people in the ACT public health system (across clinical, non-clinical and policy settings) to think about their work and behaviour towards others.

Organisational Trust

Transparency and measurement of system-wide workplace behaviour and outcomes are essential in creating a shared understanding of what skills and behaviours are valued and expected in the workplace. A commitment to effective evidenced-base decision making using available information, data, evaluation and analysis will result in increased organisational trust.

Leadership and people skills

Effective communication, active listening, interacting respectfully, performance and development goals, giving and receiving feedback, providing recognition and managing conflicts collaboratively are all critical people skills that are needed to be effective individually, working in a team and as a leader.

Additionally, the roles and behaviours of leaders have a substantial impact on individual, team and organisational outcomes.



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Workplace civility

Civility refers to behaviours such as being polite, respectful and considerate. Incivility generally starts with some form of interpersonal conflict and highlights the importance of people skills in the workplace for all levels of the workforce. Leaders with a supportive and participatory leadership style are also better able to moderate incivility.

Psychological safety

Psychological safety refers to the extent to which employees believe they can openly speak up, ask for help, ask questions and make suggestions without judgment or repercussions.

Active listening, conversational turn-taking, giving and receiving feedback, and cooperative conflict management are people skills supporting a psychologically safe environment. Leaders need to exhibit an empowering leadership style, establish development opportunities, encourage teams and individuals to speak up and ask questions and foster inclusion and diversity.

Team effectiveness

Teams are not automatically effective. Effective teams are defined as groups of workers who exhibit certain behaviours and processes that lead to high performance. Examples of behaviours or norms that lead to team effectiveness and high performance include active feedback loops, group reflection, sharing information freely, and well-developed intra-team processes (such as how to communicate and overcome conflict).

The process to change

The Workplace Culture Framework highlights a four-step process to address the five culture change priorities:

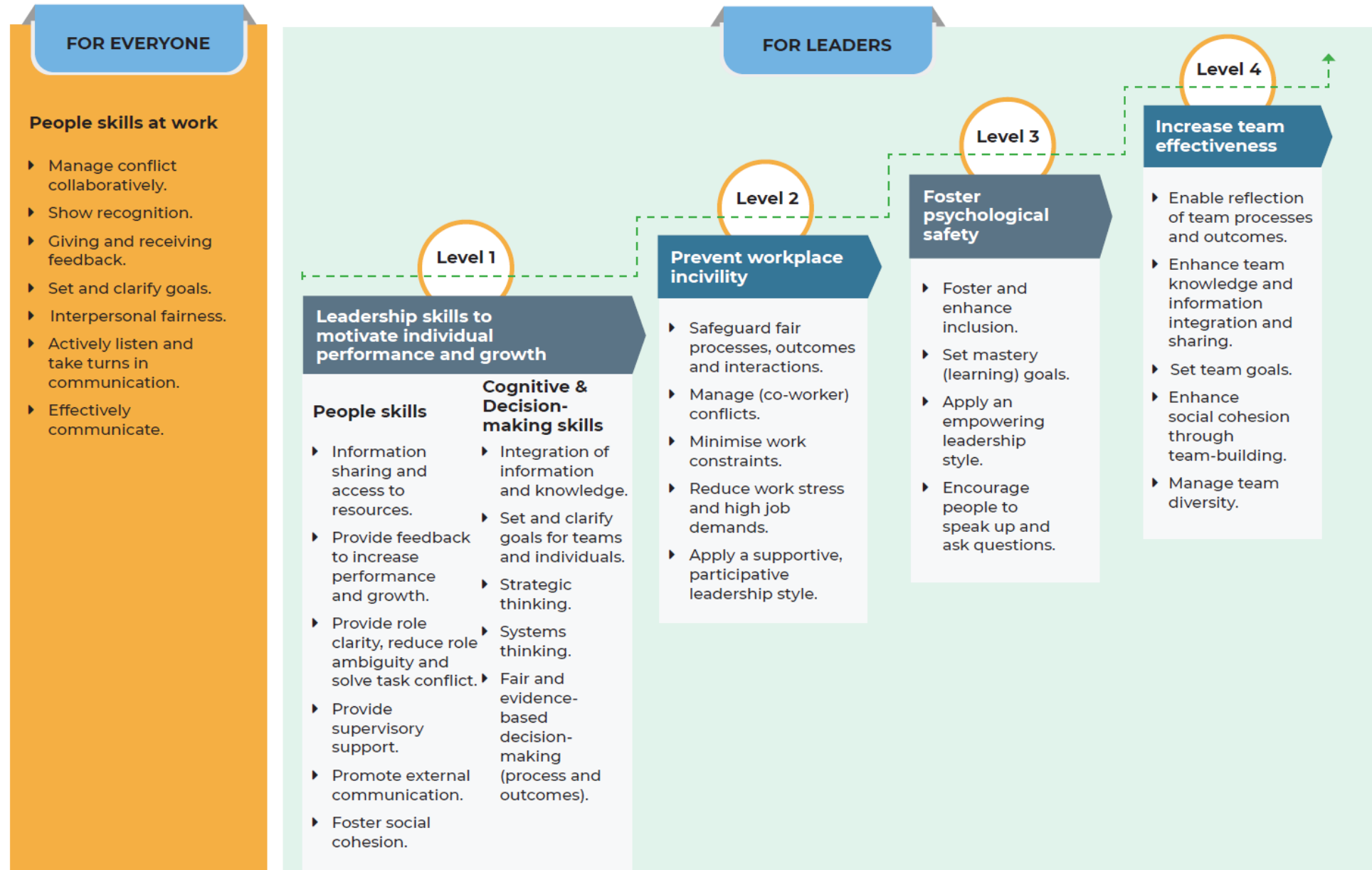
1. Set expectations system-wide,
2. Build knowledge through education,
3. Develop people and leadership skills, and
4. Measure outcomes.

Supporting the Framework

The process of change in the Framework places importance on building knowledge (knowing what) followed by skills (knowing how).

To help work through the four-steps in the Framework, an evidence-based **Workplace Skills Development Model** was developed. This works with the Framework to support the workforce to adopt the behaviours and skills needed to deliver on the priority areas.

ACT public health system: Evidence-Based Workplace Skills Development Model





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Measurement

Repeated measurement of desired outcomes is a key feature of the Framework.

Tracking progress provides an indication of the effectiveness of approaches. It helps guide future decisions about where's best to invest in implementations and interventions.

Committed to change

Achieving the outcomes outlined in the Framework requires a system-wide effort and commitment at all levels and across clinical and non-clinical roles. Everyone has a part to play in building knowledge, developing skills and applying these skills.

Balancing act

The Framework balances the needs of each organisation in the system through a strategic and system-wide approach. The Framework allows for a consistency in approach across the System (where the exploratory research highlighted the same key issues across the system), while providing flexibility for nuances within and across organisations.

The implementation will equip leaders and the workforce with skills to adapt and thrive in the face of future challenges.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

ACT Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people. ACT Health respects their continuing culture and connections to the land and the unique contributions they make to the life of this area. ACT Health also acknowledges and welcomes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are part of the community we serve.

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