

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ISSUES: TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION**  
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Workforce development (WFD)<sup>1</sup> initiatives are one set of strategies to achieve the goal of improving our service system responses to AOD problems. It is therefore helpful to focus on this central question and answer, i.e.,:

**Q: What are we trying to achieve?**

**Ans: Improved service system responses to AOD problems.**

To achieve this goal a variety of strategies are needed - one of which is WFD. An improved service system response requires attention to be directed to a range of individual, organisational and structural issues.

A national AOD WFD approach must address the needs and interests of very varied target groups including:

- a) those with a specialist interest (mostly health); including government and NGO sectors
- b) generalists (eg police, GPs, teachers, counsellors)
- c) non-frontline workers (eg policy makers, managers, funders, researchers).

Different WFD strategies are required by these diverse groups, each of which has different needs and priorities. Responding effectively to AOD related issues requires specific knowledge and skills. There are well developed training opportunities available (albeit often expensive with access problems). While knowledge and skills provide a necessary foundation for good work practice, a wide range of factors influence whether a worker can function with maximum effectiveness. These factors include organisational policies and procedures, supportive colleagues/supervisors, training/professional development opportunities, workload, project/organisation funding and so on. To achieve an improved service system response a multi-level approach is required - see box below (items highlighted represent examples of areas in which NCETA has activities).

1. A Systems Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Design and Implementation of Workforce Development Policies</b></li> <li>• <b>Managing Organisational Change</b></li> <li>• <b>Resources</b> and Partnerships</li> </ul>
2. Organisational Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce Sustainability (<b>Recruitment</b>, Motivation, <b>Stress and Burnout</b>, Job satisfaction, Career paths, <b>Turnover</b>, Job Redesign)</li> <li>• Management &amp; Supervision (<b>Clinical supervision, Mentoring</b>)</li> </ul>
3. Development of a Skilled AOD Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information Management (Evidence-based practice, Accessing information effectively)</li> <li>• <b>Development of Knowledge, Skills and Abilities</b></li> <li>• <b>Transfer of Training to Work Practice</b></li> </ul>

**An Integrated WFD Approach - Training, Dissemination, Implementation and Evaluation**

An integrated approach is also recommended. The integrated approach involves linking Training, Dissemination Implementation and Evaluation. It incorporates all three levels shown in the box above. Police commonly take an integrated approach to change. An example from the health field is training GPs/practice nurses in AOD screening and intervention, providing up-to-date materials/resources, ensuring that implementation issues are addressed (eg remuneration) and assessing what works for whom and why/why not.

**A Framework for National Action**

Important WFD initiatives have occurred in Australia in recent years; including the NCETA national surveys and WFD Symposia, NGO WFD surveys, and the WA project to develop a national WFD strategy. There is now a clearer understanding of WFD but it still can be difficult to operationalise.

To achieve progress in this area it is suggested that IGCD:

1. Establish a short term group to identify national WFD priorities and document best practice (recognising that many of areas of responsibility rest with the states)
2. Establish a national WFD Network (a low cost, ongoing initiative). The network (similar to Addiction Technology Transfer Centers (ATTCs) in the USA) would share information about new initiatives, successful strategies, WFD resources etc.
3. Conduct a national WFD forum to engage the field in these new developments.

<sup>1</sup> WFD is a comprehensive umbrella term that incorporates 'the range of factors impacting on the ability of the alcohol and other drug workforce to function with maximum effectiveness'. It focuses on individuals, and the organisations and systems within which they operate.