

**WORKSAFE AUSTRALIA**

**BENCHMARKING  
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH  
AND SAFETY**

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## How and why this kit was developed

This kit is designed to help Australian enterprises implement best practice in occupational health and safety (OHS) management through the process of benchmarking. Benchmarking can help establish OHS best practice by assisting enterprises to analyse, compare and improve what they do. The kit is part of Worksafe Australia's program of support for the development of best practice in OHS.

Although general information about benchmarking is available, this is the first kit to provide guidance to enterprises on how to benchmark OHS. Although this kit can be used on its own, it is designed to support the *Benchmarking Self Help Manual* (NIES, DIR, AMC, 1993), which is available from all Commonwealth Government Bookshops.

The kit is based on the experience of Australian enterprises which have successfully benchmarked OHS. Enterprises from a range of industry sectors and geographical locations also tested the kit in practice. This experience, as well as comment from unions, employer associations, Worksafe Australia staff, and staff from the Department of Industrial Relations and the National Industry Extension Service, was taken into account in the preparation of this kit.

## About this kit

This kit will help your enterprise benchmark OHS. It will help you to:

- develop an understanding of benchmarking and how OHS can be benchmarked;
- design and implement a process for benchmarking OHS which meets the needs of your enterprise; and
- implement changes identified through benchmarking which will improve your enterprise's OHS performance.

This kit consists of:

- An introductory guide about OHS benchmarking, designed to inform senior managers and others not directly involved in the benchmarking process.
- A team leader's manual which has been prepared for use by OHS benchmarking coordinators leading benchmarking teams within enterprises. However, it will also be useful for anyone who is working to establish OHS benchmarking within an enterprise, for example, OHS committee members, OHS representatives and OHS managers; and
- A team member's workbook for use by members of OHS benchmarking teams.

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## Acknowledgements

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Andrea Shaw would especially like to thank Kevin, Tom and Patrick, who made it all possible.

Verna Blewett gives special thanks to Cliff Brownless for his critical comments on the drafts, and Robert and Lily for endless patience and support, thus making this project achievable.



# **Benchmarking Occupational Health and Safety:**

## **Introductory Guide**

**Researched and written by**

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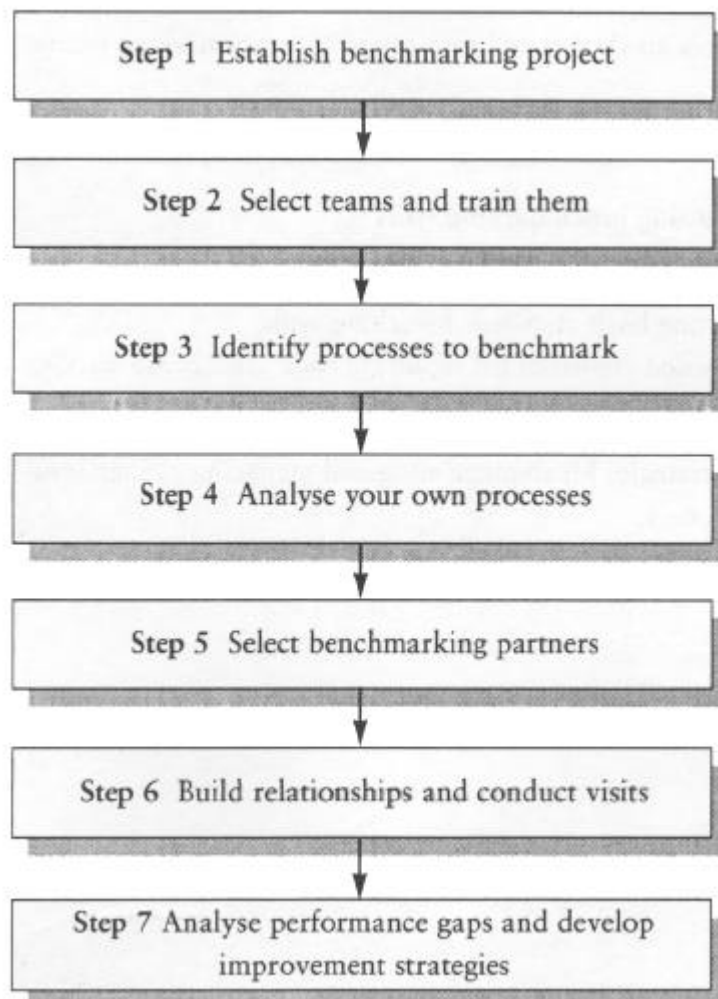
## Section 1—What is benchmarking?

Benchmarking is a tool that allows you to assess the differences between your enterprise and world-class performers. It includes an examination of the methods, processes, procedures, products and service performance of your enterprise against those of enterprises that consistently rate as world-class in the same category of performance. If done correctly, benchmarking will increase your knowledge of the improvements you need to make to become world-class. Benchmarking is a guide on the road to best practice.

Enterprises that participated in the occupational health and safety (OHS) benchmarking project reported that the most useful form of benchmarking involves:

- the analysis of processes and procedures in their own enterprise;
- the analysis of other enterprises; and
- the adaptation of the findings to guide improvements.

This approach gives valuable information about the changes that are necessary in the enterprise and makes good use of resources. The whole process can be summarised in the seven steps below:





## Section 2—Why benchmark OHS?

Benchmarking provides a creative impetus that can lead to highly innovative solutions to OHS problems. It is systematic and provides opportunities to foster or build on a continuous improvement program which is basic to any best practice approach. Because OHS is integral to all key business processes, benchmarking OHS can contribute to improvements in all management systems. It is a powerful strategy for developing the attitude that OHS is everyone's responsibility in the enterprise.

### Benchmarking and continuous improvement

Continuous improvement is a strategic approach to organisational change recognising the value of constant, incremental improvements. Those who do the work are empowered to identify and implement changes to improve the process.

Benchmarking gives practical information by encouraging analysis of your own enterprise and by close examination of other enterprises, looking at their methods, processes, procedures and performance. Benchmarking is a process, not an outcome. It should be used to examine particular issues and can be used to promote continuous improvement within your own enterprise.

### OHS is a part of management

In any enterprise, all areas of management interact. Sometimes OHS is just seen as accidents and incidents, inspections and audits, hazard management, and OHS policies and procedures. But in fact, OHS is an integral part of general management and has a role in all key areas including maintenance, training, purchasing, work system design, engineering design and production planning. Enterprises which deal successfully with OHS integrate it into the systems used to manage the enterprise.

### How do we know that we are ready for benchmarking?

All types of enterprises can benefit from benchmarking. However, certain management practices must be in place to allow benchmarking to succeed as a tool for continuous improvement. These management practices are called foundation stones and include:

- **A commitment at all levels in the enterprise, starting with senior management, to the process of benchmarking OHS.** Everyone should recognise that OHS is important for the success of the enterprise and that the benchmarking process is a valuable tool for improving OHS. Without such commitment, real change is unlikely to result.
- **The existence of preventive rather than reactive approaches to OHS systems.** Enterprises with proactive approaches to OHS have more success integrating ideas gained from benchmarking partners than those with reactive approaches.
- **A commitment to adopt an open, consultative and participative approach to managing OHS.** Ownership of change comes about when there is wide involvement in making decisions about change.

- **Recognition that OHS is a central aspect of the successful management of your enterprise.** In other words, OHS should be viewed as part of how your enterprise is managed, not just something looked after by the OHS Officer.
- **The presence of management systems which allow effective management of OHS.** These systems will be both specific OHS management systems, such as hazard procedures or accident/incident reporting systems, and general management systems which address OHS as part of meeting broader organisational needs, for example, maintenance procedures and training programs.
- **An ability to analyse OHS management systems in the enterprise rigorously.** Benchmarking team members need to be familiar with analysis tools, such as process flow charting and cause and effect analysis (fish bone charts), and with various problem-solving tools.
- **An ability to convene and manage teams.** Since benchmarking OHS is done by teams, the ability to work together cooperatively is essential. External assistance to facilitate the work of the team may be required if this experience does not exist in the enterprise.
- **Preparedness to commit the necessary people and time.** Benchmarking OHS does require resources, but it can reap rewards. The commitment to support the process right through is essential. Without this commitment there is the risk that the process will be stopped before benefits are seen.
- **Experience in project management.** The benchmarking team needs to be able to manage its project in order to work efficiently towards desirable outcomes.

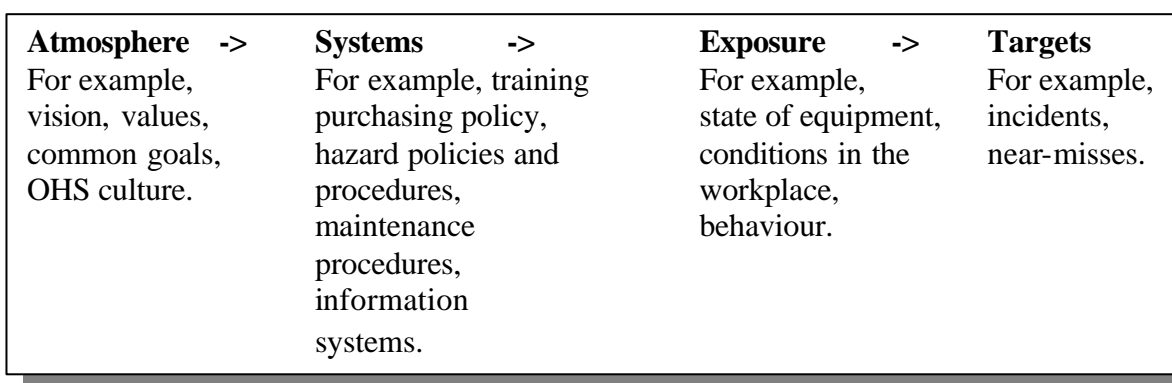
By critically examining the enterprise against these foundation stones, a decision can be made about the readiness of the enterprise for benchmarking.

## Section 3—The practicalities of benchmarking OHS

### What do we benchmark?

To get the maximum benefit from benchmarking, you should target benchmarking at the features and systems in your enterprise which have the most effect on performance.

The flow of activity in an enterprise is a little like a river. Heavy rain at the head of the river will result in flooding downstream. To prevent a flood downstream, action has to be taken upstream, not downstream. Accidents and illness at work are downstream events. To effectively stem their flow, action needs to be taken upstream. A model to describe this is the ASET Process<sup>1</sup>.



To improve the Exposure and Target end of this process, you will need to improve the first two steps—Atmosphere and Systems. Just looking at the endpoint does not allow you to improve the Atmosphere and Systems which cause incidents. Enterprises have found that the most effective OHS benchmarking occurs when the focus is on the first two steps. They have found that improved Atmosphere and Systems lead to sustained improvement in Exposures and, ultimately, in Targets. This model applies equally to all aspects of the management process.

### Who should be involved in the enterprise?

The most effective approach to benchmarking is to use teams. This allows a range of expertise, experience and representation to be involved.

<sup>1</sup> Based on an approach outlined in Krause and Finley (1993), p. 20.

Benchmarking teams should:

- involve management and employee representatives with appropriate expertise in the areas being benchmarked;
- consist of a limited number of people—around six has been found to work well; and
- receive training to give them the skills and knowledge which allow effective benchmarking.

It is useful to have separate teams focussing on different issues.

## **What resources are needed?**

Benchmarking requires time and money. Although it may not be cheap, it can bring huge rewards to your enterprise. Your benchmarking team will probably need to meet for two to three hours each week. They will need to discuss their terms of reference, determine which systems and processes are to be benchmarked, analyse your enterprise's approach to those systems and processes, find and make contact with benchmarking partners, make the visits and feed back the information from their benchmarking.

Apart from the time of the benchmarking team members, administrative resources will be required. There will be travel costs too. These will be minimal if the benchmarking partners are nearby, but if they are interstate or overseas, then the travel costs can be substantial. There may also be a need for external consultants to assist with training, process analysis and facilitation, depending on the skills of people in your enterprise.

## **How long will it take?**

Because of the large number of variables involved in benchmarking, it is difficult to specify a set timetable. The length of time taken for a benchmarking project will depend on:

- the number of processes or systems to be benchmarked;
- the resources applied to the project;
- the skill of the benchmarking team members;
- the number of benchmarking partners selected; and
- the willingness of benchmarking partners to participate.

Enterprises which make benchmarking a part of their continuous improvement system continuously use benchmarking so that, in effect, it becomes never-ending.



## **Section 4—Conclusion**

OHS benchmarking is not a ‘quick fix’ or an instant solution. It takes considerable time, money and energy. It is, however, a powerful tool for continuous improvement in OHS management at your enterprise. By taking a systematic approach, OHS benchmarking can help you establish best practice in OHS.



# **Benchmarking Occupational Health and Safety:**

## **Team Leader's Manual**

**Researched and written by**

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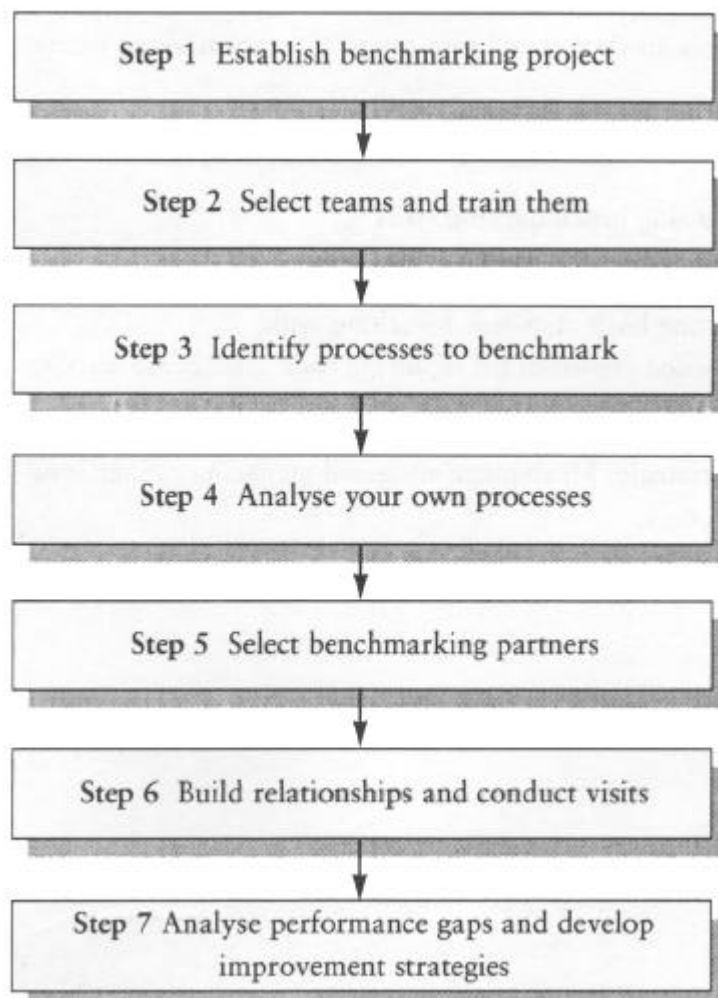


## How to use this team leader's manual

This team leader's manual is part of a kit to help you benchmark occupational health and safety (OHS) for your enterprise. The kit will help you to:

- ¾ develop an understanding of benchmarking and how OHS can be benchmarked;
- ¾ design and implement a process for benchmarking OHS that meets the needs of your enterprise; and
- ¾ implement changes identified through benchmarking which will improve your enterprise's OHS performance.

This team leader's manual consists of 10 sections. Most sections contain a variety of worksheets for your team's activities. As well, each section provides information and advice about how to lead your team through the following seven-step process to benchmark OHS.



The sections of this team leader's manual are:

- $\frac{3}{4}$  **Section 1—What is benchmarking?**  
outlining the most effective approaches to benchmarking OHS.
- $\frac{3}{4}$  **Section 2—Why benchmark OHS?**  
describing some of the benefits of benchmarking for improving OHS management.
- $\frac{3}{4}$  **Section 3—Are we ready to benchmark OHS?**  
providing a checklist of the foundation stones for effective OHS benchmarking.
- $\frac{3}{4}$  **Section 4—The practicalities of benchmarking OHS**  
taking you through the practical steps, including decisions and training, which have to be undertaken to set up an OHS benchmarking project.
- $\frac{3}{4}$  **Section 5—Knowing yourself**  
setting out tools for analysing OHS management systems in your enterprise.
- $\frac{3}{4}$  **Section 6—Who should we benchmark with?**  
guiding you on how to choose and gain access to benchmarking partners.
- $\frac{3}{4}$  **Section 7—Preparing for a benchmarking visit**  
providing guidance on developing a benchmarking visit questionnaire and interview schedule.
- $\frac{3}{4}$  **Section 8—Conducting benchmarking visits**  
describing roles and responsibilities for benchmarking visits.
- $\frac{3}{4}$  **Section 9—Reporting back after benchmarking visits**  
setting out a proposed approach for reporting back after benchmarking visits.
- $\frac{3}{4}$  **Section 10—Implementing changes**  
outlining useful strategies for implementing and managing change resulting from the OHS benchmarking process.



## Section 1—What is benchmarking?

This section defines benchmarking as a process used to identify improvements for your enterprise. It will help you determine the role OHS has to play in the improvement strategies currently underway in your enterprise.

You might want to discuss the information provided in this section with the OHS benchmarking team. Make sure that all team members share a basic understanding about benchmarking and how OHS can be included.

### Defining benchmarking

Benchmarking is a tool that allows you to assess the differences between your enterprise and world-class performers. It includes an examination of the methods, processes, procedures, products and service performance of your enterprise against those of enterprises that consistently rate as world-class in the same category of performance. If done correctly, benchmarking will increase your knowledge of the improvements you need to make to become world-class. Benchmarking is a guide on the road to best practice. Chapter 1 of the *Benchmarking Self Help Manual* (NIES, DIR, AMC, 1993) provides a more detailed explanation of benchmarking. Other references listed at the end of this manual also provide some guidance.

### Different levels of benchmarking

Enterprises undertake benchmarking at a range of different levels.

- ¾ Some examine the products of competitors and call this benchmarking. This is a simplistic form of benchmarking and is relatively easy to do, but it tends to yield little useful information.
- ¾ Others seek to quantify the differences between themselves and their competitors. Statistics, while comforting to some as tangible proof of performance or change, can be very misleading as outlined below.
- ¾ Other enterprises say that the most useful form of benchmarking involves analysis of processes and procedures—self-analysis, the analysis of other enterprises and the adaptation of the findings to guide improvements. This approach gives valuable information about the changes that are necessary in the enterprise. It is generally a better use of the resources applied to benchmarking.

### Using statistics with caution

Benchmarking OHS can involve comparisons of outcome measures such as lost time injury frequency rates (LTIFRs). However, using statistics of accidents and injuries as performance indicators for benchmarking has problems, as the following quotation describes.

*Accident data:*

- *Measure failure, not success;*
- *Are difficult to use in staff appraisal;*
- *Are subject to random fluctuations; there should not be enough accidents to carry out a statistical evaluation. Is safety fully controlled if, by chance, there are not accidents over a period?*
- *Reflect the success, or otherwise, of safety measures taken some time ago;*
- *Do not measure the incidence of occupational diseases where there is a prolonged latent period;*
- *Measure injury severity, not necessarily the potential seriousness of the accident;*
- *May under-report (or over-report) injuries and may vary as a result of subtle differences in reporting criteria; and*
- *Are particularly limited for assessing the future risk of high consequence, low probability accidents. (Amis and Booth, 1992, p. 44.)*

**Hint for team leader**

You might like to give copies of this quotation to the team. You could talk about whether any of these problems have occurred in your enterprise.

In fact, relying on numbers in any type of benchmarking has problems. The *Benchmarking Self Help Manual* reports that:

*In cases where the concentration is heavily on numbers, the scope to improve has been severely limited. For instance, one major enterprise in Australia compared its cost to install its products against others around the world in the same industry. But it didn't examine how the best did it – so it was unable to use the information to any significant degree to improve its own installation processes. Now it is going back to examine its own processes as a preparatory step to make comparisons with the processes of those which appear to be best performers. (Benchmarking Self Help Manual, p. 12.)*

The review of OHS benchmarking undertaken to prepare this manual found that those enterprises that had undertaken process benchmarking of OHS thought the effort worthwhile. On the other hand, those that had undertaken benchmarking of OHS statistics by and large did not get enough benefit to justify the effort that they had put in. Numerical benchmarking did not show them what they needed to do to improve.

LTIFRs were also not faithful guides to benchmarking partners. Enterprises with low LTIFRs may not necessarily exhibit best practice in the OHS management system that you wish to benchmark. In fact, because of the ease with which LTIFRs can be manipulated, LTIFRs may actually lead you to enterprises with ‘worst’ practice in key areas.

In summary, then, use statistics such as LTIFRs with caution. When benchmarking, do not just compare statistics with your benchmarking partners. Instead, analyse the management systems that lead to these statistics so that you can identify and implement best practice back in your own enterprise.

For more information about positive performance measures in OHS, a publication from Worksafe Australia provides a useful overview of recent work (*Positive Performance Indicators—Beyond Lost Time Injuries*, Parts 1 and 2, Worksafe Australia, Sydney, 1994. See also A. Shaw and V. Blewett, ‘Measuring Performance in OHS: Positive Performance Indicators’, *Journal of Occupational Health and Safety—Australia and New Zealand*, vol 11(4), August 1995, pp. 353-358).

## **Benchmarking is a process not an outcome**

Benchmarking is a process that you can use to help translate the strategy of your enterprise into action. Other processes that may be used include leadership, customer focus, good people management, quality management, and the use of technology. Use of these processes leads to the achievement of outcomes like lower cost, improved quality, flexibility, timeliness, innovation and competitiveness. It also makes your enterprise a better place to work.

## **Benchmarking and continuous improvement**

Continuous improvement is a strategic approach to organisational change. It recognises the value of constant, incremental improvements. In continuous improvement programs, those who do the work identify and implement improvements to processes.

Because benchmarking gives practical information about how and what to change, it forms a vital part of continuous improvement programs. Information from benchmarking visits can be used by teams examining particular issues to seed new ideas. Benchmarking can also alter the way that you go about changes that you have planned by alerting you to new ways of using existing change strategies.

When OHS is benchmarked, you will come to identify the vital part it plays in your key processes. This can give direction about other processes that could benefit from benchmarking.





## What are the reasons for benchmarking OHS in your enterprise?

- | ***Why does your enterprise want to conduct OHS benchmarking, and what do you hope the outcomes will be?***  
*(For example, to integrate OHS into the management systems of our enterprise.)*

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## Where to start?

- | ***List all the improvement strategies underway in your enterprise and determine the part OHS has to play in each one. This will help you to think about specific and general areas for benchmarking OHS.***

Improvement strategies	OHS involvement
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➤| **What are the arrangements for OHS benchmarking team meetings?**

*(Where, when, how often and for how long.)*

The hospital's OHS benchmarking team met every fortnight on a Monday afternoon for up to two hours.

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➤| **Who does the OHS benchmarking team report to?**

*(For example, to the OHS committee, the consultative committee.)*

The hospital's OHS benchmarking team reported to the hospital's Patient Care Review Committee through the Risk Manager.

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## What resources will the OHS benchmarking team have?

Benchmarking is a very useful approach to improving OHS management, but it is not a cheap or easy process. Your enterprise needs to provide clear guidance to the team on the resources available to undertake OHS benchmarking. These resources should not be just financial, but should include administrative and decision-making support.

### •| Who will provide administrative support to the OHS benchmarking team?

The OHS benchmarking team at Powercoal's Cooranbong Colliery was resourced through the Safety and Training Coordinator.

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### •| What budget must the OHS benchmarking team work to?

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### •| How much time will OHS benchmarking team members spend on benchmarking? (For example, how many hours per week off their normal jobs.)

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## **What training should OHS benchmarking teams be given?**

OHS benchmarking teams will need training to give them the skills and knowledge that allow effective benchmarking. Training also helps the team learn to work together effectively. Chapter 5 of the *Benchmarking Self Help Manual* outlines the range of skills that are required for benchmarking. To benchmark OHS, team members may also require training in OHS management and specific issues relating to the management systems to be benchmarked.

Use the following table to identify training needs for OHS benchmarking team members. You could make the assessment yourself, accompanied by self-assessment by team members.



Skills	Team	Team leader	Provided by?
Process analysis			
Communication techniques			
Team processes, for example, decision making, conflict resolution			
Meeting procedures			
Work planning			
Problem solving			
Interviewing skills			
Report preparation			
Facilitation skills			
Change management			
OHS management			
Other specific OHS issues:			

Training could be provided by relevant staff of your enterprise or by external consultants or training providers. This will depend on available staff, financial resources and time available to the team.



## Section 5—Knowing yourself

This section will help you identify and analyse the key management systems in your enterprise for benchmarking to improve OHS. This will ensure that you know enough about what you are doing now to improve in the future. Use this section to supplement the information in Chapter 6 of the *Benchmarking Self Help Manual*. The activities here show how the process analysis tools described there apply to OHS. You should work with the OHS benchmarking team to complete the activities. Specific tasks could be done by individual members of the team.

**Analysing your own processes can be difficult, but it is important to do it well. At this stage, some external assistance from a consultant can be very useful, especially if you have not undertaken process analysis before.**

### Know yourself first!

When benchmarking OHS, the most important step is to analyse your own OHS management process. If you do not know what you are doing or how you are going, you cannot gain maximum benefit from looking at how others do it. Also, the process of analysis might identify improvements immediately, without having to go outside. You can then target benchmarking to other problems or areas for improvement where you really need the creative burst given by external benchmarking.

The OHS benchmarking team for a public hospital in Melbourne found that by analysing the management system they had chosen, they were able to identify a number of immediate improvements. Before they had even chosen benchmarking partners, the team was able to make recommendations for significant improvements in how the hospital handled processes involving potential exposures to blood-borne pathogens.

### Do not analyse everything

To analyse your own OHS management process, first identify the important features. As this section demonstrates, there are many aspects of the OHS management process in your enterprise. You should target benchmarking to the most important features—the features which have the most effect on your OHS performance. This section will help you identify these features for your enterprise.

### Identifying key features of the OHS management process

Managing OHS in the workplace is similar to controlling a river. What happens upstream has consequences for the river downstream. Heavy rain at the head of the river gives rise to flooding further down. To control the flooding, action needs to be taken upstream rather than downstream where the floodwaters have had the chance to spread.

Like the river, health and safety issues also need to be resolved upstream rather than downstream. That is, the effort needs to be put into examining the atmosphere (or culture) of the enterprise and the systems that arise from it.

To do this, analyse OHS management at your enterprise in the terms of the ASET Process<sup>1</sup>.

<b>Atmosphere</b> -> For example, vision, values, common goals, OHS culture.	<b>Systems</b> -> For example, OHS-specific systems, such as hazard policies and procedures and OHS information systems, as well as general management systems that include OHS, such as training, purchasing and maintenance procedures.	<b>Exposure</b> -> For example, state of equipment, conditions in the workplace, behaviour.	<b>Targets</b> For example, incidents, near-misses.
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To improve the Exposure and Target end of this process, you will need to improve the first two steps—Atmosphere and Systems. Just looking at the endpoint does not allow you to improve the Atmosphere and Systems which cause incidents. Enterprises have found that the most effective OHS benchmarking occurs when the focus is on the first two steps. They have found that improved Atmosphere and Systems lead to sustained improvement in Exposures and, ultimately, in Targets.

Auditing systems can provide a further framework for analysis here. Your industry or enterprise might already have an auditing model. Some States and Territories have auditing models developed by their OHS or workers' compensation agency. For example, in Victoria, the OHS Authority's SafetyMAP provides 12 auditing criteria which can help identify important features for benchmarking. In South Australia, the SABScheme has also been an important driver for OHS benchmarking. If appropriate, use one of these frameworks to help identify the features or systems that you should benchmark.

Powercoal's Cooranbong Colliery analysed OHS management at their mine in terms of the industry framework established by the Australian Mining Industry Council. This 15 point model forms the evaluation criteria for the annual MINEX Awards for excellence in OHS management in the mining industry. The model focuses on upstream factors such as communication and workplace design and construction.

<sup>1</sup> Based on an approach outlined in Krause and Finley (1993), p. 20.

•+| **What are the key features of the atmosphere for OHS in your workplace?**  
(For example, OHS policy, values with respect to OHS.)

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•+| **What are all the systems used to manage OHS in your workplace?**  
(For example, OHS-specific systems, such as hazard control procedures, and general management systems that include OHS, such as purchasing.)

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•+| **Who are the customers of your OHS management systems?**  
(For example, employees, employees' families, the relevant OHS authorities.)

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Now that you have identified the significant features and systems of OHS management in your enterprise, you need to work with the OHS benchmarking team to identify the most important ones and the ones which need the most improvement. Work with the team on the next activity. Discuss their responses to the next series of questions, asking them to nominate three systems or features under each category. Ignore the left hand columns at this stage.

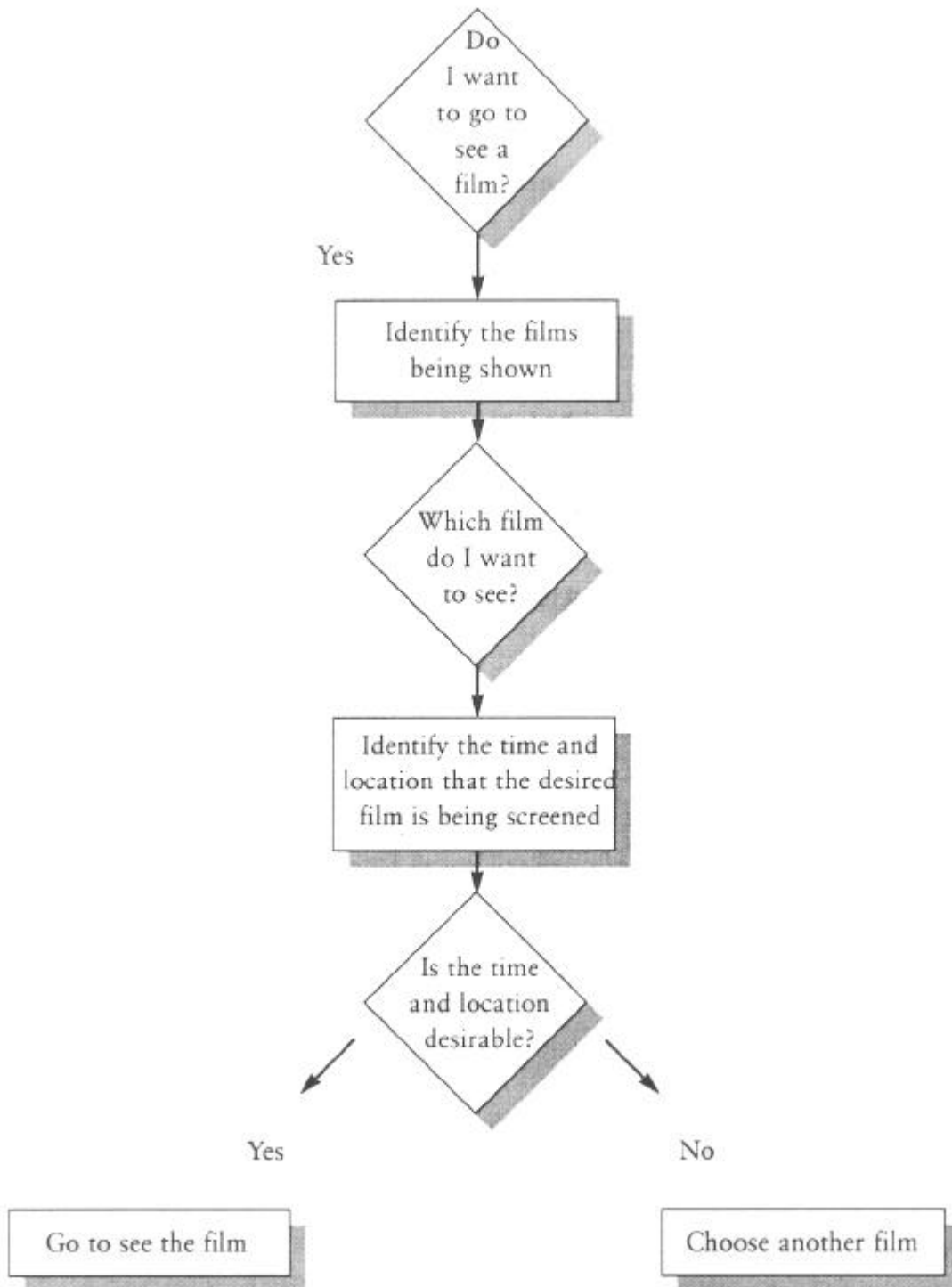
➤ Which features of the OHS atmosphere and which management systems

IMP	SAT	Question
		<p><i>have the most effect on exposures?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
		<p><i>are critical in meeting important customer needs?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
		<p><i>have effects in other areas of the enterprise?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
		<p><i>have the most potential for improvement?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
		<p><i>are the most effective in preventing OHS problems entering the workplace in the first place?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>



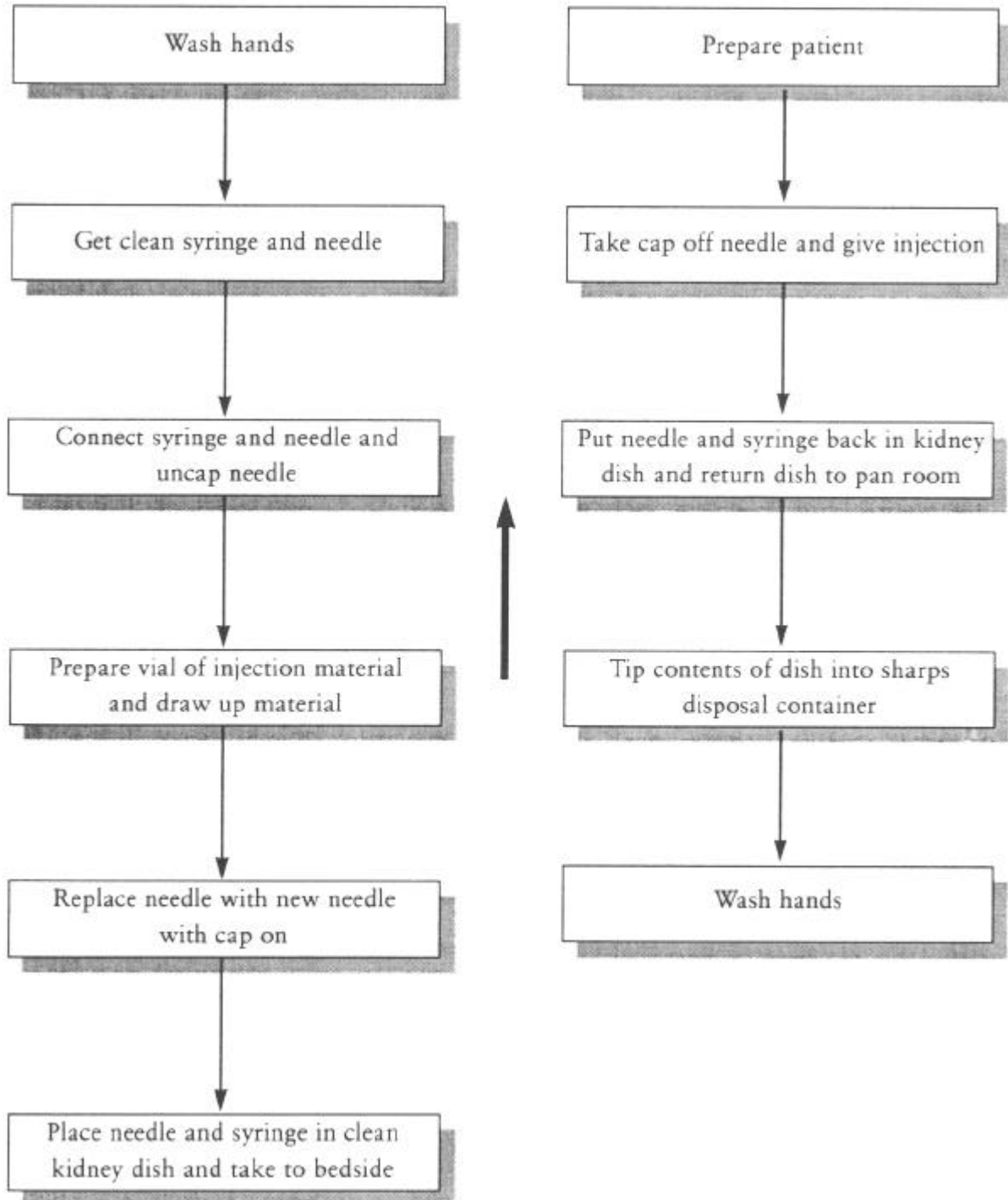






The following flow chart was developed by the OHS benchmarking team at a public hospital in Melbourne.

### Administering I/Vs and I/Ms



## **Flow chart for OHS management system selected for benchmarking**

Now, draw up a flow chart in the space below for the management system that you have chosen. To do this:

1. Ask the team to list all of the tasks that are involved in the system. Use brainstorming to help make sure that nothing has been left out.
2. Number the tasks in the order that they should be performed. Combine tasks that are done together.
3. Write the tasks again in the correct order.
4. Mark each of the decision-making points by using a diamond.
5. Ask all members of the team to mentally 'walk through' the system to identify any errors.
6. Check with the team that nothing essential has been left out.

➤ **Identify the problems and barriers at each step in the system.**

For each box and diamond, write all the problems that have arisen or can arise in carrying out the step. What stops the step being carried out efficiently and effectively? What would the customers of this system (identified earlier) say were the problems and barriers?

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➤ **Determine whether all steps in the system are essential.**

Are there any unnecessary steps or tasks? How could the steps better meet the customers' needs?

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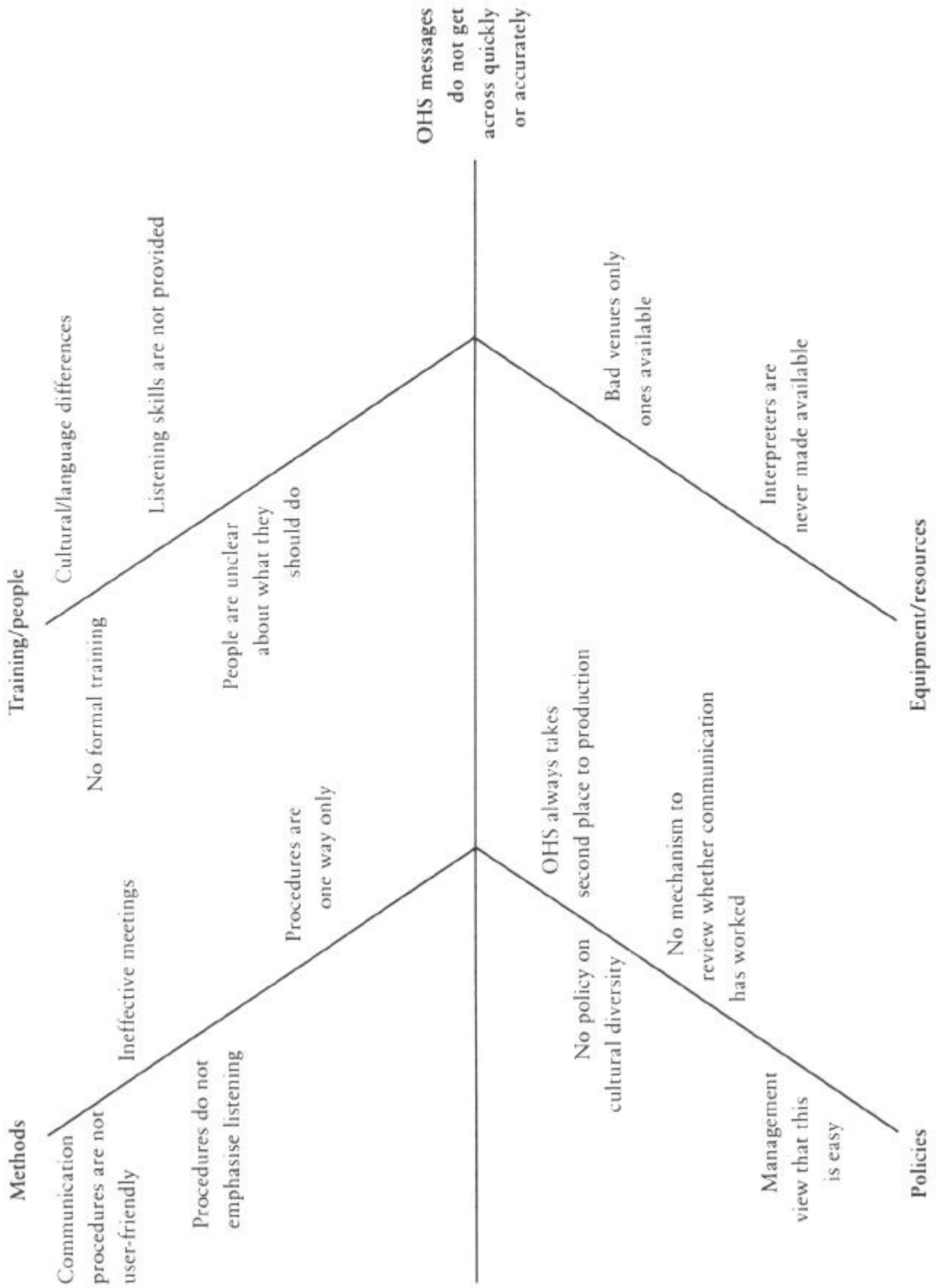
➤ **Identify the sources of the problems and barriers.**

These will probably be obvious. There are some useful techniques for documenting this. You may have already used a 'fishbone' diagram.

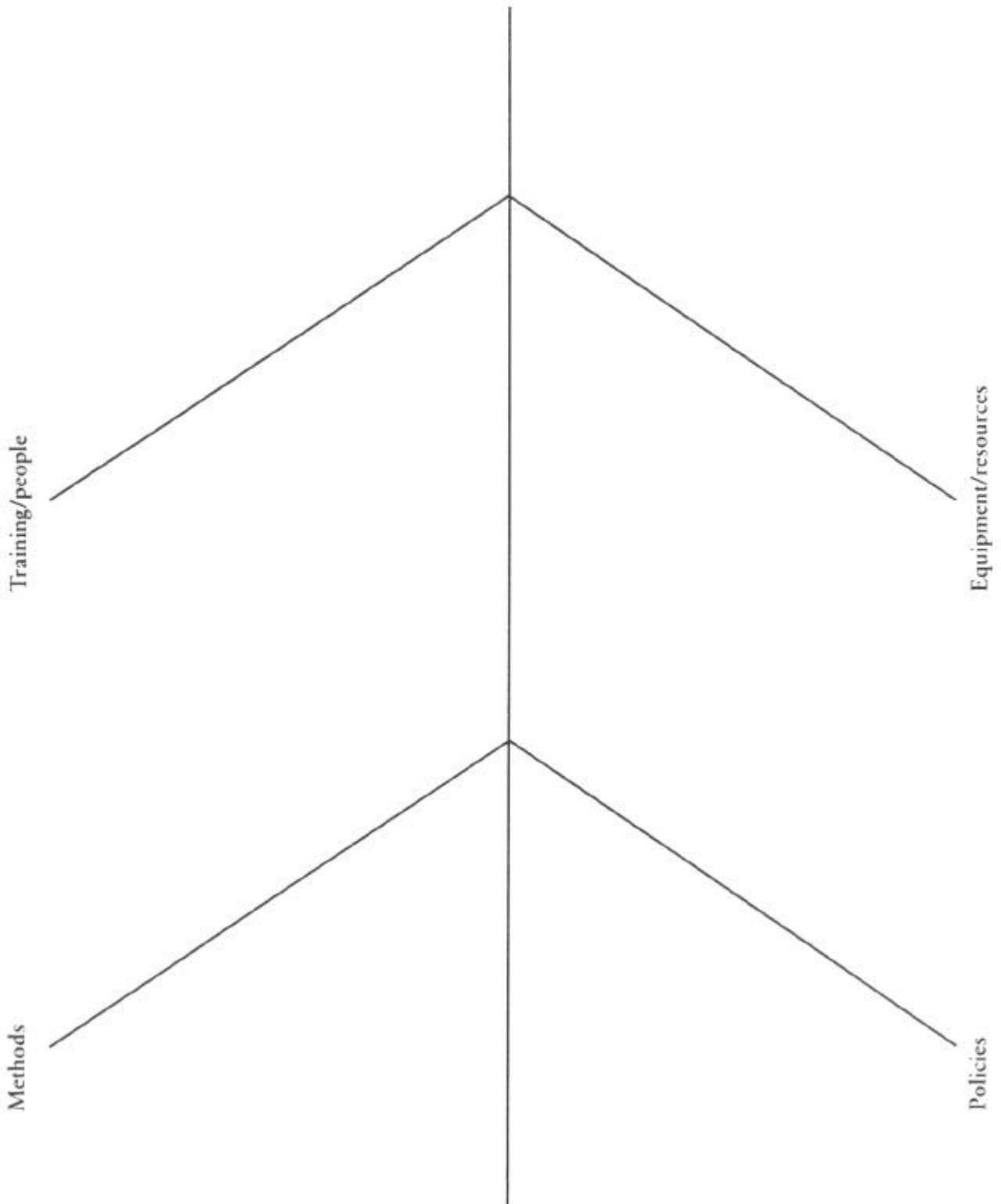
Use the whiteboard to tackle this exercise. Draw up the 'skeleton' of the fish on the whiteboard, with the problem that you are working on as the fish's head. The 'bones' of the fish can refer to any areas that you think might be the cause of your problems. Apart from the suggestions given in the example on the following page, you might also want to look at time, inspections, environment or procedures. Feel free to change the headings if you wish.

Help the team to brainstorm the causes of the problem that relate to each bone. Write their ideas along the bones of the fish. When you have collected everyone's contributions, discuss and refine the causes written on the whiteboard. You can then record the diagram permanently on paper.

The fishbone diagram on the next page was developed by an OHS benchmarking team looking at OHS communication.



Here is a blank fishbone diagram for you to photocopy and complete for each problem that the team wants to analyse.



Now, with a clear sense of what the problems are in the key OHS management systems in your enterprise, you can identify useful benchmarking partners and ask them relevant questions.









In addition to gaining access to OHS benchmarking partners through networks, you might have heard through other sources of an enterprise that you believe would be a good benchmarking partner. Even if you have no contacts in the enterprise, it is still worthwhile approaching them 'cold'. Although contacting an enterprise without prior introduction can be more time consuming, it can result in very good benchmarking relationships. Such contacts can be easier if you can offer some advantage to the potential partners, for example, information or resources that they might find useful.

The occupational health nurse at a large plastics manufacturer met the production manager of a nearby clothing manufacturer at a barbecue. They talked informally about their mutual interest in ergonomics in their workplaces. The clothing manufacturer had initiated some novel processes for overcoming manual handling injuries that might have been able to be used at the plastics manufacturer.

The occupational health nurse believed that the information was reliable so she passed the contact on to the OHS benchmarking team. There was no difficulty arranging a visit and the team brought back some fresh ideas that were implemented after consultation.

## Who will we approach?

Work with your benchmarking team to brainstorm answers to the following questions.

- ***From the existing networks of team members, list all the possible benchmarking partners.***

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- ***List the enterprises that you have heard have good reputations or that you know are doing well in areas of OHS that you want to benchmark.***

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## Section 7—Preparing for a benchmarking visit

This section is about the preliminary work that needs to take place before the visit. It will help you develop visit questionnaires and interview schedules. More detailed information can be found in Chapter 8 of the *Benchmarking Self Help Manual*.

You should facilitate your team members through the brainstorming activities in this section and the process of refining the list.

### Why a questionnaire?

At first glance, the idea of visiting a benchmarking partner with a questionnaire in hand may seem rather unnatural, but it is a good way to ensure that the visit time is used effectively. It helps to keep the benchmarking team focused on the reason for being there, it helps to prompt discussion, and it acts as a memory jogger ensuring that nothing gets left out. If you find the questionnaire format too unwieldy, you may find a simple list of issues to talk through just as useful.

One enterprise used a checklist of issues to be covered on the benchmarking visit instead of a detailed questionnaire. This checklist allowed the benchmarking team to adapt their questions to suit each individual benchmarking partner. It ensured that the team which visited each partner included someone with expertise in the areas being examined. This person was able to use the checklist as a basis for interviews and to follow up any specific issues on the spot.













## Section 8—Conducting benchmarking visits

This section will help you determine the roles and responsibilities of the members of the OHS benchmarking team during benchmarking visits. There is more detailed information about this in Chapter 9 of the *Benchmarking Self Help Manual*.

### Who does what?

It is a privilege to be allowed to spend time in another enterprise. The time is valuable to both you and your benchmarking partners so it is important that you use it wisely. Good preparation is vital and it shows in the manner in which you conduct your visits. If you are well prepared, both you and your benchmarking partners stand to gain a great deal.

With the team, allocate specific roles to different members of the benchmarking team using their skills as a guide to selection. Ask team members about the roles that they would prefer.

Roles may include note taker, questioners, observers, photographer (but get permission to take photographs before getting there) and interview taper (but get prior permission to tape). Once you have allocated roles, make sure that team members are able to fulfil them. Extra training may be of benefit at this stage.

The whole team will need to be on the alert during visits. Make sure that all of the identified issues are covered. Be prepared for new, side issues to be raised. Make sure that these side issues are followed through if they are of interest to the team.

List of roles	Who takes each one
Note taker: .....	.....
Questioners: .....	.....
Observers: .....	.....
Photographer: .....	.....
Taper: .....	.....
Other: .....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
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## **Give and take**

Remember that benchmarking is a two-way process. You will pick up information from your benchmarking partners and, as the term 'partner' implies, your partners will learn from you. Be prepared to give information about your enterprise. Before your visit, ask your partners if there is any information that they would like from you. Bring any appropriate material with you on the visits.

## **After the event**

Finally, you will return to your workplace, laden with new ideas and the energy to implement them. During this stage of excitement, remember to thank your benchmarking partners for sharing their time and information with you. It is appropriate for the team to send a short personal note of thanks.

You must also provide your partners with any information that you promised as a follow up to your visits. Remember, benchmarking is a two-way process. Effective, long term benchmarking partnerships require a continuing exchange of information.

## Section 9—Reporting back after benchmarking visits

This section will help you report back to the rest of your enterprise when you have completed your benchmarking visits. It provides a strategy for ensuring that the right people get the right information as early as possible. You might choose to report back in more detail when the team has identified the changes that they will recommend as a result of benchmarking (covered in Section 10). However, it is important that some kind of preliminary report back occurs very quickly after you return. Otherwise, the impetus of your work can be lost.

### Why should we report back?

Reporting back as soon as possible after you have returned from your benchmarking visits is vital to retain credibility with the rest of the enterprise. Reporting back will help to gain the necessary commitment to change. Preparing written and verbal reports can also help crystallise what you have discovered while it is still fresh in your minds. You will also be able to use this as an opportunity to canvas potential improvement strategies.

One enterprise found that the OHS benchmarking team needed to discuss what they had discovered as soon as they had returned to the workplace. A ‘debrief’ on the same day helped the team identify the most important findings.

On the basis of their debrief and further analysis, the team quickly drew up a set of draft recommendations. These were presented to senior management who provided comments and suggestions for change. A formal report was then prepared and again presented to senior management. Middle management received the report next, followed by presentations to the entire workforce shortly afterwards.

By discussing their findings with senior management first, this team avoided a potentially damaging public debate with senior management about what they were recommending. Some confusion about the proposed changes was able to be resolved quickly. This ensured that the report which was finally prepared had management support.

### Who should we report back to?

Everyone in the workplace should be informed about the outcomes of the benchmarking exercise. However, different groups and areas will have different information needs and will want information in different forms.

- | **List all of the groups in your enterprise that will need to receive a report back.**  
(For example, senior management, OHS committee, OHS representatives, OHS Manager.)

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- | **Who will be responsible for reporting back to each group?**

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## **What should we report back about?**

Everyone should get the same essential message. However, some groups will want different degrees of detail and information about different subjects. For example, you can expect that the Finance Manager will not want or need the same degree of detail about the actual OHS issues and management systems that you observed as, say, the OHS committee.

- | **What information will each group need?**

*Group 1:* .....  
.....  
*Group 2:* .....  
.....  
*Group 3:* .....  
.....  
*Group 4:* .....  
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Report to	By	About	In the form of	When



## Section 10—Implementing changes

This section outlines useful strategies for implementing and managing change as a result of benchmarking. Chapter 10 of the *Benchmarking Self Help Manual* also provides guidance on this.

### What did we learn from our OHS benchmarking visits?

Using the problems and systems that you identified in earlier stages of the process, analyse the information that you have received from your benchmarking partners to identify potential improvement strategies for the key problems and systems.

There are a range of approaches for doing this. Essentially, it is a matter of analysing the systems that you observed in benchmarking partners in the same way that you have earlier analysed your own systems. You could compare flow charts and fishbone diagrams between all enterprises. Another approach is to prepare a table comparing how different enterprises handle the range of issues that you need to address.

For example, say one of the systems that you benchmarked was purchasing procedures. The fishbone analysis of your own procedures identified training received by Purchasing Officer, links between OHS and purchasing staff, consultation with users, obtaining information about OHS standards for equipment and gaining access to hazardous substances information as key problems. Your table might then look like the one on the following page.

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Partner A</b>	<b>Partner B</b>	<b>Partner C</b>
Training received by Purchasing Officer	Purchasing Officer has received same OHS training as have other supervisors	Purchasing Officer has received OHS training at local TAFE college	No Purchasing Officer—work groups do own purchasing
Links between OHS and purchasing staff	Purchasing Officer consults with OHS Officer as purchasing requests come in	Purchasing Officer consults with OHS Officer on an ad hoc basis	Work groups check with OHS Officer regarding OHS standards for new material and equipment needs
Consultation with users	Users are consulted once a short list of suppliers, materials or equipment is prepared by the Purchasing Officer	Users are involved in determining the parameters for purchases and are consulted further if equally acceptable alternatives exist	Users are purchasers
Obtaining information about OHS standards for equipment	OHS Officer provides latest information to Purchasing Officer as it is received	Purchasing Officer keeps own material	OHS Officer provides relevant OHS information to the work groups as it becomes available
Gaining access to hazardous substances information	Copies of the hazardous substances register are available in all work areas, including Purchasing. All staff have received basic training in concepts used	Copies of the hazardous substances register are available in all work areas, including Purchasing. All staff have received basic training in concepts used	Work groups keep own hazardous substances register, as well as having copies of the enterprise-wide register. All staff have received full training in hazardous substances management

Draw a similar table to analyse the information that you have received from each enterprise.





## Getting agreement to change

Once the benchmarking team has identified the changes that are needed to achieve best practice, the consultation must start. You will need to consult with all relevant people, especially decision makers and those who will have to implement and operate under the changes.

➡ **List all the people who will have to be consulted and how this will be done to achieve a list of agreed changes for implementation.**

OHS committee: .....

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Senior management: .....

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Others: .....

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## The environment for implementing change

In implementing the agreed changes, you should remember that the current situation is caused by a balance between forces driving for change (drivers) and forces trying to maintain the status quo (barriers or obstacles). Your implementation plan will have to include strategies to work on both types of forces. If you just look at driving forces, for example, the only result might be stronger obstacles to change.

⇒ **List the most significant forces driving for change in your priority areas.**

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⇒ **List the most significant obstacles to change in your priority areas.**

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⇒ **List possible change strategies which will reduce the obstacles and increase the drivers.**

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## How will we implement the agreed changes?

One OHS benchmarking team identified a strategy for implementing each of their recommendations as part of a workplan. Each strategy included responsibilities for each task. A regular report was given to the OHS committee about the status of the plan? whether the strategies had been completed or what still needed to be done. Six months after the workplan was developed, the OHS committee reviewed overall progress. Most of the recommendations had been implemented, but a few remaining strategies needed to be given a higher priority.

Make sure that you get ‘the runs on the board’ early by tackling some easily implemented but obvious changes quickly. This will help create momentum to support the more difficult, long term strategies.

After you have agreed on the changes to be implemented and analysed the drivers and obstacles for change, you will need to develop an implementation plan. Use the following table as a guide to developing your own implementation plan.

<b>Tasks (in order)</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>	<b>How will each task be done, for example, sources of information?</b>	<b>What resources are required?</b>	<b>When must the task be completed?</b>	<b>To whom should progress be reported?</b>



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## Glossary

<b>Benchmarking</b>	is a systematic tool to identify and assess the differences between your enterprise and world-class performers. It can be used to introduce best practice into enterprises. It is conducted in such a way that there is wide consultation and people are in a position to understand and achieve their full potential.
<b>Best practice</b>	refers to the cooperative way in which enterprises and their employees work together continuously to strive to be the best possible in all key business processes. The benefits can be seen in improvements in timeliness, cost, quality and customer service.
<b>Cause and effect diagrams (fishbone diagrams)</b>	are a technique for identifying the possible causes of a problem to be solved (the effect). It is a visually effective method of breaking a problem into manageable chunks. Ideas about the possible causes of the problem are recorded, analysed as they are suggested and organised into the major categories that contribute to the problem.
<b>Continuous improvement</b>	is a keystone of best practice. It refers to the incremental changes that occur through the cooperative efforts of all people in the enterprise. In enterprises that embrace a philosophy of continuous improvement, people bring their ideas forward and management provides consistent encouragement and support.
<b>Flow charts</b>	are pictures representing the steps or activities in a process. Rectangles represent a step in the process. Diamonds represent decision points. Lines with arrowheads give the flow and direction of the process.
<b>Foundation stones</b>	are certain management practices that need to be in place in an enterprise before benchmarking can be effective. Foundation stones include a commitment to the adoption of a consultative and participative management style.
<b>Performance indicators</b>	are used to monitor the performance of individuals, groups or whole enterprises. Performance needs to be monitored to improve and to provide a better service to the enterprise's customers.



## Useful contacts

### AusIndustry

AusIndustry is the Commonwealth Government's one-stop shop for all business assistance services.

There are offices in every State and Territory. To contact your local office, call AusIndustry's hotline on 13 2846.

### National Industry Extension Service

The National Industry Extension Service is a joint Commonwealth/State business improvement program which can help you identify and implement strategies to make your enterprise more competitive and successful. It has offices in each State and Territory.

NSW: (02) 228 3050

Vic: (03) 9412 8142

Qld: (07) 3224 2075

SA: (08) 8300 1500

WA: (09) 481 2525

Tas: (002) 33 5577

NT: (08) 99 7993

ACT: (06) 205 0614



# **Benchmarking Occupational Health and Safety:**

## **Team Member's Workbook**

**Researched and written by**

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**for Worksafe Australia**

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Enterprises that purchase this publication may make copies of the three component parts for use by OHS benchmarking team leaders and members. The right to reproduce this publication is not transferable to other individuals or organisations outside the enterprise that purchases it.

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enough benefit to justify the effort that they had put in. Numerical benchmarking did not show them what they needed to do to improve.

LTIFRs were also not faithful guides to benchmarking partners. Enterprises with low LTIFRs may not necessarily exhibit best practice in the OHS management system that you wish to benchmark. In fact, because of the ease with which LTIFRs can be manipulated, LTIFRs may actually lead you to enterprises with 'worst' practice in key areas.

In summary, then, use statistics such as LTIFRs with caution. When benchmarking, do not just compare statistics with your benchmarking partners. Instead, analyse the management systems that lead to these statistics so that you can identify and implement best practice back in your own enterprise.

For more information about positive performance measures in OHS, a publication from Worksafe Australia provides a useful overview of recent work (*Positive Performance Indicators—Beyond Lost Time Injuries*, Parts 1 and 2, Worksafe Australia, Sydney, 1994. See also A. Shaw and V. Blewett, 'Measuring Performance in OHS: Positive Performance Indicators', *Journal of Occupational Health and Safety—Australia and New Zealand*, vol 11(4), August 1995, pp. 353-358).

## **Benchmarking is a process not an outcome**

Benchmarking is a process that you can use to help translate the strategy of your enterprise into action. Other processes that may be used include leadership, customer focus, good people management, quality management, and the use of technology. Use of these processes leads to the achievement of outcomes like lower cost, improved quality, flexibility, timeliness, innovation and competitiveness. It also makes your enterprise a better place to work.













Use the following table to identify your training needs.

Skills	Team	Team leader	Provided by?
Process analysis			
Communication techniques			
Team processes, for example, decision making, conflict resolution			
Meeting procedures			
Work planning			
Problem solving			
Interviewing skills			
Report preparation			
Facilitation skills			
Change management			
OHS management			
Other specific OHS issues:			

## Section 5—Knowing yourself

**This section will help you identify and analyse the key management systems in your enterprise for benchmarking to improve OHS. This will ensure that you know enough about what you are doing now to improve in the future.**

### **Know yourself first!**

When benchmarking OHS, the most important step is to analyse your own OHS management process. If you do not know what you are doing or how you are going, you cannot gain maximum benefit from looking at how others do it. Also, the process of analysis might identify improvements immediately, without having to go outside. You can then target benchmarking to other problems or areas for improvement where you really need the creative burst given by external benchmarking.

The OHS benchmarking team for a public hospital in Melbourne found that by analysing the management system they had chosen, they were able to identify a number of immediate improvements. Before they had even chosen benchmarking partners, the team was able to make recommendations for significant improvements in how the hospital handled processes involving potential exposures to blood-borne pathogens.

### **Do not analyse everything**

To analyse your own OHS management process, first identify the important features. As this section demonstrates, there are many aspects of the OHS management process in your enterprise. You should target benchmarking to the most important features—the features which have the most effect on your OHS performance. This section will help you identify these features for your enterprise.

### **Identifying key features of the OHS management process**

Managing OHS in the workplace is similar to controlling a river. What happens upstream has consequences for the river downstream. Heavy rain at the head of the river gives rise to flooding further down. To control the flooding, action needs to be taken upstream rather than downstream where the floodwaters have had the chance to spread.

Like the river, health and safety issues also need to be resolved upstream rather than downstream. That is, the effort needs to be put into examining the atmosphere (or culture) of the enterprise and the systems that arise from it.

To do this, analyse OHS management at your enterprise in the terms of the ASET Process<sup>1</sup>.

<p><b>Atmosphere</b> -&gt;</p> <p>For example, vision, values, common goals, OHS culture.</p>	<p><b>Systems</b> -&gt;</p> <p>For example, OHS-specific systems, such as hazard policies and procedures and OHS information systems, as well as general management systems that include OHS, such as training, purchasing and maintenance procedures.</p>	<p><b>Exposure</b> -&gt;</p> <p>For example, state of equipment, conditions in the workplace, behaviour.</p>	<p><b>Targets</b></p> <p>For example, incidents, near-misses.</p>
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To improve the Exposure and Target end of this process, you will need to improve the first two steps—Atmosphere and Systems. Just looking at the endpoint does not allow you to improve the Atmosphere and Systems which cause incidents. Enterprises have found that the most effective OHS benchmarking occurs when the focus is on the first two steps. They have found that improved Atmosphere and Systems lead to sustained improvement in Exposures and, ultimately, in Targets.

Powercoal’s Cooranbong Colliery analysed OHS management at their mine in terms of the industry framework established by the Australian Mining Industry Council. This 15 point model forms the evaluation criteria for the annual MINEX Awards for excellence in OHS management in the mining industry. The model focuses on upstream factors such as communication and workplace design and construction.

➤ **What are the key features of the atmosphere for OHS in your workplace?**  
*(For example, OHS policy, values with respect to OHS.)*

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<sup>1</sup> Based on an approach outlined in Krause and Finley (1993), p. 20.

➤| **What are all the systems used to manage OHS in your workplace?**

*(For example, OHS-specific systems, such as hazard control procedures, and general management systems that include OHS, such as purchasing.)*

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➤| **Who are the customers of your OHS management systems?**

*(For example, employees, employees' families, the relevant OHS authorities.)*

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➤| **Which features of the OHS atmosphere and which management systems**

IMP	SAT	Question
		<p><i>have the most effect on exposures?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
		<p><i>are critical in meeting important customer needs?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

IMP	SAT	Question
		<p><i>have effects in other areas of the enterprise?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
		<p><i>have the most potential for improvement?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
		<p><i>are the most effective in preventing OHS problems entering the workplace in the first place?</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

## Setting priorities

Now, identify how *important* these features or systems are, where:

- 1 = Very important
- 2 = Important
- 3 = Not important.

Write the relevant number in the first column (IMP) against your previous answers.

Now, identify how *satisfied* you are that these features or systems are now working well?

- 1 = Very dissatisfied with how this feature or system is going
- 2 = This feature or system seems to be operating adequately
- 3 = This feature or system is working very well.

Write the relevant number in the second column (SAT) against your previous answers.

The features or systems which have a 1 against them in *both* columns are very important and do not seem to be working well. These become the features or systems that you should analyse in preparation for benchmarking. Write them here.





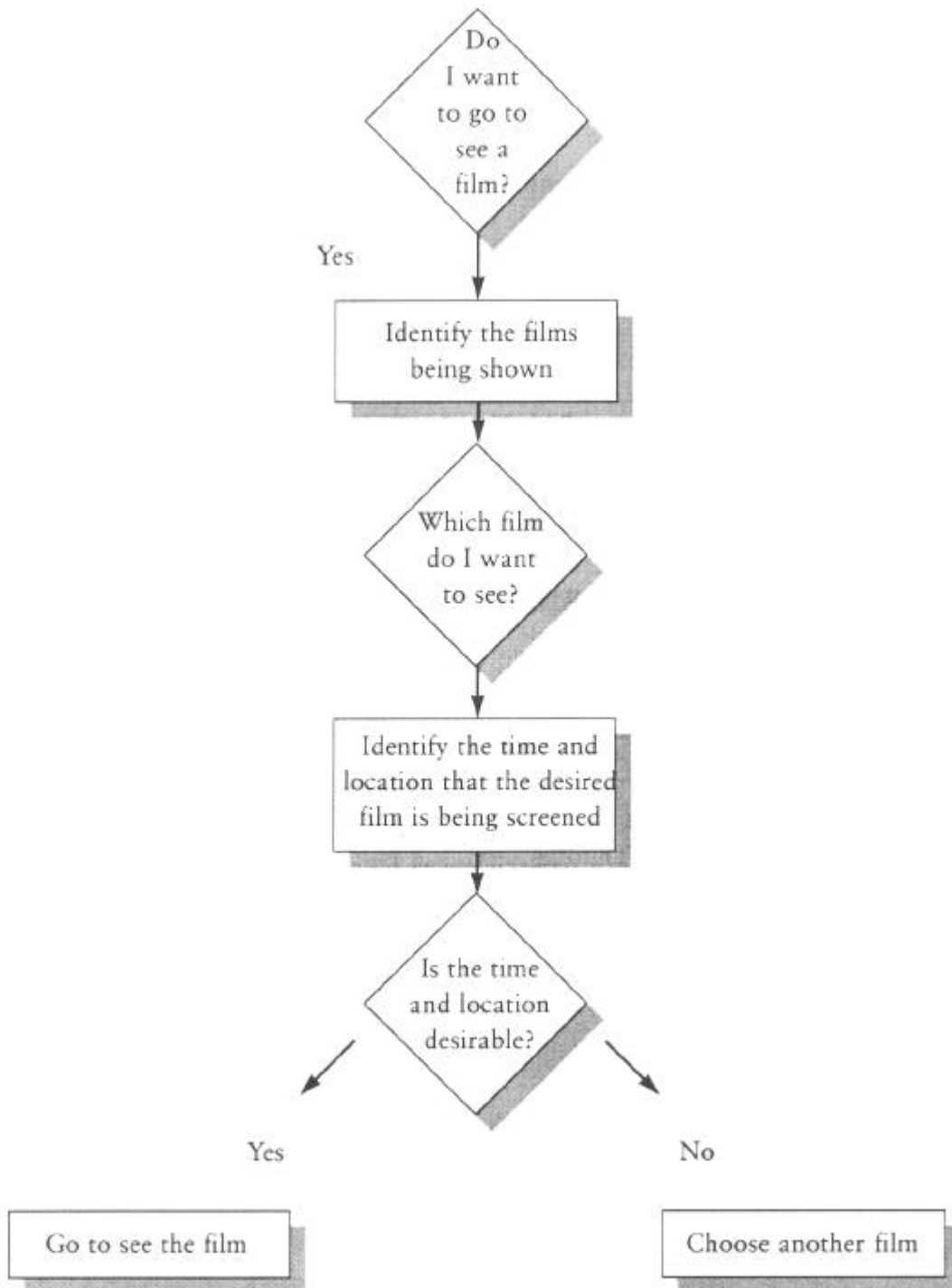
- | Choose one of the management systems that you identified in the previous activity as having a high priority.

.....

- | List all the steps in this system. Draw them up as a flow chart.

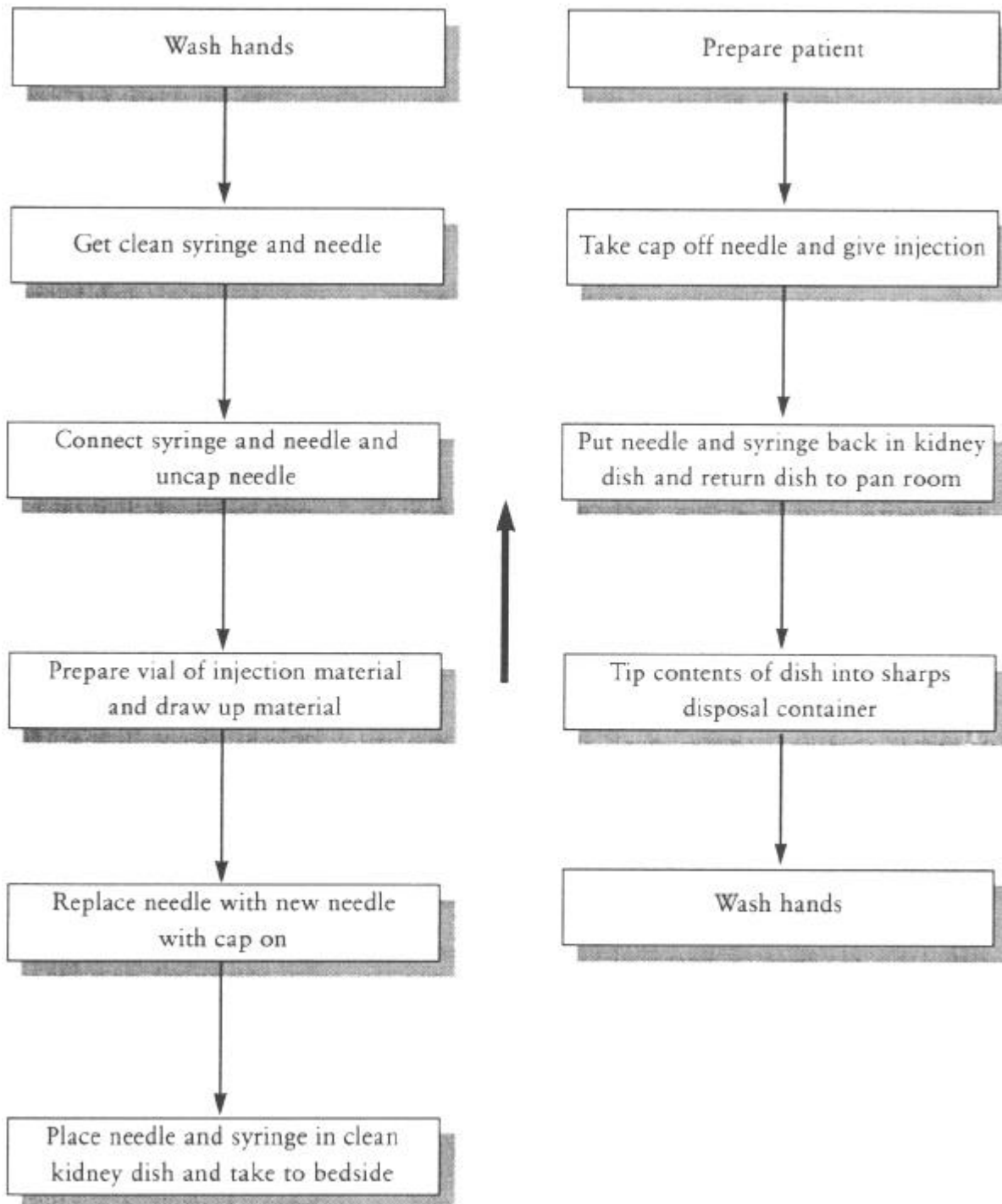
A flow chart is a diagram that represents all the steps and decisions involved in a management system. Write each step in a box and link them with arrows to show the direction of the process. Mark decision-making points as diamonds.

For example, a flow chart for deciding to go to see a film might look like the diagram below.



The following flow chart was developed by the OHS benchmarking team at a public hospital in Melbourne.

### Administering I/Vs and I/Ms



## **Flow chart for OHS management system selected for benchmarking**

Now, draw up a flow chart for the management system that you have chosen.

➤| **Identify the problems and barriers at each step in the system.**

For each box and diamond, write all the problems that have arisen or can arise in carrying out the step. What stops the step being carried out efficiently and effectively? What would the customers of this system (identified earlier) say were the problems and barriers?

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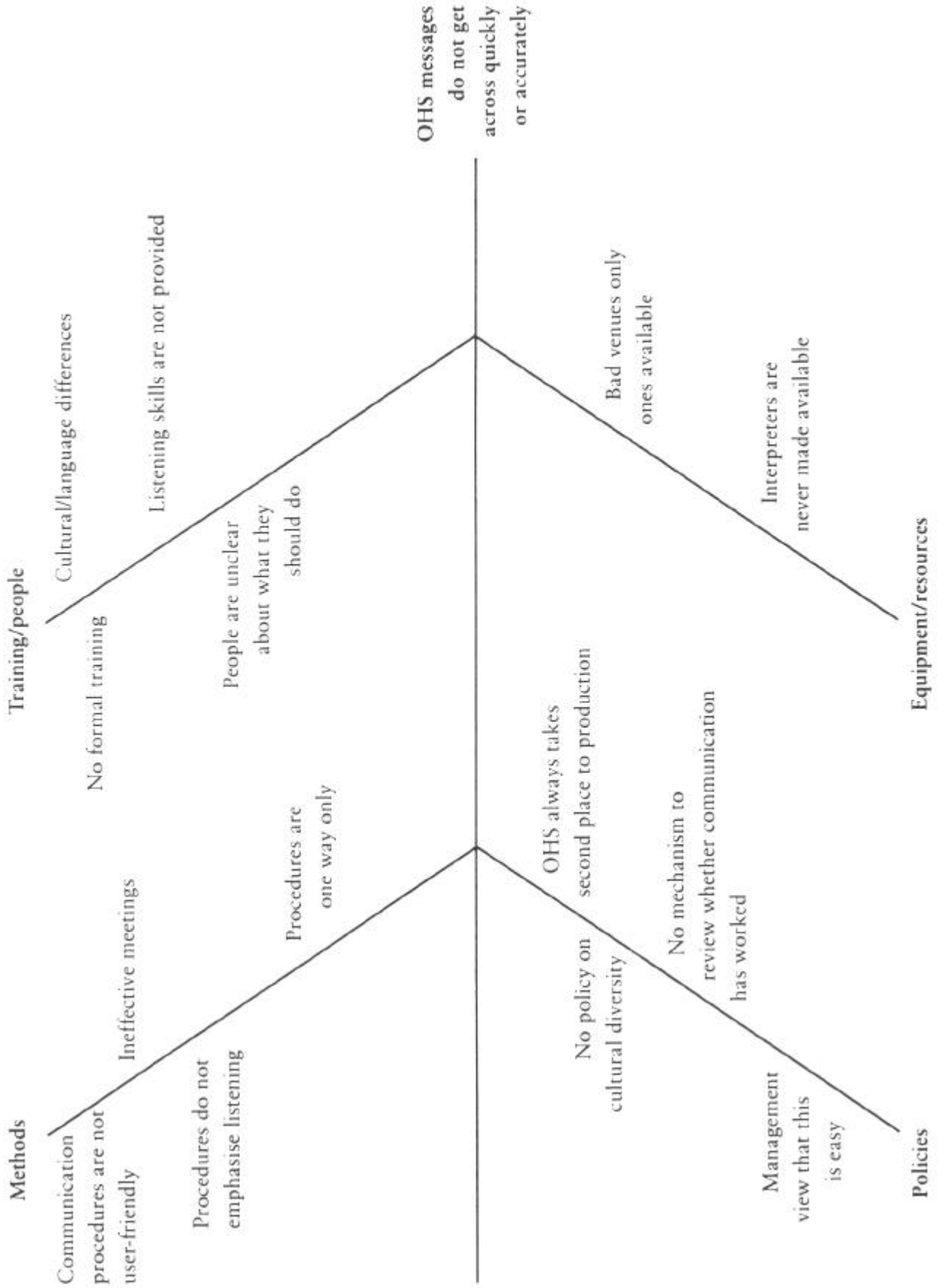
➤| **Determine whether all steps in the system are essential.**

Are there any unnecessary steps or tasks? How could the steps better meet the customers' needs?

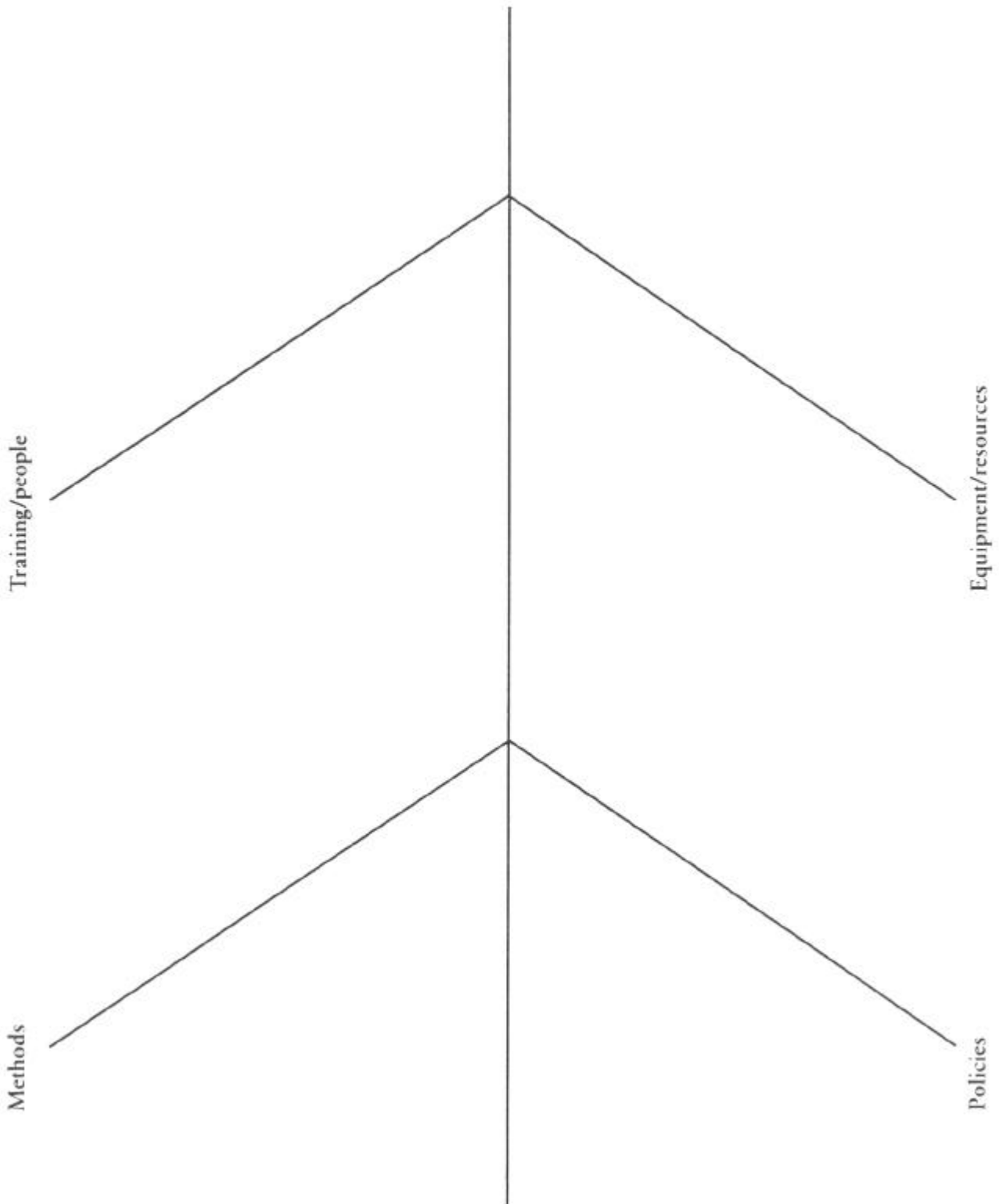
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➤| **Identify the sources of the problems and barriers.**

These will probably be obvious. There are some useful techniques for documenting this. You may have already used a 'fishbone' diagram. The fishbone diagram on the following page was developed by an OHS benchmarking team looking at OHS communication.



Here is a blank fishbone diagram for you to photocopy and complete for each problem that the team wants to analyse.



Now, with a clear sense of what the problems are in the key OHS management systems in your enterprise, you can identify useful benchmarking partners and ask them relevant questions.





Note that your benchmarking partners will not necessarily be in your industry. It may even be useful to visit partners in quite different industries to avoid issues relating to competitors and commercial confidentiality. Some enterprises reported significant 'break through' change as a result of benchmarking outside their industry.

A major Melbourne public hospital identified prevention of exposures to blood borne pathogens as a significant OHS problem. Through process analysis, their benchmarking team identified that the hospital needed to make employees more aware of how work practices can increase the risks of exposures. The benchmarking team has looked at public awareness campaigns such as the Victorian Transport Accident Commission's campaigns about road safety and the Anti-Cancer Council's Slip, Slop, Slap campaign about skin cancer for ideas about how to get the message across.

## **How do you gain access to OHS benchmarking partners?**

Many enterprises reported that they used the networks of their people to gain access to potential partners. Informal discussions, for example, at social events or conferences, and social contacts were some of the most common sources of benchmarking partners. The advantage of this approach is that it is often easier to get reliable information about the workings of another enterprise through informal contact. The otherwise difficult job of determining the usefulness of the potential partner is half done. Networking at break times at conferences and training courses can be a very useful opportunity to establish such relationships.

Other networks that might be useful are the staff of the Department of Industrial Relations, your local OHS or workers' compensation agency, unions, employer associations and professional associations.

In addition to gaining access to OHS benchmarking partners through networks, you might have heard through other sources of an enterprise that you believe would be a good benchmarking partner. Even if you have no contacts in the enterprise, it is still worthwhile approaching them 'cold'. Although contacting an enterprise without prior introduction can be more time consuming, it can result in very good benchmarking relationships. Such contacts can be easier if you can offer some advantage to the potential partners, for example, information or resources that they might find useful.

The occupational health nurse at a large plastics manufacturer met the production manager of a nearby clothing manufacturer at a barbecue. They talked informally about their mutual interest in ergonomics in their workplaces. The clothing manufacturer had initiated some novel processes for overcoming manual handling injuries that might have been able to be used at the plastics manufacturer.

The occupational health nurse believed that the information was reliable so she passed the contact on to the OHS benchmarking team. There was no difficulty arranging a visit and the team brought back some fresh ideas that were implemented after consultation.

## Who will we approach?

Brainstorm answers to the following questions.

- | ***From the existing networks of team members, list all the possible benchmarking partners.***

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- | ***List the enterprises that you have heard have good reputations or that you know are doing well in areas of OHS that you want to benchmark.***

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## Section 7—Preparing for a benchmarking visit

**This section is about the preliminary work that needs to take place before the visit. It will help you develop visit questionnaires and interview schedules.**

### Why a questionnaire?

At first glance, the idea of visiting a benchmarking partner with a questionnaire in hand may seem rather unnatural, but it is a good way to ensure that the visit time is used effectively. It helps to keep the benchmarking team focused on the reason for being there, it helps to prompt discussion, and it acts as a memory jogger ensuring that nothing gets left out. If you find the questionnaire format too unwieldy, you may find a simple list of issues to talk through just as useful.

One enterprise used a checklist of issues to be covered on the benchmarking visit instead of a detailed questionnaire. This checklist allowed the benchmarking team to adapt their questions to suit each individual benchmarking partner. It ensured that the team which visited each partner included someone with expertise in the areas being examined. This person was able to use the checklist as a basis for interviews and to follow up any specific issues on the spot.













## Section 8—Conducting benchmarking visits

This section will help you determine the roles and responsibilities of the members of the OHS benchmarking team during benchmarking visits.

### Who does what?

It is a privilege to be allowed to spend time in another enterprise. The time is valuable to both you and your benchmarking partners so it is important that you use it wisely. Good preparation is vital and it shows in the manner in which you conduct your visits. If you are well prepared, both you and your benchmarking partners stand to gain a great deal.

Each member of the benchmarking team will have a specific role. These may include note taker, questioners, observers, photographer (but get permission to take photographs before getting there) and interview taper (but get prior permission to tape). Once you have been given a role, make sure that you are able to fulfil it. Ask for extra training if you think that it is needed.

Each member of the team will need to be on the alert during visits. Make sure that all of the identified issues are covered. Be prepared for new, side issues to be raised. If these side issues are of interest to you, follow up and ask about them.

List of roles	Who takes each one
<i>Note taker:</i> .....	.....
<i>Questioners:</i> .....	.....
<i>Observers:</i> .....	.....
<i>Photographer:</i> .....	.....
<i>Taper:</i> .....	.....
<i>Other:</i> .....	.....
.....	.....
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### Give and take

Remember that benchmarking is a two-way process. You will pick up information from your benchmarking partners and, as the term ‘partner’ implies, your partners will learn from you. Be prepared to give information about your enterprise. Before your visit, ask your partners if there is any information that they would like from you. Bring any appropriate material with you on the visits.

## **After the event**

Finally, you will return to your workplace, laden with new ideas and the energy to implement them. During this stage of excitement, remember to thank your benchmarking partners for sharing their time and information with you. It is appropriate for the team to send a short personal note of thanks.

You must also provide your partners with any information that you promised as a follow up to your visits. Remember, benchmarking is a two-way process. Effective, long term benchmarking partnerships require a continuing exchange of information.

## Section 9—Reporting back after benchmarking visits

This section will help you report back to the rest of your enterprise when you have completed your benchmarking visits. It provides a strategy for ensuring that the right people get the right information as early as possible.

### Why should we report back?

Reporting back as soon as possible after you have returned from your benchmarking visits is vital to retain credibility with the rest of the enterprise. Reporting back will help to gain the necessary commitment to change. Preparing written and verbal reports can also help crystallise what you have discovered while it is still fresh in your minds. You will also be able to use this as an opportunity to canvas potential improvement strategies.

One enterprise found that the OHS benchmarking team needed to discuss what they had discovered as soon as they had returned to the workplace. A ‘debrief’ on the same day helped the team identify the most important findings.

On the basis of their debrief and further analysis, the team quickly drew up a set of draft recommendations. These were presented to senior management who provided comments and suggestions for change. A formal report was then prepared and again presented to senior management. Middle management received the report next, followed by presentations to the entire workforce shortly afterwards.

By discussing their findings with senior management first, this team avoided a potentially damaging public debate with senior management about what they were recommending. Some confusion about the proposed changes was able to be resolved quickly. This ensured that the report which was finally prepared had management support.

### Who should we report back to?

Everyone in the workplace should be informed about the outcomes of the benchmarking exercise. However, different groups and areas will have different information needs and will want information in different forms.

⇒| **List all of the groups in your enterprise that will need to receive a report back.**  
(For example, senior management, OHS committee, OHS representatives, OHS Manager.)

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⇒| **Who will be responsible for reporting back to each group?**

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### **What should we report back about?**

Everyone should get the same essential message. However, some groups will want different degrees of detail and information about different subjects. For example, you can expect that the Finance Manager will not want or need the same degree of detail about the actual OHS issues and management systems that you observed as, say, the OHS committee.

⇒| **What information will each group need?**

Group 1: .....  
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Group 2: .....  
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Group 3: .....  
.....  
Group 4: .....  
.....



Report to	By	About	In the form of	When



## Section 10—Implementing changes

This section outlines useful strategies for implementing and managing change as a result of benchmarking.

### What did we learn from our OHS benchmarking visits?

Using the problems and systems that you identified in earlier stages of the process, analyse the information that you have received from your benchmarking partners to identify potential improvement strategies for the key problems and systems.

There are a range of approaches for doing this. Essentially, it is a matter of analysing the systems that you observed in benchmarking partners in the same way that you have earlier analysed your own systems. You could compare flow charts and fishbone diagrams between all enterprises. Another approach is to prepare a table comparing how different enterprises handle the range of issues that you need to address.

For example, say one of the systems that you benchmarked was purchasing procedures. The fishbone analysis of your own procedures identified training received by Purchasing Officer, links between OHS and purchasing staff, consultation with users, obtaining information about OHS standards for equipment and gaining access to hazardous substances information as key problems. Your table might then look like the one on the following page.

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Partner A</b>	<b>Partner B</b>	<b>Partner C</b>
Training received by Purchasing Officer	Purchasing Officer has received same OHS training as have other supervisors	Purchasing Officer has received OHS training at local TAFE college	No Purchasing Officer—work groups do own purchasing
Links between OHS and purchasing staff	Purchasing Officer consults with OHS Officer as purchasing requests come in	Purchasing Officer consults with OHS Officer on an ad hoc basis	Work groups check with OHS Officer regarding OHS standards for new material and equipment needs
Consultation with users	Users are consulted once a short list of suppliers, materials or equipment is prepared by the Purchasing Officer	Users are involved in determining the parameters for purchases and are consulted further if equally acceptable alternatives exist	Users are purchasers
Obtaining information about OHS standards for equipment	OHS Officer provides latest information to Purchasing Officer as it is received	Purchasing Officer keeps own material	OHS Officer provides relevant OHS information to the work groups as it becomes available
Gaining access to hazardous substances information	Copies of the hazardous substances register are available in all work areas, including Purchasing. All staff have received basic training in concepts used	Copies of the hazardous substances register are available in all work areas, including Purchasing. All staff have received basic training in concepts used	Work groups keep own hazardous substances register, as well as having copies of the enterprise-wide register. All staff have received full training in hazardous substances management

Draw a similar table to analyse the information that you have received from each enterprise.





## Getting agreement to change

Once the benchmarking team has identified the changes that are needed to achieve best practice, the consultation must start. You will need to consult with all relevant people, especially decision makers and those who will have to implement and operate under the changes.

- **List all the people who will have to be consulted and how this will be done to achieve a list of agreed changes for implementation.**

*OHS committee:* .....

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*Senior management:* .....

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*Others:* .....

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## The environment for implementing change

In implementing the agreed changes, you should remember that the current situation is caused by a balance between forces driving for change (drivers) and forces trying to maintain the status quo (barriers or obstacles). Your implementation plan will have to include strategies to work on both types of forces. If you just look at driving forces, for example, the only result might be stronger obstacles to change.

⇒ **List the most significant forces driving for change in your priority areas.**

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⇒ **List the most significant obstacles to change in your priority areas.**

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⇒ **List possible change strategies which will reduce the obstacles and increase the drivers.**

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## How will we implement the agreed changes?

One OHS benchmarking team identified a strategy for implementing each of their recommendations as part of a workplan. Each strategy included responsibilities for each task. A regular report was given to the OHS committee about the status of the plan—whether the strategies had been completed or what still needed to be done. Six months after the workplan was developed, the OHS committee reviewed overall progress. Most of the recommendations had been implemented, but a few remaining strategies needed to be given a higher priority.

Make sure that you get ‘the runs on the board’ early by tackling some easily implemented but obvious changes quickly. This will help create momentum to support the more difficult, long term strategies.

After you have agreed on the changes to be implemented and analysed the drivers and obstacles for change, you will need to develop an implementation plan. Use the following table as a guide to developing your own implementation plan.

Tasks (in order)	Who is responsible?	How will each task be done, for example, sources of information?	What resources are required?	When must the task be completed?	To whom should progress be reported?



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## Glossary

<b>Benchmarking</b>	is a systematic tool to identify and assess the differences between your enterprise and world-class performers. It can be used to introduce best practice into enterprises. It is conducted in such a way that there is wide consultation and people are in a position to understand and achieve their full potential.
<b>Best practice</b>	refers to the cooperative way in which enterprises and their employees work together continuously to strive to be the best possible in all key business processes. The benefits can be seen in improvements in timeliness, cost, quality and customer service.
<b>Cause and effect diagrams (fishbone diagrams)</b>	are a technique for identifying the possible causes of a problem to be solved (the effect). It is a visually effective method of breaking a problem into manageable chunks. Ideas about the possible causes of the problem are recorded, analysed as they are suggested and organised into the major categories that contribute to the problem.
<b>Continuous improvement</b>	is a keystone of best practice. It refers to the incremental changes that occur through the cooperative efforts of all people in the enterprise. In enterprises that embrace a philosophy of continuous improvement, people bring their ideas forward and management provides consistent encouragement and support.
<b>Flow charts</b>	are pictures representing the steps or activities in a process. Rectangles represent a step in the process. Diamonds represent decision points. Lines with arrowheads give the flow and direction of the process.
<b>Foundation stones</b>	are certain management practices that need to be in place in an enterprise before benchmarking can be effective. Foundation stones include a commitment to the adoption of a consultative and participative management style.
<b>Performance indicators</b>	are used to monitor the performance of individuals, groups or whole enterprises. Performance needs to be monitored to improve and to provide a better service to the enterprise's customers.



## Useful contacts

### AusIndustry

AusIndustry is the Commonwealth Government's one-stop shop for all business assistance services.

There are offices in every State and Territory. To contact your local office, call AusIndustry's hotline on 13 2846.

### National Industry Extension Service

The National Industry Extension Service is a joint Commonwealth/State business improvement program which can help you identify and implement strategies to make your enterprise more competitive and successful. It has offices in each State and Territory.

NSW: (02) 228 3050

Vic: (03) 9412 8142

Qld: (07) 3224 2075

SA: (08) 8300 1500

WA: (09) 481 2525

Tas: (002) 33 5577

NT: (08) 99 7993

ACT: (06) 205 0614

