



NDIS Quality
and Safeguards
Commission



NDIS Workforce
Capability Framework

Supervising for Capability

Systems to Support Supervision: A Guide for Leaders and Senior Managers

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User icon key

Each document in the NDIS Workforce Capability Framework suite of resources uses one or more icons to show the intended user or users.

Icon	Key
	NDIS participants
	Workers
	Supervisors and frontline managers
	Senior managers and leaders
	NDIS providers

Introduction

The [NDIS Code of Conduct](#) sets out the responsibilities of all NDIS providers and workers. Registered providers must also meet the [NDIS Practice Standards](#). Organisations must ensure workers have the capabilities they need, provide appropriate supervision, and have policies and systems in place to ensure supports are delivered safely and competently.

Besides these regulatory requirements, NDIS providers should have sound policies and practices in place to support and develop their workforce because achieving service and support delivery goals and outcomes is almost entirely dependent on how the workforce performs on the job. When used in a positive, collaborative and supportive way, supervision is a key tool for effective delivery of services and supports to participants. It is also an effective tool to create, develop and retain an engaged workforce that is committed to quality work and ongoing capability development.

Related supervision resources

This guide is part of a set of 'Supervising for capability' resources developed by the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission). This guide is part of a set of 'Supervising for Capability' resources developed by the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. You can view the [full set of resources](#) on our website or access related resources by selecting the links below.

Further useful resources developed by the NDIS Commission are listed at the end of this guide.

Related supervision resources

- [Overview of Resources](#)
- [Performance Agreement template](#)
- [Working Together: A Guide for Supervisors](#)
- [Learning and Capability Development: A Guide for Supervisors](#)

What is in this guide

This guide has three sections:

- Organisation objectives, values and culture
- Policies, procedures and systems
- Evaluation.

Each section contains an overview followed by a checklist of elements and suggested actions to consider. You can find additional information on requirements for organisations in both the Code of Conduct - guidance for NDIS Providers and the NDIS Practice Standards. Links are provided at the end of this resource.

The approach to supervision in this guide focuses on collaboration, support and development and does not address processes to deal with matters such as wilful misconduct, serious breaches of required standards, or a worker who is a poor fit for working in disability. It is recommended that arrangements for these issues are established separately and accessed when there is a need to manage a serious issue requiring formal assessment and action.

Using this guide

This guide can be used as a checklist by leaders and managers when first establishing supervision policies and systems. It can also be used as a reference when reviewing existing arrangements.

Organisation objectives, values and culture

Supervision policies, procedures and systems are most effective when they are embedded in a positive and supportive organisation culture that is genuinely embraced and promoted by its leaders and managers. The value the organisation places on its workforce and its commitment to workforce-supportive principles in achieving positive outcomes for participants should be reflected in ‘the way we do things’ – in the organisation’s values, messaging, documents, procedures and regular communications.

Elements	Suggested considerations and actions
<p>Organisation goals and values</p>	<p>It is important for organisations to decide on the priorities and values they will commit to and apply, including those related to workforce, then communicate and promote them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include workforce-related goals in your corporate goals: For example: “We support our workers by providing a positive and collaborative work environment, supportive supervision, and opportunities for capability development”. • Articulate the principles that apply to your workforce management practice and incorporate them when communicating with your workforce: For example: “We are committed to quality practice, supportive supervision, listening to workers, trust, mutual respect, ongoing learning, teamwork, etc.” • Highlight your approach to workforce in external communications, e.g. websites, social media, annual reports, newsletters, job advertisements.
<p>Reaching potential new workers</p>	<p>Job applicants look for information about the culture of organisations and the way they manage their staff, as well as more practical information such as role, location and pay. An organisation’s ‘employee value proposition’ (EVP) describes the support and benefits it offers its employees in return for their skills, capabilities, and experience, including the level of on-the-job support and opportunities for learning. This can be a key factor in attracting and retaining the workers you need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include information about your approach to workforce management, including supervision support and opportunities for capability development, in your role descriptions, your advertisements, and the background information you provide to prospective job applicants. Link to the NDIS Workforce Capability Framework (the Framework) and its resources to encourage suitable applicants.

Elements	Suggested considerations and actions
Communicating with participants	<p>Participants expect to be supported by workers with the capabilities they need to do a good job. Most participants also value workforce stability so they know who will be coming to support them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information about how you support and supervise workers to ensure supports are delivered safely and competently. Encourage participants to give feedback about things that go well and areas where change is needed. Use the Framework to explain how you expect workers to deliver services and supports. • Discuss how you will confirm that workers have the capabilities they need and explain your responsibility to make sure the supports and services provided are right for them. For example, discuss how the supervisor will make arrangements to observe how things are going when setting up the Service Agreement. You can also use the Working Together guide to support you to make these arrangements.
Leaders and managers 'walk the talk'	<p>Workers will engage with supervision arrangements and appreciate their value if they experience them as constructive, collaborative, fair and supportive rather than selectively applied or focused on fault-finding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all managers and supervisors are familiar with the Framework, expectations about the way services and supports are delivered by workers, how you want supervisors to work with workers, and the leadership capabilities they should demonstrate. • Provide guidance to managers and supervisors about how you see supervision working. Encourage them to review their own supervisory capabilities and ensure they are reflecting the organisation's workforce values and principles when communicating with and supervising workers. Check that supervisor training refers to the Framework and clearly conveys the positive, supportive and collaborative principles and approach to be demonstrated in conducting supervision. • Ensure that members of governance bodies, such as board members, are aware of the Framework and have the capabilities they need to reflect the organisation's workforce values and principles when determining strategic direction.

Policies, procedures and systems

To be effective, supervision arrangements must be appropriate for the organisation’s purpose and settings. The NDIS context also has some specific characteristics that should be considered when designing supervision policies, procedures and systems, including:

- The principle of participant choice and control means that there should be three-way collaboration between supervisor, participant and worker. The Framework provides guidance on ‘what good looks like’ when services and supports are delivered according to this principle. Participant input and feedback are essential elements in deciding how supports are delivered.
- NDIS supports and services are increasingly delivered in NDIS participants’ own homes or community settings: this limits opportunities for in-person contact between worker and supervisor and means that workers may not regularly attend a common workplace. Other means of communication need to be established and promoted.
- Resources are limited: simple processes and adapted solutions are needed to ensure that supervision is as effective and efficient as possible. However, investment in supervision and worker development more than compensates for the high cost of turnover and the risks posed by inexperienced or poorly trained workers.
- NDIS providers are required to establish systems, policies and procedures to support delivery of quality services. This guidance addresses the elements directly related to workforce capability. Refer to the Code of Conduct: Guidance for NDIS providers and the NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators for information on other requirements.

Elements	Considerations
Guiding principles to establish effective policies, procedures and systems	<p>Some important criteria to keep in mind when deciding on your approach include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical and realistic in your context. • Beneficial to each of the organisation, participants, supervisors and workers. • Supportive, with a priority focus on the capabilities described in the Framework. • Embedded in everyday functions and work, not a once-in-a-while, formal event. • Easily understood and applied. • Consistently implemented across the organisation. • Recorded, reported and regularly reviewed to identify areas for improvement.

Elements	Considerations
The size and distribution of your organisation	<p>All organisations need processes to direct their workers on what they are required to do in their job, agree with them on performance expectations, and offer support, feedback and opportunities to enhance or develop new capabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The complexity and formality of the policies, procedures and systems will vary with the size and complexity of the organisation. Larger organisations, especially those where the workforce is geographically distributed, will usually have online human resource (HR) management systems for use by supervisors and workers to access guidance and templates, and to record key supervision milestones, expectations, achievements and development needs. Small organisations may manage the process adequately without such systems but still need to have clear policy, guidance, templates and the means to record key information to ensure transparency, consistency and accountability. The templates and checklists in these resources can be used as a starting point.
The workers covered by supervision arrangements	<p>An organisation is responsible for managing and supervising all workers delivering services and supports on its behalf, regardless of their employment status. All workers need to know what is expected of them, how their work will be assessed, and what support they can expect from the organisation. When designing systems to manage these arrangements, factors to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to provide supervision to all workers, that is, the need to plan for headcount (not full-time equivalent (FTE)) numbers. • Capacity to address the needs of different groups of workers such as permanent, temporary and casual, full-time or part-time. Different approaches may be required depending on expected length and frequency of employment. For example, a short-term or a casual employee who only works a couple of hours a week is unlikely to have a long-term learning plan as well as a performance agreement. Defining expectations and agreeing on how work will be assessed is still important but may not need to be as detailed as for ongoing workers. If the employee stays for longer than initially expected, make sure supervision arrangements are adjusted. • Contractors: performance expectations and method of assessing performance should be agreed as a condition of engagement and set out in contractual documentation. • New recruits and experienced staff: new recruits will usually need more support in the initial stages of employment; more

Elements	Considerations
	<p>experienced staff may need coaching and support to adapt their approach to NDIS requirements, refresh and maintain skills or develop new capabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce stability: if you experience high turnover in the first few months of employment it could be useful to develop a specific supervision policy for supporting new workers to ensure quality service delivery, worker engagement, and retention. • Workforce changes: if you are planning to expand or change the mix of services you offer, consider the supervision implications.
Where work is performed	<p>Supervision is particularly challenging if work is performed in different locations. Many NDIS workers deliver supports and services in NDIS participants’ homes or in community settings. Organisations may also be delivering services in city, regional and/or remote locations, making it impractical to hold regular in-person meetings. In these cases, organisations should consider establishing systems to support alternative approaches such as using networking apps, text messages, phone/video calls, emails and other digital communications. Where these systems are introduced, organisations should consider the training and support users may need to use them effectively, and policies and procedures should describe expectations about how and when different communication channels should be used. For example, not all interactions are suited to remote communications. Planned events, such as developing the performance agreement or annual performance reviews, should ideally be conducted in-person.</p>
The type of services and supports you deliver	<p>All NDIS providers need to ensure their workers have the capabilities they need to deliver different kinds of supports and services. This includes an appropriate method to record relevant training, assess capability and ensure relevant capabilities are current.</p> <p>Some NDIS organisations provide specialised supports requiring supervision by health or allied health staff. In these cases, supervision planning needs to allow for this when setting up the performance agreement and reviewing performance. This can be managed in different ways. For example, some supervisors are also registered health or allied health workers. In other cases, the worker’s supervisor coordinates inputs and feedback from all relevant sources, including specialist practitioners and participants.</p>
Responsibility for supervision	<p>There are many aspects to supervision, as described in the Overview of Resources. Although each worker will have a main supervisor, some aspects of supervision might be done by others. For example, rostering and attendance management might be separately managed</p>

Elements	Considerations
	<p>from providing direction and oversight for the services delivered to participants. Learning and capability development could be managed by a People and Culture/HR function in a larger organisation. Where that is the case, it is important to make sure the different elements of supervision are complementary and provide a coherent basis for setting up the performance agreement and reviewing performance. The worker's main supervisor is best placed to coordinate inputs about expectations and feedback on performance from all relevant sources.</p>
Supervisor training and commitment	<p>Organisations rely on supervisors to ensure workers deliver relevant, quality supports and services to NDIS participants. Supervisors' main responsibilities should be to support workers in their jobs, identify where supports and services to participants is going well and where there is a need for adjustment, and provide opportunities for workers to reflect on and develop capabilities. The Framework sets out the key capabilities supervisors need to do this. Organisations need to support and develop their supervisors by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expecting them to be familiar with the Framework and use it to guide their advice and support to workers. • Providing clear guidance on the supervision approach they want to apply consistently across the organisation, including policies, procedures, templates and record management systems. • Arranging access to relevant training on the principles of supportive supervision and the organisation's specific approach. • Including performance as a supervisor in the supervisors' own performance agreements and performance reviews. • Seeking feedback from workers on their experience of supervision, to assess its effectiveness, perceived benefits and areas for improvement. • Seeking feedback from supervisors on how well the organisation is supporting them in meeting their supervisory responsibilities.
Engaging workers	<p>Effective supervision relies on sound working relationships between supervisors and workers, built on values such as mutual respect, trust, honesty, transparency, professionalism, and fairness.</p> <p>When it is working well, workers understand their role within the organisation and the contribution they make to achieve its objectives. Workers and their supervisors agree on what work should be done, how it should be done (drawing on the Framework), how it will be assessed, and their ongoing learning and capability development</p>

Elements	Considerations
	<p>pathway. Some of the important steps organisations can take to gain positive engagement of workers in the supervision process include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request workers to be familiar with the Framework, to help them understand expectations in the NDIS context. • Include an outline of your supervision approach in role descriptions and other information about working in your organisation, emphasising a collaborative, positive process that supports workers to deliver quality services, gain job satisfaction and further develop their capabilities. • Highlight the importance, value of and commitment to supervision during recruitment and induction. • Make sure supervisors collaborate with workers to develop their performance agreements, review achievements and discuss learning and capability development plans regularly. • Encourage workers to provide feedback about the supervision process, in discussions with their supervisor and in response to other opportunities, such as regular climate surveys or exit interviews.
Involving participants	<p>In the NDIS, participant input is essential when setting service expectations and reviewing performance, at the organisation level and the individual worker level. The Working Together Guide provides guidance on how to obtain that input as part of a collaborative, respectful and mutually beneficial approach. Key points are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include information about the organisation’s approach to supervision in information provided to participants about the services you provide, making it clear that supervision is a positive, supportive and constructive process aimed at ensuring quality service and support for workers. • Explain the organisation’s approach to supervision, including the supervisor’s responsibility to oversee service delivery and the importance of participant input, when first engaging with participants. • Communicate and agree on how input and feedback will be provided (including preferred communication mode). • Encourage participants to use the Framework to help them describe what they expect and/or provide specific feedback on what is going well and what could be improved.

Elements	Considerations
Resourcing	<p>Organisations should make adequate resources available to conduct supervision. This means that planning, preparation, and supervision time need to be factored in as part of supervisors' and workers' workload.</p> <p>Supervision is an ongoing, integral part of service delivery. Although some planned sessions are necessary (for example to develop performance agreements, review performance or discuss capability development or career steps) the majority of supervision activity is best delivered as part of day-to-day operational functions: supervision is most effective when integrated into how supervisors manage service delivery rather than a separate process. For example, a phone check-in on an assignment provides the opportunity to ask how things are going, if there are issues the worker would like to discuss (then or at a later, more convenient time), check on their wellbeing, debrief and support workers to manage challenging situations.</p> <p>Observation of a great interaction with a participant is the right time to give quick positive feedback. Setting up service arrangements for a new participant or making changes to an existing arrangement is the right time to discuss the options to meet their needs and things to look out for.</p> <p>Both the worker and the supervisor can draw on these operational experiences and discussions when deciding on the aspects they want to discuss at their cyclical, planned sessions.</p>
Record keeping	<p>Organisations need to keep records of supervision to meet expectations in the Code of Conduct and the Practice Standards. Record keeping also enables organisations to review how well their supervision system is implemented and link it to participant and workforce outcome measures.</p> <p>Organisations will set up different systems to meet this requirement. As a minimum, records should provide evidence that steps have been taken to ensure workers have a clear understanding of their role, have the capabilities they need, and were appropriately supervised to ensure safe and competent delivery of supports.</p>

Evaluation

Establishing methods to evaluate how well supervision is working to support achievement of organisational goals provides a sound basis for ongoing assessment and refinement of the approach over time.

Elements	Aspects to consider
Measures of success at whole of organisation level	<p>How will you know how well your supervision system is working? It is important to decide on criteria that are meaningful and measurable. For example, you could consider criteria related to achieving service delivery and quality goals and workforce goals.</p> <p>Your criteria should include numerical measures to tell you things such as how many of your workers have current performance agreements, the proportion of participants who regularly provide feedback, staff turnover. They should also include measures more closely related to outcomes, such as the results of staff feedback surveys on measures related to job satisfaction, participant outcomes and satisfaction feedback, worker capability profiles.</p> <p>To help you interpret your data, you can also consider measures such as staff turnover, participant retention, complaints, reportable incidents.</p> <p>Start by measuring performance in areas where you have records, data and systems in place to record and collect consistent and reliable information. If you do not have records or data in a key area, consider setting up a system to obtain it.</p> <p>You could also include assessment of supervision efficiency and effectiveness as part of your regular internal audit cycle.</p>
Measures of success at individual worker level	<p>Each supervisor should seek worker feedback on how well things are going on a regular, informal basis as well as part of planned cyclical performance and development discussions. This should include feedback on the supervision arrangements and interactions.</p>
Measures of success at individual participant level	<p>Each supervisor should also seek feedback from participants on how satisfied they are with the supports they receive from their worker(s) – what is going well and where things could be done differently. This feedback should be incorporated in performance reviews conducted with the worker.</p>
Taking action on evaluation findings	<p>Supervision will only be an organisational priority if it is integrated into all relevant operational aspects and clear responsibilities are assigned to coordinate and oversee its implementation. The following actions will help achieve this:</p>

Elements	Aspects to consider
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign responsibility for oversight of the supervision system implementation, including record keeping, to a specific manager. • Include responsibility for data gathering and producing periodical reports to assess how things are going to a specific role and include review of the reports as a regular item for management and/or board meetings. • Consider information from supervision systems together with workforce indicators (e.g. turnover, capability levels, job satisfaction) and participant experience indicators (satisfaction with services received, measures of fidelity, number and type of complaints) to gain insight into their efficiency and effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

Other useful resources

- [NDIS Workforce Capability Framework](#): describes the attitudes, skills and knowledge required by all workers – including supervisors – and the behaviours you can expect to see.
- [Workforce Management and Planning Tool](#): a tool designed to support organisations to assess and plan current and future workforce needs and prioritise strategies, including learning and capability development plans.
- [NDIS Code of Conduct](#): promotes safe and ethical service delivery by setting out expectations for the conduct of both NDIS providers and workers.
- [NDIS Code of Conduct - Guidance for service providers](#).
- [NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators](#): specify the quality standards to be met by registered NDIS providers to provide supports and services to NDIS participants.