



GUIDE TO BUILDING A CULTURE OF WELLNESS

Along with the individualized feedback from your reports, the aim of this narrative is to guide you through each key component of this wellness topic, in a readable format, to help you enhance your organization’s wellness culture. All of the associated tools and resources can be found by using the search feature for the Culture of Wellness toolbox.

Here are the four strategic methods we recommend to make wellness a priority and a part of your organization’s infrastructure:

- 1. Build Executive Commitment for Wellness**
Get C-suite and senior manager buy-in. Learn how to make the pitch for wellness and how leadership can become your biggest wellness champions!
- 2. Establish Human Resource Capacity for Wellness**
Don’t go it alone! Wellness programs are more likely to be sustained if there is more than one person leading the charge. Build a wellness committee and add wellness to job descriptions and performance reviews.
- 3. Create Financial Capacity for Wellness**
Ever heard of an organization-wide effort that did not require a budget? Wellness efforts tend to require up-front funding but see significant long-term savings when implemented thoughtfully.
- 4. Implement Data and Evaluation Systems for Wellness**
How can you fix something if you don’t know it’s broken? Collecting the right wellness data and evaluating your programs will tell you exactly how to improve your wellness efforts and keep them sustainable.

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GET STARTED

*To search for essential resources and tools for this wellness topic, select **Getting Started** from the Key Component drop-down options in the Culture of Wellness toolbox search and click Search*

What is a Culture of Wellness?

Creating a strong culture of wellness involves more than an occasional wellness challenge, it is about implementing lasting policies, incorporating employee wellness into your core values, and engaging the support of senior leadership. WorkHealthy America's *Culture of Wellness* moves organizational wellness from its traditional place as an added program to the heart of the organization.

How can WorkHealthy America help you?

Your access to this document and the toolbox indicates that you have taken at least one Culture of Wellness assessment and have answered questions about your organization's overall wellness culture, including executive leadership commitment, wellness committees, financial aspects of wellness, and your data collection and evaluation efforts.

Some next steps include downloading the Recommendations report for a list of the high-level actions you should take to improve your wellness environments. Consider using this report as a check-list for your wellness committee. If you get stuck on a Recommendation, view the Action Plan for this wellness topic and get short-term and long-term specific action steps and linked resources to help you. Searching for resources in the toolbox will also assist you in your efforts. Resources available include fact sheets, implementation guides, sample policies, case studies and webinars, to name a few.



KEY COMPONENT 1: EXECUTIVE COMMITMENT

*To search for all resources and tools for this section, select **Executive Commitment** from the Key Component drop-down options in the Culture of Wellness toolbox search and click Search*

One aspect of a strong culture of wellness involves engaging the support of senior leadership. There are five aspects to building an executive commitment to wellness:

- Ensure **senior leadership's written commitment** to and visible participation in wellness activities
- Include wellness in your organization's **core values** or guiding principles
- Adopt, implement & communicate **wellness policies**
- Include metrics for wellness initiatives in **performance reviews** of senior management
- Support employee **attendance** at wellness events

Ensure senior leadership's written commitment to and visible participation in wellness activities

Make the Pitch for Wellness

Executive leadership commitment to wellness is an important component of ensuring that wellness becomes embedded in your organization's culture. To garner executive leadership and CEO support, ensure that you have a strong business case for wellness. Here are some important facts to note about the cost-savings and productivity enhancements of implementing comprehensive wellness programs:

- Annually, health-related losses in productivity are estimated to cost US employers **\$1685 per employee**.
 - Reduced performance at work, or presenteeism, accounts for 71% of the stated loss in productivity.
- According to a [review of 56 published research studies](#), comprehensive worksite wellness programs yielded, on average:
 - a 27% reduction in sick leave related absenteeism;
 - a 26% reduction in health costs;
 - a 32% reduction in workers compensation;
 - and a cost savings of \$5.81 saved for each \$1 spent.

Incorporating wellness into the foundation of your organization will increase productivity and benefit your bottom line. While making the case for worksite wellness, stay up-to-date on research regarding its economic returns.

Remind your leadership that worksite wellness can be a point of competition among peer organizations. An outstanding Culture of Wellness could give your organization the edge. Worksite wellness initiatives present opportunities for success that reflect well on your organization, your employees and your community.

If your CEO is harder to convince, consider recruiting them to take part in an Executive Health Program. These programs are created specifically for busy executives and provide personalized tips on how to lead healthier lives, including reducing stress, eating right and getting physical activity. By having them participate in such a program, you may be able to convince them that wellness services are needed for *all* employees.



Get CEO Commitment in Writing

CEOs and the executive leadership team juggle many commitments. Once they have agreed to support worksite wellness initiatives, get their commitment in writing. Make sure that this commitment is an active commitment and is visible and pronounced. Examples of this include:

- Participation in workday exercise breaks
- Serving healthy foods in the cafeteria on opening day of healthy food program
- Encouraging employees to take advantage of wellness benefits via CEO communication

Once executive leadership is on board, they can become the biggest champions of a strong Culture of Wellness. Leadership commitment and endorsement will encourage employees to participate and work toward healthier lifestyles.

Include wellness in your organization's core values and guiding principles

The wellness of your employee population is imperative to your organization's success. Unhealthy employees are expensive and not as productive as their healthier counterparts. With employee wellness incorporated into your organization's core values, guiding principles, business objectives or strategic plan it becomes a vital function to be sustained over time.

Adopt, implement & communicate wellness policies

Keep in mind that the most effective wellness policies for your organization will be distinct from those for other organizations. Determining the best wellness policies depends on your field/sector, current organizational culture, the needs and interests of your employees, your organization's leadership and several other factors.

Review Current Wellness Efforts

Start by completing WorkHealthy America assessments for the wellness topics available to you. Once you view your grades and tailored reports you will be able to visualize the gaps in your wellness efforts. Also, take stock of your organization's traditional wellness programs such as lunch-and-learns, challenges, walking groups and health risk appraisals.

Adopt & Implement Wellness Policies

Your WorkHealthy America reports and toolboxes will guide you in the creation of wellness policies; examples include a tobacco-free worksite policy, a healthy catering policy and a policy for paid physical activity time.

Can't decide which policy to adopt and implement first? Consider your employee population and their motivators and needs. Which policy would affect them the most – from a positive, health perspective? A policy that is well-supported by employees and is the easiest to implement may be the best place to start.

Communicating Wellness Policies

Once you have adopted wellness policies, the next step is communicating these policies to your staff. As in any other organizational rollout or change in policy clear communication can be the difference between success and failure. Consider communicating new policies to employees via:



- Employee policy manual
- Employee benefits information
- New employee and volunteer interviews and orientation
- Employee performance review
- Communication from senior management/CEO
- Newsletters, intranet, email, voicemail, bulletin boards, website, signs, trainings, events, etc.

Include metrics for wellness initiatives in performance reviews of senior management

It is important that the executive leadership's commitment to worksite wellness is visible and pronounced. If wellness is incorporated in your senior and front-line managers' performance reviews it will ensure that they are engaged and active in leading wellness at your organization. They may even become your biggest wellness champions! Some examples of annual wellness metrics include:

- Attend at least X wellness activities with employees
- Include wellness topic in quarterly communications to employees
- Participate in X wellness committee meetings
- Communicate all wellness messages to employees via meetings or other communications
- Other self-defined measures

Support employee attendance at wellness events

To encourage employee attendance at wellness events, senior leaders should allow flexible scheduling (i.e. employees should have the option to come in earlier or leave later in order to build in wellness activities). Be flexible with the free time that employees have during the day. If the lunch break at your workplace is generally an hour, communicate to your employees that they can take 30 minutes of that hour for wellness activities. If your budget allows, consider offering paid exercise time during the day.

For special wellness events, give plenty of advance notice so that all employees can attend. Employees may be wary of attending wellness events in light of their busy schedules. Managers and supervisors should communicate to staff that they are allowed and encouraged to attend wellness events.



KEY COMPONENT 2: HUMAN RESOURCE CAPACITY

*To search for all resources and tools for this section, select **Human Resource Capacity** from the Key Component drop-down options in the Culture of Wellness toolbox search and click Search*

Regardless of your organization's enthusiasm wellness, a Culture of Wellness will not grow sustainably without dependable human resource capacity to back it up. Here are a few key strategies to establishing human resource capacity for wellness:

- Allocate **staff time** to work on wellness initiatives
- Designate specific **responsibilities** for wellness staff and wellness committee
- Clear **plan for action**

Allocate staff time for employee wellness

It is important that employees are allowed to devote time and energy to wellness efforts. Depending on the size and structure of your organization, you may consider creating a committee to lead your wellness efforts. Evidence shows that taking a team approach is an effective way to structure wellness and ensure you get a diversity of voices. Include employees who are passionate about wellness on your committee but also consider those employees that may be difficult to reach (e.g. security, nurses, department heads) and invite someone from this group to be a member of the committee. Chances are they will be excited to share their valued point of view. Another benefit of a diverse wellness committee is that it will bring a varied group of employees together and can contribute to improved morale.

To ensure accountability and sustainability of your wellness programs, divide the responsibility for the program(s) amongst staff – and allocate work time for these efforts. While worksite wellness is traditionally an “add-on” to staff responsibilities, you can showcase that it is a priority by including wellness tasks into an employee's job description. There are a few ways to do this:

- Include time for employee wellness initiatives in a job description.
- Track allocation of time spent on wellness committee tasks. This information can then be incorporated into their annual review or performance review. Including this into their annual or performance review will solidify wellness as a work priority.

Designate specific responsibilities for wellness staff and wellness committee

As you recruit for your wellness committee, ensure that individuals know the demands of being on the committee before they agree to serve. Clear communication throughout the process of forming your wellness committee is key to awareness of responsibilities. This will prevent high turnover of committee members and increase continuity and efficiency of the committee's tasks.

To ensure that there is accountability for the progress of your wellness initiatives, designate specific tasks and responsibilities to wellness staff and the wellness committee. Committee workbooks can help guide the work and division of work for your wellness staff and committee members. Some example responsibilities of wellness staff and committee members include:

- assessing employee wellness wants



- prioritizing and following through on WorkHealthy America action plans (see *Clear Plan for Action* below),
- implementing wellness initiatives, and
- creating and evaluating wellness policies.

Similar to the CEO commitment form, consider having wellness committee members sign an Employee Wellness Committee Commitment form with their responsibilities listed.

Clear plan for action

To guide you in creating wellness policies, benefits and environments, WorkHealthy America provides you with easy-to-use action plans that are editable and allow for delegating tasks and tracking deadlines. The action plans are sortable and show you short and long-term action steps to achieving or sustaining the highest grade in each wellness topic.



KEY COMPONENT 3: FINANCIAL CAPACITY

*To search for all resources and tools for this section, select **Financial Capacity** from the Key Component drop-down options in the Culture of Wellness toolbox search and click Search*

Along with an executive commitment and a wellness committee it will take a budget to sustain your wellness initiatives. Here are several effective strategies for building financial capacity for wellness at your organization:

- Allocate **funding** for employee wellness
- Improve **benefits** and/or **incentives**:
 - to encourage employee **participation** in wellness & healthy behaviors
 - to help employees **treat and manage chronic disease**

Allocate Funding for Employee Wellness

Wellness initiatives often require upfront investment and the returns on your investment may not be immediate. However, over the long-term, there are many benefits of a worksite culture that supports wellness. When considering funding a wellness program, many organizations immediately jump to budget allocations. Before you begin forming this budget, consider what principles guide budgeting in other programs in your organization, how you would justify your budget, and how you can sustain or increase your budget in the future.

Creative ideas for funding wellness efforts

The following are creative ideas for where you can find existing funding for wellness or how you can think outside the box for free/low-cost wellness activities/programs:

- Examine existing health insurance for wellness opportunities
 - *Does your insurance cover preventive services, wellness coaches, dietician services, low or no-cost tobacco cessation medications or counseling?*
- Consider renegotiating with your insurance carrier to provide wellness services
- Look for no or low-cost wellness opportunities to easily implement:
 - Free fruit bowls
 - Implement policies
 - Include wellness into all employee-wide communications
 - Post signs to encourage stair use
 - Small cash benefits to purchase wellness items
 - Look to other health-related non-profit organizations that may have free programs or resources
- Explore possibilities for wellness funding (or cost-savings by implementing wellness) from outside sources
 - Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (www.healthcare.gov)
 - Tax credits/cost-savings for small businesses
 - Affordable health insurance coverage for large employers



- Wellness grants for small businesses
- CDC's Healthier Worksite Initiative may list small grants
- Join with other organizations and consider seeking funding from community foundations

Communicate the value of wellness

Many times, employees do not know about the benefits available to them. You can help your organization view wellness benefits as worthwhile resources by actively communicating the value of these efforts. Tell your employees about the value of wellness benefits and initiatives through several different channels of communication:

- Annual compensation statement (be sure to include wellness benefits!)
- New hire orientation
- Employee manual
- Communication from senior management
- Bulletin boards

Improve Benefits and/or Incentives

Improving health insurance benefits or equivalent employee benefits and providing incentives have been shown to significantly increase participation in certain wellness activities. Similar to the overall design of your program, the benefits and incentives of your program should be tailored to your employees. For some employees, the decision to make healthier lifestyle choices is not an easy one, and is often barred by excuses (e.g. "I'm too busy,"). Benefits and incentives can encourage employees to work toward a healthier lifestyle, but only if these benefits and incentives appeal to them.

Offering comprehensive preventive benefits, such as tobacco cessation counseling and medical nutrition therapy to all employees can improve employee health. Search the benefits key components in any wellness topic in WorkHealthy America toolbox for more information. In addition, the [Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act](#) also stipulates that private health plans must cover certain preventive services (cholesterol tests, mammograms, etc.) without a co-pay.

- **Improve benefits and/or incentives to encourage employee participation in wellness**

Research has shown that appropriate [incentives programs can increase participation rates by 12-35%](#). Incentives to encourage employee participation can range from cash, lower health insurance premiums, gifts cards, coupons, employee recognition, time-off, merchandise, health club discounts and even health savings account contributions.

While incentives can increase participation in wellness initiatives, there are challenges to consider before implementing an incentive system. One challenge is that it is difficult to know the most appropriate incentives for your employees. There are also a few unintended effects that could arise from poorly designed incentives such as dependency or unsafe behavior. Be sure to carefully weigh the pros and cons when planning for benefits and incentives that encourage participation and be sure your *organization is* in compliance with HIPAA nondiscrimination requirements – particularly if you are providing incentives/rewards for reaching a certain health standard (a certain BMI/weight, specific cholesterol level, etc.) and not just for participating in a wellness challenge or program. Contact your



attorneys for more information.

- **Improve benefits and/or incentives to help employees treat and manage chronic disease**

The resources in this section of the toolbox will help you add, refine and more effectively target incentives and benefits that encourage employees to prevent and manage chronic disease. Just follow the step-by-step instructions using the guidelines provided for each step, along with best practice recommendations from other worksites, and soon your organization will be offering the right incentive for the right employee at the right time.

4 Key Steps to Evidence-based Incentives and Benefits (EBIB)

1. Collect Health and Health-related Data
2. Integrate and Analyze Data
3. Choose High-Value Incentives
4. Apply Incentives

Getting Started

The first steps to offering effective incentives to encourage employee behavior change are to review the employee health data your organization collects, and understand how the different types of data are integrated and analyzed. Your data will reveal your organization's major employee health cost-drivers, which means that you will know *who* and *where* to incentivize. Next is choosing *what* types of incentives to offer, then applying them *when* they will be most effective.

The 4 Key Components to Evidence-based Incentives and Benefits document provides a brief look at the components needed to offer effective incentives that engage employees in taking action to prevent and manage chronic disease. Also included are links to articles, guides and case studies that show best practice recommendations from organizations that have successfully used incentives to improve population health while addressing health care costs.

For a deeper look into the topic, a glossary and guide to commonly found concepts and acronyms is provided to help you navigate some of the health care industry language, along with a list of strategies, concepts and areas of interest including behavioral and mental health, medication adherence, targeted incentivizing, and worksite based chronic disease management.



KEY COMPONENT 4: DATA & EVALUATION

*To search for all resources and tools for this section, select **Data & Evaluation** from the Key Component drop-down options in the Culture of Wellness toolbox search and click Search*

Data and evaluation help you understand what is working, what is not working, and how to improve your wellness initiatives. It is imperative that you are able to track the progress and evaluate the effectiveness of your worksite wellness programs to help justify its validity to funding sources. Evaluation can also inform modifications to your program according to where dollars can have the most significant impact.

Here are a few strategies for implementing data and evaluation systems for wellness:

- **Measure progress** on wellness goals and objectives
- **Evaluate impact** of wellness initiatives on health care costs, employee productivity, and health outcomes
 - Offer annual **HRA** with individual feedback
 - Conduct annual **employee survey** of wellness interests

Measure progress on wellness goals and objectives

The 'why, what, how and when' of evaluating your wellness programs can be overwhelming. Remember, though, that deliberate planning pays off. Ideally, data collection and evaluation should be on your mind before you begin implementing your wellness initiative. If you can determine goals and objectives prior to implementation, you can deliberate early on about how to best evaluate and measure progress. Successful programs are designed and evaluated in a cyclical nature; this strategy of constant improvement will contribute to the relevance and sustainability of your Culture of Wellness.

Consider aligning your wellness goals with systems that your Human Resources Department already has in place. For example, consider tracking sick leave and productivity measures (see below for more) to see if there is any correlation between these measures and your wellness initiatives.

Evaluate impact of wellness initiatives on health care costs, employee productivity, and health outcomes

Evaluating your wellness programs involves collecting and analyzing data to determine the impact of your programs on behaviors, health care costs and productivity. The goal of evaluation is to provide useful feedback to your wellness committee or organization on the effectiveness and impact of your wellness efforts.

As a participant in WorkHealthy America, you are already using one of the most robust wellness evaluation tools available. After you answer a few simple questions about your wellness policies, benefits and environments, WorkHealthy America automatically evaluates your efforts by providing you with a grade and immediate feedback on how to improve and sustain wellness.

Three types of evaluation methods that are useful for measuring the impact of worksite wellness programs are process, outcome and impact evaluations:

- **Process evaluation reviews “the how” of program implementation.** How did employees hear about the initiative? Was the timing (time of day, etc.) convenient? What were the participation rates? After



you have gathered this information, you can make appropriate logistic and structural changes to your initiative.

- **Outcome evaluation analyzes the *short-term effects of a program*.** Examples of measures range from the knowledge of appropriate servings of fruits and vegetable to the behavior of stretching and taking exercise breaks at work.
- **Impact evaluation asks whether an *ultimate, long-term goal of a program was met*.** These goals can be measured by health outcomes (biometric measures such as BMI, blood pressure) or through financial outcomes. These are likely the same outcomes that you focused on when initiating your Culture of Wellness. Potential measurable outcomes include annual dollars spent on employee health care costs, sick days or leave (absenteeism) or employee turnover.

Important sources of wellness data for evaluation include:

- Participation information
- Environmental scans/audits
- Employee interest surveys (see more below)
- Self-reported behavior surveys
- Health Risk Appraisals (see more below)
- Productivity questionnaires
 - Stanford Presenteeism Scale
 - Work Limitations Questionnaire
- Claims systems

Conduct annual employee survey of wellness interests

An annual wellness survey examines employee wellness interests and helps your wellness initiatives stay relevant and exciting. By conducting your wellness initiatives in accordance to employee interests, you will increase the chance that your wellness initiatives will be used and thus, maximize each wellness dollar invested. Depending on your needs and how much time you will have to analyze the collected data, you can use a simple or more in-depth wellness survey.

When creating a survey to gauge employee interests in wellness, consider the following aspects of a worksite wellness program:

- **Content and services:** What health topics are of most interest to your employees? What health screenings would employees be most interested in? How would employees like to receive information about health and wellness (e.g. one-on-one, talks from professionals)?
- **Logistics:** What times (e.g. before work, during lunch, afternoon, after work) or days of the week are the best times to schedule future wellness events?
- **Demographics:** What are some basic demographics of your employee population? Depending on characteristics of your employees, such as age or gender, the wellness initiatives and approaches will vary.
- **Employee Motivators:** What incentives will motivate your employees to participate in wellness initiatives? What are their motivations for getting healthy (personal health, role model for their families, etc.)? What will help incentivize healthy behavior (i.e. tangible incentives, intangible incentives)?



Offer annual Health Risk Appraisal (HRA) with individual feedback

One way to foster an organizational Culture of Wellness is to offer an annual Health Risk Appraisal (HRA) with individualized feedback, in addition to other health education programs. An HRA is conducted by a qualified vendor or wellness specialist and consists of a series of questions answered by employees that identifies risk factors, and should, according to the scientific evidence, link individuals with appropriate health management services and provide customized feedback. An HRA has several potential benefits: by collecting health characteristics and risk factors of your employees, you can tailor your wellness initiatives to meet their needs, use the data as baseline data in evaluation, increase individuals' awareness of their health, and connect employees to available disease management options.

Because HRA information is HIPAA-protected, employers will only be able to see aggregate data for the organization. The Society of Prospective Medicine has published guidelines related to ethical HRA use by employees and organizations. The general guidelines include program planning, instrument selection, participant orientation, administration, data security, report interpretation, and resource accessibility.

Don't forget to look into other wellness laws when implementing wellness programs/activities

When looking at the results of your evaluation, remember to also compare your progress to the cost of doing nothing on fronts such as physical inactivity, tobacco use, obesity and preventable healthcare claims. Address the net difference between your ROI post-improved Culture of Wellness, and the cost of doing nothing to address employee health and wellness. Cost calculators can be helpful with this endeavor.