

# Business Case

This document aims to make a business case for investment in workplace health for all organizations regardless of size or industry. Based on an extensive literature review we will demonstrate the financial burden businesses face due to poor employee health. From this we show how workplace health programs can be applied to help employees maintain or improve their health while reducing costs for businesses. This relationship is established with economic evaluation that measures savings against program costs, also known as return on investment. Investment in workplace health not only helps reduce costs related to health but can also generate profits from improvements in productivity. However, not all programs are equally effective. Through a cost-benefit analysis of workplace programs we have identified the five critical components as the following: Leadership Support, Integrated & Strategic Approach, Communication, Employee Engagement & Participation, and Evaluation & Continuous Improvement. These five elements results in the greatest return for a workplace health program. Lastly, partnership with a third party organization like the Alberta Health Services Workplace Health Project Team will help guide businesses to develop a comprehensive program to fit their organization.

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# Executive Summary

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**Purpose:** To demonstrate the economic benefit of workplace health programs for businesses in Alberta and foster commitment to these programs.

**Audience:** Employers, wellness coordinators, health and safety, human resource, health benefit staff, occupational health nurses, or others responsible for workplace health promotion in an organization.

**Objectives:**

- The Burden of Poor Health: Define workplace health and the costs associated
- Containing the Burden of Poor Health: Recommend workplace health programs to achieve cost containment
- Maximizing Return On Investment - The 5 Pillars of Success: Outline the 5 most cost-effective strategic pillars of workplace health programs

**The Issue:**

Thousands of Canadians are affected by chronic diseases that are largely preventable. Part of the issue is the contribution of unhealthy workplaces to rising disease rates. A healthy workplace is an environment where Individual Healthy Lifestyle Practices, Occupational Health & Safety Programs, and the Organizational Culture & Support, work together to promote health and prevent disease. Unhealthy workplaces also place a significant burden on businesses. For example, Canadian businesses lose approximately \$33 billion dollars annually due to the indirect and direct costs of poor health. Some of these costs include: health benefits premiums, drug premiums, short term disability (STD), long term disability (LTD) costs, productivity loss, absenteeism, Worker Compensation Board (WCB) costs, high job turnover, and a poor company image.

**Recommended Action:**

Organizations are turning to workplace health programs (WHPs) to contain both the indirect and direct costs of poor health. Workplace health programs can contain the cost of poor health by identifying employee and employer health risks and prioritizing those risks. Companies can then provide support to help address these priorities. Health priorities may include: tobacco reduction, health screenings, healthy eating, addictions prevention, mental health promotion, limiting UV exposure and promoting physical activity. WHPs not only reduce the cost of poor health but can also impact your company's bottom line. Studies have found an average return of \$3.00 for every \$1.00 spent on WHPs due to a reduction in both indirect and direct costs.

However, not all workplaces and WHPs are successful. Some WHPs are more effective than others. Successful WHPs with the highest return on investment (ROI) contain five key components: Leadership Support, Integrated & Strategic Approach, Communication, Employee Engagement & Participation, and Evaluation & Continuous Improvement. These pillars have been determined

through an analysis of cost-benefit literature as the most effective interventions in workplace health programming.

## The Burden of Poor Health

Many Albertans struggle to access basic needs that are necessary to prevent illness. In many cases there are underlying risk factors that are contributing to a person's health status such as access to healthy foods, time and access to cancer screening, substance misuse and mental illnesses etc. For example, an individual's mental health status including stress in the home or at work further worsens current health problem. Common mental health problems in the workplace such as stress induced anxiety and depression leads to more severe chronic diseases.

Every year thousands of Canadians are diagnosed with cancer and chronic diseases that are largely preventable. In 2009, approximately 2.4 million Canadians were living with diabetes and 1.6 million with heart disease.<sup>1</sup> The Canadian Cancer Society reports that approximately 2 in 5 Canadians will develop cancer in their lifetimes and 1 in 4 will die of the disease.<sup>2</sup> In the future, these numbers are expected to rise. Chronic disease has a major impact on the health of Albertans, resulting in a significant decreased quality of life, and in some cases death. Additionally, many Canadians remain undiagnosed; 54% of the population is living with 2 or more risk factors for chronic disease. In fact, the greatest increase in disease prevalence in recent years has been in the working age group, between 25 and 64 years old. This suggests that most of the Canadian workforce is at the cusp of developing a chronic disease. Canadian businesses are uniquely positioned to address barriers to health and reduce disease rates in the population by implementing a Workplace Health Program (WHP).

### What is a healthy workplace?

A healthy workplace is an environment where employees, employers, and the community work together and support one another to promote health and wellbeing. Individual health & lifestyle practices, occupational health & safety programs, and the organizational culture & support represent the five main intervention pillars that influence the health of a workplace.<sup>3</sup>

Physical, environmental, and occupational safety programs already exist in most workplaces. Organizations have largely focused on the environment through occupational health and safety programs with little attention to health promotion. However, healthy lifestyle practices, workplace culture and supportive environments are also critical elements of a healthy workplace. A balance between all three elements is required as



shown in the figure (for a further detailed description of our workplace health process, please see appendix A).

A healthy workplace is one where employers:

- Embed health goals into organizational operations and corporate culture
- Work with employees to achieve a common health vision
- Provide an environment and establish work processes to protect and promote physical, psychological, and social health for their employees
- Empower managers and workers to increase control over their own health

A healthy workplace is one where employees:

- Have access to opportunities to adopt healthy lifestyle practices
- Learn and develop personal coping skills to manage stressful situations
- Enjoy positive working relationships with their colleagues that encourages respect, recognition for their work and a sense of belonging
- Experience opportunities to become involved in the decision-making process and given opportunities for personal and professional growth

## Workplaces in Alberta

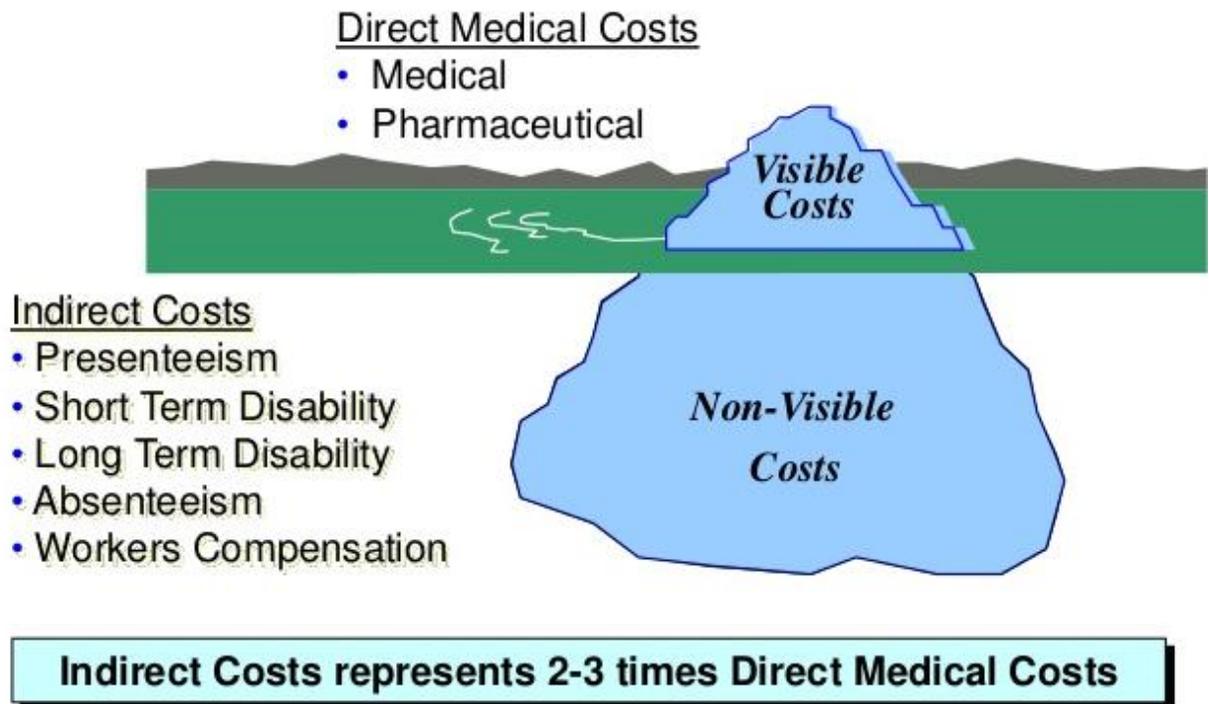
Most adults spend a large portion of their waking hours at work, making what goes on at work important to their overall health. In Alberta, 2.4 million individuals are currently in the workforce.<sup>4</sup> This figure represents 58% of Albertans who spend on average 39.0 hours a week working; 2.4 hours longer than the national average. Albertans spend approximately 60% of their waking hours working<sup>5</sup>. Yet, the proportion of Canadian workers who are "very satisfied" with their work has declined, due to poor health in the workplace.

Employment conditions have a profound effect on a person's physical, mental and social health. Work not only provides an income, but also a sense of identity and purpose, social contacts, and opportunities for personal growth. Therefore, the workplace presents a unique opportunity to support healthy behaviors through a WHP. With the combined efforts of employers, employees, and health organizations, a healthy working environment can be created and help reduce the overall burden of health costs on businesses, government and Albertans.

An unhealthy workforce places a significant burden on Canadian business. This burden is twofold: direct medical costs and indirect costs of health (i.e. presenteeism, absenteeism, disability, etc.). The diagram below demonstrates how indirect costs significantly outweigh the direct costs of poor health. The iceberg phenomenon is important to understand the health burden. Since indirect costs are hidden, they often go unnoticed but have the biggest effect on the business. These costs will only rise in the coming years. Below are 5 specific examples of how health is indirectly and directly impacting Canadian businesses.

# Iceberg Phenomenon

## Direct vs. Indirect Costs



### 5 ways poor health can affect my company?

1. Absenteeism costs Canadian businesses an estimated \$5.48 billion/year <sup>6</sup>
2. Long-term disability costs are expected to increase by 27% due to an aging workforce, increasing demands, and rising health claims.<sup>7</sup>
3. Poor Mental health cost Canadian businesses \$33 billion per year. <sup>8</sup>
4. Annual estimates of costs due to health include: \$235.69/employee for chronic disease management, \$160.23/ employee for high blood pressure; \$104.32 for diabetes; \$90.24 on low back pain; \$69.23 for a heart attack; and \$65.08 on chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.<sup>9</sup>
5. A Canadian plan sponsor of 35,000 employees was spending an estimated \$10 million annually on respiratory conditions alone – \$1 million for costs associated with drugs and \$9 million for indirect costs.<sup>10</sup>

# Minimizing the Burden of Poor Health

## How Workplaces can take action

Workplace health promotion programs are the solution. In the U.S. and Canada, a growing number of employers are turning to WHPs to contain the health costs facing companies - both direct and indirect costs.<sup>11</sup> A WHP can help identify employee modifiable health risks and support employees in reducing these risks through the 5 pillars of a successful program: Leadership Support, Integrated & Strategic Approach, Communication, Employee Engagement & Participation, and Evaluation & Continuous Improvement. WHPs can include but are not limited to the following: tobacco reduction, health screenings, healthy eating, addictions prevention, mental health promotion, limiting UV exposure and promoting physical activity. Research studies on workplace health have determined a relationship between health and economic outcomes - where poor health is linked to a negative return on investment, net present value, and productivity at work.<sup>12</sup> Conversely, good health is linked with reducing worker compensation costs, absenteeism, presenteeism, and disability days.

<b>Employer benefits</b>	<b>Employee benefits</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ <b>Reduce Absenteeism</b></li><li>✓ <b>Improve Performance</b></li><li>✓ <b>Reduce Short-Term Disability /Long-Term Disability costs</b></li><li>✓ <b>Reduce Insurance Costs</b></li><li>✓ <b>Improve Workplace Morale</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ <b>Better Physical, Mental &amp; Social Health</b></li><li>✓ <b>Reduce Risk of Disease</b></li><li>✓ <b>Increase Health Knowledge</b></li><li>✓ <b>Job Satisfaction</b></li><li>✓ <b>Healthier Employees</b></li></ul>

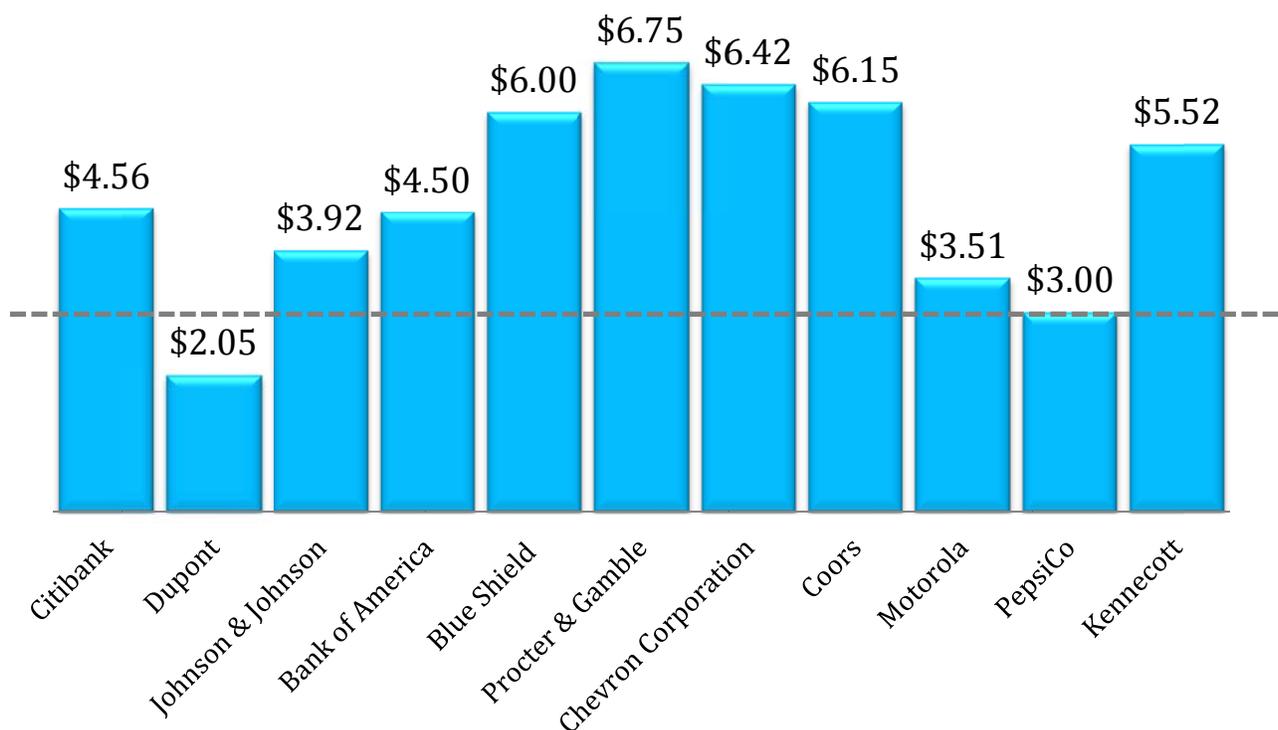
## Return on Investment of Workplace Health Programs

Return on Investment (ROI) is a performance measure to help determine the effectiveness of WHPs. It is a way of considering profits in relation to investment costs. A high ROI means the investment gains are higher than the costs.

Several ROI studies have demonstrated the financial benefit of WHPs. So employers can not only contain costs, but can generate savings too. One example of this is a study by Aldana in 2005 examining the impact of a 2 year Wellness Program in Nevada on employee health care costs and rates of absenteeism. Approximately 15% of their employees participated in 11 wellness programs offered via internet and email.<sup>13</sup> Analysis of absenteeism showed that non-participants missed 20% more work days overall compared to participants. This difference translates to a cost-benefit ratio of 15.6; where every \$1 spent on the wellness program resulted in \$15.6 dollars of savings. This indicates an economic benefit when investing in employee health, and a positive economic impact of WHP's for companies.

Studies on WHPs at Johnson and Johnson<sup>14,15</sup>, Citibank<sup>16</sup>, DuPont<sup>17</sup>, Bank of America<sup>18,19</sup>, Tenneco<sup>20</sup>, Duke University<sup>21</sup>, The California Public Retirees System<sup>22</sup>, Procter and Gamble<sup>23</sup>, and Chevron Corporation<sup>24</sup> have found similar positive economic impacts of WHPs ranging from a \$1.40 to \$10.10 saved for every dollar spent. The average return on investment savings was estimated at \$3.00 per \$1 dollar spent. However, this number may be an underestimation as many of these programs did not include calculating indirect economic benefits such as productivity increase or reduction in absenteeism which has been demonstrated to have a marked effect.<sup>25</sup>

## Summary Return on Investment of WHPs



The figure above shows a different return on investment for each organization. The return on investment figures differ due to the quality of the health promotion/wellness program and employee participation. Also some WHPs have been in effect for longer than others. Because health benefits accrue over a long term period, significant benefits are generally not observed until three years after implementation. Some examples of initiatives workplaces have implemented include but are not limited to the following: fitness challenges, mental health awareness sessions, employee discounts for massages, online health risk assessment, improved corporate culture, and smoking cessation programs.

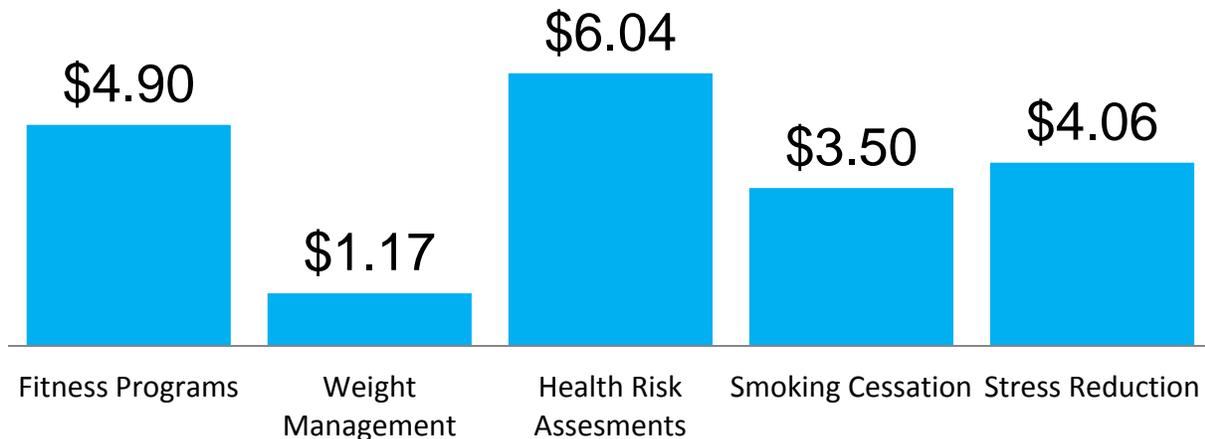
BC Hydro, Canada Life Insurance and TELUS BC are some examples of Canadian companies that have invested in workplace health.

- **BC Hydro:** saved an estimated \$3 for every \$1 spent on their wellness program.<sup>26</sup>

- **Canada Life Insurance:** saved \$3.34 for every \$1 spent on its fitness program.<sup>27</sup>
- **TELUS-BC:** Saved \$3 for every \$1 spent on corporate health initiatives.<sup>28</sup>

## ROI Quick Reference Guide

The following table represents an overview of WHP return on investment of various types of health priorities. The values are an average of the amount earned for **every \$1 spent** on workplace wellness programs for various studies found in literature, mainly conducted in the United States.<sup>29</sup>



## The Cost of Doing Nothing?

A study on short-term disability usage after implementation of a worksite wellness/health promotion program found that the average short-term disability days increased for program non-participants compared to participants. These findings suggest that employees who are at a low-risk for experiencing health problems can become high-risk over time if nothing is done. Moreover, high-risk employees can become even higher risk without support; the higher the risk, the higher the cost to companies. Overall, \$212 dollars were saved for each participant compared to non-participants. Employees will become high-risk and thus high-cost if companies do nothing. Over a long term period, choosing not to invest in WHPs will increase costs and reduce profits for businesses.<sup>30</sup>

## What is the theory behind workplace health?

The widespread success of WHPs is apparent, yet researchers have not been able to determine the reason behind their success. Many economists believe these programs are a result of direct investment in human capital. Human capital theory asserts that people acquire knowledge and skills that can result in increased economic output.<sup>31</sup> The theory recognizes that all labor is not equal and investment in human capital improves production quality and quantity.<sup>32</sup> Hence, investments in WHPs will have an effect on both the quantity and quality of your work force. In addition, social return on investment (SROI) is an important measure of WHPs that is usually not captured in ROI studies. There are many benefits that are difficult to measure but still have a positive effect on businesses and indirectly affect profits such as the value of your employees. Some

of the areas of SROI for WHPs include: reduced job retention, increased recruitment, improved morale, and enhanced business reputation/image.

The second theory, game theory is already used by businesses for strategic decision-making and can easily be applied to health.<sup>33</sup> Game theory is a process of decision making when at least two parties are involved i.e. employees and organizations. The model examines the cost or benefit of a decision, where one party's decision affects the other. In this case, if organizations implement a WHP and employees participate, it can result in large benefits for the individual employee and the employer. However if businesses don't invest in WHPs and employees don't reduce their health risk, both parties will suffer. For employees this will present as poor health and profit losses for employers.

## Maximizing ROI: The 5 Pillars of Success

To plan and implement an effective WHP, businesses should concentrate their action around the following five pillars:

1. Leadership Support
2. Integrated & Strategic Approach
3. Communication
4. Employee Engagement & Participation
5. Evaluation & Continuous Improvement

These pillars will not only help improve health, they are also the most cost effective areas of investment. Focusing on these components will ensure a successful WHP and maximize ROI.

The Johnson & Johnson® *Live for Life* program has been cited as one of the most effective WHP's since it was introduced in 1979.<sup>34</sup> *Live for Life* includes individual level health promotion and environmental risk reduction by offering a menu of different health interventions. The company continues to experience substantial financial return after three decades of intervention, reporting an annual average savings of \$565 per employee in 2009 or an estimated \$1.88-\$3.92 ROI. Their continued success can be attributed to adherence to these 5 pillars of success.

Some key elements of a WHP may include:

- Demonstrating leadership and commitment to health via advocacy
- Actively communicating and promoting health as a business imperative
- Implementing integrated health programs inside and outside the workplace
- Engaging and encouraging participation in health initiatives and activities



- Adopting appropriate workplace policies and procedures to support health
- Measuring and tracking performance against health goals
- Providing tools to help employees identify personal health risk

The five components to consider when creating a WHP are:

## 1. Leadership Support

Strong organizational, leadership and management support is essential to generate the human and financial capital required to operate a successful WHP. The leadership team demonstrates a commitment to workplace health through its actions, the allocation of resources, and by providing access to health programs. The following components of leadership support are necessary for the development and implementation of effective workplace initiatives:

- Commitment to workplace health is demonstrated through the allocation of financial resources (budget) and human resources (staff time or committed position).
- Workplace policies are in place to ensure a healthy and supportive environment for all employees.

## 2. Integrated and Strategic Approach

Effective WHPs must address both psychosocial and physical environments, as well as the health of individuals. This requires a concentrated effort and alignment between different departments in an organization. Health is determined by many interdependent factors, and the following represent a comprehensive, integrated and strategic approach to workplace health.

- A vision/mission statement is developed that outlines the organization's commitment to the health of its employees. This is supported by a workplace health strategy and/or action plan with defined goals, objectives, activities and timelines.
- Different staff or departments within an organization (i.e. Leadership, Marketing, Communications, health/wellness champions, etc.) are involved with and have responsibility for the WHP and activities (i.e. through a joint health and safety committee).
- The organization performs a voluntary employee health interest survey that identifies employee needs and preferences. The workplace health program should use this information to help inform planning and implementation of the activities. Identifying health risks and setting priorities should address one risk factor at a time to increase the likelihood of success and thus motivating the employee to change other behaviors.<sup>35</sup>
- A review conducted by the researchers Goetzel and Ozminkowski examined the elements of an effective WHP and emphasized the importance of administering an employee health risk assessment (HRA) prior to WHP planning and implementation.<sup>36</sup> A voluntary health risk assessment also helps align individual and organizational goals. For employees, the HRAs tell

them what their individual health risks are. The HRA can also assess readiness to change, perceived self-efficacy, and learning style.<sup>37</sup> Without this information, it is difficult to develop a tailored plan of action that fits each unique workplace. HRAs are relatively low cost tools (from \$0.05 to \$50 per respondent) that can be administered using low cost means (online) but also result in the highest cost savings.<sup>38</sup>

- The organization should collect other related health information to help guide the workplace health strategy, action plan and activities (e.g. employee assistant program (EAP) info, health benefit premiums, STD/LTD statistics, absenteeism data, etc.).
- Information gathered from the voluntary health risk appraisal, voluntary health risk assessments, and other related health information (e.g. EAP, STD/LTD data) helps increase the evidence base from which the organization can plan their workplace health program.

### 3. Communication

Effective communication is essential for engaging employees in discussions about health, as well as providing information and promoting employee health initiatives. Without effective communication, employees will not be aware of, engaged in or participate in health programs and activities. The following components are key elements of an effective communication approach:

- Multiple communication methods are used to promote the workplace health program and activities (i.e. notice boards, team briefings, company intranet, use of email, paycheck stuffers, newsletters, posters).
- A variety of educational materials are made available for staff to increase their knowledge and awareness of different health topics and to support behavioral change.
- The organization utilizes a mixed approach of specific and targeted communication. Health messages should be tailored instead of generic messages. Providing tailored messages based on HRAs increases the likelihood an employee will change at least one risk factor by 18% compared to employees who received a generic message.<sup>39</sup>

### 4. Employee Engagement and Participation

Engagement and participation of employees at all levels during the development and implementation of health programs and activities is important. The following characteristics are necessary for organizations to actively engage employees in health programs and activities:

- The organization uses multiple approaches to engage employees in the workplace health program and activities such as: opportunities to be a member of, or have representation on a joint health and wellness committee, employees lead or organize health activities, having a suggestion box or workplace health email that ideas can be sent to, etc.

- Employees have the ability to participate in the organization's workplace health program and activities – ideally during work time and not just during rest periods (coffee breaks, lunch hour) or after work hours.
- Employees have the ability to be involved in decisions that impact their work, and working environment (i.e. giving feedback, not just passive recipients of information). When employees have the ability to provide input and feedback into the workplace health program, the more engagement and ownership they will have with the program.
- Easy to access programs improve employees enrollment and participation rates. Often times, employees do not participate in offsite programs even if they are interested. Offering programs onsite reduces time and transportation barriers that usually lead to dropping out. Also, one individual workplace health intervention results in limited short term health improvement impact. Longer term strategies allow for continuous health improvement.

Some Workplaces provide incentives for participating in the workplace health activities such as: offering programs free of charge, giving employees a half day off, or small tokens like a t-shirt or an apple.<sup>40</sup> Incentives can be used to encourage participation, increase compliance with behavioral recommendations, and support workers to achieve their personal health goals. For instance, a \$100 increase in incentives will improve WHP participation and uptake by 10%. Incentives should be used with caution, to avoid tying healthy behavior to the incentive. There is a risk of losing the healthy behavior when incentives are removed.

## 5. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Evaluation is an essential process used to assess the progress of ongoing health activities. Evaluating health activities measures the effectiveness and efficiency of the programs and activities, and provides critical information about both employee and organizational health needs. This information can be used to improve future workplace health initiatives and activities.<sup>41</sup>

Evaluation is often thought to be the final stage of health promotion program development, but should be initiated at the beginning of the planning phase and used at each stage of workplace health planning and implementation in order to measure the intended and unintended effects.

The following are important components in the evaluation and continuous improvement of WHPs:

- The organization collects aggregate data to help guide the workplace health program and activities and protect individual privacy and confidentiality. Examples of data that the organization may collect include: employee participation numbers, participant satisfaction, EAP usage, health benefits data, etc. The data should be collected over a long period of time as results will not be realized immediately.
- The organization analyzes the collected data to see if any changes occurred in the workplace or in employee health. It's important to determine if there are any changes over time to prove the

value of the workplace health program and to provide direction on how the organization moves forward with their program.

- The organization revises the workplace health program based on the analyzed data to make changes that are required to improve the program and to ensure the program is effective in addressing the health needs of the organization.

Organizations can identify timelines for measuring health outcomes and determine ways of tracking and evaluating the health program outcomes regularly. Some outcomes may be measured only once, while others may be measured several times, to assess the impact of each action, as long as the program is active. After findings are analyzed, they should be circulated to update stakeholders and participants. This can be done through: annual reports, newsletters, intranet, company websites, and seminars.

One important component of evaluation that is often missed is the measurement of baseline data.<sup>42</sup> Baseline measurements help to determine how an organization is currently performing and then if there have been improvements from year to year.

#### **a) Process Measures**

Process evaluation is useful for keeping a program on track and for determining if a program is progressing according to plan. This is important so that organizations can evaluate their actions throughout the project and adjust their program as needed to meet their target objectives.

Companies can use the following indicators to measure impact of: the costs of operating a program, the number of employees reached, change in health knowledge, the number of activities planned, and the number and type of resources offered.

#### **b) Outcome Measures**

Outcomes can be short, intermediate, and/or long-term events that indicate effectiveness. Long-term measures typically relate the reductions in disease and the costs associated. This can take years to observe.<sup>43</sup> Short and intermediate term measures, relate to the steps necessary to achieve the long-term outcomes, such as individual employee reductions in health risk, or process changes like implementing a new health-related policy. Programs must run for at least one year before changes are measured. Even still, the impact of most long-term activities will not be observable until several years after starting. It is also important to note that health promotion evaluation can be challenging and difficult. However, investing in health promotion evaluation is vital for success.

#### **Examples of outcomes that workplaces can measure:**

1. Indirect Outcomes: Absenteeism among employees due to poor health, reduced overtime to cover absent employees, and costs to train replacement employees
2. Direct Outcomes: Changes in the number and type of health insurance claims over time, WCB costs, and short/long term disability costs

3. **Health Outcomes:** acceptable levels of disease, prevalence of risk factors, Change in knowledge, self-management, coping skills, and social support network, attendance rates, completion of feedbacks forms
4. **Organizational Outcomes:** documenting the process and effects of changes made to organizational structure, policies, procedures, or practices

## Summary Recommendations

Leadership Support	Integrated Approach & Program Design	Communication	Employee Engagement & Participation	Evaluation & Continuous Improvement
Leaders participate in health activities	Workplace health integrated into business plan	Use different communication channels	Use different approaches to engage staff	Develop baseline measures
Allocate Resources to WHP	Conduct an Organizational Health Assessment	Offer a variety of Educational materials	Conduct an employee interest survey	Data is used to revise current health environment
Allocate Budget directly to WH activities	Conduct a Health Risk Appraisal	Promote health activities, available benefits and policies	Form a wellness committee	Track measures over short and long term
Healthy policies (food, physical activity, etc.)	Designate a staff FTE for workplace health	Tailor messaging to employees	Allow access to programs during work time	Calculate and track return on investment
Encourage staff participation during work hours	Create a Comprehensive workplace health action plan	Communication to all work sites	Implement Incentives for participating	Data is used to inform future health activities
Offer EFAP and health benefits	management and supervisors are engaged	Mixed approach	Programming tailored to staff feedback	Share data and lessons learned with employees

## Partnerships

Research has demonstrated that workplaces that communicate with community health organizations and third party wellness vendors experience the highest success rates and thus the greatest return.<sup>44</sup> The Alberta Health Services (AHS) Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Fund (ACPLF) offers organizations in the province an opportunity to participate in a pilot project through the Workplace Health Improvement Project 2 (WHIP2). The one year project will support organizations in developing and implementing a comprehensive workplace health program.

## Take Action!

If your organization would like to develop or improve your workplace health program, and would like to be a part of the pilot project, please contact the AHS Workplace Health Team to be added to the list of potential sites. Email: [workplacehealth@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:workplacehealth@albertahealthservices.ca)

## Conclusion

Health costs have a direct and indirect effect on the bottom line for employers. Sick days, reduced productivity, and disability costs due to an unhealthy workplace can have a profound cumulative negative effect on profits. A review of the evidence demonstrates a significant impact of workplace health promotion programs on health, costs, and profits. This impact can translate into positive return on investment as well as an increase in job satisfaction and an improvement in company image. Employees also experience benefits as a result of WHPs in terms of reduced cancer and chronic disease mortality and morbidity risk. These programs should utilize a systematic process to plan, implement, evaluate and sustain workplace health strategies and activities. Programs should be integrated and comprehensive in nature and offer a variety of engagement and communication strategies to meet the needs of their organization. However, without addressing the corporate culture, obtaining management support, addressing organizational barriers, and timely evaluations, success will be limited. A comprehensive, integrated WHP means improved business, healthier employees, and a better Alberta.

We thank you for your interest and encourage you to participate in the exciting new **Alberta WHIP2** initiative.

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## **Appendix A**

## Workplace Health Improvement Project (WHIP)

Research of Alberta workplaces has revealed that employers are seeking appropriate resources for workplace health promotion, and support in demonstrating the value of such programs through evaluation and ongoing monitoring. The AHS standards aim to enhance the workplace health efforts of Alberta employers & to support them in the assessment, development, and evaluation of workplace health activities.

