



Healthy Workplace Initiatives Program - Making the case for managers

BACKGROUND

Since 2008, UBC Human Resources (HR) has offered seed funding to departments and units across Vancouver and Okanagan campuses in support of grassroots efforts to promote workplace health and wellbeing. Rooted in the values of creating and maintaining healthy and sustainable workforces, as laid out in UBC's Focus on People strategic framework, the program has provided funding to 327 initiatives totaling over \$800,000.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

Investing time and resources into healthy workplace initiatives has been shown to positively impact individual physical and mental health, as well as workplace productivity, culture and engagement.

- Physical exercise, actively working on time management and increased social time help improve occupation stress (particularly among faculty). [1]
- Active promotion of physical activity and health-related activities in the workplace reduces absenteeism and increases overall mental health of employees. [2] [3]
- In Canada, the majority of workplace health programs aim to improve outcomes related to employee stress, work-life balance and depression. [4]
- Top priorities in Canadian workplaces include 1) developing workplace cultures where individuals are responsible for their health and 2) improving the mental health of employees. [5]

PROGRAM ADVANTAGES

89% of program leads reported that the application process was easy and straightforward
94% reported that they were able to achieve the program's intended goals
90% believed that the program had the intended impact and gains set out at the start

KEY FINDINGS

Enhancing health behaviours

- Top goal among departments when applying was to promote healthier behaviours in the workplace.
- 64% of participants wanted to lead healthier lifestyles and find ways to incorporate health and wellbeing into their daily routine.
- 24% of participants reported that the greatest program benefit was "successfully incorporating health and wellbeing into daily life".
- Top area for desired improvement at the start was individual physical health (76%)
- Social health was the area with the highest self-reported positive changes (64%).

Decreasing stress



- Reducing stress was ranked third amongst participant goals at the outset but ranked second as the greatest benefit to participation upon completion.

Increasing productivity

- Though increasing productivity was not a top goal identified by participants at the start, it ranked third as the greatest benefit to participation upon completion.

Minimal barriers to participation

- 33% of participants reported no barriers to participation. Reasons provided by other participants stated that timing and frequency of programs offered presented the greatest barrier (15%), followed by lack of support from supervisor/manager (8%) and lack of personal motivation (7%).

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

There are a wide variety of additional resources available to support Managers and Supervisors in the pursuit of embedding wellbeing in the workplace.

- The [Healthy Workplaces Initiatives Program](#) comes with supporting toolkits for implementation. The [Health, Wellbeing and Benefits](#) unit offers on-demand workshops and training programs at no cost.
- Face to face support and collaboration opportunities exist within [Human Resources](#) units such as Workplace Learning and Engagement, Health and Wellbeing, Benefits, and Workplace Health Services.

Supervisor feedback:

“Wellbeing is a critical component of a vibrant and productive workplace. The program raised awareness and appreciation of ways to maintain health in the workplace and brought folks together and made for a more cohesive team environment. The benefits from a morale-boosting perspective have been considerable.” Dr. Sterling Bryan, Director Centre for Clinical Epidemiology & Evaluation, and Professor, UBC School of Population & Public Health

CONCLUSIONS

Though the findings presented above are specific to the Healthy Workplace Initiatives Program, based on supporting research and evidence, it can be concluded that the implementation of any workplace health and wellbeing initiative will positively impact individual staff and faculty, as well as the unit as a whole.

The Healthy Workplace Initiatives Program is one of many ways to enhance health and wellbeing within departments and units on campus. The program aligns with UBC’s commitment to the goals of the [Okanagan Charter: An international Charter for Health Promoting Universities](#) and Colleges, including embedding health into all aspects of campus life and leading health promotion action locally and globally. It is also a practical extension of UBC’s commitment to the [Focus on People](#) strategic plan.



REFERENCES

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- [2] Bhui, K. S., Dinos, S., Stansfeld, S. A. & White, P. D. A Synthesis of the Evidence for Managing Stress at Work: A Review of the Reviews Reporting on Anxiety, Depression, and Absenteeism. *J. Environ. Public Health* 2012, 1-21 (2012).
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- [4] Buck Consultants, *Working Well: A Global Survey Of Health Promotion And Workplace Wellness Strategies*. 2009. Print. Executive Summary.
- [5] Towers Watson, *Trends And Directions On Workforce Health And Productivity*. 2014. Print. 2013/2014 Staying@Work Survey.