

M3 Blog

WELCOA Benchmarks: A More Holistic Approach

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Since the emergence of the wellness industry in the early 1970's it has wisely stayed with the times by evolving. The most recent example this the **The 7 Benchmarks Evolution**, set by The Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) as the current standard for successful, results-orientated wellness programs.

WELCOA is known for its leadership in the wellness industry. The organization's guidance for building high-performing healthy workplaces is considered to be the gold standard, so when they update any part of their approach, it is notable. And when they released the seven benchmarks to success, it was newsworthy.

When WELCOA announced the second generation of their benchmarks, they made it explicit that this update was about people. Putting people at the heart of what wellness is about. This is an exciting change and one that makes wellness more accessible for more people. Here are some of my takeaways from the new WELCOA benchmarks:

- **Culture-focused.** The new benchmarks do a great job of understanding that each workplace has a different culture. It's important that your wellness efforts align with your overall organizational goals, rather than a standard set of goals. An example of this shift is understanding that leadership can come from many sources, not just those in traditional management roles. While committed leadership matters, so does collaboration with key front-line individuals. Wellness isn't just for triathletes, it's for everyone.
- **More holistic.** Also addressed in the new benchmarks is the fact that programming needs to be more holistic. This means not just focusing on physical wellness, but looking into the other avenues such as emotional, financial and

occupational wellness. All of the areas together offer a more well-rounded approach to your workplace wellness programming and speak to the whole employee.

Wellness is more than physical activity and nutrition.

- **Evaluate and share.** WELCOA also reiterates the importance of not just collecting data, but collecting the right data for your organization. A good program then uses that data as part of a bigger look at your efforts to not only evaluate your progress but to celebrate and build upon that success. Whether your progress is big or small, any advancements are a step in the right direction. When you make those positive steps, don't forget to share them with your stakeholders so they can engage in your results.

The revised benchmarks are a very welcome evolution in the wellness industry. WELCOA has stayed true to their roots, but have accepted that not every organization should focus on the traditional areas of physical activity and nutrition. By meeting people where they are, we empower employers to offer programs that meet the wants and needs of employees. More than anything this shift will give workplace wellness programs a greater potential for engagement and success.

***Tyler Stuntebeck** is a Wellness Consultant for M3 Insurance. He partners with organizations to help design and implement wellness programs that fit their unique culture.*

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