

→ *Creating Healthy Organizations:*  
Promising Practices  
in Kentucky  
*Executive Summary*



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# Creating Healthy Organizations in Kentucky

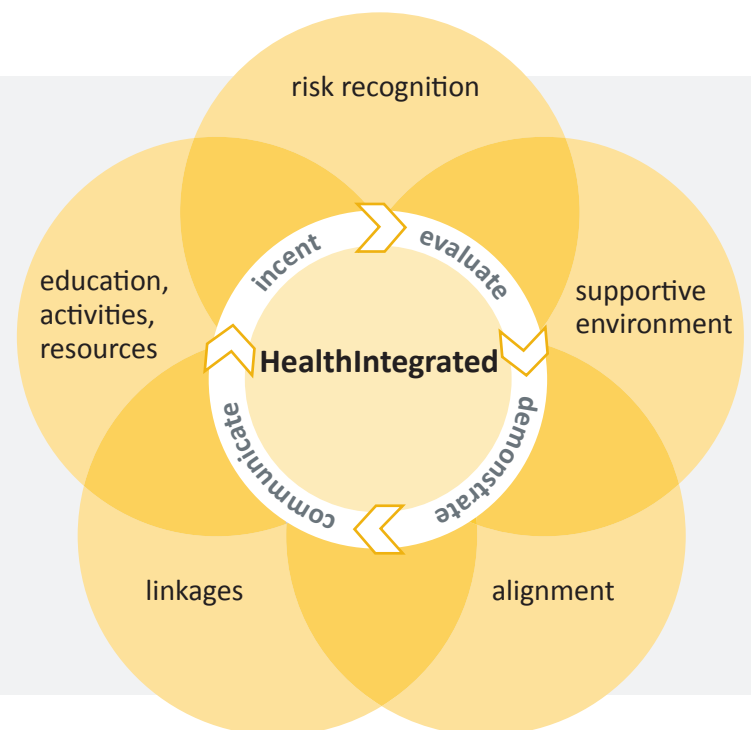
## Executive Summary

Employers today face a host of challenges in resource management as budgets contract, the workforce ages, health care costs mount and chronic disease becomes a chronic concern. Though each of these challenges are significant individually, emerging research reveals many of them to be interlinked with employee health—presenting vast opportunities for innovative problem-solving strategies. One such strategy that has gained attention in recent years is the push for healthy organizations, where employee health and wellness is integrated into the culture, operations, and business strategy of the organization.

Although many employers increasingly understand the opportunities offered by a healthy work environment, many do not know how to begin the transition into actually creating one. In order to address the need for best practice examples and evidence-based tools for developing worksite wellness initiatives expressed by Kentucky employers, the Institute for Workplace Innovation (iwin) presents its Creating Healthy Organizations: Promising Practices in Kentucky report. Sponsored in part by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, CVS Caremark, and UK HealthCare, this report provides employers with a process to create healthy organizations (through the HealthIntegrated Model) and case studies that illustrate how Kentucky employers are integrating health and wellness into their culture and business processes.

### Presentation of the HealthIntegrated Model

A HealthIntegrated Organization is an organization that strategically integrates employee health and well-being into its culture and business objectives through collaborative and comprehensive initiatives, policies and practices to achieve positive organizational and employee outcomes. A review of the literature and analysis of employer interviews informed the development of the HealthIntegrated Model, which consists of five key dimensions and four essential business processes. This model provides a tool for integrating health into organizations' culture and operations.



# Presentation of Case Studies

Case studies are presented according to how they represent the five HealthIntegrated Model dimensions. Innovations at a Glance describe how organizations reflect the model's essential business processes for HealthIntegration. An overview of the types of practices gleaned from the case studies are provided below.

## Risk Recognition

Risk recognition is achieved when a firm proactively assesses its health-related risks and target areas at the individual and organizational level and provides information, treatment and follow-up to staff. Health risk assessments (HRAs) and screenings were commonly utilized by employers. By looking at these results—and other sources such as claims data, prescription costs, total health care costs and employee surveys—companies can assess employee risk at the organizational level and stratify their employee population by risk level in order to better target intervention strategies.

Case studies include the practices of leveraging internal expertise in order to assess organization-level health priorities and provide a rich, data-driven program and identifying one's most important health issue(s) and providing convenient and frequent screenings to employees.

## Education, Activities and Resources

The most commonly adopted dimension of a HealthIntegrated Organization is the provision of education, activities and resources in order to empower employees in personal health management. Such programming promotes skill development, behavior change, and awareness-building and is most successful when tailored to employee interests and needs; when families are engaged; and when the physical, psychological, and social aspects of health are recognized. Four categories of programming efforts were reported by participants: the distribution of information via literature or online sources, awareness-building events like health fairs, the provision of classes or interactive group activities, and offering lifestyle (disease case) management programs where participants are stratified by health risk status.

Case studies include the practice of providing a range of programming to reflect employees' diverse interests and needs, integrating multiple aspects of well-being (e.g., physical, social, emotional, intellectual) in programming efforts, and engaging and empowering workers in managing personal health.

## Supportive Environment: Physical and Social

As organizations work hard to improve the health of their workers, it is important to consider how the work environment itself may help or hinder employees as they try to adopt healthy behaviors. Supportive environments are those in which leadership has created formal policies that support the cessation of risky behavior and the promotion of healthy behavior; where jobs are designed to reduce physical, psychological, and environmental stressors; and where employees at all levels of the organization are engaged and empowered to support one another in leading healthy lifestyles. Several organizations support health through the physical or social work environment by encouraging coworker support, creating policies that support health, and providing onsite exercise facilities and healthy eating options.

Case studies include the practice of leadership modeling healthy behavior, using teams and testimonial-sharing to foster coworker support, and providing onsite facilities with policies in place that support their use.

## Linkages

Linking health-related initiatives with other organizational programs helps to ingrain them into the firm's culture and establish employee well-being as an organizational priority. This is achieved when wellness goals are linked with those of other workforce-related programs. Although strategically integrating goals of linked practices remains a gold standard that is difficult to achieve, many organizations in this study recognized connections between their health and wellness goals and those of their talent management programs, work-life fit initiatives, corporate social responsibility efforts, and their occupational safety and health initiatives.

Case studies include the practice of connecting wellness activities to work-life initiatives by offering employees flexibility to manage their work and non-work responsibilities (thus reducing stress) as well as to fit exercise into their routine. Also included is the practice of facilitating partnerships between wellness and occupational safety and health initiatives.

## Alignment

For optimal employee and organizational performance results, emphasis on employee health must be a part of the way that the organization conducts business. In other words, employee health promotion initiatives must be aligned with the organization's strategic business objectives, mission, and values. Often one of the first steps toward aligning employee wellness comes from formally designating staff and resources toward the effort, which many of our participating companies have done. Alignment is aided when wellness staff is well-connected within the organization—across different work groups and within the administrative core.

Case studies include the practice of creating site certification processes to ensure that health-related goals are infused into an organization's systems and structure, creating standard management objectives that support safety and wellness, offering matching grants to managers to implement localized wellness-focused programming, and aligning wellness goals and programming into a team-oriented management approach.

## Essential Business Processes for HealthIntegration: Innovations at a Glance

In addition to representing the dimensions of the HealthIntegrated Model through their practices, Kentucky organizations are also implementing its essential business processes for HealthIntegration (incent, evaluate, demonstrate, and communicate). The following practices are highlighted through brief case studies, referred to as "Innovations at a Glance."

- Incent: One organization has extended a weight-loss competition (and incentives) for an additional 6-months after its original end-date to reward maintained weight loss.
- Evaluate: One company—with a well-established wellness initiative—has innovated numerous ways to evaluate its needs and the effectiveness of its wellness programming by leveraging available resources.
- Demonstrate: One organization's founder and owner demonstrates his commitment to employee well-being by participating in exercise competitions with staff, continuously sponsoring community wellness events, and making its exercise facilities a prominent part of the physical work environment.
- Communicate: One organization utilizes a variety of communication avenues and engages the labor union to reach its diverse workforce.

## Next Steps

Evidence linking employee health to numerous organizational outcomes—such as employee engagement, organizational commitment, and productivity—continues to build. As the demand for health-oriented organizational strategies continues to grow, iwin is poised to continue its research and employer outreach initiatives in ways that help employers navigate the process of integrating health into their operations and culture.

Copies of *Creating Healthy Organizations: Promising Practices in Kentucky* are available at no charge by contacting UK iwin at 859.257.6767. An electronic copy is available for download at [iwin.uky.edu](http://iwin.uky.edu).