

Needs Assessment – From Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/programdesign/needsassessment.htm>

A baseline needs assessment can be considered the market research phase for a workforce health promotion (WHP) program and is critical for employers who want a program to reflect employee needs and align with company objectives. It is important to involve employees in all activities related to WHP program design, and needs assessment is a great place to begin that process. Include a diverse group of employees – from all levels of the organization, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, ages, and genders.

Needs assessments can be conducted by the company or by health benefits or WHP consultants. They can be very comprehensive or have a limited scope. Needs assessments can measure and identify

- Baseline data necessary for evaluation purposes
- Management and programmatic goals and objectives
- The feasibility of implementing a WHP program at a given workplace
- Support for WHP at various levels of the organization
- Employee needs and interests
- How company policies support or present obstacles to healthy lifestyles
- Features of the workplace environment that support or present obstacles to healthy lifestyles
- Cultural aspects of the organization that could impact program strategies
- Internal and external resources available for program planning and implementation
- Current employee lifestyle behaviors
- Medical care costs
- Productivity costs
- Priorities for financial and other resources
- Needs for practices that address specific diseases and conditions
- Needs for practices that enable persons with disabilities or special needs to participate in health promotion programs

For those readers with a business background, the baseline assessment is analogous to market research to determine target market segments and product design. For example, the four P's of marketing can be applied to WHP – baseline data are used to design the program (product), encourage participation/minimize barriers (price), address access (place), and successfully communicate the program (promotion). Please see Health Marketing Basics for more information.

For examples of needs assessment tools, follow this link to the Program Design page.