

2024 NASPEs AWARD

Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

DETAILS

Please attach a one-page summary of the program. Provide a narrative answer for each of the questions. You are limited to four pages (based on regular 8 1/2 x 11-inch paper double-spaced in 12-point font). The four-page limit does not include the one-page summary.

1. Please provide a brief description of this program.

The State of North Carolina's Statewide Employee Wellness initiative is a collaborative effort of three OSHR divisions that helps reinforce to state employees that the work they do matters and we are vested in providing ways to support their wellness. The program exemplifies OSHR's commitment to employee wellness through a holistic approach. This encompasses providing state employees with the tools they need to thrive in the workplace and at home:

- Engaging monthly wellness webinars with a licensed nutritionist focused on nutrition;
- Biannual team walking challenges to encourage daily activity among state and university employees;
- Financial wellness webinars educating on retirement as well as a program for reducing student debt;
- A comprehensive Employee Assistance Program (NC EAP) that provides a wide scope of resources available to state employees, including a series of on-demand mental health and support seminars, monthly newsletters that equip them with tactics, methods and resources focused on mental health, self-care and alleviating stress within and outside of the workplace; and enrollment in our Perks at Work program, as well as
- A dedicated Personal Observance Leave day for the employee to use as they choose; and
- Teleworking and Flexible Work Schedules.

ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST:

- Meet all eligibility requirements • Meet deadline requirements
- Include a complete nomination packet • Conform to all copyright laws

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2. How long has this program been operational (month and year)?

While aspects of the program were implemented at different times, the overall reevaluation and commitment to employee wellness began in March 2020.

3. Why was this program created? (What problem[s] or issues does it address?)

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of a holistic approach to employee wellness – physical, mental/emotional and financial. The program was developed to offer employees a valuable set of tools and resources to invest in and improve their mental health and wellness.

4. Why is this program a new and creative method?

North Carolina has worked to expand its support of state employees by developing a holistic approach to that commitment at **no cost to employees**. Highlights of this comprehensive approach include:

- Eight hours of **personal observance leave** (approved July 2022). In 2023, **33,391 employees** used an average of 7.7 hours.
- **Nutritionist-led monthly webinars** (launched Dec. 2021) with an average of 1,295 employees registered for each event (**159% increase** since pilot webinar)
- Additional webinars focused on other aspects of physical and financial health.
- Agencies can now spend up to \$50/year/employee for **worksite wellness initiatives**.
- Employee assistance program (EAP) offers employees free and confidential assessments, short-term counseling, training and development, as well as work-life services to help manage personal life issues with a **utilization rate of 19.21%** in 2023.
- Bi-annual fitness challenge engaging **over 4,400 employees** in daily physical activity in spring 2024, an **increase of approximately 1,436 employees** since fall 2020.

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- Through statewide work groups, expanded the Teleworking Program Policy to meet the needs of employees and agencies in mid-2020 with hybrid and flexible work schedules.

5. What was the program's startup costs? (Provide detailed information about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology, and staff already in place.)

The startup costs were limited to routine operational expenses, i.e. virtual video conferencing.

6. What are the program's operational costs?

Operational costs remain limited to routine operational expenses of the agency.

7. How is this program funded?

Existing staff with no new funds. Agencies use lapsed salaries for worksite wellness funds.

8. Did this program originate in your state?

9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states?

10. How do you measure the success of this program?

Aspects of the program are measured in various ways. Highlights indicating growth and efficacy

include:

- **159% increase**, on average, in Wellness Webinar registrations since its pilot webinar.
- **94%** of employees rated their overall satisfaction Wellness Webinars as **Good or Excellent**.
- Doubled **Worksite Wellness funds** agencies can spend from \$25/yr to \$50/yr/employee.
- Over **257,110 hours** of personal observance leave used in 2023; over 47,686 hours used in 2024 (as of April 10).
- Over **2,200 employees utilizing counseling services** to address a variety of issues, including personal and workplace stress through the EAP.

11. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

The program is constantly expanding to address the wellness needs of the State's employees.

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2024 NASPE Innovative State HR Mgmt Program - NC OSHR Wellness Program Summary

North Carolina's Office of State Human Resources recognizes that **the State's most valuable resource is our employees**, and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 emphasized the need for prioritizing employee wellness. OSHR has since implemented and overhauled many initiatives to help employees lead healthier lives both in and out of the workplace at no cost to the employee. The multifaceted program answers many of the concerns most often expressed during, and since, the pandemic. A series of monthly wellness webinars is offered to improve physical health with an emphasis on nutrition, and a team walking challenge to encourage daily activity among employees is held biannually. Focused on mental and emotional well-being, an independent employee assistance program offers all employees free and confidential assessments, short-term counseling, training and development, as well as work-life services to help manage personal life issues that can distract from professional responsibilities. Work-life services include resources for childcare providers, elder care, grief management, addiction recovery, on-demand well-being videos, and employees can access free and discounted legal and financial services, including Perks at Work, a statewide employee discount shopping program. The State now also provides eligible employees with eight hours of leave to invest in the familial, cultural and communal activities they find most valuable and fulfilling.

Each initiative is meant to invest in employees as the individuals that they are rather than answer employee wellness needs with a broad-scale, one-size-fits-all solution. By equipping employees with a toolbox stocked with many beneficial services, we're able to **sustain an all-around healthier workforce and make state employees feel confident that they're valued**, just as one recent wellness webinar attendee shared by saying, "Please keep these up – it's a reminder to me that the State cares."