



Case Study

# Finding success through wellness champions and tiered incentives



Government entities face unique challenges when it comes to managing the health of employees. Maricopa County turns challenges into opportunities with a wellness program that nurtures the long-term health of employees and makes health improvement easy, accessible and rewarding.

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### 3 GOALS FOR AN UPDATED WELLNESS PROGRAM

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- ✓ PROVIDE A ROBUST PROGRAM
  - ✓ CONSOLIDATE ACTIVITIES + COMMUNICATIONS
  - ✓ FOCUS ON PARTICIPATION + OUTCOMES
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## Finding success through wellness champions and tiered incentives

Maricopa County is the fourth most populous county in the United States, and includes 24 cities and towns. The county's 13,000 employees are spread out across 9,000 square miles and work in a variety of positions. So, when county administrators decided they needed to enhance their employee wellness program, they knew they had to think differently.

County management, in partnership with their internal wellness team and StayWell, identified three main goals for updating the wellness program:

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**Provide a more robust wellness program that encourages employees to adopt healthier behaviors.**

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**Consolidate wellness activities and communications.**

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**Create a platform for a more sophisticated and fulfilling incentive program that includes participation and outcomes.**

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Approximately 89 percent of benefits eligible employees participate in at least one initiative offered by Maricopa County's "Wellness Works" program each year. They come from a long list of job titles, including nurses, attorneys, judges, teachers, librarians, sheriff's deputies, jail workers, engineers and more. Most employees have a long tenure with the county, which means changes have to be implemented thoughtfully and over time.

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**89%**  
OF ELIGIBLE  
EMPLOYEES  
PARTICIPATE IN  
AT LEAST ONE  
INITIATIVE

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## Finding success through wellness champions and tiered incentives

Unique wellness program challenges for local governments

Every employer has its own distinct challenges when it comes to employee health and wellness. For local governments like Maricopa County, those challenges are found in:

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### A long list of diverse job functions

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### Decentralized operations and work sites

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### Gradual adaptation to change among long-time employees

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The Wellness Works program at Maricopa County uses two volunteer-based wellness advocate networks to keep employees actively involved and educate them about program changes. A group of 30 employees participate in a Volunteer Fitness Instructor Program, which brings peer-taught group fitness classes

to county workers at their job sites. Meanwhile, a wellness champion network of approximately 50 employees representing departments across the county serve as healthy role models and educate employees about the wellness program, including activities and changes.

“Through our network of employee volunteers, we have been able to connect with employees across the valley,” said Julie Garcia, Maricopa County wellness supervisor.

“Because of the long tenure of our employees, we also have a unique opportunity to improve their health and quality of life, which translates to a healthier workforce and community, and more efficient use of the county’s health care dollars.”



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The county’s new incentive strategy encourages employees to embrace long-term change by offering tiered incentives that encourage increased engagement as employees progress through the program.

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A phased approach to outcomes-based wellness incentives

When Maricopa County first rolled out a financial incentive for wellness program participation, they offered a generous incentive for completing biometric screenings and health assessments, and for being tobacco-free. The focus was on helping employees gain a better understanding of any current or potential health risks.

The county’s new incentive strategy encourages employees to embrace long-term change by offering tiered incentives that encourage increased engagement as employees progress through the program.

Tiered Incentive Offerings

**Level 1: Employees must complete a health assessment and biometric screening.**

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**Level 2: Once Level 1 is complete, employees can complete the tobacco-free affidavit and either a tobacco screening or certified tobacco cessation course.**

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“We have consolidated our incentive activities into a one-stop shop that gives employees access to all available incentives through one structure and one provider. This makes it easier for us to administer and to communicate to employees,” said Chris Bradley, director of the county’s Employee Benefits and Health Department.



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## Finding success through wellness champions and tiered incentives

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### Initial outcomes indicate success

With one year of the program complete, initial outcomes are promising.

As Maricopa County embarks on year two of its new wellness program, the focus will be on offering more incentive options and rewarding employees for taking steps to improve their personal health.

The new incentive structure is driving strong participation:

**Health assessment  
(82 percent completion)**

**Biometric screening  
(89 percent completion)**

**Tobacco-free affidavit or screening  
(74 percent completion)**

**82%**  
COMPLETION  
OF HEALTH  
ASSESSMENTS



### About StayWell

StayWell is a health engagement company that helps its clients engage and educate people to improve health and business results. StayWell brings decades of experience working across the health care industry to design solutions that address its clients' evolving needs. We fuse expertise in health engagement and the science of behavior change with an integrated portfolio of solutions and robust content assets to effectively engage people to make positive health care decisions. StayWell programs have received numerous top industry honors, including the C. Everett Koop National Health Award and the Web Health Award for health engagement programs. StayWell also has received URAC and NCQA accreditation for several of its programs. StayWell is headquartered in Yardley, Pennsylvania, and also has major locations in Salt Lake City, Utah, and St. Paul., Minnesota. To learn more, visit [staywell.com](http://staywell.com).

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