



Well-being Case Study



City of Cedar Rapids

When City employees were asked what they wanted most from their well-being program, their answers led to big changes — and a healthier, happier, more engaged employee population.

The need

The City of Cedar Rapids has proudly offered a well-being program to employees since 2009. City benefits managers had always known that such programs were instrumental to employee satisfaction and morale. But over time, many employees began participating only as a means of collecting the incentive — and engagement was slowing down.

For years, the City's 1,500 employees had been offered biometric screenings and coaching for at-risk individuals. However, without additional points of connection, the program had become a box to check rather than the supportive resource it was meant to be. What was missing? When asked, employees were vocal about their wants and needs: “More options,” “more personalization” and “the ability to pick my own path.”

The ideal well-being program would not only reduce health risks, but be a cultural driver, a retention tool and a point of pride ... if only it offered more.





Our approach

When the time came for Cedar Rapids to select a new partner, Wellmark shared its [five best practices](#) for building a successful strategy.

After listening to City benefit managers and employees tell their stories, two best practices showed the strongest opportunities for impact: providing **individualized support** and taking a **whole-person approach**.

We knew that meeting employees where they were on their well-being journey would require new tools and new ways to grow interest and sustain it over time.

For the City, that meant adding holistic and personalized well-being programming; expanding coaching tracks with the ability to opt in or out; enabling go-at-your-own-pace participation; and providing new pathways to support employees' health and help them earn their well-being incentive.

“ We look at the full picture for every group — not just data and benefits, but how employees experience their well-being program. By bringing together insights from across our Wellmark teams, we design strategies that are personal, practical and built to evolve. ”

— Cory Jackson, Wellmark
Well-being Consultant

Well-being best practices:



Data-driven
strategy



Whole-person
approach



Individualized
support



Leadership,
mentors and
motivators



Strategic, custom
communications

See how your strategy stacks up:



Proof points

Drawing on our partnership with WebMD® and our end-to-end program management capabilities, the Wellmark Well-being Team worked with the City to produce a plan that was:

- Competitive on cost
- Actionable and sustainable
- Impactful across key well-being metrics

Bringing strategy to life

With the City eager to get started, the Wellmark Well-being Team and City benefits managers coordinated a seamless rollout to minimize service interruptions and interest new and returning well-being participants early on. Here's how we put our best practices to work.

Best practice: Taking a whole-person approach

Everybody's health is different, and needs can evolve from day to day. To keep offerings useful and relevant for a large employee population, the dynamic **Wellmark Connect Premium powered by WebMD** well-being platform was rolled out, offering support for diverse interests, needs and challenges:

- The platform's Wellness Assessment helped employees identify specific goals across all well-being categories. Using their personal health screening results, they could also track unique health indicators and view progress over time.
- Employees could now go beyond well-being basics to explore new areas including sleep hygiene, tobacco cessation, personal finance, social and community involvement, resilience and mental health.
- Wellmark's cost-competitive offering allowed the City to stay budget-neutral while giving employees additional access to **Wellbeats® Wellness**, a dedicated point solution from LifeSpeak® focused on nutrition, fitness and mindfulness.

Wellbeats provides access to more than 1,200 classes and programs for employees of all ages and ability levels.



Employees decide when coaching works for them and participate at their own pace.

Best practice: Providing individualized support

When it comes to well-being, reducing barriers to entry translates directly to stronger engagement. For Cedar Rapids, this involved offering practical programs that added greater convenience and freedom of choice for employees:

- Coaching would no longer be a required component for participation in the voluntary program. Instead, employees were given the ability to opt in to expanded point-based coaching programs to reduce modifiable and clinical risks.
- Biometric screening options expanded to include self-schedule walk-in clinics and annual preventive exams in addition to the city's on-site hosted event. Staff also appreciated the comfort that came from having a choice between fingerstick and venipuncture blood draws.
- The restructured program stayed true to employees' requests for more choice in how incentives were earned and multiple paths completion.
- Individual well-being journeys were nurtured with behavior-based nudges and messages from the platform specific to employees' unique goals. Along the way, they always had something new to explore, like gamified activities and the platform's extensive library of in-app videos, articles and podcasts.

TIP: [Reach out](#) to learn more about buy-up coaching solutions to support unique population goals, such as **Quit** for nicotine cessation and **Positively Me** for weight management.



“ I like that I have the entire year to work towards my goals and incentives. With the new program, I can build out a plan to improve my wellness long-term in areas that I pick myself and that I like doing. ”

— City of Cedar Rapids
program participant

Results and key takeaways

Organizations with a successful well-being strategy in place enjoy a happier, healthier and more productive workforce — and the City of Cedar Rapids is no exception. After just one year of working with the Wellmark Well-being Team, our client saw measurable improvements in both program participation and overall population health.



7 out of 8 modifiable risks reduced¹



2 out of 4
clinical risks reduced¹

76%
participation rate
in 2025¹

95%
completion rate¹

1. Statistical claims are based on Wellmark internal reporting in conjunction with public financial filings, regulatory and demographic data sources including NAIC, IRS, IID/SDOL, CMS, US Census Bureau.



“ Since partnering with the Wellmark Well-being Team, our platform has seen a significant change in the variety of ways to participate. Our employees are more satisfied and engaging in so many different ways. And, because they enjoy using it, they use it more often. ”

— Gretchen Barske, City of Cedar Rapids Benefits Manager

Get well-being to work

To move the needle, well-being programs must meet employees *where they are* and help get them to *where they want to be*.

The Wellmark Well-being Team has worked with organizations of every size to boost engagement and create change by improving employee health and happiness.

Take the next step for your own organization. Schedule your free, personalized consultation to learn how Wellmark can help you meet your well-being goals.



What results would you like to see?

Take a two-question survey to tell us more about your organization's needs.



You've invested in a health plan that protects your employees and their families. As an extension of your team, we can support your efforts with unique well-being strategies built on best practices to drive your results.



Ready to grow your success?

Contact the Wellmark Well-being Team at wellbeing@wellmark.com.



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