



**WELLNESS  
WORKS**



## **CONSIDERATIONS FOR SELECTING A FINANCIAL WELLNESS PROVIDER**

As financial wellness increases in popularity, it becomes critical to develop a valid framework for selecting a financial wellness provider.

Providers offer a variety of tools, resources, and services. Due to the diversity of offerings, if employers can effectively communicate their highest-priority components of a financial wellness provider, they may be better suited to navigate what is becoming an increasingly complex landscape.

Here are some considerations that employers may want to incorporate into their evaluation process. This list only serves as a framework to start their evaluation—the needs and priorities of every employer may differ.



## Budget or cost

For many employers, this may be the biggest factor in narrowing down the list of potential financial wellness providers.

- Is cost based on all eligible employees for the program, or are only those who enroll charged a fee?
- Will the cost be passed through to employees?
- Will the employer decide to shoulder the per-employee cost?



## Business model

Financial wellness as a topic has exploded very quickly throughout the retirement industry. Because of its current widespread popularity, financial wellness providers seem to be entering the market almost every month. But much like the proliferation of target date providers a decade ago or dot-com start-ups from the late 1990s, do they have a strategy for long-term success or are they a flash-in-the-pan outfit? Questions that employers should ask a potential provider could include:

- Do they have the capacity to grow as my organization grows?
- How do they make their money—from advertising, or does their revenue come from cross-selling additional products and services to my workforce?



## Communication frequency

How often a financial wellness provider may be sending messages to employees may be an important consideration. Each company develops its own communication culture. Some may pepper their employees with frequent messages, others may prefer to group communications in a newsletter type of format that only goes out weekly or perhaps less frequently.

Inquire about the timing, frequency, and type of message that the financial wellness provider would typically send. In an ideal world, perhaps they can even synchronize their messages to be complementary to the ones the employer is sending as well.

- What is their client service model for ongoing engagements with [me/the employer]?
- Do they have dedicated account or relationship managers? Is it a pooled client service environment? A toll-free number?
- What is the ongoing cadence of communications after the program is implemented?

Just like the difference in financial wellness providers, a variety of demographics, preferences, and communication styles exist all within the same organization. Employers can work with their advisor to prioritize the services and features of financial wellness providers that are most important to them.



## Multimedia resources

Each organization's workforce is unique. And most of the time, it's not homogeneous. Some employees may have access to computers, laptops, or other mobile devices, while other employees rely more heavily on paper-based communication or call center conversations.

- Does the financial wellness provider offer education in a variety of formats?
- How is content accessed? Do employees have to go to the financial wellness provider's site, can the content reside on the employer's internal websites, or is it a mix of both?
- Is content available in paper, electronic, phone-based, and/or face-to-face formats? Which of those might be the highest priority for the employer's organization?



## Data reporting capabilities

Financial wellness providers come in a variety of flavors. Some offer coaches or access to financial professionals. Others link financial accounts to give users a holistic look at their finances on a weekly or monthly basis. And others are prescriptive in the behaviors that lead to financial wellness and the order in which employees change each behavior.

All of those examples come with differing abilities to track employees' progress and measure the success of the program. Employers who may be under pressure to demonstrate the effectiveness of a financial wellness program may want to evaluate how detailed the program can be at providing results or progress.

While data reporting capabilities sound like a "must have," employers should keep in mind that this capability is often accompanied by bigger logistical hurdles pertaining to data feeds and access to employee information. This raises questions about data integrity and security as well. Data reporting may also carry with it a heftier price tag for the program.



## Integration with other benefits

Financial wellness should be seen as an extension, or another facet, of an employee's overall benefits package. The better integrated it can be into existing communications about retirement, the better chance the employee has to understand how the benefits fit together. At its core, financial wellness gives employees the capacity to generate additional savings, an important outlet of which is their workplace retirement plan. Other considerations with respect to integration are:

- Can messages about financial wellness be incorporated into retirement plan statements?
- Can the plan's website include financial wellness (or at least a link to obtain more information on the program and resources available)?
- Is there an opportunity to incorporate financial wellness information into call center scripts?

Enhancing the visibility and amplifying the presence of the financial wellness program will only help to increase adoption within the workforce.

# Create your own “Request for Information”

Pick and choose from the questions compiled below to create your own customized Request for Information to collect responses from your short list of financial wellness providers to enable you to compare their responses to assist you in making an informed choice. While the considerations listed here can get you thinking about what will be most effective for your workforce, it is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

## Budget and Cost

- How is the program priced? Per eligible, per employee, or per enrollee?
- How can the fees be charged? To enrollees directly? To the employer?

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## Business Model

- How many years have you been in business? How many people are currently enrolled in your program?
- What are your current participation rates?
- How do you earn revenue now? What are your plans (if any) to expand or explore different revenue streams going forward?
- Will employees have the ability to speak with an actual person? Do you offer services such as a call center staffed with CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER® practitioners?

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## Communication

- Is there a website for employees? Can it be customized for our employees? Do you offer an app that enrollees can access on a smartphone or tablet?
- How do you typically communicate with enrollees? How often? How many formats is your education available in? Do you offer the ability to coordinate your messaging with our own communications?
- If employee information is included in data feeds to/from the provider, what security measures are in place to protect it?

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## Data Reporting

- What level of reporting can you offer the employer?
- Can you provide reporting that demonstrates the effectiveness of the program? Is there any additional cost for reporting?

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## Integration With Other Benefits

- What systems do you have in place to integrate the program with our existing benefits offerings?
- Can you communicate directly with our retirement plan provider or recordkeeper?
- Can you demonstrate how your financial wellness program will align with our retirement plan and other benefit plans?

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For more information,  
please talk to your financial advisor.

