

Develop Evaluation Tools, Survey Questions and Methods to Measure Impact of Workplace Health and Wellbeing Programming at UBC

Executive Summary

My internship as a UBC Sustainability Scholar was with the Health and Wellbeing Program ran by UBC Human Resources. Most employed adults spend 7 or more hours a day at their place of employment. During this time, the activities that they perform, the resources that they have access to, and the nature of the physical and social environments around them, all play a role in shaping their overall health and wellbeing. With the growing recognition that employee health and wellbeing is a necessary component for socially sustainable work communities, more and more attention and efforts are being placed on workplace health promotion and building work environments that enable healthy behaviors and positive social interactions.

The purpose of my internship was to facilitate the Healthy UBC program in running an effective, evidence based health promotion program and to help UBC realize their goal of creating a progressive, sustainable work culture. To achieve this, specific objectives were to: 1) build an evidence base to inform current and future programming; 2) identify how the organization can support and enable sustainable health promotion initiatives implemented at the department level; and 3) review existing evaluation tools and make recommendations on how to best assess and demonstrate the unit's overall impact on campus.

For the first objective, a literature review was conducted using various scholarly databases. From this search, research articles relevant to existing Healthy UBC programs (e.g. meditation workshops, walking programs, staff and faculty sports day) were extracted and saved. An index was then created to match each article to the relevant program as well as to document key findings. In addition to this, a second literature review was performed to identify existing models of health behaviour change and faculty vitality. A summary document was written to briefly describe each model and supplementary reading material was referenced.

To identify how the organization can support health promotion initiatives at the department level and enable them to become self-sustaining, a developmental evaluation of an existing seed-funding program called the Healthy Workplace Initiative Program (HWIP) was conducted. To conduct the evaluation, 22 participants were interviewed and common themes and experiences related to sustainability were identified and discussed in an evaluation report. Common themes included ongoing or self-generated funding, participation, support from senior leadership, and collective responsibility.

Lastly, existing survey tools used to evaluate Healthy UBC programs were reviewed and edited. In conjunction to this, recommendations for assessing, developing a method, and demonstrating the unit's overall impacts on campus were made.

Recommendations included adaptation of an evaluation framework, standardization across surveys, and linking survey items to organizational goals.

Health promotion is an emerging and ever evolving field where best practices are not universal across situations, populations, or environments. This can make it difficult to apply research findings or generalized frameworks to health promotion practice. However, I do believe that there is a place for scholars in bridging the gap between research and real world decision-making. The Sustainability Scholar internship was an excellent opportunity to communicate with health promotion professionals and to relate research evidence to real challenges and issues experienced in the field.

Andrea Jones

PhD Student and Bridge Strategic Training Fellow
School of Population and Public Health | University of British Columbia