

by | **Kathy Bergstrom, CEBS**, and **Tyler Lloyd, GBA**

Gwinnett County’s employee wellness program has long included a financial education component, but this year, benefit leaders expanded the program after data revealed some concerning trends among the county’s 6,100 employees.

In the past, the county’s financial education efforts focused mostly on retirement preparation, said Karissa Calvert, GBA, benefits division director for Gwinnett County, which is in the northeast part of the Atlanta, Georgia metropolitan area. “We have really amped up overall financial education this year because we reviewed data regarding loans, financial stress, etc., and saw the need for it,” she explained.

Like Gwinnett County, more than four in ten (43%) organizations believe they have a responsibility to provide education for pensions and benefits, encourage workers to save for retirement and help them become financially literate, according to a recent International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans report. The report—*Workplace Wellness and Financial Education: 2025 Survey Report*—provides details on financial education programs offered by corporations, public employers and multiemployer plans and covers topics such as goals and obstacles for financial education programs, budgets and more.

Financial Education Goals and Initiatives

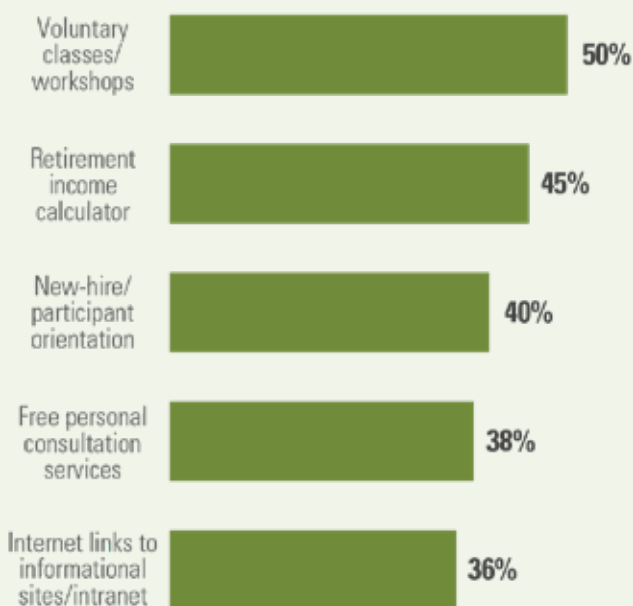
The most frequently cited goals for financial education programs were to increase workers’ ability to manage their money (61%) and to improve workers’ retirement/investment decisions (60%) as well as their understanding of current benefits (54%).

Organizations offer a variety of financial education initiatives, and the most frequently provided are voluntary classes/workshops, retirement income calculators, new-hire orientations, free personal consultation services and links to informational sites (Figure 1).

Gwinnett County’s financial education content expansion included the launch of its online Financial Fridays program in 2025. Participants receive wellness points for attending the online sessions and are entered into a raffle for prizes. Participation has averaged about 500 employees for each ses-

FIGURE 1

Top Five Financial Education Initiatives Offered



sion. “We cover everything from budgeting to understanding credit to understanding our retirement plans,” Calvert said.

The county offers a longer standing program called Retirewise, which started in 2019. The program is “a comprehensive look at everything you need to focus on when you are thinking about retirement—We cover Social Security, benefits, will and estate planning, mental health, investments and the steps needed to begin the retirement process,” she said. Attendance is capped at 100 because it is an in-person program. These seats typically fill up quickly.

The Motion Picture Industry Pension & Health Plans (MPI) in Studio City, California offers two separate financial education programs to its 320 employees with the goals of helping them develop and maintain healthy financial habits, reducing financial stress and improving financial management skills.

One of the programs is a series of workshops started in 2018 and led by a Certified Financial Planner (CFP) and a Certified Retirement Planning Counselor (CRPC). The workshops cover topics such as budgeting and debt reduction, retirement planning, successful investing, risk management, and growing and protecting wealth.

Sessions are recorded and uploaded to the plan's intranet for easy employee access. The facilitator provides their contact information and is available for individual financial counseling.

In 2022, MPI added free employee access to a well-known online financial wellness program designed to help people manage their finances effectively, build wealth and achieve financial freedom. The online format offers the benefits of being accessible at any time and from any device, MPI leaders said. The program covers a wide range of topics, including paying for college, buying a home, understanding credit scores and retirement.

"The two programs complement each other and reinforce key principles of financial management and wellness," said Rita Van Vranken, MPI's chief human resources officer.



"Our biggest success is in getting team members out in the field. Sometimes, to get the information to where it needs to go, you have to meet employees where they are. This means heading to roll call at the sheriff's department, dropping in on the crews at the fire stations and showing up at the Department of Transportation barn when the employees are getting ready to head out for the day."

Karissa Calvert, GBA
Benefits Division Director,
Gwinnett County,
Lawrenceville, Georgia

MPI also offers financial wellness sessions led by a CFP/CRPC to its 130,000 participants as part of its wellness program.

FIGURE 2

Top Five Obstacles in Providing Financial Education

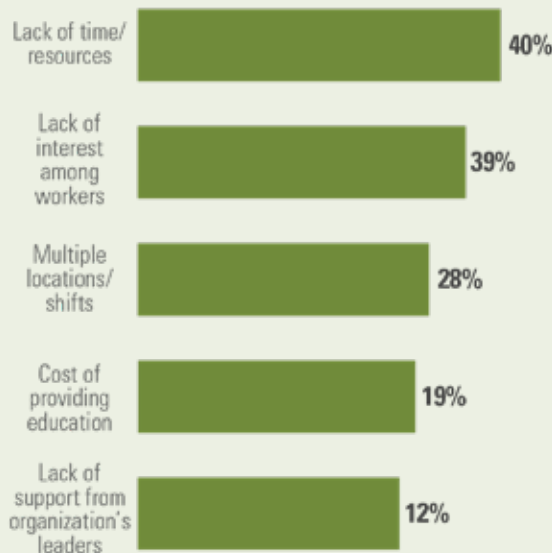
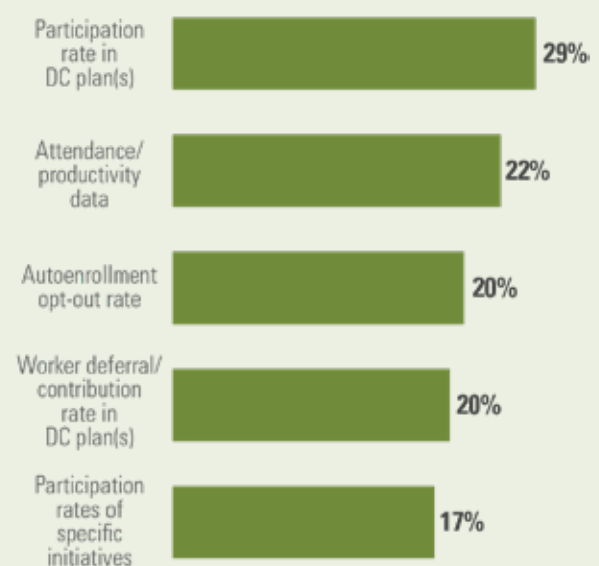


FIGURE 3

Top Five Factors Tracked to Measure Program/Initiative Success



Financial Education Obstacles/Barriers

The International Foundation survey report showed that organizations face a variety of challenges offering financial education, ranging from lack of time to lack of support from organizational leaders (Figure 2).

“Our biggest challenge is the different shifts that our employees work. We have a large number of public safety employees who are not necessarily available for lunch and learns and could really benefit from the information,” Calvert noted.

Measuring Success

The Foundation’s survey report revealed that organizations use a variety of metrics to assess the success of their programs, and the rate at which workers participate in the defined contribution retirement plan is the most frequently used. Data on attendance and productivity is another popular metric (Figure 3).

“We can tell in our data the number of people taking loans and/or hardship withdrawals from their retirement accounts. Any decrease in this number is considered a success. We also measure success through awareness—The more people recognize our employees and understand our plans, the more successful our program,” Calvert said.



“The key to maintaining high employee engagement, participation and satisfaction is to ensure that the programs remain current as well as relevant to employees’ specific needs and interests. MPI regularly surveys employees to obtain feedback from prior presentations and to solicit suggestions for new topics of interest.”

Rita Van Vranken

Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO),
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About the Report

Workplace Wellness and Financial Education: 2025 Survey Report includes responses from 331 corporations/single employer plans, multiemployer funds and public employer plans in the United States. To view the survey report, visit www.ifebp.org/workplacewellness25. See the Quick Look on page 10 for more highlights from the report.