

# what's working

building a global culture  
of employee well-being



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*In March 2020, global employer AECOM saw requests for information on its well-being program skyrocket as the COVID-19 pandemic began. The company, which has 47,000 employees in 52 countries, responded by fast-tracking an already-planned expansion of the program. Bernie C. Knobbe, CEBS, AECOM's head of global benefits and well-being, describes its evolution.*

Research shows businesses that focus on improving performance in areas impacting employee well-being are likely to see a comparable effect on customer satisfaction and retention. AECOM believes there's more to the story. When the focus is on employees' well-being, not only do they feel better at work, but they also have more to give outside of work to their families, friends and communities.

Headquartered in Dallas, Texas, AECOM is a professional technical and management support services provider offering planning, consulting, architectural and engineering design, and program and construction management. The company launched its global well-being efforts in 2018.

## From Well-Being Week to Well-Being Month

In 2018, we launched Global Well-Being Week, hosting 134 on-site well-being events in 56 locations. Events included financial sessions, healthy habits workshops and physical activities. Our team worked with global and local vendors to run these events. The sidebar identifies AECOM's six pillars of well-being.

One unique event was a stress block challenge, where employees in select locations collaborated to build a structure out of squeezable soft foam stress blocks placed throughout their buildings. The activity was designed to build connections among colleagues, be fun and create memories. Employees submitted pictures of 150 stress block structures to the well-being program.

Employees in several locations could also spin the "well-being wheel" and pick a healthy habit to engage in for the day. For example, to support social well-being, employees could collect spare change in a jar and donate the money to a local charity. For physical well-being, they could track how much water they drink and aim for 64 ounces that day.

In June 2019, we expanded the program to Global Well-Being Month. This initiative included the Mission Possible! challenge, which inspired employees to get moving, be mindful, save money and be good to the planet. We held weekly challenges, such as increasing physical activity, and participants tracked their progress to be entered into a prize drawing. Employees were encouraged to post images and videos of their activities on social media sites. Their posts were showcased on AECOM's benefits site in the U.S. and Canada as well as the global well-being site so employees could see what their colleagues were doing. We also provided a content library on our global well-being site with articles, videos and tools.

During the month, there was a 200% increase in the number of countries hosting well-being events and activities, with 300 on-site events occurring at 100 locations in 27 countries.

## Responding to COVID-19

Even before the pandemic, we were planning to expand our focus on global well-being to a year-round effort. We had targeted a June 2020 launch to coincide with Global Wellness Day, but the

# benefits

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## Six Pillars of Well-Being

AECOM defines *well-being* through the following six pillars:

- 1. Physical:** Be active, eat smart, practice prevention and sleep well
- 2. Financial:** Budget and plan, invest smart, manage debt and save smart
- 3. Emotional:** Build resilience, reduce stress, disconnect from digital, discover happiness, learn to relax and mind your mental health
- 4. Social:** Build connections, care for your family and spread kindness and gratitude
- 5. Intellectual:** Be mindful, communicate effectively, cultivate creativity, get organized, solve problems and train your brain
- 6. Planet:** Connect with nature and live sustainably.

These six pillars show how total well-being goes beyond staying physically fit and emotionally healthy—It also includes making sound financial decisions, becoming involved in the community and taking care of our planet.

spread of COVID-19 fast-tracked those plans. By March, we were being asked by health and safety staff, human resources (HR)—pretty much everybody in the organization—for help with responding to employee needs.

Right away, we began offering information including how to work remotely, what to do if you contract COVID-19 and how to access health plans. By April, we had launched the full program. The timing was both challenging and beneficial—It became obvious that we needed to provide tools and support to help employees deal with the pandemic and put their well-being first.

AECOM also moved beyond individual impact to a global culture of well-being by keeping employees connected during the pandemic, cultivating community and spreading kindness and gratitude. More than 1,200 employees shared their personal stories about what they were doing to stay connected and healthy during the pandemic, and 1,000 employees participated in the Operation: Be Well challenge, completing well-being activities to spread kindness and sharing well-being tips with one another.

The result was more than 270,000 well-being program “touch points” in 2020, measured through program participation, page views, resources accessed and stories shared across the Global Well-Being program at AECOM. We also created new regional well-being steering committees and identified well-being champions.

During the year, there were nearly 50 virtual events offered, 3,700 challenge activities completed, 7,400 well-being wheel spins and more than 20 healthy recipe submissions.

## Resources and Incentives

AECOM uses incentives to encourage employee participation in our well-being programs. Employees earn points for participating in company-offered corporate social responsibility and health and safety programs and services as well as self-reported activities.

When employees sign up to work with a well-being health coach through our wellness partner, a coach will follow up with the employees to make sure they are aware of resources like smoking cessation and stress management programs as well as online and video conferencing “WELLbinar” training programs. This enables employees to choose activities aligned with their personal interests and values. As participants complete activities, they can improve their personal well-being and earn points toward rewards, including a discount on medical plan contributions, gift card raffles, membership to a digital fitness platform and a fitness reimbursement.

Our network of 250 well-being ambassadors and champions shares tools and resources to strengthen their connection to employees and their families. Employees can also access digital tools focused on engaging and enabling our global workforce through mobile applications. These tools provide relevant resources and information on our programs, allowing employees around the world to access online quizzes, videos, webinars and progress trackers to help them improve their overall well-being.

Another key resource is AECOM’s long-standing global employee assistance program (EAP), which employees can turn to when they need advice on physical activity, building financial stability, improving emotional resilience and other important issues. In fact, EAP usage increased by 7% in 2020.

## 2021 and Beyond

In 2021, we launched enhanced mental health resources for employees and managers. We had 331,000 well-being program touch points, and global EAP usage remained high at 18.3%.

One highlight that year was the Super 6 challenge from July through December 2021. Employees submitted more than 100 personal wellness stories, and a winner was selected each month. The winners highlighted AECOM's global reach, featuring workers from Australia, the Philippines, the United States, the United Kingdom, China and India.

In 2022, we are spotlighting a different pillar of well-being each quarter. During each month of the quarter, we are providing tools and resources on a specific aspect of the quarterly theme and feature a corresponding challenge. For example, the first quarter of 2022 focused on financial well-being. January's challenge was Chart Your Financial Path, and it included a WELLbinar on the psychology behind saving money and other good financial habits.

We've upgraded the global well-being website so it's easily accessed from a mobile phone or a computer. Employees who register and log in can view a dashboard displaying their monthly challenges, resources they've bookmarked and progress they've made toward their well-being goals. We're also enhancing the tools and information we provide to our well-being ambassadors and champions.

Our efforts over the years have earned us several honors, including a 2019 Best Employers: Excellence in Health & Well-Being award by the National Business Group on Health, Silver Stevie Awards and an APEX Award of Excellence.

By making well-being a priority, we hope to create a culture in which our employees feel happier; live more balanced lives; enjoy more creativity, innovation and productivity; and inspire others. Our goal is to help them bring their best selves to everything they do—at work and at home.



Employees at AECOM participated in a stress block challenge as part of the company's well-being efforts.



AECOM Employees submitted pictures of 150 stress block structures to the well-being program.

