

# In Pursuit of Whole Person Health

Sample RFI Questions to Ensure Your Vendors and Partners Support a Whole Person Health Strategy



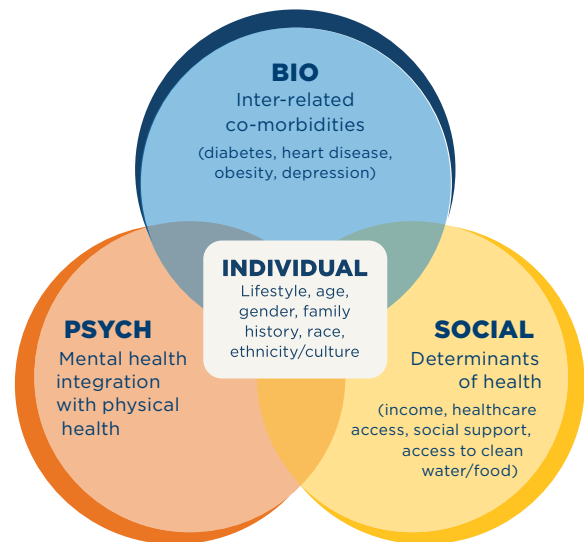
**National Alliance**  
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Driving Health, Equity and Value



St. Louis Area  
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BUSINESS HEALTH COALITION  
*employer partners in healthcare*

Employers typically work with a variety of partners to execute their health care strategy. This guide provides suggestions on how to evaluate solution providers, health plans, PBMs, vendors, and other partners on their commitment to a whole person health approach.

**Figure 1.**  
**Whole Person Health Dimensions**



## What is Whole Person Health?

Whole person health focuses on the interplay of multiple biological-psychological-social dimensions of health, with the goal of providing holistic, personalized, and equitable support to employees on their wellbeing journey. A whole person health approach considers an individual’s unique needs across the spectrum, from wellness and prevention services, to chronic disease management, and primary and specialty care delivery. This next generation of strategies builds on successes, not by going broader, but by taking a more individualized and comprehensive approach to addressing the health of employees and their families.

## Why Does It Matter?

Today, 90% of US healthcare costs are driven by individuals with chronic diseases, with almost half having three or more conditions. As the root causes and effects of these comorbid conditions are often interrelated, it’s time to migrate from approaches that focus on managing a single condition to one that holistically supports people living with multiple conditions. Management of health behaviors required to mitigate disease and improve outcomes is intertwined with the underlying emotional state of the

individual. Furthermore, social factors are estimated to impact 80% of health outcomes and are large contributors to health disparities and inequities.

## Where Is the Impact?

As highlighted by the [National Institutes of Health](#), health and disease are not separate, disconnected states; they occur on a path that can move in two directions. By considering multiple factors that can promote health or disease, adopting whole person health can lead to improved employee productivity and lower healthcare costs over time. When considering both clinical and financial outcomes, interventions with a whole person health lens appear to outperform organizational efforts that are more one-dimensional.

## How Do I Do It?

This guide assists employers in identifying vendors, health plans, PBMs, and other partners that have integrated whole person health in their solutions. Sample RFP questions have been included for each dimension of whole person health, as well as helpful research and resources. Recognizing that a “one-size-fits-all” approach will not meet the needs of every organization, employers are encouraged to evaluate vendor responses with their workforce in mind.



## Individual Dimension

As pictured in Figure 1, the individual is at the center of a whole person health strategy. In addition to impacting a person's predisposition for certain health conditions, characteristics such as lifestyle, age, gender, and ethnicity can also influence an employee's perception of wellbeing and the acceptance of behaviors and treatments to maintain health. While traditional population health approaches consider outcomes across a group of individuals, vendors adopting a whole person health lens will provide opportunities to tailor content and goals based on specific needs.



### SAMPLE VENDOR RFP QUESTIONS

- Please describe how program content is tailored to participants' needs and preferences. What metrics do you use to measure engagement over time?
- Is a participant's perception of their own health evaluated? If yes, please describe.
- Is a participant's readiness to change evaluated? If yes, please describe.
- Are a participant's lifestyle risks evaluated? If yes, please describe.
- Are a participant's unique characteristics considered when setting goals, establishing coaching protocols, and tracking program success?
- What languages does your solution support?
- How do you ensure diversity (i.e., gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age, etc.) among your solution's support team and/or providers?
- Does the program include demographic breakdowns when evaluating program efficacy?



## Bio/Physical Dimension

Conditions that simultaneously present with another condition, known as co-morbidities, are increasingly prevalent in the US. Six in 10 adults have a [chronic condition](#) and four in 10 adults have two or more. In deploying a whole person health strategy, employers need to consider whether their vendor solutions have a streamlined, non-siloed approach to addressing the presence of two or more diseases or medical conditions (i.e., comorbidities).



### SAMPLE VENDOR RFP QUESTIONS

- Describe the lifestyle or disease management topics addressed by the program.
- Describe your solution's approach to managing a participant's multiple, interrelated co-morbid conditions.
- How does your organization coordinate with an employer's ecosystem of benefit and health partners to better manage a participant's co-morbid conditions?
- How does your organization partner with a participant's care provider (e.g., doctor, nurse practitioner, pharmacist) to manage co-morbid conditions?



# Psychological Health Dimension

Those with mental health conditions are more likely to have a preventable physical illness, such as heart disease or diabetes. Similarly, one in three people with a chronic condition also have a mental health diagnosis, like [depression](#) or anxiety. Whole person health takes an integrated approach to addressing [mental and physical health](#), improving condition management and wellbeing overall.



## SAMPLE VENDOR RFP QUESTIONS

- Does your organization integrate mental health and physical health to address holistic well-being? If yes, please describe how.
- Please describe how your solution helps employers establish a culture that values employee mental health and reduces stigma across all levels of the organization.
- Which of the following, if any, evidence-based measures does your organization use to track mental health outcomes?
  - CIS-R (Clinical Interview Schedule)
  - GHQ (General Health Questionnaire)
  - SRQ-20 (Self-Report Questionnaire 20)
  - SF 36 (36 Short Forum Survey)
  - K6 and K10 (Kessler Psychological Distress Scales)
  - PHQ (Patient Health Questionnaire)
  - GAD-7 (General Anxiety Disorder)
  - WHO-5 (WHO-5 Well-being Index)
  - CDC HRQOL (CDC Healthy Days Core Module)
  - DASS-21 (Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale)



## Social Dimension

Up to 50% of an individual's health status is impacted by their physical environment and other social and economic indicators. Referred to as [social determinants of health \(SDoH\)](#), [program and policy solutions](#) that address these factors have been demonstrated to result in better health outcomes, including length and quality of life.



### SAMPLE VENDOR RFP QUESTIONS

- Does your organization assess the following social determinants of health when providing support to participants? If yes, how is this data collected?
  - Education level
  - Job status
  - Family social support
  - Income
  - Community safety
  - Housing
  - Transportation
  - Childcare
  - Food insecurity
  - Healthcare access
- Does your solution link to community programs to address gaps in basic social needs? If yes, please describe how this is operationalized.
- Does the program connect participants with each other for social/peer support?
- Please describe how your program tailors messaging based on literacy and education levels to ensure the content is accessible to all.



## Resources

- ▶ [Using Total Person Health to Meet Your People Where They're At | Business and Tech](#)
- ▶ [Understanding Health Equity in the Workplace Action Brief | National Alliance](#)
- ▶ [Social Determinants of Health: A Guide for Employers | Northeast Business Group on Health](#)
- ▶ [Total Worker Health® Employer Guide | St. Louis Area Business Health Coalition](#)
- ▶ [Program Measurement & Evaluation Guide | Health Enhancement Research Organization](#)
- ▶ [Leading by Example and Moving Upstream Together: A Fresh Look at Social Needs and Social Determinants of Health](#)
- ▶ [The Path Forward for Mental Health and Substance Use](#)
- ▶ [How do Individuals with Behavioral Health Conditions Contribute to Physical and Total Healthcare Spending?](#)

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The St. Louis Area Business Health Coalition (BHC) represents nearly 70 leading employers, which provide health benefits to thousands of lives in Missouri and millions nationally. Since 1982, the BHC has supported employer efforts to improve the well-being of their enrollees and enhance the quality and overall value of their investments in health benefits. A nonprofit organization, the BHC strives to make health care work better for businesses, their employees, and the larger communities they serve. To learn more, visit [www.stlbhc.org](http://www.stlbhc.org) or follow the BHC on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).



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