

Recovery Ready Workplace Metrics¹

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Background

Recovery-Ready Workplace (RRW) programs – also known as Recovery Friendly Workplace programs – are an investment to maintain a strong and healthy workforce and have potential to benefit the bottom line. Multiple stakeholders can bear the costs of these investments, particularly employers who administer these programs. Costs are also born by government or other oversight entities that provide program certification and technical assistance, and employees may need on- or off-duty hours to train on RRW policies, procedures, and resources, or to volunteer to provide program support.

Existing literature on the positive impact of RRWs can help support the development and implementation of nascent RRW programs.^{2,3} However, variability in program design and implementation across companies or workplaces necessitates mechanisms to assess the impact of programs at the individual employer or individual workplace level.

This primer provides a framework on potential metrics for assessing or evaluating the effect of RRW programs, including important considerations in how those metrics are to be collected and interpreted. This primer also provides generic recommendations.

Recovery Ready Workplace Metric Framework

This RRW metric framework is a modified [logic model](#). A logic model assists in program planning implementation, management, evaluation, and reporting by showing the relationships between program components: i.e., inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. The logic model utilized for this RRW metric framework does not include inputs, which can help quantify costs, but are less salient for understanding program effects. The RRW metric framework focuses primarily on outputs and outcomes, which are the most important logic model components for understanding RRW impact. The logic model was developed based on RRW elements detailed in the [Recovery-Ready Workplace Toolkit](#)⁴ and a [RRW model law](#)⁵ (developed by the Legislative Analysis and Public Policy Association (LAPPA)). The framework also organizes logic model components by stakeholder group (i.e., employee, employer, government, and insurer) to better map the specific roles and needs of each of these stakeholders.

¹ This document was written to accompany the February 12, 2024 slide deck entitled *Recovery Ready Workplace Metrics* produced by the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

² Goplerud E, Hodge S, Benham T. A Substance Use Cost Calculator for US Employers With an Emphasis on Prescription Pain Medication Misuse. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. 2017;59(11):1063-1071. doi:10.1097/jom.0000000000001157

³ Fields M, Longley, J, Martinez, JA, Weizman, S, LaBelle, JR. Recovery Ready Workplaces: A key strategy for reducing overdoses and sustaining recovery from substance use disorder. *Journal of Opioid Management*. 2023;19(7):45-52. doi:DOI:10.5055/jom.2023.0798

⁴ Recovery-Ready Workplace Hub. [Recovery-Ready Workplace Resource Hub | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\)](#)

⁵ Model Recovery -Ready Workplaces Act (2023). [Model Recovery Ready Workplaces Act | LAPPA \(legislativeanalysis.org\)](#)

Exhibit 1, the RRW metric framework illustrated from the employee perspective, provides an example of how to read the logic model. The RRW activities, outputs, and outcomes reflect an employee's priorities (e.g., job security, job satisfaction, psychological safety or belonging in the workplace, work-life balance, and health for the employee). The RRW activities listed are those that an employee might perform, and color-coding links these activities to specific outputs. Because the activities are performed by the employees, the outputs are measured from the employee perspective as well. For example, an employee may document completion of one or more RRW trainings in a learning portal or training diary. Short- or long-term RRW outcomes (such as awareness of available RRW resources) may result from one or more outputs (such as completion of training or participation in an employee resource groups (ERG) or receipt of services from an employee assistance program (EAP)). Challenges with specific activities, outputs, and outcomes are noted within the framework in numeric superscript, corresponding to the numbers at the bottom of Exhibit 1. In particular, new mechanisms may be required to document activities.

The employer's RRW metric framework (Exhibit 2) builds upon the employee framework in three ways. 1) The employer aggregates outputs across employees. For example, the employer could tally trainings taken across all company employees. 2) Similarly, the employer also can aggregate outcomes across employees. Descriptive analysis of these outcomes can be very informative; for example, if no employees report willingness to seek help and use RRW resources, then the RRW program may not be effective overall. 3) Alternatively, the employer may also compare outcome (or output) measures between groups or timeframes: e.g., before versus after implementing RRW policies and procedures, before versus after receiving RRW certification, or between those referred for employment from recovery programs or housing versus their peers.

The government RRW metric framework (Exhibit 3) also aggregates outputs and outcomes across employers. The insurance RRW metric framework (Exhibit 3) is primarily concerned with cost of insuring the employer's company.

The RRW metric framework does not include metrics for indirect outcomes or for outcomes that are tangentially related to RRW programs, such as overdose mortality and crime.

Metric and design considerations

Minimizing the measurement burden was a key concern when constructing the RRW metric framework. The needs for comprehensiveness and specificity must be balanced with the need for feasibility. For example, in many cases, *de novo* data collection, where metrics are not already readily measured, may not be feasible, especially for smaller business.

Timing of measurement should be as convenient as possible to promote information capture. Data that are automatically collected and that can be tapped to monitor RRW implementation are ideal. Examples include completion of sessions offered through a learning portal, unscheduled absences tracked in a payroll and leave system, or EAP utilization. When

measurement is not automatic, its timing should be opportune: measurement of knowledge and attitudes about RRW programs can be collected immediately upon completion of training.

Measuring select RRW metrics in a standardized way will be important for understanding the overall effect of RRW programs across employees and employers. However, standardized items can be complemented by data elements specific to an employer or program model and open-ended survey questions can provide useful insights.

In addition to selecting which RRW metric(s) to track and how to capture and analyze them, large employers or initiatives may need to consider adopting a sampling methodology to limit the scale of data collection for information that is not automatically collected and thereby reduce measurement burden. This may apply, for example, to surveys or questionnaires sent to a large number of employers. The power and accuracy of data can be affected by sampling methodologies (e.g., convenience or random) as well as by response rates. The larger the percentage of individuals who do not respond to a survey, the less representative the responses become of the overall population served. Focus groups provide another cost-effective data collection mechanism, providing qualitative information of the kind that can be gathered by open-ended survey questions.

As alluded to above, measuring for situational awareness (i.e., without a comparison group) can be informative in and of itself. Moreover, comparative analyses may be difficult to conduct. For example, when RRW programs are universal across the workplace, there is no cohort of employees unexposed to RRW programs, policies, and procedures. Additionally, there are likely to be multiple differences between workplaces that have and have not adopted RRW policies, making comparison challenging. Moreover, employers that adopt RRW programs or seek RRW certification may be a self-selected group, confounding comparisons between them and employers who have not adopted RRW policies. Even comparisons of the same employer before and after RRW adoption or certification can be difficult due to other policy changes, environmental factors, or market changes that can impact measure values. Self-selection and confounding can also affect analyses of dose-response (e.g., comparing nascent programs to more established programs). Comparison between groups to evaluate RRW implementation through an equity lens requires collection of additional data above and beyond the metrics outlined in the RRW metric framework. These may include demographics, such as race, gender, age, or sexual orientation or business ownership, leadership, and management characteristics.

Selection bias and measurement error must be considered to ensure that information from RRW program assessment is interpreted appropriately. Although convenience sampling may be generally reasonable to maximize capture of the employee or employer population, the inferences that can be made using this sampling methodology will be limited. In addition, how a metric is designed (e.g., the design of a survey question and answer choices) can affect how well it captures what it purports to measure.

Recommendations

Given the available metrics outlined in Exhibits 1-3 and the need to minimize measurement burden, two questions (or some variation of them) answerable by employees – and aggregated by employers – can provide the most direct and important information on the impact of RRW programs:

1. “How familiar are you with your employer’s substance use (including alcohol use) policies, procedures, and resources?”
2. “Would you be willing to seek help for an alcohol or other drug issue using the procedures, and resources provided by your employer?”

RRW programs would seem to be most impactful when employees are aware of them and willing to use them. To maximize data capture, these questions could be asked upon conclusion of RRW training, upon receipt of a declaration statement produced by an employer implementing a RRW program through convenience sampling, or during a focus group. It is important to ask these questions directly to employees and not through a proxy. To the extent possible, these questions should be standardized across employers through a state or local RRW initiative or through a multi-employer collaborative effort.. That being said, follow-up questions may be used to hone in on specific design or implementation topics (e.g., “How familiar are you with reasonable accommodations under the RRW program?”).

Ancillary metrics with low level of measurement burden can support the two questions above, especially if the ancillary metrics would be collected using existing data collection mechanisms. Ancillary metrics could include the number or percent of persons receiving substance use disorder literacy or overdose identification and response training, the number of return-to-work agreements produced or number of employers receiving RRW certifications.

Conclusion

While a large number of potential metrics can be used to assess the impact of RRW programs, measurement burden may necessitate a smaller selection of items. This primer provides generic recommendations that aim to balance rigor and comprehensiveness with feasibility. This primer can also guide the identification, collection, and interpretation of RRW metrics by various stakeholders, including business RRW champions, government, and community groups.

The corresponding [Recovery Ready Workplace Metrics Presentation.pptx](#) can be accessed by clicking the link and can be used to provide education on implementation of the logic model and to highlight the importance of metric collection in RRWs.

Exhibit 1: Recovery Ready Workplace (RRW) metric logic model from the employee perspective

Stakeholder Priorities	RRW Activities	RRW Output Lower effort to understand RRW impact	RRW Outcomes Higher effort to understand RRW impact Short and long-term effects of outputs
Employee (includes all employees) Job security Job satisfaction Work-life balance Health Psychological safety/belonging in the workplace	In likely chronological order of how an employee might perform activity Applies to – with or without referral – to jobs at RRWs Takes RRW training ¹ Participates in RRW activities ¹ Utilizes RRW-specific resources and policies ^{1,2} Utilizes treatment and other services through workplace benefit package ²	In likely chronological order of how an employee might perform activity Frequency of participation in RRW-related activities ¹ : training, lunch and learn, ERG, recovery community activity through community partnerships (e.g., job fair, awareness event) Level of utilization of RRW-specific resources and policies ^{1,2} : EAP, provision or receipt of peer support, return-to-work agreement created, receipt of reasonable accommodations (by type of accommodation, e.g., flex time to be able to attend AA or NA meeting) SUD treatment utilization ²	In order of increasing difficulty for data collection from the person perspective Duration of employment Workplace injury ² Disciplinary actions ² Workplace absences Incidents of reported substance use in the workplace ^{1,2} Individual productivity Awareness of SU/SUD, recovery, and resources ¹ Dissatisfaction with work stressors (e.g., excessive hours, unpredictable scheduling poor supervision and toxic work cultures) ¹ Satisfaction with RRW policies and procedures ¹ Willingness to seek help and use resources ¹ Sustained recovery ²
Challenges <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Requires new mechanism (one that is not generally in place in at a workplace) to measure <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Note: standard workplace metrics – such as absences or productivity – may not be measured reliably across employers Some metrics may require survey method Needs protections to prevent disclosure of recovery or substance use status (for self or loved one) 			

Note: Color coding aims to link RRW activities with RRW outputs (e.g., blue RRW activities correspond with blue RRW outputs)

AA = Alcoholic Anonymous; EAP = Employee Assistance Program; ERG = Employee Resource Group; NA = Narcotics Anonymous; RRW = Recovery Ready Workplace

Exhibit 2: Recovery Ready Workplace (RRW) metric logic model from the employer perspective

Stakeholder Priorities	RRW Activities	RRW Output Lower effort to understand RRW impact	RRW Outcomes Higher effort to understand RRW impact Short and long-term effects of outputs
Employer Productivity (absenteeism, presenteeism) Healthcare and workers comp costs Safe work environment Public perception	In likely chronological order of how an employee in recovery might be affected by activity Adopts fair-chance hiring ² Engages community partners (e.g., recovery community organizations), including for recruitment of persons in recovery, and participates in community partners' events ^{2,3} Review urine drug screen (UDS) policy ⁴ Establishes RRW policies and procedures, and provides, ensures access to, and promotes utilization of RRW resources (e.g., EAP, ERG, peer support, health and wellness programs), training, and reasonable accommodations Ascertains how to document RRW trainings ¹ , participation in RRW activities ¹ , and RRW resource or policy utilization ¹ Provides access to and training on opioid overdose reversal medications on-site ^{1,4} Applies for RRW certification Advertises that company is RRW-friendly or RRW certified, and establishes substance-free workplace functions ^{1,4}	In likely chronological order of how an employee in recovery might be affected by activity Number of persons in recovery recruited and number of referrals from recovery programs or housing ^{1,2,3} Number of community partners engaged and number of engagements (e.g., job fair, awareness event) ^{1,3} Number of urine drug screens conducted and number of UDS that are positive ^{1,2} Number of RRW trainings provided ¹ Aggregation of individual output measures: employees trained ¹ , employees participating in RRW educational activities (like lunch and learns) ¹ , employees participating in community partnerships ¹ , persons using EAP ^{1,2} , peers participating in peer support ^{1,2} , return-to-work agreements ^{1,2} , persons receiving reasonable accommodations ^{1,2} Overdose reversal medication use on-site ^{1,2,4} Number of naloxone devices distributed ^{1,4} Media inquiries about RRW ^{1,3} New hires noting RRW as a draw to applying to jobs ¹	Aggregation of individual outcome measures that do not need a comparison group: awareness (SU/SUD, recovery, resources) ¹ , dissatisfaction with work stressors ¹ , satisfaction with RRW policies ¹ , willingness to seek help and use resources ¹ , incidents of reported substance use in the workplace ¹ Comparison of aggregate individual outcome measures before vs. after implementing RRW policies and procedures, or before vs after receiving RRW certification: any outcome above that does not need a comparison group Comparison of aggregate individual outcome measures to assess whether those in referred for employment ² from recovery programs or housing are faring similarly or doing better than their peers: any outcome above that does not need a comparison group, duration of employment, workplace injury, disciplinary actions, workplace absences, productivity Public perception ¹
Challenges <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Requires new mechanism (one that is not generally in place in at a workplace) to measure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note: all outputs and outcomes require robust tracking mechanisms; employers may have no experience tracking metrics Some metrics may require survey method Needs protections to prevent disclosure of recovery or substance use status (for self or loved one) Requires community partner engagement May have a procurement cost <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note: all activities have an implicit cost of time and labor 			

Note: Color coding aims to link RRW activities with RRW outputs (e.g., blue RRW activities correspond with blue RRW outputs)

EAP = Employee Assistance Program; ERG = Employee Resource Group; RRW = Recovery Ready Workplace

Exhibit 3: Recovery Ready Workplace (RRW) metric logic model from the government and insurance perspectives

Stakeholder Priorities	RRW Activities	RRW Output Lower effort to understand RRW impact	RRW Outcomes Higher effort to understand RRW impact Short and long-term effects of outputs
Government RRW uptake RRW fidelity Stigma reduction	In likely chronological order of how an employer might be affected by activity Sets RRW certification standards and certifies RRW employers ¹ Provides technical assistance, resources, and training to employers ¹ Tracks types of RRW infrastructure or RRW activities performed by employers (e.g., which employers set up hiring infrastructure with local recovery homes) ¹ Establishes governmental incentives ^{1,2} Publicizes RRW ¹	In likely chronological order of how an employer might be affected by activity Number of RRW certifications and characteristics of those employers (e.g., number of employees, industry type) ¹ Duration of RRW certifications and number of recertifications ¹ Number of employers who received specific types of technical assistance, resources, and training ¹ Number of employers by types of RRW infrastructure or RRW activities performed ¹ Number of employers who received government-funded incentives ^{1,2} Number of “success” stories; news stories; count of new hires noting RRW as a draw to applying to jobs across employers ¹	Comparison of aggregate employer outcomes between RRW-certified employers vs. other employers ¹
Insurance (workers’ comp, health) Cost of insuring employer’s company	Establishes insurance benefit packages (e.g., SUD treatment, disability, prescription opioid prior authorization) ³ Pays disability and medical claims ³	Number and cost of medical, urgent care, ER visits, and referrals, including SUD treatment Number and cost of workplace-related injuries and disability claims Number and days of supply of opioid prescriptions	
Challenges <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Requires tracking mechanism <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Governments will need to prepare for the depth of work associated with standing up RRWs and best way to track TA metrics Needs budget and political support Need cooperation between employers and insurance companies 			

Note: Color coding aims to link RRW activities with RRW outputs (e.g., blue RRW activities correspond with blue RRW outputs)

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Recovery Ready Workplace Metrics

OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY

CDR James Trinidad and CDR Jen Lee-Ramos

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Agenda

- Importance of Recovery Ready Workplace (RRW) metrics
- Framework for identifying RRW metrics
- Design and metric issues to identify most important metrics
- Proposed metrics



Why are RRW metrics important?

- RRW programs are an investment to maintain a strong and healthy workforce and should ideally yield benefits in soft and tight labor markets.
- RRW metrics help...
 - quantify level of activity
 - measure utilization and impact
 - strengthen evidence and support for RRWs
- Whereas the RRW checklist focuses on design and implementation of RRW programs, RRW metrics discussed herein focus on the effect of those programs.



RRW Metric Framework: Logic Model Nestled in Perspectives

Logic model components

Inputs
Activities
Outputs
Outcomes
Challenges

Perspectives

Employee
Employer
Government
Insurance



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Challenges

1. Requires new mechanism (one that is not generally in place in at a workplace) to measure
 - a. Note: standard workplace metrics – such as absences or productivity – may not be measured reliably across employers
 - b. Some metrics may require survey method
2. Needs protections to prevent disclosure of recovery or substance use status (for self or loved one)

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Insurance (workers’ comp, health) Cost of insuring employer’s company	Establishes insurance benefit packages (e.g., SUD treatment, disability, prescription opioid prior authorization) ³ Pays disability and medical claims ³	Number and cost of medical, urgent care, ER visits, and referrals, including SUD treatment Number and cost of workplace-related injuries and disability claims Number and days of supply of opioid prescriptions	
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Design Considerations

- Credibility vs. feasibility
 - role of sampling: convenience vs random
 - sampling of businesses
 - sampling of employees
 - role of focus groups
- Measurement for situational awareness
- Measurement for comparison
 - lack of 'RRW unexposed' employee cohort among employers with RRW programs
 - confounding when comparing employers with vs. without RRW programs
 - dose-response: intensity vs. duration
 - e.g., number of activities performed vs. duration of RRW certification



RRW metric considerations

- Measurement burden and cost
 - *de novo* data collection
 - decreasing return with increasing measurement
 - high relative cost for smaller businesses
- Importance of roles
 - government
 - champions (businesses or persons in businesses)
 - community (e.g., community groups, Recovery Friendly Workplace National Institute)
- Standardization vs. flexibility
- Frequency of measurement
 - RRW certification frequency
 - training as an opportunity to measure knowledge and attitudes
- Indirect outcomes (e.g., improvements in mortality and crime) can be confounded
- Examining equity requires additional data collection



Survey questions with greatest potential impact

- **Question 1:** How familiar are you with your employer's RRW policies, procedures, and resources?
- **Question 2:** Would you be willing to use RRW policies, procedures, and resources provided by your employer?
- Questions could be asked upon conclusion of RRW training, upon receipt of a declaration statement about employer implementing a RRW program, through convenience sampling, or in focus group.
- Ideally standardized across employers, noting that RRW implementation and design will vary across employers



Ancillary Metrics With Low Level of Effort if Using Existing Data Collection Mechanisms

- Employee/Employer
 - Number and percent of persons receiving training
- Employer
 - Employees receiving reasonable accommodations or with return-to-work agreements
- Government
 - Number of employers receiving RRW certifications





More Information

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