

You now know your numbers, now what?

If you don't already have a wellness initiative in place, there is an amazing opportunity to fund your corporate wellness programs. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) has created a grant program which assists small businesses in providing comprehensive workplace wellness programs. Grants will be awarded to eligible employers who provide their employees with access to new workplace wellness initiatives. The grants will be awarded **beginning in 2011** with **\$200 million** appropriated for a five-year period. Employers, including non-profits, are eligible if:

- the company employs less than 100 employees who work for 25 hrs or more a week.
- the company does not have a workplace wellness program as of March 23, 2010 (date of PPACA's enactment).

The PPACA requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop program criteria that are based on research and best practices. A comprehensive workplace wellness program must be made available to all employees and include:

- **Health awareness initiatives** (including health education, [preventive screenings](#), and health risk assessments)
- **Efforts to maximize employee engagement** (including mechanisms to encourage employee participation)
- **Initiatives to change unhealthy behaviors and lifestyle choices** (including counseling, seminars, online programs, and self-help materials)
- **Supportive environment efforts** (including workplace policies to encourage healthy lifestyles, healthy eating, increased physical activity, and improved mental health)

Eligible employers seeking to participate in the grant program must submit an application to the HHS secretary that contains a proposal for a comprehensive workplace wellness program that meets the criteria and requirements listed above. Currently the health reform legislation does not specify the grant amount per employer/employee, or any requirements for employers to provide matching funds.

Due to the potential complexities of the government opportunities and guidelines, Pansalus Consulting recommends that you start your wellness planning process now, and that in order to maximize funding, work with a Wellness Advisor who understands how to develop this process.

In addition to planning, companies can take steps now to prepare their work environment for a culture of health. Company culture is composed of environment, workplace policies and attitudes relating to health, as well as a myriad of other factors. Culture can robustly impact employee health positively or negatively, and is one factor that can be addressed immediately and that is often overlooked.

For more information on how you can start a wellness program and Make Wellness Work, please contact info@pansalus.com.