

Maria Sheridan

M.P.H. Candidate, Global Health Track

maria.sheridan@vanderbilt.edu

Practicum Site: African Health Innovation Centre

Practicum Site Supervisor: Emily Sheldon, M.P.H.

Workplace Well-being Initiatives within West African Startups

Keywords: Human Resource capacity, wellness program, Ghana



Introduction: The African Health Innovation Centre (AHIC) based out of Accra, Ghana, formally Impact Hub Accra, is a leader in the health innovation space within West Africa. AHIC's mission is to strengthen Africa's burgeoning health innovation ecosystem and empower emerging leaders to improve health outcomes through entrepreneurship and innovation. AHIC focuses on empowering health professionals and entrepreneurs to further create innovative health solutions. This practicum aimed to expand its Human Resource (HR) capacity in efforts to retain employees, grow investment, and attract talent.

Methods: AHIC namely looked to build a comprehensive benefits package including, but not limited to health insurance, parental leave, time-off, and a wellness program. Over the course of the practicum, key stakeholders within Ghana were identified to understand the needs of each program. One key area of interest was the expansion of the company's wellness and well-being program. Quantitative and qualitative data provided an insight look to the culture, trends, attitudes, and diseases that are prevalent in West Africa. I sourced key trends within Global workplace well-being programs and created well-being initiatives for *physical, social, personal, and financial* well-being.

Results: This workplace wellness program was aimed at creating a culture of healthy living by improving the health outcomes of employees and reducing the cost to the employer sponsored health plan, which was being implemented by the end of my practicum. AHIC's well-being program looked at identifying health risks within Ghana and West Africa, specifically targeting pre-diabetes and diabetes trends. Furthermore, the framework in place also served as a toolkit and training module for other startups in the West African entrepreneurial space.

Conclusions: This formalized workplace wellness program aimed to benefit the company through improved employee and community health, fewer absences, improved productivity, worker satisfaction and retention are among the benefits. The adoption of a wellness program to AHIC's benefits strategy aimed at having a direct impact to community health, as it encourages its employees to engage in healthy behavior.