

**YOUR
MONEY
LINE**

The HR Leader's Guide to Financial Wellness Benefits

Everything you need to find the right
benefit and make a real impact



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About this guide

You didn't get into HR to become a financial advisor. But somewhere along the way, your employees' money stress became your problem, and rightfully so.

Financial stress doesn't stay home when your people come to work. It shows up in missed deadlines, disengaged teams, unexpected turnover, and the quiet burnout that's hard to name but impossible to ignore. And as the pressure on employees' finances continues to grow, more HR leaders are turning to financial wellness benefits to do something about it.

But the market is crowded. The options are confusing. And the stakes, for your employees and your organization, are real. That's why we wrote this guide.

Whether you're evaluating financial wellness for the first time or rethinking a solution that isn't delivering, here's what you'll find inside:

- ✔ **What financial wellness actually means**, and what it doesn't
- ✔ **The key features to look for** in a platform that drives real behavior change
- ✔ **The questions to ask every vendor** before you sign anything
- ✔ **Red flags to watch out for** so you don't get stuck with a solution that underdelivers
- ✔ **How to measure success** and prove ROI to your leadership team



What is financial wellness? (And what isn't)

Ask ten people what financial wellness means and you'll get ten different answers. It's become one of the most overused terms in the benefits space, slapped on everything from a retirement calculator to a one-time webinar. These things aren't bad. They're just not financial wellness.

So what does real financial wellness actually mean?

Real financial wellness means employees feel confident, in control, and prepared, today and in the future. It's less about how much someone earns and more about how supported they feel managing what they have. And it looks different for everyone: a 24-year-old navigating student loans needs something very different than a 52-year-old planning for retirement.

The lunch-and-learn problem

Many organizations already offer something in the financial wellness space and check the box, feeling good about it. The intention is right. But intention and impact aren't the same thing.

So before you decide you're already covered, ask yourself these questions:

- After your last financial wellness initiative, did employees actually change their behavior?
- Can you point to measurable outcomes like reduced stress, increased savings, less financial anxiety?
- Do your employees know the benefit exists and actually use it?

Financial wellness vs. financial literacy: what's the real difference?



Financial literacy is education.

It teaches people how money works, how to budget, how interest compounds, how a 401(k) functions. That knowledge matters, but it has a ceiling. If someone is already stressed about debt, more information isn't the answer. They need someone to sit with them, understand their situation, and help them take the next right step.



Financial wellness goes beyond education to create real behavior change – combining knowledge with tools, accountability, and human support so employees don't just learn good financial habits, they actually build them.

Think of it this way: financial literacy tells you what to do. Financial wellness helps you actually do it.

Why financial wellness is a must-have benefit this year

Financial wellness used to be a nice-to-have. A differentiator for companies with big budgets and progressive benefits teams. That's no longer the case.

Employees' financial pressure has been building for years due to rising costs of living, stagnant wages, student loan debt, and a retirement savings crisis. HR leaders are connecting dots they can't ignore: financial stress drives turnover, kills productivity, and quietly erodes the culture you've worked hard to build.

Here's what the business case actually looks like.

1. Retention — the math has changed

Employees are leaving for marginally higher pay elsewhere because they're desperate for financial relief and a slightly bigger paycheck feels like the only lever they have. A financial wellness benefit changes that math. When employees have real support managing their finances, the appeal of chasing a small raise starts to fade.

66%

of YML users say that having access to a financial wellness benefit makes them more likely to stay with their employer.

2. Productivity — distraction is expensive

When someone is mentally running through their financial stress at their desk, they're not fully present. At [Thompson Thrift](#), leadership noticed it before they could name it: increased absenteeism, difficulty focusing, a general undercurrent of stress.

“

It can affect the way they eat, the way they sleep, and then can potentially affect performance in their position too.

”



— Total Rewards Specialist
Shanoah Castlen

The cost adds up fast. And it's largely preventable.

3. 401(k) loans – a warning sign hiding in your benefits data

Hardship withdrawal rates hit a record high in 2025, rising from 5% to 6% year over year [according to Vanguard](#), skewing toward your most financially vulnerable employees. By the time someone is borrowing from their future to survive today, the stress has been building for a while. A financial wellness benefit gives employees somewhere to turn before they reach that point.

4. Recruitment – standing out in a crowded market

Benefits packages are scrutinized more carefully than ever, especially by younger workers carrying student loan debt. A financial wellness benefit signals that your organization cares about employees' whole lives, not just their performance at work. [Franklin Community Schools](#) used YML as part of their formal "Employer of Choice" program.

“

Especially for teachers, the student loan forgiveness guidance has been a huge recruitment tool.

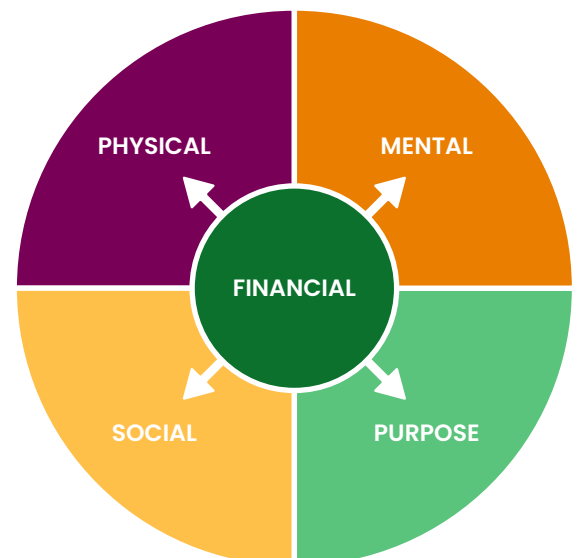
”



– CFO Tina Gross

5. The bigger picture – the 5 pillars of wellness

Most organizations think about wellness across five dimensions: physical, mental, social, financial, and purpose. What's underestimated is how deeply financial stress affects all the others, from skipping preventive care to anxiety, disconnection, and disengagement. Take care of the financial piece, and the other four take care of themselves.



Identify the need and make the case

The clearest signals of financial stress aren't always obvious. They show up in unexplained turnover, low 401(k) participation, or an EAP no one's using. You don't have to wait for a crisis.



REVIEW YOUR DATA

401(k) participation, EAP usage, and voluntary turnover patterns tell you more than you think



TALK TO YOUR MANAGERS

They're closest to employees and often hear financial stress before it shows up anywhere else



TRACK THE MONEY-RELATED QUESTIONS YOUR HR TEAM GETS

You might be surprised how often they come up



ASK YOUR EMPLOYEES DIRECTLY

A short anonymous survey with a few targeted questions can give you both the data and the language you need to build an internal case

At [Triad Financial Services](#), a simple employee benefits survey was all it took. HR leader Haley Sheldon found that her team members "were stressed out about money often and didn't really have anywhere to turn to for guidance." That survey didn't just surface a problem, it gave Triad the justification they needed to act.

Ready to make the case to leadership?

We built you a ready-to-use executive proposal template. Fill in a few blanks, drop in your own data, and you've got a polished business case ready to share.

The template includes:

- ✔ A brief summary of the business case for financial wellness
- ✔ Key stats and data points you can use as-is or swap for internal numbers
- ✔ Fill-in-the-blank sections to personalize it for your organization
- ✔ Space to outline the problem you're solving and outcomes you're targeting
- ✔ A recommended solution section you can tailor to your shortlisted vendor



EXECUTIVE PROPOSAL

The Case for Financial Wellness

PREPARED BY:

Name: _____ Organization: _____

Title: _____ Date: _____

The ask

I'm proposing we invest in a financial wellness benefit for our employees. This isn't just a perk, it's a business decision with a measurable return on retention, productivity, and employee wellbeing.

Proposed benefit/vendor: _____

Estimated annual investment: _____

Proposed launch date: _____

The problem we're solving

Financial stress is one of the leading drivers of employee disengagement, absenteeism, and turnover – and it's showing up in our workplace.

WHAT WE'RE SEEING:

Turnover trends: _____

Productivity signals: _____

Benefits data: _____

Employee feedback: _____

Other observations: _____

EXECUTIVE PROPOSAL | THE CASE FOR FINANCIAL WELLNESS

The numbers behind it

The data is hard to ignore. According to a survey of 1,293 employees conducted by Your Money Line¹:

84%

say financial stress has contributed to burnout or emotional exhaustion

62%

say financial stress impacts their focus and productivity at work

46%

have changed jobs because of financial stress

71%

say improving their finances would make them a better performer

And the retirement picture is getting harder to ignore too. According to Vanguard, hardship withdrawal rates from 401(k) plans hit a record high in 2025, rising from 5% to 6% year over year, a sign that employees are running out of financial runway before they ever get to retirement.

Why this matters to the business

RETENTION

Employees don't always leave for dramatically higher salaries. A few hundred dollars a month of financial relief, whether through better money management or a benefit that helps them feel supported, can be enough to keep someone who would otherwise walk out the door.

66% of employees say access to a financial wellness benefit makes them more likely to stay with their employer.

Our current annual turnover rate: _____

Estimated cost to replace an employee: _____

Potential retention impact: _____

PRODUCTIVITY

A financially stressed employee isn't a fully present one. When someone is mentally running through their money problems at their desk, they're not fully there for their work, their teammates, or our customers. The cost of that distraction adds up fast – and it's largely preventable.

Internal productivity signals we've observed: _____

¹Your Money Line 2026 Annual Employee Financial Behavior Report

EXECUTIVE PROPOSAL | THE CASE FOR FINANCIAL WELLNESS

RECRUITMENT

Benefits packages are scrutinized more carefully than ever, especially by younger workers entering the workforce with student loan debt and limited savings. A financial wellness benefit signals something important: that we care about our employees' whole lives, not just their performance at work.

Roles or demographics where this benefit could support recruitment: _____

The solution

After evaluating options in the market, I'm recommending the following vendor as our financial wellness partner: _____

Here's why it stands out:

[Using the Your Money Line features and key data points as an example]

What it includes	What it delivers
Combines technology and human coaching	97% of users feel more confident after coaching
1:1 access to certified financial coaches	14% increase in financial stability after 1 year
Budgeting, credit monitoring, and spending insights	25% growth in emergency funds after 1 year

EXECUTIVE PROPOSAL | THE CASE FOR FINANCIAL WELLNESS

The investment

Financial wellness benefits are often more affordable than leadership teams expect — especially when weighed against the cost of turnover, disengagement, and lost productivity.

Cost	Details
Annual cost (total)	
Cost per employee per month	
Implementation fees (if any)	
Estimated ROI breakeven	

How we'll measure success

We'll evaluate this benefit against the following metrics at 6 and 12 months:

- Employee enrollment and engagement rates
- Employee-reported financial stress (via engagement survey)
- Voluntary turnover rate, compared to prior year
- 401(k) hardship withdrawal rates
- Financial confidence scores (provided by vendor)
- Qualitative feedback from employees and managers

Any additional internal metrics we want to track: _____

The bottom line

Our employees are dealing with real financial pressure — and it's showing up at work. A financial wellness benefit isn't just the right thing to do for our people. It's the smart business move.

I'm asking for approval to move forward with the following vendor and bring this benefit to our team by the target date below. I'm happy to walk through the details, answer questions, or set up a demo with the vendor.

Vendor name: _____ Target date: _____

What to look for in a platform

Not all financial wellness platforms are created equal. Some are little more than a library of articles and a budgeting calculator. Others are comprehensive solutions that create lasting change. Here's what to evaluate before you commit.

Technology that actually helps

The platform should make it easy for employees to see their full financial picture in one place. Look for smart budgeting tools, account aggregation, credit monitoring, spending insights, and identity protection. The best platforms don't just show employees their data, they help them understand it and act on it.

Human support that goes beyond a chatbot

Technology can only go so far. Employees dealing with real financial stress need access to a real person, someone credentialed, empathetic, and focused entirely on helping them move forward. Look for platforms that offer 1:1 coaching with AFC® or CFP® certified professionals, unlimited access, and no pressure to buy any financial products.

Personalization at scale

A benefit that feels generic won't get used. The platform should meet employees where they are — whether they're a 24-year-old managing student loans or a 55-year-old trying to figure out retirement. Tools like financial personality assessments, personalized recommendations, and tailored coaching make the difference between a benefit employees ignore and one they actually come back to.

Accessibility for every type of worker

A strong platform works for deskless employees, remote teams, and everyone in between, via mobile, desktop, phone, or text, and offers multiple learning formats so employees can engage however works best for them.

Family and household coverage

Financial stress doesn't stop at the employee, it lives in the household. A platform that extends access to spouses, partners, and adult dependents multiplies its impact significantly.

Privacy and data security

Employees will only engage honestly with a benefit they trust is truly private. Look for SOC 2 Type II certification, which means the platform meets rigorous standards for how data is stored, processed, and protected – and has been independently audited against a nationally recognized framework. Beyond certifications, make sure the platform has a clear policy that individual employee data is never shared with the employer.

Integration with your existing benefits stack

A financial wellness benefit shouldn't exist in a silo. Ask vendors how their platform complements your 401(k), EAP, and HSA. The goal is a benefits experience that feels cohesive, not one where employees are juggling five different apps.



What separates the good from the great

Some platforms check the box on paper but fall short when employees actually try to use them. Here's what separates a truly great solution from one that just looks good in a demo.

Certified financial guides, not just coaches

Look for platforms that staff their coaching teams with Accredited Financial Counselors (AFC®) and Certified Financial Planners (CFP®), credentials that require rigorous education, examination, and ongoing ethics requirements. Your employees deserve guidance from someone who has actually earned the right to give it.

No sales pressure. Ever.

Some financial wellness platforms are backed by financial institutions with products to sell. That's a conflict of interest your employees will feel, even if they can't name it. The best platforms are completely independent, with coaches who work entirely in the employee's interest, with nothing to sell and no incentive to push anything.

Unlimited coaching access

Financial wellness isn't a one-time conversation. It's an ongoing relationship that grows as an employee's situation changes. Before you take a vendor at their word, dig into the details: whether coaching is 1:1 or group-based, whether availability extends beyond business hours into evenings and weekends, and whether coaches are salaried employees of the platform or third-party contractors brought in on the side.

A deep educational library for every money stage

Look for a library deep enough to meet employees wherever they are, whether they're just starting out, navigating a major life change, or planning for retirement. On-demand courses, videos, worksheets, and tools should cover the full range of financial life, not just the basics.

Easy implementation, minimal lift for HR

You shouldn't have to hire a project manager to launch a financial wellness benefit. The best platforms handle the heavy lifting, onboarding, communications, employee education, so your team can stay focused on everything else on your plate.

A partner, not just a platform

The best financial wellness solutions don't just deliver a product and disappear. They take the time to understand your workforce, your culture, and what your employees actually need, and they grow with you over time. At [Nightingale College](#), what started as a financial wellness benefit grew into a three-year strategic partnership, with YML helping build an emergency monetary fund and PTO donation program that extended well beyond the platform itself.

Pricing: what to expect and what to ask

Pricing in the financial wellness space isn't always straightforward. Vendors structure their costs differently, and it's easy to end up with a number you didn't expect.

Per employee per month (PEPM)

The most common pricing model in the benefits world. PEPM pricing comes in a few different forms. It can be seat-based, (you pay for every eligible employee), utilization-based (you only pay for active users), or flat rate. Each model has tradeoffs. Seat-based is predictable but you're paying for non-users. Utilization-based can feel lower risk but may be harder to budget for. Flat rate is simple but make sure you understand exactly what's included. Some vendors add fees on top for coaching access, implementation, or premium features, so always ask for a fully loaded number, not just the base rate.

Usage based pricing

You only pay for employees who engage, which sounds attractive, but it can make budgeting unpredictable and costs can run high. If you achieve any reasonable level of engagement, PEPM will almost always work out in your favor. Run the math before assuming usage-based is the safer bet.

Flat fee pricing

One price regardless of headcount. This works well for smaller or stable organizations, but make sure you understand exactly what's included and whether it scales if your company grows.

Questions to ask in every pricing conversation

- Is coaching included, or is it an add-on?
- Are there implementation or onboarding fees?
- What happens to pricing if our headcount changes?
- Are there any per-session or usage-based fees hidden in the fine print?
- What does renewal pricing look like — is the rate locked or does it increase?



The right vendor will answer these questions without hesitation. If you get vague answers or feel like you're being redirected, that's a signal worth paying attention to.

Questions to ask every vendor

The best vendor conversations happen when you come prepared. These are the questions worth asking every time, so you can walk away confident you're making the right call for your people.

About coaching

- Are your coaches certified? What credentials do they hold?
- Do they certify their own coaches, or are credentials issued by an independent body?
- Is coaching unlimited, or is there a session cap?
- Is the coaching 1:1 or 1:many?
- How quickly can an employee get access to a coach after signing up?
- Are coaches independent, or are they affiliated with any financial institution or product?

About the platform

- What tools are included – budgeting, credit monitoring, account aggregation, identity protection?
- Is there a mobile app? Can employees engage via phone call, email or text?
- Does the platform extend to spouses, partners, or adult dependents?
- What does the educational library look like? How deep is it, and how often is it updated?
- Do you offer ongoing webinars for employees?

About implementation and support

- What does implementation look like, and how much will it require from our HR team?
- What ongoing support do you provide after launch?
- How do you help drive employee awareness and engagement?
- What is your NPS score?

About data and privacy

- Is individual employee data ever shared with the employer?
- Are you SOC 2 Type II certified?
- How is employee financial data stored and protected?

About outcomes

- What does engagement typically look like after the first year?
- How do you measure and report on impact?
- Can you share outcome data from similar organizations?

What to expect after you sign

Signing a new vendor contract can feel like the finish line. But for most HR leaders, it's really the starting point. With the right partner, what comes next shouldn't feel overwhelming.

Week 1–2: Kickoff and setup

Platform configuration, employee data setup, and aligning on your launch timeline. A good vendor takes time to understand your organization's goals before anything gets built

Week 3–4: Communication and launch prep

Your vendor should provide ready-to-use communication templates like emails, flyers, and digital banners, all tailored to your workforce, so all you have to do is hit send.

Launch: Employees get access

A strong partner makes onboarding seamless — clear instructions, easy setup, and a reason to engage right away.

Post-launch: Ongoing support

The best partners stay engaged after launch — tracking utilization, sharing data, and helping you keep momentum going.

What good onboarding support looks like

The best vendors don't just hand you a platform and walk away, but show up as a partner from day one.

At [Thompson Thrift](#), the implementation process felt seamless:

“

Implementing Your Money Line was a breeze, thanks to the dedicated support of the client success team. The new financial wellness benefit felt like a natural extension of Thompson Thrift's existing offerings.

”



— Total Rewards Specialist
Shanoah Castlen

How to measure success

A financial wellness benefit is only as good as the impact it creates. And impact needs to be measurable. Here's what to track, what to ask your vendor for, and what real results can look like.

UTILIZATION AND ENGAGEMENT RATES

How many employees are actually using the platform? Are they coming back, or logging in once and never returning? Engagement over time is a stronger signal than sign-up numbers alone.

EMPLOYEE-REPORTED FINANCIAL STABILITY

This one is harder to quantify but incredibly telling. Regular pulse surveys or vendor-reported confidence scores show whether employees feel meaningfully supported, not just whether they clicked a link.

COACHING SESSION ACTIVITY

How many employees are meeting with a coach? How often? Are certain teams or demographics underrepresented? Coaching activity is one of the clearest indicators that employees are getting real, personalized support.

BEHAVIOR CHANGE METRICS

Look for measurable shifts in savings rates, debt reduction, emergency fund growth, reduction in 401(k) loans, and retirement contributions. These are the numbers that tell you something real is changing in your employees' financial lives.

RETENTION IMPACT

Are employees who use the benefit staying longer? Some vendors can help you correlate benefit usage with retention data, and that's a conversation worth having. However: retention is rarely caused by a single thing, so it's always worth asking vendors how they arrive at their numbers.

WHAT A STRONG VENDOR DASHBOARD LOOKS LIKE

Your vendor should be proactively sharing data with you, not waiting for you to ask. Look for clear, readable reporting on engagement, utilization, and outcomes.

What real results look like: The proof is in the numbers.

At Center for Employment Opportunities, 403(b) utilization **increased by 10%** in just 1.5 quarters after a YML-led retirement-focused initiative

At Franklin Community Schools, participating employees **saved \$171,782** and paid off **over \$250,000 in debt**.

The Vendor Comparison Scorecard

Vendor name: _____

Date of evaluation: _____

Coaching quality

- Coaches hold independent credentials (AFC®, CFP®)
- Coaching is unlimited, not session-capped
- No financial products to sell – fully independent

Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Technology

- Budgeting and account aggregation
- AI-powered personalized insights
- Credit monitoring, identity protection, tax filing
- Mobile app, desktop, phone, and text access

Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Accessibility

- Works for deskless and remote employees
- Extends to spouses, partners, and adult dependents
- Multiple learning formats available
- Multiple languages available

Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Pricing transparency

- Pricing model is clearly explained
- No hidden fees or session-based coaching costs
- Implementation costs are disclosed upfront

Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Implementation support

- Clear implementation timeline provided
- Communication templates included
- Dedicated client success support
- Simple onboarding process

Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Reporting and outcomes

- Engagement and utilization tracked
- Behavior change metrics available
- Outcome data shared from similar organizations

Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Education

- Topics cover the full financial picture – budgeting, debt, saving, retirement, taxes, and more
- Multiple formats available: videos, articles, courses, worksheets, and podcasts
- Content is personalized to each employee's financial situation
- Employees can learn at their own pace with on-demand access

Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Total Score: _____ / 35

Notes:

About Your Money Line

Your Money Line combines smart, AI-powered technology with real human coaching to help employees navigate their financial lives with clarity, confidence, and care. Employees get a full suite of financial tools — budgeting, credit monitoring, spending insights, identity protection, and more — alongside unlimited access to certified financial guides who are genuinely in their corner.

Every YML guide is an Accredited Financial Counselor (AFC®) or Certified Financial Planner (CFP®), independently credentialed, never commissioned, and never there to push products.

From field teams to front offices, YML meets employees where they are — on mobile, desktop, phone, or text — and meets them at every stage of their financial life.

The impact speaks for itself

- ✔ **14% increase in financial stability** after one year
- ✔ **11% more retirement contributions** after one year
- ✔ **44% less stressed** about making ends meet vs. non-users
- ✔ **65.7% say YML makes them more likely to stay** with their employer

Ready to see what YML can do for your people?

[Learn more](#)

[Watch a demo](#)

