



Post-Open Enrollment Evaluation **Guide**

How to analyze wins and losses for future planning



Congrats!

You’ve survived another year’s open enrollment season. Now it’s time to kick back and relax.

Wait—not so fast! While open enrollment has ended for now, it’s time to charge full speed ahead with next year’s strategy.

That’s right. According to Steve Carroll, Vice President of Client Services at WEX, the best time to start planning for the next year’s open enrollment is immediately after the current year’s ends. “Open enrollment season never really ends,” explains Carroll. “Instead, a new cycle begins. Start having conversations early. For example, debrief in January to start planning for next year. Then, have a kick-off meeting in early spring.”

These early conversations will help you analyze what went right and what could be improved, so you can implement an easier, more effective process for next year. When reflecting on last year’s wins and losses, we recommend you collect, analyze and act upon data from four key groups:

- 1 Your employees
- 2 Your internal stakeholders
- 3 Your benefit brokers
- 4 Your benefits technology partner

With data from these four groups, you’ll have everything you need to improve your benefits strategy for next year. So, let’s break it down and start by focusing on the first (and most important) group—your employees.

Employee post-open enrollment **survey.**

As the people who participate in open enrollment and utilize your enrollment platform, the employee experience is one of the most important pieces to analyze.

Keep in mind that some employees designate a spouse or other family member to perform benefits enrollment on their behalf. So, it's important to survey both benefits-eligible employees and any listed dependents to ensure data is collected from the true end-user.

So, what to ask? "The open enrollment survey questions you ask largely depend on the goals you are trying to measure," explains Carroll. For example, was the goal to drive employees to a specific health plan? Or, was it to introduce employees to health savings accounts for the first time? If you have not defined any specific goals, start by focusing on the enrollment experience.



TOP 5

Post-open enrollment survey questions for employees

1. How would you rate the overall benefits enrollment experience?
2. How satisfied were you with the benefits packages offered during open enrollment?
3. Did you have enough tools to make an informed decision about your benefits?
4. Was the benefits enrollment system personalized and easy to navigate?
5. What could be better during next year's open enrollment?

Internal stakeholder post-open enrollment **survey.**

Now it's time to survey your key internal stakeholders with a different set of questions that evaluate the open enrollment period retrospectively. To get the data you need, we recommend asking questions around these four topics: planning, execution, results and communication.

Here are some sample survey questions to start with:

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1-5 (1=disagree, 5=agree).

1. We had adequate time to prepare and plan for open enrollment.
2. Our benefits administration software allowed us to execute open enrollment effectively.
3. We met our open enrollment goals.
4. We communicated effectively as a team.
5. We communicated effectively to our employees.

Please complete the following open-ended questions.

6. Which of our pre-open enrollment processes worked well and which can be improved?
7. How can we improve the process for next year?
8. Did we get the results we wanted?
9. Will the results make an impact on the health and wellness of our employee population?
10. How can we improve communication around open enrollment, both as a team and to our employees?



Conversations

to have with your consultant post-open enrollment.

By soliciting vendors for your organization and assisting with open enrollment strategy, your benefits broker is a valuable resource post-open enrollment. After the dust of open enrollment settles, schedule a meeting with your broker to discuss the results of the open enrollment period and drill down on the following topics:

1

How can we use data to refine our offerings?

As any scientist will tell you, digging into data can identify trends. The same is true when it comes to using data from last year's open enrollment to assist in benefits planning for next year.

Overall participation rate: Use this data to identify if you've reached specific goals such as increases in online benefits enrollment or higher average number of benefits selected.

Participation rate by benefit class: Break the above data down even further by looking at the total counts of the participants enrolled in plans by benefits class, demographic, geography or other specific sets of criteria. This data will help you identify which offerings resonate with different employee personas.

Year-to-year plan movement: Use this report to examine what plans employees have added / dropped during open enrollment year-over-year.

S.M.A.R.T. goal reports: Lastly, run reports that provide data for S.M.A.R.T. goals that were set for open enrollment. For example, if your goal was to save costs by lowering the percentage of ineligible dependents covered under your plan, you might run a dependent census report to identify dropped and/or added dependents and their plan type elections and compare to prior years.

After running these reports, use this newly collected data to refine your benefits offerings. For example, setting up tailored plans that range from high coverage and low risk to low coverage and high risk, while effectively packaging health, dental, vision, life, HSA/FSA contributions, critical illness, disability and/or accident coverage based on the combination of options your employees truly need.



2

How can we solve _____ pain point?

From low participation, ineffective communication, time constraints, or any number of open enrollment challenges, you're bound to hit some roadblocks along the way. Reflect on these pain points post-open enrollment and ask your broker to help craft a solution. Chances are, they've seen this scenario before or can use their network to help you find viable solutions.

3

How does our benefits package compare to others in the industry?

The employee benefits you provided as recently as 2020 might not be enough anymore. This is especially true in the face of the Great Resignation, with a record-breaking number of Americans leaving their jobs.

If you're part of an employer's C-suite, a member of human resources, or a key benefits decision maker, your ability to creatively adapt to your employees'

evolving needs will be crucial for the success of your business and your employees' lives.

Failing to keep up with the competition could cost you employees and have a profound impact on your bottom line. Perform an evaluation of your current offerings with your broker to gauge how you measure up against the competition. Areas your broker can investigate include:

1. How expansive are other firm's health plan choices? Are competitors offering both traditional health plans and HDHPs?
2. How do your premiums and out-of-pocket costs compare with those of your competitors?
3. What percentage of your competitors are offering contribution accounts?
4. What type of voluntary benefits are my competitors offering?
5. Do we have a strong employee wellness offering that includes mental, physical, and financial wellness?



Evaluate

your benefits administration partner after open enrollment.

Finally, it's time to objectively evaluate your benefits administration outsourcing provider after the open enrollment period. As the team that provides the solution for a streamlined open enrollment process, it's imperative to gain insights on how the platform is working to identify plans for improvement, or how to best continue with the partnership. By completing this exercise, you'll be able to identify more than a vendor, but a partner. That said, we recommend evaluating your benefit admin provider based on these main topics:

1

Did they meet their service level agreements?

Before you evaluate anything else, you'll want to ensure that your benefits administration partner has met (and hopefully exceeded) their service level agreements. While service level agreements differ from vendor to vendor, we recommend evaluating both objectively (e.g. terms that are clearly defined, measurable and formulaic), as well as subjectively (e.g. I was happy with..., I was unhappy with...).



What are the areas for improvement?

Next, review the things that went right and what wasn't successful. Below are some common benefits administration scenarios to evaluate when making these considerations, broken down into three categories: pre-open enrollment, during open enrollment, post-open enrollment.

Pre-open enrollment

- Was the vendor responsive to questions and/or concerns raised during preparation for open enrollment?
- Were there any difficulties with any plan design, rates and/or eligibility changes?
- Were there any data inconsistencies that caused a problem?
- Were there any carrier file issues?
- Were there any dual year processing challenges?
- Were there any payroll file processing issues?
- Were the testing timelines long enough?
- Did the client testing experience meet and/or exceed expectations?
- Were all employee communications sent on time, containing the correct information?
- Did the vendor meet your desired "go-live" date for open enrollment?

During open enrollment

- Did the vendor successfully manage all aspects of annual benefits enrollment, including:
 - **Project management**
 - **Development of communication**
 - **Updating of enrollment website**
 - **Processing enrollments**
 - **Sending data to appropriate third party benefit providers and payroll vendor**



- Did the vendor successfully administer all aspects of COBRA and direct billing, including:
 - Communication
 - Billing
 - Benefit administration for COBRA eligible and direct billed employees, retirees and surviving spouses?
- Did the vendor provide the necessary processes and administration procedures to successfully administer HSA, FSA and / or HRA programs?
- Was the vendor's call center staffed with qualified and knowledgeable personnel that correctly responded to questions and assisted participants with benefit enrollment related issues?
- Was the benefits enrollment technology easy to use?
- Were the decision support tools:
 - Utilized as expected, higher than expected, or lower than expected?
 - Intuitive?
 - A value-add for employees?
- Did the vendor provide adequate support for administrators during open enrollment?
- Did the vendor respond quickly to any issues that arose during enrollment?
- Did the vendor effectively address unresponsive employees during open enrollment?

Areas your broker can investigate include:

1. How expansive are other firms' health plan choices? Are competitors offering both traditional health plans and HDHPs?
2. How do your premiums and out-of-pocket costs compare with those of your competitors?
3. What percentage of your competitors are offering contribution accounts?
4. What type of voluntary benefits are my competitors offering?

After open enrollment

- Did the vendor effectively collect and configure the data elements needed to comply with the Affordable Care Act (ACA) reporting requirements of IRC 6055 and 6056, including:
 - Exporting data to populate the 1095 forms
 - Transmitting data to the IRS
 - Printing/sending 1095 forms to employees?
- Was the vendor able to deliver required reporting for all populations including actives, COBRA, and retirees for post-open enrollment analysis?
- Did the vendor pro-actively schedule an open enrollment post-mortem for overall review and client feedback opportunities?



3

What were the key accomplishments?

While it's easy to focus on bumps in the road, make sure you take time to reflect on the positives that occurred during open enrollment, or where you vendor and their extended team members went above and beyond to help you reach your open enrollment goals. For example, was the vendor able to accommodate changes that were unknown during the planning process?

Or, did the vendor do more than expected to help meet goals and respond to your needs?

4

What's next? Is your vendor equipped to take you further next year?

Finally, while your vendor may be meeting their service level agreements and executing effective pre, during and post-open enrollment administration, consider if they're missing the mark in other areas. For example, your benefits administration partner should consist of a highly trained "benefits-wise" team that can address the most complex benefits issues and advise on best practices.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about additional challenges for HR including a shift in recruitment and retention strategies and staffing concerns to new benefits and COBRA legislation and vaccine mandates. Did your benefits administration provider rise to the challenge and offer the support you needed? Below are a few questions to ask your ben admin partner to truly evaluate their service as well as expertise in the benefits administration space:

- What do similar firms in our industry category do that we should consider in our next cycle?
- What do your most successful companies (in any industry category) do that we should consider?
- What do the leading firms in your portfolio do that would help us meet our goal of X, Y and Z next year?
- What else should we explore as we think about our approach to the benefits plan for next year?

When you evaluate vendors with a forwardthinking lens, you'll be able to identify more than a vendor, but a true partner. Selecting a partner can help you not only enhance enrollment participation, but most importantly, empower employees to make informed benefits decisions.



Post-Open Enrollment Wrap-Up

There you have it! We hope you'll use this guide to educate team members and enhance your post-open enrollment strategy. Outside of your employees, key stakeholders, broker and benefits administration partner, you should also evaluate your goals as an organization.

When looking back on this year's open enrollment period, keep in mind the simple (yet crucial) questions:

- How effective was your timing?
- What was the frequency and nature of your communications?
- How has your employee population changed?
- What were your enrollment numbers?
- Did you meet goals set earlier in the year?
- How did you utilize your benefits administration partner?

We wish you well in your post- open enrollment analysis endeavors, and look forward to seeing what methods are most effective for you, both this year and beyond.

How did your benefits administration partner score?

Our open enrollment season was a slam-dunk! Can you say the same? If your enrollment didn't exceed your expectations, it might be time to re-evaluate your existing provider.

WEX has helped create a better benefits experience for even the most complex organizations across multiple industries. Join the many companies succeeding with WEX and let our benefits-wise team help you score high this season!

