

ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS

Associations, coalitions and industry groups have consistently developed and delivered a large array of services for their member organizations.

These services include business expertise, education and regulatory and business support. Associations frequently receive requests from their membership to support collective purchasing of employee benefits, particularly healthcare. It's not at all unusual for associations to provide other business insurance, but healthcare has been elusive.

Many people incorrectly believe the Affordable Care Act eliminated the ability to create an Association Health Plan (AHP). But AHPs are alive and well, and proposed regulation may actually expand their availability. On January 4, 2018, the DOL released proposed guidance in response to the Executive Order issued in October of last year. Among other items, key proposed changes include:

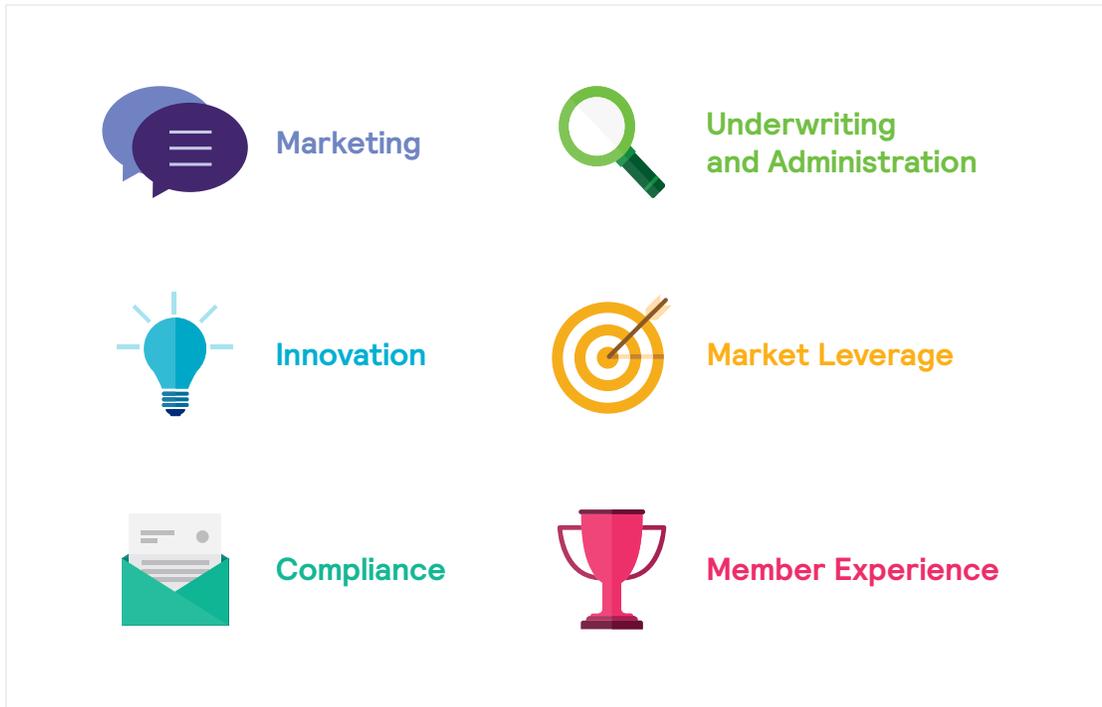
- Allows for the creation of AHPs for the sole purpose of purchasing health insurance
- Expands the commonality of interest requirement to include geography (state/MSA; prior requirement was industry-specific)
- Expands possible participants to include "working owners" and sole proprietors

With or without the proposed regulation, you can provide this valuable benefit to your membership now.

Mercer's Best Practice Bundle is a one-stop shop for multiple employer organizations or associations. Our Best Practice Bundle provides consulting, brokerage and administrative services to help you manage an existing AHP or launch an entirely new offering.



KEY ELEMENTS OF THE BEST PRACTICE BUNDLE



Marketing

AHPs have a unique challenge that employer-sponsored group plans do not. Once an association decides to offer a health plan or has a plan that is in decline or not growing, the association must “market” the plan to its member organizations. Retention and growth of plan participation is key to a sustainable AHP. To address this challenge, Mercer handles the marketing effort to your member companies using techniques developed over 65 years by our Associations business segment. The process uses multiple delivery mechanisms (web, mail, landing pages, paid search, crowd sourcing, etc.).

Innovation

Healthcare costs continue to rise at unsustainable rates that outpace inflation and workers’ wages. Managing healthcare trends requires constant innovation in the health plan and product suite that’s offered. The innovations Mercer has developed for our traditional corporate clients have unique application in the association space, lowering health costs while improving quality of care, access, patient navigation and employee experience.

Compliance

To say the compliance landscape is complex for multiple employer organizations wanting to offer health insurance would be an understatement. In conjunction with our in-house ERISA attorneys and outside counsel partners, we've developed a compliance package to ensure our association clients are compliant with state Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangement (MEWA) regulations, DOL regulations and myriad compliance requirements for employer-sponsored healthcare.

For clients looking to get started with offering a health plan, we have easy-to-use checklists and template documentation to ensure the setup (for example, governance structure) meets regulatory requirements.

Underwriting and Administration

The first things your member companies or franchisees want to know are "What benefits are available to me?" and "What does it cost me?" We've designed a web-based onboarding process where your member companies can:

- Learn about benefits offered to them
- Upload or enter a census of their employees
- Request a quote for the benefits they'd like to offer to their employees
- View quotes from carriers
- Select plans to be offered and input employer contributions

Once these steps are completed, the member organization or employer's open enrollment site is configured and ready for employees to use.

Market Leverage

Without market leverage, it's difficult to purchase healthcare effectively. Combining your membership with Mercer's unmatched buying power can support your goal of a cost-effective offering. Based on publicly available data, no other firm in the US has more clients, premiums managed or employees enrolled.

Member Experience

Once your plan is in place and member organizations have signed up, the employee or member experience must be optimal to ensure everyone feels they have value. Our technology-based enrollment system provides a streamlined, easy-to-use shopping experience. In addition to clearly explaining the benefits available, the site provides guided shopping tools to help consumers select the most appropriate plans and benefits to fit their family needs.

Mercer's Multiple Employer solutions can support your membership, add value to your offerings and create a greater value proposition.

For more information, please contact [Mercer's Multiple Employer Solution Team](#).