

FEATURED SESSION— Addressing Substance Use in the Trades

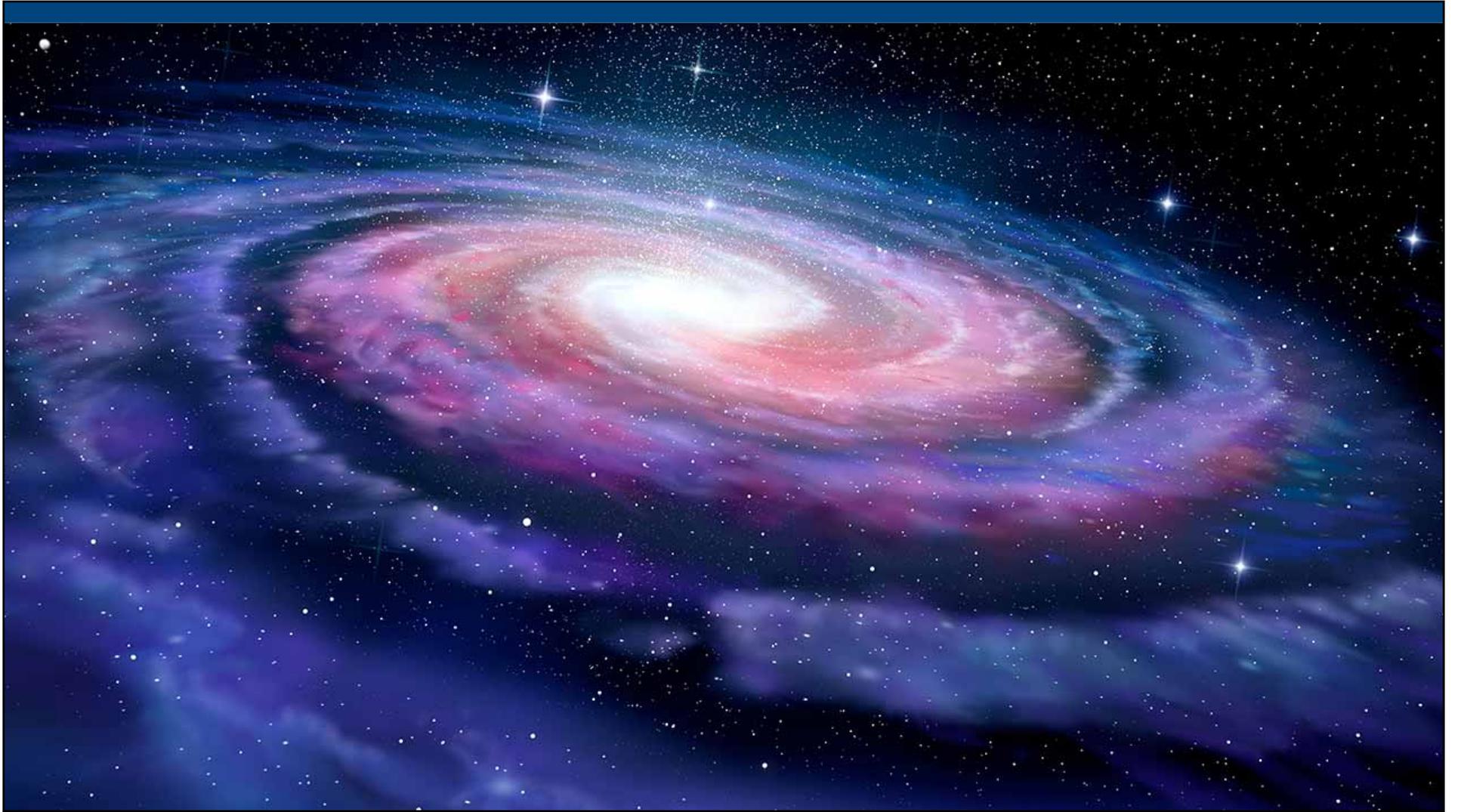
Tramaine El-Amin, M.A.

Vice President, Mental Health First Aid USA
National Council for Mental Wellbeing
Washington, D.C.



The opinions expressed in this presentation are those of the speaker. The International Foundation disclaims responsibility for views expressed and statements made by the program speakers.

International Foundation
OF EMPLOYEE BENEFIT PLANS 

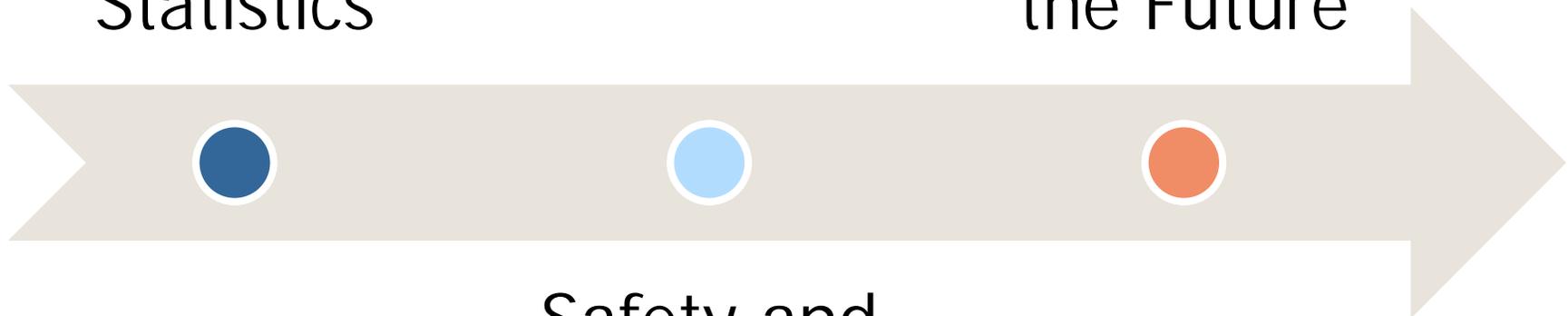


H22-2

Roadmap

Stigma and
Statistics

Signals for
the Future



Safety and
Solutions

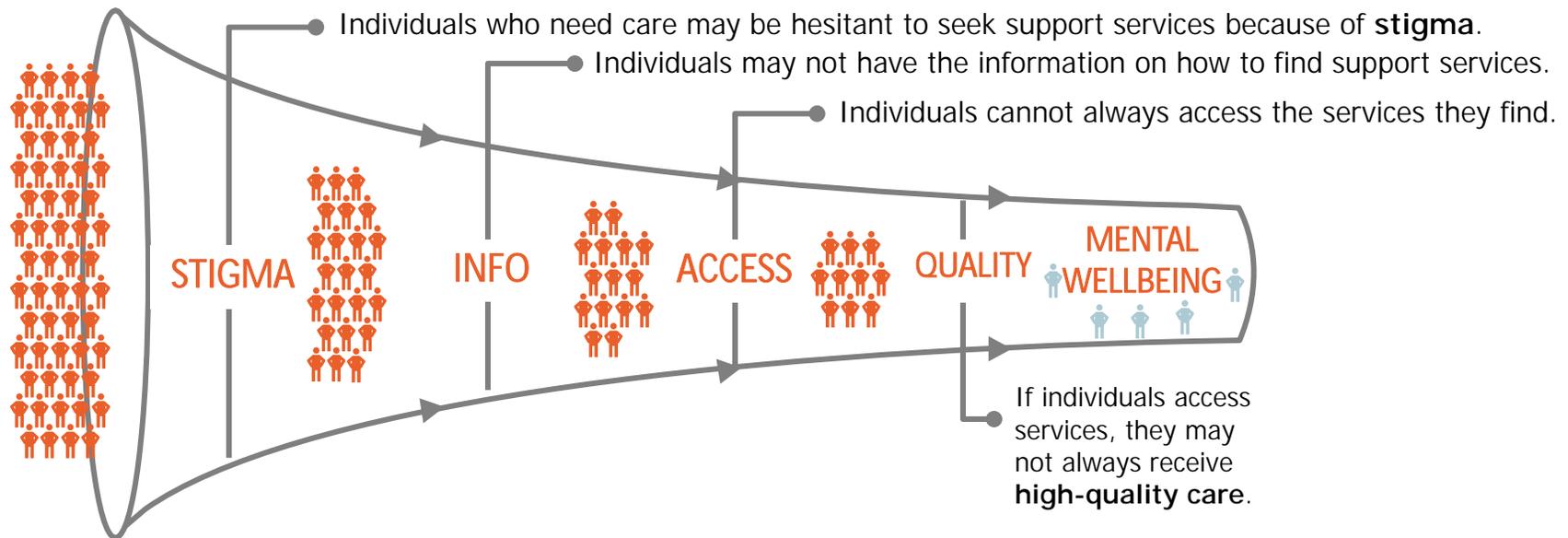
Quick-Connection + Reflection

What is the **one word** you would use to describe the **WORST** work environment you have ever experienced?

What is the **one word** you would use to describe the **BEST** work environment you have ever experienced?

Stigma and Stats

The Challenge



Source: National Council for Mental Wellbeing © (2023)

Mental Health at Work

130

people die by suicide every day, on average.

Source: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

10.8M

full-time workers have a substance use disorder.

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

10%

of employees feel their workplace is free of mental health stigmas.

Source: McKinsey Center for Societal Benefit

12.5B

working days lost—\$1 trillion in productivity—annually to depression and anxiety

Source: World Health Organization

40%

of employees reported their jobs have a negative impact on their mental health.

Source: Gallup

75%

of employees indicated that mental health stigma is present in their workplace.

Source: McKinsey & Company

Substance Use Disorder in the US (2021-2023)

- **3 in 4 people** aged 12 or older who needed substance use treatment in the past year **did not receive it** (SAMHSA, 2023)
- Overdose crisis has resulted in over **105,000 deaths** in the last 12 months (Ahmad et al., 2024)

Substance Use Disorder	2021				2022				2023			
	Number in Thousands	Standard Error	Percentage	Standard Error	Number in Thousands	Standard Error	Percentage	Standard Error	Number in Thousands	Standard Error	Percentage	Standard Error
Substance Use Disorder	46,787	(847)	16.7	(0.30)	48,722	(774)	17.3	(0.27)	48,464	(768)	17.1	(0.27)
Drugs	24,467	(620)	8.7 ^{bc}	(0.22)	27,230	(634)	9.7 ^a	(0.22)	27,153	(615)	9.6 ^a	(0.22)
Opioids	5,583	(299)	2.0	(0.11)	6,117	(336)	2.2	(0.12)	5,679	(307)	2.0	(0.11)
Alcohol	29,734	(717)	10.6	(0.26)	29,542	(620)	10.5	(0.22)	28,859	(579)	10.2	(0.20)

Source: SAMSHA, National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (2023)

Prevalence: Substance Use by Industry

19%

Construction
trades and
extraction
workers

13.5%

Installation,
maintenance
and repair
workers

12.9%

Production,
machinery,
and operators

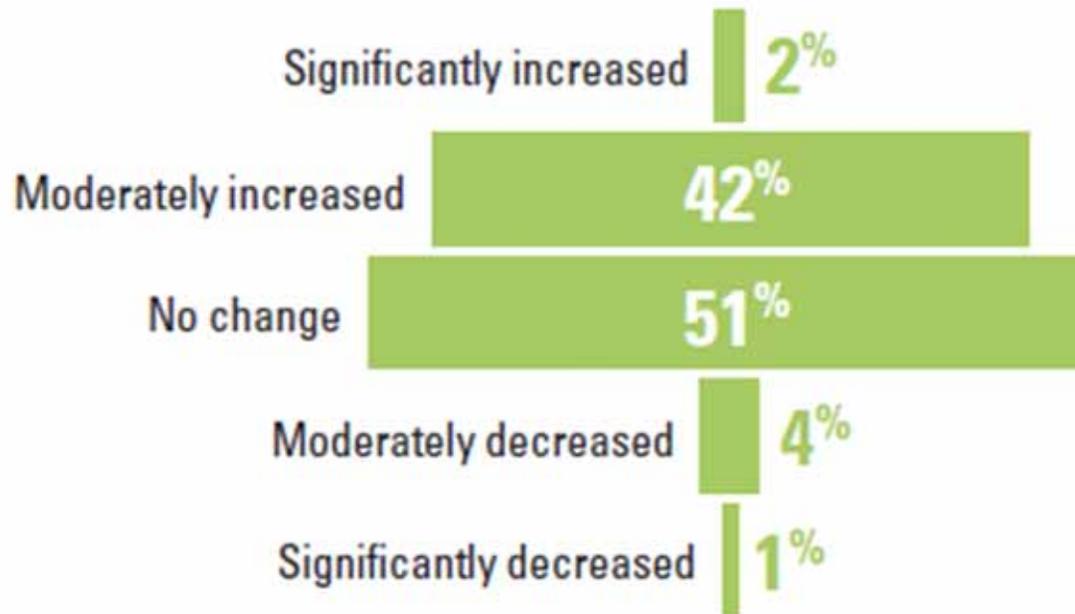
9.9%

Protective
Services (e.g.
police, fire,
EMS, etc.)

Source: SAMHSA (2016)

Substance Use Disorder: In the Trades

Abuse of Legal Substances in the Last Two Years



Source: International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans (2024)

Savings From Addressing MH/SU

\$8,255

annual cost per worker of untreated substance use disorders.

Source: APA (2020)

For every

\$1 invested

in *mental health treatment*,

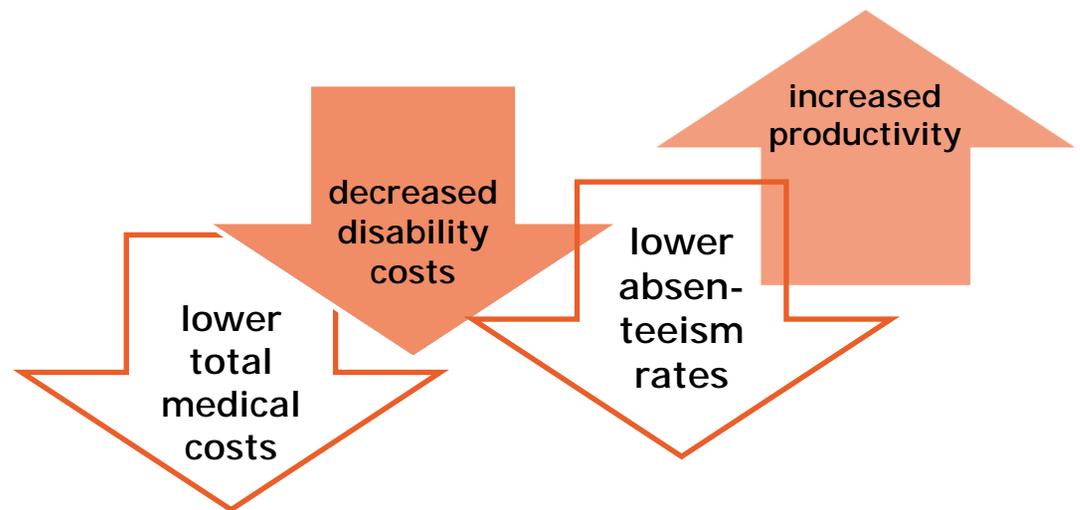
there is a

\$4 return

in *improved* health and productivity

Source: WHO (2016)

Effective treatment for substance use challenges can lead to



Safety and Solutions

Safety: Current Frameworks and Standards



United States Department of Labor (2023)



Office of the U.S. Surgeon General (2022)



Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (2022)

Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing

Five Essentials for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being

Centered on the worker voice and equity, these five Essentials support workplaces as engines of well-being. Each Essential is grounded in two human needs, shared across industries and roles.



The U.S. Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being

Address

- Workloads and retention
- Fast paced
- Impact of stress

Promote

- Wellbeing initiatives
- Comprehensive benefits
- Workplace-supported recovery

Solutions: Organizational Interventions



King County



- Employee and member-assisted programs
- Peer support programs
- Recovery-friendly workplaces
 - Addressing multiple stigmas
 - e.g. Medication-assisted treatment for alcohol use or opioid use
- Substance use literacy

Solutions: Substance Use Literacy



- What does Mental Health First Aid® teach?
 - Risk factors and warning signs of mental health and substance use challenges.
 - Information about anxiety, depression, trauma, substance use (including opioids), non-suicidal self-injury and psychosis.
 - A 5-step Action Plan (ALGEE) to help someone who is developing a challenge or is in crisis.
 - Available evidence-based professional, peer and self-help resources.

Source: National Council for Mental Wellbeing, Mental Health First Aid® USA (2019)

Solutions: Individual Risk Factors

Substance Use and Overdose



- Use of multiple substances
- Variation in strength, content and method of substances used
- Tolerance level
- Family history
- Physical health
- Psychological health
- Isolation
- Transient living

Source: National Council for Mental Wellbeing, Mental Health First Aid® USA (2019)

Solutions: What Can I Look For?

Signs

What we may see

Changes in self-care/appearance

Emerging pattern of lateness

Presenteeism or Absenteeism

Withdrawing from coworkers

Increasing sadness or mood changes

Symptoms

What someone may feel

Low energy

Increasing worry

Need for more substances over time

Difficulty concentrating or focusing

Hopelessness or despair

Source: National Council for Mental Wellbeing, Mental Health First Aid® USA (2019)

Solutions: Maintaining Professional Boundaries

Use only what you observe, behaviors, statements and interactions

No hearsay

No assumptions

No direct questions about health/diagnosis

Understand that listening and being supportive does not indicate agreement



Pay attention to your feelings during the conversation



Stop the conversation when needed and redirect to EAP

You can learn too much!

Source: National Council for Mental Wellbeing, Mental Health First Aid® USA (2019)

Solutions: Prevention/Intervention Messages

- “I am concerned about you. I noticed...”
- “Your safety is the most important thing. How can I help?”
- “I am not an expert on this, but I could connect you with someone I trust who is—They might be able to help us.”



Signals for the Future

Multi-Generational Workplaces

- Traditionalists—Born 1925 to 1945
- Baby Boomers—Born 1946 to 1964
- Generation X—Born 1965 to 1980
- Millennials—Born 1981 to 2000
- Generation Z—Born 2001 to 2020

Overcoming Barriers

Barriers to MH/SUD Initiatives



Worker fear that admitting a problem may negatively impact their job security



Worker fear about confidentiality



Workers do not acknowledge/are not ready to address their problems



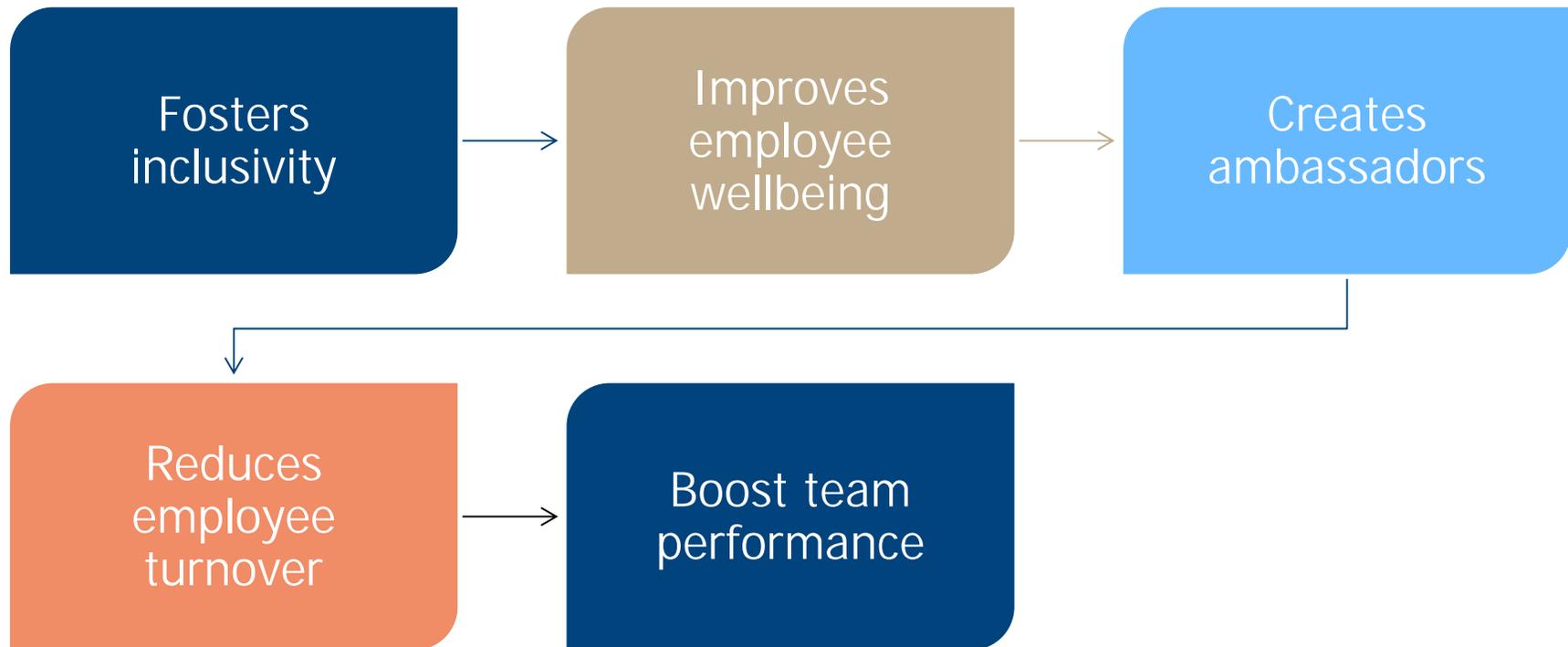
Discomfort among supervisors in addressing the issue with workers



Lack of time for design/implementation

Source: International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans (2024)

Improving Organizational Culture: Psychological Safety



Recovery: Substance Use Triple Bottom Line

- Training + Education
- Benefits + Communication
- Employment Policies

Prevention
+
Early
Intervention

Treatment
+ Crisis
Response

- Established Protocols
- Fair Chance Policies
- Naloxone Onsite

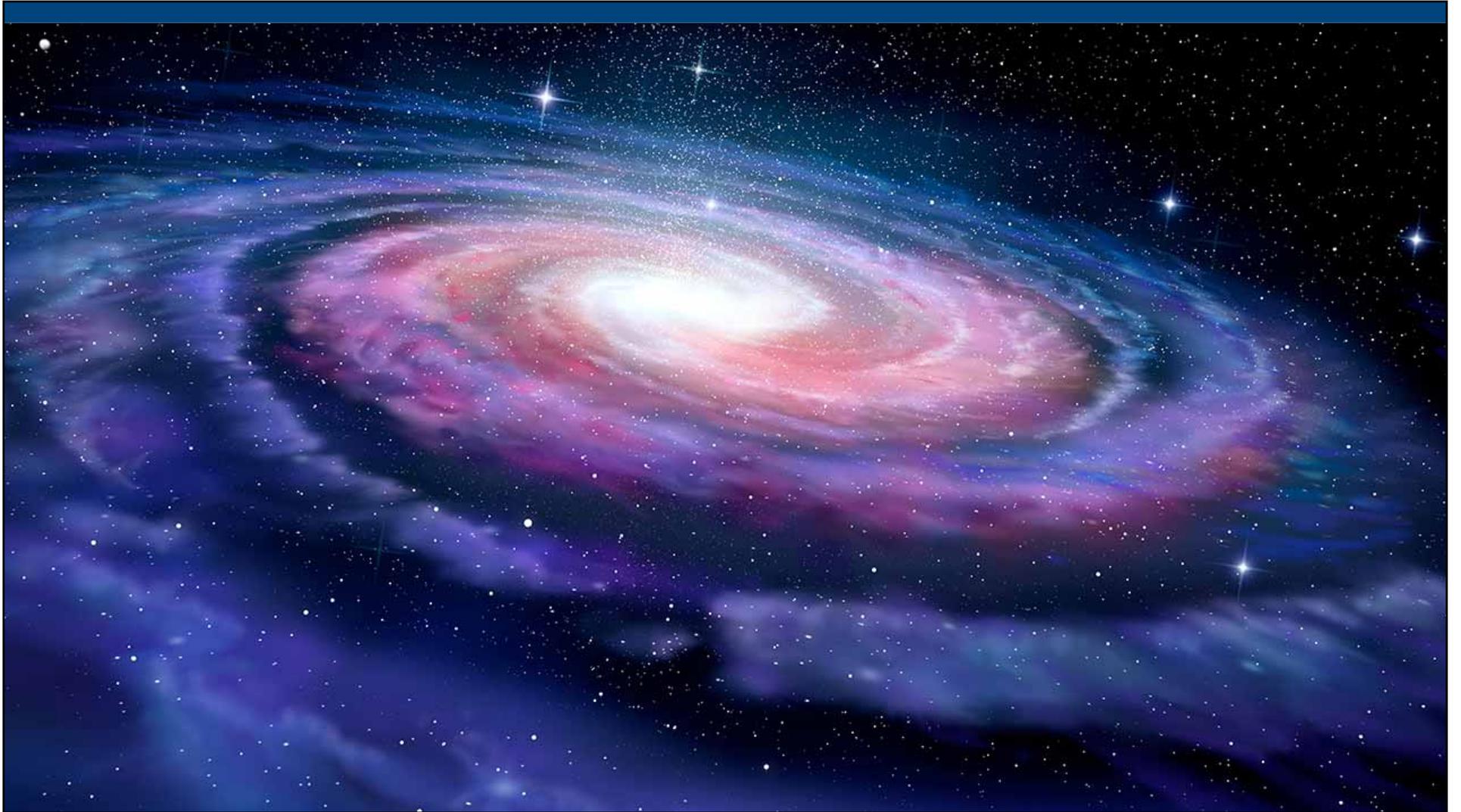
- Peer Support
- Fair Chance Policies

Return to
Work +
Recovery

Quick-Connection + Reflection

A year from now...

What is the **one word** you would want your team to use to describe the state of **recovery support** within your work environment?



H22-27

Key Takeaways

- Stigmas remain, substance use prevalence is increasing within the trades, and yet **more employers have improved initiatives** to address them over the last 3 years.
- Emphasizing recovery-friendly practices through **comprehensive mental health and substance use frameworks**, employee assistance programs (EAP/MAP), peer support, and substance use literacy training can foster safer and more supportive environments.
- Multi-generational workplaces that cultivate **psychological safety** and **prioritize recovery** as part of organizational culture can improve wellbeing, productivity, and retention.

Your Feedback
Is Important.
Please Scan
This QR Code.

Session Evaluation

