

This response is submitted on behalf of the state of Ohio, by The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS). Questions should be directed to Jennifer Brown, ([Jennifer.Brown2@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Brown2@jfs.ohio.gov)).

**Narrative**

The diversity of Ohio's population, geography, and economy, as well as its proven innovative approach to moving low-income Ohioans into self-sufficiency makes the state uniquely positioned to participate in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) pilot. Ohio has been anticipating becoming part of the pilot and is currently implementing program changes that align with ACF's goals for the pilot – *insofar as it can do that without impacting work participation rate (WPR)*. Approval of the pilot would allow ODJFS to truly **implement its vision of increasing employment outcomes by focusing on family stability and well-being**. ODJFS' pilot proposal would bring its TANF assistance program, Ohio Works First (OWF), into the 'continuum of services' model, which is designed to holistically support low-income Ohioans as they become sustainably self-sufficient and active participants in the workforce.

2020 Data US Census	
Race	%
White	77%
African-American*	14.4%
Asian*	3.2%
Other*	4.1%

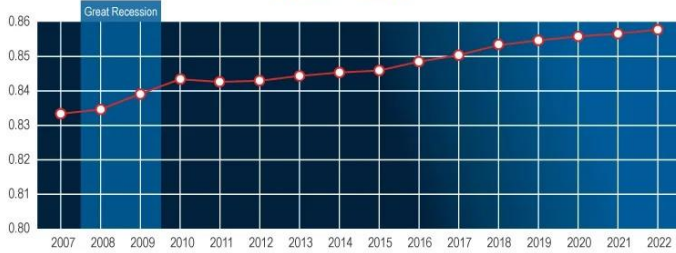
*\* alone or in combination*

**Ohio is Diverse:**

Based on 2020 US Census data, **Ohio has a very diverse population**, which will ensure that the pilot is touching a variety of groups, and the results are not specific to certain individual demographics. Additionally, Ohio serves refugee populations from 35 different countries, including but not limited to Afghanistan, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Burma, Somalia, and Sudan. Of Ohio's work-eligible individuals, 19% have a primary language other than English, with the leading languages being Arabic, Haitian Creole, Pashtu, Spanish, and Ukrainian.

Ohio is **geographically varied** with 3 major metropolitan cities (Columbus, Cincinnati, and Cleveland), smaller metro cities (such as Akron, Canton, Dayton, Findlay, and Toledo), suburban, rural, and Appalachian areas; as well as cities/towns that have been part of the “Rust Belt” where manufacturing jobs capable of economically sustaining families moved out of the area. The pilot will help provide a lens for the needs and

**Industrial Diversity Index in Ohio (2007-2022)**  
(U.S. = 1.00)



resources of geographically diverse regions. (e.g., are rural areas more susceptible to wrap around services, or do the urban areas have more resources and therefore are better suited). Ohio's economic diversity is evident in the Moody's Industrial Diversity Index, an authoritative annual index that measures how

closely a state economy resembles the national economy. Recent data shows that "**...over the past decade (2012-2022), Ohio's Industrial Diversity score increased 1.73%, the second fastest pace (% change) among Midwest competing states (IL, IN, KY, MI, PA) and outpacing U.S. business hubs on the East and West Coasts such as New York, California, Oregon and Arizona.**"<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the TANF program in Ohio is administered by 88 counties that are uniquely positioned to understand their local community needs and available resources to better respond to emergent demographic and economic changes.

**Ohio is an Innovator:**

As explained more fully below, **ODJFS has been taking innovative approaches towards moving low-income Ohioans into the workforce and towards sustainable self-sufficiency and improved family well-being.** However, the TANF WPR creates a constant downward pressure on ODJFS' aspiration to truly change OWF. Nevertheless, Ohio Braids TANF and Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Funding.

For years, ODJFS has been transforming its employment and training programs to take a holistic approach to serving individuals and helping them achieve self-sufficiency, just as envisioned by Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in its Request. Changes first began with the creation of the Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP) in 2016. Identified by the ACF as an "*innovative [approach] to help people with low incomes, including TANF recipients, prepare for and engage in work and increase their overall*

<sup>1</sup> Ohio's Economy is Diversifying With Multiple Industries (jobsohio.com)

*stability*<sup>2</sup>, CCMEP braids TANF and WIOA funding and programming to provide intensive case management, education, and training, and wrap-around support for youth, 14 -24 years of age, to break the cycle of poverty and to increase their employability. Work-eligible individuals in this age group are required to participate in this program for the number of hours required to meet the WPR, but do not follow the core and non-core activity requirements. Instead, the case manager identifies barriers, strengths, goals, and career paths to determine what activities to assign to best meet the individual’s needs and meet the goal of self-sufficiency. The impetus for removing the core and non-core requirements was that by focusing on barrier removal and providing the individual with what they needed through wrap-around supports, they would eventually enroll in education and training or find employment, leading to self-sufficiency and better employment outcomes. Since the program’s inception, **participants’ median earnings have almost doubled (from \$2,725 in 2017 to \$4,313 in 2023), and measurable skills gained increased from 30.9% in 2017 to 57.2% in 2024.**

### **Ohio Promotes Successful Families:**

The Ohio Department of Children and Youth’s (DCY) Family Success Network (FSN) was created in 2020 to address a lack of single-entry-point community-based services that strengthen and support families (single parents, two-parent, kinship, and other family structures). The model’s developers conducted a comprehensive needs assessment in 2016, which compiled data pertaining to the indicators that make families more susceptible to child maltreatment, as well as data pertaining to what factors buffer families from maltreatment. Income support for vulnerable families was found to be a protective factor in the region, which included OWF, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and childcare assistance. However, **family-level risk factors, such as food insecurity, mental health, maternal depression, and substance abuse, indicated families in these pilot counties were more likely to be involved in the child welfare system.** When developing a comprehensive approach to mitigating these risk factors and increasing families’ protective factors, it was apparent that **connecting families to services and support earlier through strong community collaboration was**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/case-study-employment-program-youth-and-services-families-community-action-organization>

**imperative.** The FSN model is designed to meet families where they are and to strengthen and support families based on their unique needs. Services include information and referrals, parenting support, basic life skills, financial literacy and concrete supports, and in-home family coaching. Each FSN site works within its community to understand what services are available and to be seen as a trusted community-based partner. FSN was launched and piloted in 3 counties and has since grown to an additional 9, with 12 total counties currently implementing FSN and with sites in all major metro counties across Ohio. The current sites cover 7 of Ohio's 10 Health Equity Counties. These counties encompass Ohio's counties with the largest racial disparities pertaining to infant mortality and healthy birth outcomes.

### **Ohio is Taking on the Benefit Cliff:**

In 2020, ODJFS conducted a human centered design (HCD) initiative to better understand how families overcome the benefit cliff. It was determined that **families need more than just more money and a career path to become long-term self-sufficient; they needed wrap-around services including, but not limited to, mental health support, financial literacy, peer mentors, childcare, and other basic life skills training that are not typically part of an employment and training program.** As a result, ODJFS created the Benefit Bridge (BB) – a 5-county pilot launched in 2021, which required each county to use local resources to create a 'care team' to work together with participants to help mitigate the barriers. Each **care team had to consist of a county benefits caseworker and a peer mentor, with the rest of the team being tailored to the individual's needs (e.g., mental health, child support, transportation, job and/or education coach, financial coach).** The team approach is an essential element as a public assistance eligibility worker cannot be a subject matter expert in all aspects of well-being, such as clinical mental health. To overcome these barriers, clients need trained individuals in these areas. Since its inception, the BB pilot has grown to 12 counties, of which four are FSN counties and requires participants to be given the well-being assessment multiple times in their journey. The assessment includes scoring an individual across multiple social determinants of health through organic conversations with trained case managers. Through these ongoing conversations, participants set goals and case managers help overcome barriers

along the way. As a result, scores and employability increase as barriers and dependency on assistance decrease. As of 2024, **the average increase in the well-being score (discussed in detail below) for participants who positively leave the program is 20 pts and 87% have not returned to benefits.** Additionally, on October 1, 2024, Ohio is increasing its SNAP income eligibility from 130% to 200% FPL under broad-based categorical eligibility to help working families and have an off ramp for benefits – slowly reducing benefit amount with additional earnings.

### **Ohio is Meeting Employer Needs:**

Beginning in August of 2023, the ODJFS began an HCD approach to redesigning its SNAP employment and training (E&T) program to determine why Ohio’s mandatory participation program was not leading to positive employment outcomes. The results indicated that the program was administratively burdensome and transactional, primarily because case managers were more focused on getting mandatory participants into *an* assignment with countable hours, as opposed to reducing barriers and getting them into the *right* assignment. With this in mind, ODJFS convened a workgroup comprised of stakeholders, counties, non-profits, workforce professionals, employers, and associations to redesign the program to better meet the needs of the individuals and employers. Starting on October 1, 2024, the new voluntary SNAP E&T program will launch: **The program is now designed to meet individuals where they are by utilizing the well-being score, used in the BB program, which will help caseworkers better understand the barriers individuals are facing.** Through policy changes and specific training, caseworkers will move from being transactional to transformational by moving away from making rote assignments to actual case management, where they will **help eliminate barriers and provide foundational work and life skills training that are imperative to long-term economic success; as well as outcome-based assignments to ensure participants are moving (and staying) into the workforce.**

If approved, **Ohio will be ready to implement the Pilot program quickly.** In addition to being ready to report on the employment and earnings required by all states, as of October 1, 2024, Ohio’s eligibility system will include the well-being score for the SNAP E&T and OWF programs and will provide detailed data on the scores.

As a result of the SNAP E&T redesign, caseworkers are already being trained on the holistic approach to service delivery. Additionally, FSNs are already operating and will be able to serve all of Ohio’s OWF population while continually expanding their presence in the counties. Ohio’s ramp-up time will include changing policy and training the county staff. Ohio will be able to provide ACF with not only employment and earnings outcomes, but holistic data on the individuals well-being as well.

### Theory of Change



ODJFS' theory of change is simple: **Investing in family stability and individual well-being is the only way to ensure positive employment outcomes.** Research has shown that a holistic, integrated approach to addressing poverty among low-income individuals, which includes local stakeholder input, can increase ownership, accountability, and sustainability while empowering individuals. Taking a holistic/integrated approach to poverty alleviation addresses the immediate disparities while fostering sustainability and resilience.<sup>3</sup> ODJFS' proposal for the TANF pilot is a holistic approach to the system and the individual.

Having almost a decade of work rooted in meeting individuals where they are and raising them up utilizing wrap-around services, we have been able to stabilize individuals and prevent churn. Unfortunately, many of Ohio’s TANF assistance recipients have not been served holistically due to the strict WPR requirements and potential steep financial penalties states face for not meeting them. This results in a very transactional program, where caseworkers meet metrics instead of helping families stabilize and become economically self-sufficient.

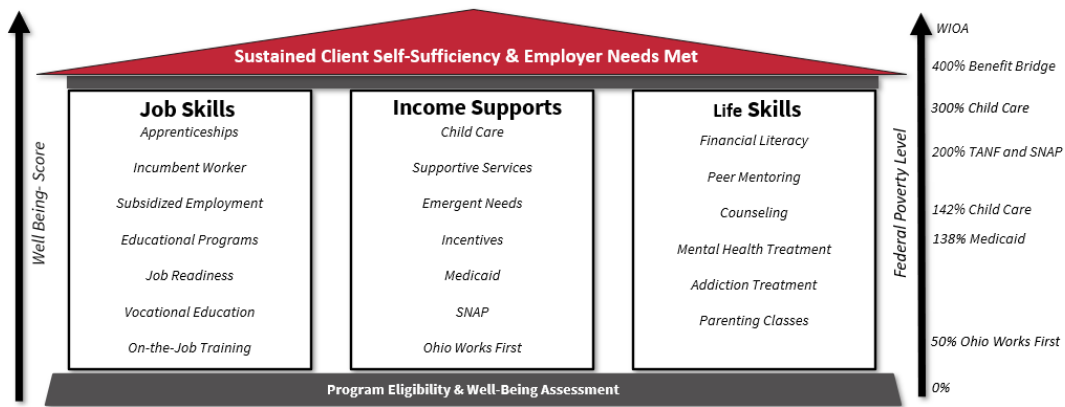
The State of Ohio envisions that **the future of the state’s work programs and supports is to have them complement each other, not compete.** Instead of viewing them as siloed programs, the programs will all offer

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<sup>3</sup> Elisabeth, C. (2024). Integrated Approaches to Poverty Alleviation: Global Perspectives and Strategies. *Golden Ratio of Mapping Idea and Literature Format*, 4(1), 78–90.

work and training skills, income supports, and life skills to individuals at different points in their journey to self-sufficiency. Ohio strongly believes that every person is on their own journey and may not be right for every work and training program. Rather than duplicate efforts and/or place a person in a program they will not be successful in, Ohio envisions a continuum of services, where each service elevates the person into the next program and eventually into long-term economic self-sufficiency. Ohio wants to ensure its OWF program, which is the first step on the continuum, has the flexibility to offer the same holistic approach to families without the shackles of the outdated work requirements that focus simply on “doing something for their cash assistance”. In other words, moving from transactional to transformational work. Our pilot will focus on the entire family, breaking down barriers and wrapping around them with State, county, and local resources to provide them with the foundation to accept promotions, raises, additional work hours, and even a career pathway.

### Future State - Align Services Across Programs



### Ohio is Ready to Pilot:

ODJFS proposes to add the OWF program to the continuum of work and training programs along with income and life skills supports. Understanding that some OWF recipients are the hardest-to-serve, the pilot will meet the individual where they are and move away from only core hour activities and focus on barrier removal. This will be accomplished by working with other agency partners, incentivizing individuals, and creating basic life skills prior to or in concert with education and employment services (depending on the individual’s unique

circumstances). Additionally, the pilot will focus on the whole family through the FSN, which will reduce the potential for entering the child welfare system and generational poverty. The multigenerational approach is critical because “children growing up in poverty, compared to those growing up in wealthier families, experience worse outcomes in ‘virtually every dimension, from physical and mental health to educational attainment and labor market success, to risky behaviors and delinquency.’ These effects are magnified when children experience poverty early, when they experience it over a prolonged period of time, and when it is more severe.”<sup>4</sup>

The pilot will be a combination of state, county, and community resources to move the State away from the current transactional world, into a transformational world, where families become economically self-sufficient. Ohio is a county-administered state, meaning local county caseworkers will be the initial entrance point for families. County caseworkers will evaluate families utilizing the well-being score, which will be in Ohio’s eligibility system as of October 1, 2024, to assess family barriers and monitor progress in reducing or removing them. As mentioned above, Ohio’s OWF population is one of the hardest-to-serve and, therefore, requires a skill set that county caseworkers do not have: a background in social work. As such, the family will be offered a dedicated FSN family coach by referring them to their local FSN (currently located in 12 counties across the state and expanding).

Because FSNs already exist, the infrastructure and community resources are in place to leverage for OWF families. The FSN model is

Participating Families will Receive...
<b>Family Coaching:</b> Coaching sessions that move towards behavioral change utilizing motivational interviewing.
<b>Financial Literacy:</b> The FSN family coach will work with the individuals utilizing Money 101, which offers families at minimum one session, but up to four sessions, of financial literacy around topics such as understanding credit, establishing a budget, and planning for the future.
<b>Concrete supports:</b> County caseworkers will help with housing, transportation, childcare, and other monetary supports.
<b>Basic Life Skills:</b> Family coaches trained in Transition to Independence Process Model will support families through decision making processes to help families with basic skills around goal setting, achieving self-sufficiency, and improving confidence of participants.
<b>Family Success Planning:</b> County caseworkers and FSN family coaches will work with families to create goals and success measures for families that includes home visiting with on average 2 visits per month.
<b>Incentives:</b> The program will provide incentives to individuals who accomplish goals or meet success measures.

<sup>4</sup> Ruiz De Luzuriaga, N., Beals, L., Brueck-Cassoli, S., Caward, R., Horner, C., & Veileux, N. (n.d.). *Moving the whole family ahead: Realizing the 2-gen Potential of Early Childhood Programs by Integrating Economic Mobility Coaching.*

[https://s3.amazonaws.com/empathwebite/pdf/EMPath\\_Childhood\\_Brief\\_singles.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/empathwebite/pdf/EMPath_Childhood_Brief_singles.pdf)



comprised of numerous evidence-based practices, built on a strength-based approach to increase protective factors and “meet families where they’re at” by wrapping resources around the family.

With the county caseworker, the FSN family coaches will work with families to provide a menu of services designed to improve well-being for the family. Creating a program that pulls in multiple community resources and wraps around the family while meeting them where they are, is key to Ohio’s pilot. As stated above, ODJFS has seen how intensive case management combined with holistic, person- and family-centered approaches across various life domains (e.g., mental health, housing, transportation) creates a stable environment where individuals can focus on their education and employment goals without being distracted and consumed by personal instability. Ohio has seen in multiple HCD programs that addressing personal and professional challenges comprehensively better equips participants to invest in the education and training opportunities available to them and as a result, obtain and maintain employment. Longer periods of job retention lead to opportunities for career advancement, which in turn increases their earnings and overall family income.

#### **Ohio has Multiple Performance Measures:**

Understanding whether a program is working is rooted in understanding its metrics. Ohio plans to utilize multiple metrics to monitor and evaluate its pilot. These metrics will include data from the well-being score, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Questionnaire, Protective Factors Survey, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (PFS-2), Working Alliance Inventory, Short Revised (WAI-SR), Ohio Benefits (OB), and Ohio State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). Additionally, Ohio will focus on the domains required in the ACF pilot application (economic: increasing Whole Family Income through Work) as well as focusing on measuring the following: health (physical and mental), Education (education and training, financial literacy and management), Community (family), Social (networks and basic life skills), and Family stability (housing, transportation, and child care).

## Ohio Measures Well-Being:

ODJFS knows that simply having earnings from a job does not adequately measure self-sufficiency. In 2023, Ohio began using a well-being score to holistically measure a person’s level of self-sufficiency across multiple social determinates of health:

All pillars are vital to becoming and maintaining self-sufficiency. Ohio’s goal is to increase a person’s scores across all pillars by removing barriers and providing coaching and wrap-around supports that encourage and support economic self-sufficiency. For example, an individual who does not have reliable transportation or housing is less likely to maintain employment. An individual’s lowest total well-being score possible is 20, with the highest potential total score of 120. The lower the score, the more barriers to self-sufficiency. The higher the score, the higher the well-being and self-sufficiency. Ohio’s Well-Being score tool is below:

SCORE	Family Stability			Well-Being		Financial Literacy & Management		Education & Training	Employment & Career
	Housing	Transportation	Family and Child Care	Physical & Mental Health	Networks	Debts	Savings	Educational Attainment	Earnings Level Ohio
10	No subsidy Housing cost 1/3 or less of HH gross	Can always get to work/school -Has driver's license -Vehicle is reliable; able to pay for gas, maintenance & insurance	Fully able to work/go to school & family life does not get in the way OR no dependents	Fully able to engage in work, school, & family life; physical & mental health needs don't get in the way	Can always rely on networks to provide advice, guidance, & support, advocates for others	No debt other than mortgage, education, or car loans, & current	Savings of 3 months' expenses or more	20 Bachelor's degree or higher complete	<b>Earnings = 80% + Household Size:</b> 1: \$50,650+ 2: \$57,850+ 3: \$65,100+ 4: \$72,300+
8	No subsidy Housing cost exceeds 1/3 of HH gross	Mostly able to get to work/school -Has driver's license -Vehicle most of time reliable; able to pay for gas, maintenance & insurance, OR reliable transport	Mostly able to engage in work/school & family life; children or family needs rarely get in the way	Mostly able to engage in work, school, & family life; physical & mental health needs rarely get in the way	Can often rely on networks to provide advice, guidance, & support	Current in all debts & making more than minimum payments on one or debts	Savings of more than 2 months' expenses but less than 3	16 Associate degree or professional certification complete	<b>Earnings = 50-79% Household Size:</b> 1: \$31,650-\$50,649 2: \$36,200-\$57,849 3: \$40,700-\$65,099 4: \$45,200-\$72,299
6	Subsidized housing -pays \$300+ towards rent	Transportation is available some of the time.	Somewhat able to engage in work/school & family life because of children or family needs	Somewhat able to engage in work, school, & family life because of physical & mental health needs	Can sometimes rely on networks to provide advice, guidance, & support	Making minimum payments on all debts	Savings of at least 1 month of expenses but less than 2	12 Job training or certificate complete (beyond high school)	<b>Earnings = 30-49% Household Size:</b> 1: \$19,000-\$31,649 2: \$21,700-\$36,199 3: \$24,860-\$40,699 4: \$30,000-\$45,199
4	Subsidized housing -pays \$0-\$299 towards rent	Has various types of unreliable transport	Barely able to engage in work/school & family life because of children or family needs	Barely able to engage in work, school, & family life because of physical & mental health needs	Can rarely rely on networks to provide advice, guidance, & support	Behind in payments of 1 or more debts	Savings of less than 1 month of expenses	8 High School Diploma or GED complete	<b>Earnings = &lt; 30% Household Size:</b> 1: < \$19,000 2: < \$21,700 3: < \$24,860 4: < \$30,000
2	No permanent housing	No transport	Not able to engage in work/school & family life because of children or family needs	Not able to engage in work, school, & family life because of physical & mental health needs	Can never rely on networks to provide advice, guidance, & support	Has debts; currently not making any payments	No savings	4 Less than High School Diploma or GED	Not currently employed <i>*Income ranges are for Ohio. Data from HUD's 11/22/2022 AMI tables</i>

### Family Stability and Well-Being Outcomes

Ohio will also utilize the PFS-2, which measures protective factors in five areas: (1) Social Supports; (2) Concrete Supports; (3) Nurturing and Attachment, (4) Family Functioning/Resilience; and (5) Caregiver/Practitioner Relationship. Research demonstrates that when families possess these key protective

factors, their risk factors pertaining to child maltreatment are reduced. This tool is administered as a pretest and posttest, and results are scored to assess improvement as the family has engaged in the program over a period of time.

FSNs also use WAI-SR, which evaluates the relationship between the family coach and the participant through a self-report survey. This survey will be expanded in the pilot to include the county caseworker. Ohio knows from other programs that an individual will not be successful unless they feel heard and supported. This survey will provide a litmus test on how the team is interacting and building rapport with the family.

Finally, ODJFS will leverage data from OB and SACWIS. These systems will provide outcome data that will include employment outcomes, churn, child welfare involvement, and what interventions are having the biggest impact. Additionally, Ohio will be able to marry the data from both systems to see the impact OWF has on child welfare involvement.

### **Economic and Well-Being Outcomes:**

*Which additional economic well-being measure(s) are you interested in addressing?*

The pilot will allow OWF to transition from performance-based work to outcome-based service delivery and integrate OWF recipients into the continuum of Ohio's existing models. This will provide the opportunity to address several economic well-being measures, including **barrier remediation, employment skills gain, job access, earnings in excess of a set threshold, and asset building (based on debts and savings)**. Ohio's approach, grounded in HCD-focused case management, emphasizes addressing the unique needs of each participant and working closely with the individual to create personalized plans to align with their goals and challenges. It empowers participants to break generational poverty by building an educational and employable foundation that promotes progress toward consistent self-sufficiency. Tailoring interventions to each individual's specific situation ensure the solutions are relevant, practical, and appropriately timed. For instance, someone struggling with housing instability will not be required to complete a "countable activity" to satisfy the work participation rate first. Instead, they will first receive targeted support to secure stable housing while also working

with the FSN to increase basic life skills and family functioning/resilience. Once these foundational needs are stabilized, they will focus on their educational and/or career goals. This includes skills development workshops, basic education classes, certifications, or vocational training tailored to local job markets. Integrating these measures into the existing models for OWF recipients will complement the Whole Family Income measure and offer a more comprehensive understanding of participants' economic stability and resilience. This approach aligns with the pilot's focus on personalized barrier-removing interventions and supports long-term self-sufficiency for individuals and families.

*Which of the other stated domain(s) (health, education, community, social) are you interested in addressing?*

Ohio's approach to focusing on the entire family for economic self-sufficiency will provide the opportunity to address several domains. Thorough assessments (e.g., comprehensive assessment, well-being assessment and Protective Factor Survey, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) will be conducted to identify the various life domains of each family, including housing stability, access to health care and services based on physical and mental health well-being, educational attainment, and social needs based on having a reliable support network. This will create a comprehensive profile of each participant and development of individualized case management plans based on the assessment results. Utilizing DCY's FSN and leveraging the county-administered structure will allow for a more personalized and responsive supports to address each family's unique circumstances while coordinating services with various providers (e.g., housing authorities, educational institutions, healthcare providers) to ensure seamless delivery of services.

Additionally, it is understood some individuals on OWF have disabilities and will never return to the workforce and need a long-term disability income to support their family. These individuals are often stuck between the red tape of the government and the need for long-term disability. To help these individuals, Ohio will assist in the Social Security Income benefits application process (or other private long-term disability) and will use approval for disability benefits as another measure of success in the pilot, as it is long-term economic support for the family, unlike time-limited TANF cash assistance. For those individuals with disabilities willing to return

to work with additional assistance, caseworkers will work with participants who are flagged as ready for a referral to Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). OOD helps individuals with disabilities to find, keep, or return to work successfully with various supports. The OWF caseworker would partner with the OOD caseworker, similarly to the FSN caseworker.

*Identify the performance measure(s) within the domain(s) that your state would consider tracking in your pilot program.*

When measuring family stability and well-being, ODJFS plans on utilizing more than one intervention and measurement. Ohio will use multiple tools to track the various performance measures because it is known through the HCD approach that not just one approach will impact outcomes, but instead, it will take multiple factors, resources, and interventions. First, Ohio will utilize the well-being assessment, which takes a holistic view of the person to determine what barriers impact their journey to self-sufficiency. Each pillar is scored based on the participants' current status, not simply how the individual believes they are doing. The well-being score has 5 pillars:

1. **Well-being**—which includes not just their Physical and Mental Health but also their Networks—what kind of people and/or supports are in one’s life guiding decision-making. Are they draining or supportive, and do they think their goals are important and have the ability to share resources to help make progress. The physical and mental health pillar assesses whether a person is able to engage in work or school and family life where physical and mental needs do not get in the way.
2. **Family Stability** – which focuses on how much time and energy is devoted to meeting children and family needs and how much that effort takes away from the time and energy you can devote to working on your own goals (especially work and school). This includes the obvious components: Housing Stability, Reliable Transportation, and Family & Childcare, including care of adult family members. Examples of needs that might impact how much an individual or family is able to engage in school or work are a child who gets sick often, not being able to find consistent, appropriate childcare, a child who has difficulty following the rules at

school, or a child who has learning challenges for which s/he is not getting help.

3. **Financial Literacy and Management** - which includes debt, savings, and appropriate budgeting. Ohio has found Financial Literacy to be a key component to holistic support. Many families have a lot of debt and are victims of predatory loans as well as “rent to own” companies. Teaching families how to create and stick to a budget, including strategies for tracking expenses, cutting unnecessary costs, importance of credits scores, and allocating funds for savings, is key to a successful transition off benefits. This enables families to build stronger financial foundations, build assets, reduce their reliance on benefits when an unexpected cost arises, and navigate financial challenges more effectively.
4. **Education and Training** – which includes education or training level and skills. This pillar is essential for equipping individuals with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities needed to improve their economic status. The focus is on providing access to quality education and vocational training that aligns with current job market demands and personal career goals.
5. **Employment and Career** - focuses on helping individuals secure and advance in meaningful, well-paying jobs. This pillar encompasses strategies and resources aimed at improving employability, career progression, and job satisfaction. It looks at household earnings and how much it may take to support their family using Area Median Income (AMI). AMI is used because it matches the metrics used for public benefit eligibility. Although the numbers may look high on this tool, it is not to discourage the participant but to help them figure out pathways that move them closer to their living wage and how they define economic self-sufficiency for their family.

Additionally, DCY’s FSN is built upon several evidence-based programs, which include the Triple P Positive Parenting Program, Transition to Independence Process Model, Motivational Interviewing, and Money 101, and utilizes the PFS-2 to measure improvement in family protective factors. This assessment is a self-report tool used to assess protective factors in families. Many of the same protective factors that are being assessed through the well-being assessment (e.g., family functioning/resiliency (Family Stability), social supports (Well-being), and

concrete supports (Financial Literacy). PFS-2 helps identify strengths and areas of need among parents and caregivers, which can inform the development of targeted interventions to support family stability and well-being.

The key areas assessed are:

1. **Family Functioning/Resiliency**—Measures the adaptive skills and strategies to persevere in times of crisis. It measures parents' and caregivers' ability to openly share positive and negative experiences and mobilize to accept, solve, and manage problems to recover from stress and adversity.
2. **Social Support** - Assesses the strength of social support networks and relationships (from family, friends, and neighbors) that can provide assistance and emotional support.
3. **Concrete Support** - Measures access to and utilization of material and financial resources needed to support family stability and tangible goods and services to help families cope with stress, particularly in times of crisis or intensified need.
4. **Nurturing and Attachment** - Assesses the emotional tie along with a pattern of positive interaction between the parent and child that develops over time.

The score analysis helps in understanding the family's current situation and needs. It highlights areas where families are strong and resilient, which can be leveraged in intervention planning. It also identifies areas of challenges or lack of resources, enabling the development of targeted support strategies. Examples of interventions provided by FSN may include parenting education through one-on-one effective parenting techniques, identifying social support networks similar to FSN's existing Parent Café model, or addressing emotional resilience through counseling services.

*Indicate why the identified domain(s) is of interest to your state and explain how your proposed interventions (e.g., the proposed activities) are anticipated to affect the outcome(s) associated with this domain.*

Ohio's focus on a holistic approach to addressing the multifaceted needs of families is designed to provide a comprehensive support system that enhances economic self-sufficiency and overall well-being. This approach

recognizes that there is no single solution ("silver bullet") to complex issues like poverty, family well-being, and economic instability. Instead, it requires addressing multiple domains simultaneously. By addressing various domains—such as employment, housing, health, and education—Ohio can provide more integrated and effective supports, leading to better overall family outcomes. Families face a range of interconnected challenges that influence their economic stability. For instance, inadequate housing can impact health, affecting employment opportunities and educational attainment. Addressing all relevant factors ensures that interventions are effective and sustainable. Investing in education and vocational training increases earning potential, and career advancement opportunities lead to economic stability and self-sufficiency. Considering all factors helps in designing interventions that address root causes rather than just symptoms, which improves family well-being and reduces generational poverty. Ohio's proposed interventions will complement and enhance our existing programs (CCMEP, SNAP ET, BB, and FSN). This integration helps create a more robust support system as individuals progress through the continuum of services toward self-sufficiency. By building on the successes of existing programs, Ohio can expand effective strategies and apply lessons learned to new interventions, improving overall service delivery and impact.

*What are the data sources that may be available in your state to track progress toward these outcomes.*

Ohio plans to utilize multiple metrics to monitor and evaluate its pilot. These metrics will include data from the well-being score, PFS-2, WAI-SR, OB, and SACWIS. County caseworkers will use the well-being score that has been added to Ohio's eligibility system and will be part of three programs as of October 1, 2024, to assess family barriers and monitor progress. PFS-2 will be used to measure the core components (parental resilience/family functioning, social connections, concrete supports in times of need, and nurturing and attachment) to determine whether families possess the necessary protective factors to prevent children services involvement. Finally, ODJFS will leverage data from both OB and SACWIS.



*What barriers does your state anticipate and what technical assistance or other capacity building supports ACF could provide to address these barriers?*

Navigating the complexities of government regulations and bureaucratic processes can impede the efficient implementation of new measures. Moving from a transactional to a transformational approach (emphasizing long-term outcomes) can be challenging. However, Ohio has already begun this transition with BB and SNAP E&T, requiring various “case management” trainings, such as: mobility mentoring; motivational interviewing; trauma-informed care; substance abuse; and de-escalation training. Ohio anticipates challenges in serving specific populations, such as parents of infants, victims of domestic violence, and the male population. This may involve creating culturally sensitive materials and establishing trust-building programs. Ohio would appreciate it if ACF could assist in evaluating and refining its strategies based on evidence and successful practices from other states. This support will enable Ohio to navigate systemic challenges, engage difficult-to-reach populations, and adopt effective strategies for breaking the cycle of poverty and improving housing stability.

### **Service Population**

*How does the proposed intervention align with the employment, training, stability, and well-being needs of the TANF eligible population?*

ODJFS knows that its OWF population is among the hardest-to-serve, with an income level at 50% or below. They often lack the stability of housing, transportation, and concrete life skills. Likewise, “[i]t also means that parents often need to cobble together family and neighbor support in order to scrape by while also juggling work, school, and parenting. Parents with low incomes rarely receive sufficient government support. Instead, they are subject to surveillance and punitive policies and practices.”<sup>5</sup> Ohio plans to approach the pilot with a lens towards interventions that are multigenerational and help stabilize the family, including, but not limited to housing, transportation, mental health, parenting, and life skills. Creating this foundation will build the skills and

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<sup>5</sup> Moving the Whole Family Ahead, EmPath

mindset to empower families to make changes to help them with long-term economic growth and sustainability because “tackling poverty requires improving economic conditions and ensuring real, actual access to quality education, employment, housing and health services.”<sup>6</sup>

*Do you plan to focus certain efforts on a specific region or population? If so, please explain the implementation structure and the reasons for it.*

Ohio’s pilot would cover the entire State (all 88 counties) and the entire OWF work-eligible population, excluding those 14-24 years as they are already required by Ohio law to participate in the CCMEP program. As stated earlier, CCMEP is a wrap-around service program that helps youth break the cycle of poverty and gain employability skills. As part of our continuum of services, ODJFS will focus on work-eligibles aged 25+ to ensure we are not duplicating services and resources. Ohio will also focus on providing holistic services to pregnant women, new mothers, and victims of domestic violence by meeting them where they are and helping them through their current life chapter. As a result, we will leverage the successful service delivery that already exists with CCMEP as well as the referrals to FSN, which will allow a targeted family centric approach to build the foundation necessary for long-term economic self-sufficiency.

*What are your plans for targeting and reaching the eligible population; and strategies for engaging and serving target populations?*

ODJFS has learned from prior efforts that significant outreach is required to both practitioners and participants to overcome their understanding of legacy policies and prejudices. As a county administered state, county workers are the face of OWF and have their fingers on the pulse of the needs of their community, so targeted outreach to county staff is critical so that they are in turn able to talk about the new program, with OWF participants. Ohio will create a marketing kit for the counties to help with outreach to participants. As previously stated, Ohio will target work-eligible individuals aged 25 and older, because younger participants are already

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<sup>6</sup> European Commission, Joint Research Centre, Cassio, L., Blasko, Z., Szczepanikova, A. (2021). *Poverty and mindsets : how poverty and exclusion over generations affect aspirations, hope and decisions, and how to address it*, Publications Office of the European Union. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/453340>

served within CCMEP.

Additionally, the FSNs already have outreach initiatives that will be leveraged, particularly around men and pregnant women. FSNs are led through trusted community-based organizations with a strong history of working with agencies, non-profits, and others within their communities to minimize stigma in accessing services and build rapport with families.

*How does the proposed pilot design consider cultural competence in serving diverse populations?*

ODJFS will require county caseworkers to take Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training as well as Trauma Informed training. Additionally, the FSNs are trained in motivational interviewing and many family coaches have lived experiences. A supervisory component of FSN is a Structured Meeting, a formal, monthly, group meeting with all FSN staff where information is presented from a research perspective and applied to FSN families. Examples of Structured Meetings conducted in the past include engaging African American Families with Social Services, Engaging Families with Children on the Autism Spectrum, Understanding the Guatemalan Immigrant Population in Ohio, the Impact of Inflation on Economically Disadvantaged Families, and Fatherhood. Structured Meeting topics are selected based on feedback and reflections from Family Coaches who provide areas they feel they could use more information. For this pilot, Structured Meetings will ensure the ongoing provision of culturally competent research and resources that will directly inform services to OWF families.

### **Implementation Capacity**

*How will the pilot design affect TANF eligibility.*

Pilot participants will be required to have an engagement plan and will be subject to a sanction (lose eligibility for OWF) if they do not follow the requirements of their plan. While the Pilot will not change eligibility criteria for the OWF, the TANF assistance program, TANF *non-assistance* programs will be available to families who move into employment but remain eligible for TANF. The new service delivery model focused on a holistic approach means that services are more integrated and accessible, reducing the complexities and barriers that might discourage individuals from seeking assistance. This approach is expected to improve accessibility, increase client

engagement, and provide valuable data for continuous ongoing program improvements. Additionally, on October 1, 2024, Ohio is increasing its SNAP income eligibility from 130% to 200% FPL under broad-based categorical eligibility to help working families and have an off ramp for benefits – slowly reducing benefit amount with additional earnings.

*What resources (financial, human, and technological) are required for successful implementation? Are there plans for an adjustment in TANF funds, or additional federal, state, local, or private investments, please indicate.*

Successful implementation will require human, technological, and financial resources. As stated above, Ohio is ready to implement the pilot and move away from the WPR. However, the change will require retraining the mindset of state and county staff, participants and community partners to transition from a metric-driven, transactional case processing to a transformational, person-centered approach focusing on holistic support for individuals and families. Again, Ohio has already begun this mindset change with the BB and SNAP E&T, which has been vital for the smooth transition of the SNAP E&T changes Ohio is implementing on October 1.

It will also require engaging stakeholders to foster buy-in through county workgroups and regional roundtables for collaborative planning and execution of the pilot project. OWF recipients have also been in the mindset of just “doing something” for their benefit and will now need to see this program as one that is structured to help them thrive and become self-sufficient. Another key component will incorporate incentivized participant workgroups to engage individuals with lived experiences to provide valuable insight and feedback throughout the implementation process.

From a technological viewpoint, Ohio is ready but will need to prepare for policy rule changes, ensure staff and stakeholders are informed of the changes, and update data-sharing agreements with DCY and other relevant entities to ensure efficient data sharing.

*What are the unique opportunities and capacities of your state to successfully implement the proposed intervention(s).*

ODJFS knows that its OWF population is one of the hardest-to-serve and, therefore, requires a skill set that county caseworkers do not have: a background in social work. As such, they will work with their local FSNs who have this skill set. The FSNs are currently located in 12 counties across the state and are expanding. Services are delivered in person and FSN offers virtual options if necessary. Because FSNs already exist, the infrastructure and community resources are in place to leverage for OWF families. Additionally, the well-being score will be implemented into the eligibility system on October 1, 2024, as well as data reports on the scores. Ohio is ready technologically and to provide services.

*How the pilot will be administered and monitored to ensure accountability and effectiveness?*

The pilot will be a partnership between the OWF case manager and the FSN workers, each focusing on their area of expertise. FSNs currently use WAI-SR, which evaluates the relationship between the provider and the participant. The survey is a self-report measure that assesses the strength and the relationship between the FSN provider and the individual. With the pilot, Ohio will expand this survey to include the county caseworker. It is known from other programs that an individual will not be successful unless they feel heard and supported. This survey will provide a litmus test on how the teams are interacting with the family. Again, the well-being scores, along with the employment and earnings measures, will monitor effectiveness. Ohio will also utilize the guidance counsel to provide feedback on what they are seeing and hearing.

*What are the dependencies for launching the pilot and plans to mitigate expected and unexpected obstacles?*

Ohio understands the pilot will require a comprehensive approach involving several factors, including cooperation with county and local resources. This will be achieved by scheduling regular meetings with county and local stakeholders to foster communication, address any issues promptly, and build strong relationships, ensuring active participation. Another important component will be encouraging a cultural shift within agencies from focusing on processes to prioritizing participant outcomes and success. Ohio will implement mandatory training focusing on outcome-based case management rather than paper and hours tracking. These trainings (e.g., Foundational Skills of Motivational Interviewing, Trauma Informed Care, Human Trafficking Awareness, De-

escalation Training, and Fundamentals of Addiction) were required for the SNAP E&T caseworkers and will also integrate existing FSN best practice trainings that are helpful for the holistic family approach. The third obstacle will be shifting the participant's mindset and involvement to one focused on empowerment and personal development. This will be mitigated by forming participant workgroups to get input from individuals with lived experiences and implementing regular feedback loops to gather insight from the workgroups to make necessary adjustments to the pilot program. Lastly, navigating unexpected obstacles will require contingency planning to address potential challenges and ensure flexibility in implementation. This will include creating support systems for staff and participants to handle unexpected issues effectively, continuously evaluating the pilot's progress, and adjusting based on real-time feedback, metrics, and emerging needs.

### **Collaboration and Partnerships**

*How will the pilot design and implementation will be informed by individuals with lived experience receiving TANF or other public assistance benefits; or by WIOA partners, workforce agencies, post-secondary education partners, or employers? What are the proposed partnerships or collaborations with other government agencies, non-profit organizations, or community stakeholders?*

ODJFS of Ohio will create a guidance council comprised of stakeholders, including WIOA, DCY, CCMEP, higher education, Community Colleges, FSNs, county JFS, and non-profits. Additionally, the council will include OWF participants and people with lived experience. This council will meet monthly in the beginning, then quarterly with time.

Ohio has learned through the BB and SNAP E&T that incorporating partner feedback from the start is the key to success. Getting buy-in and allowing stakeholders the ability to help design the program allows for a dynamic and agile program. Additionally, creating a constant feedback loop helps to enhance and create a program that withstands time.

### **FRA Pilots Federal Implementation and Outcomes Study**

*Is your state willing to participate in the FRA pilot's federal implementation and outcomes study.*

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Office of Family Assistance will participate in the FRA pilot's federal implementation and outcomes study.