



# Aligning Federal Performance Indicators Across Programs Promoting Self- Sufficiency

**National Association for Welfare Research and  
Statistics Workshop**

Elizabeth Brown

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# The EMPOWERED project









- **EMPOWERED examines the use of different policies and strategies to reduce dependency, increase self-sufficiency and improve program performance across a variety of federal assistance programs**
- **Conducted for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE)**
- **Two year study (Fall 2017-Fall 2019); three study components**
  - **Performance indicator alignment** (focus of this presentation)
  - Work requirements
  - Child support cooperation requirements



# Study context

- **Low-income families frequently qualify for multiple programs that are regulated and administered by different federal agencies, each with its own performance metrics**
- **Increased emphasis on measuring performance across human services programs**
- **Significant steps taken at federal level to align performance indicators across certain programs that promote self-sufficiency (e.g., WIOA)**
- **Opportune time to consider performance alignment under WIOA and for a broader range of human service programs**

# Study focal programs

	 <b>Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs</b>	 <b>AEFLA</b>	 <b>FSS</b>	 <b>Jobs Plus</b>	 <b>SNAP E&amp;T</b>	 <b>TANF</b>	 <b>VR</b>	 <b>Youth Program</b>
<b>Federal administering agency</b>	DOL	ED	HUD	HUD	USDA	HHS	ED	DOL
<b>Target population</b>	<p>All adults age 18 and older</p> <p><b>Adult:</b> Priority to low-income individuals or those with barriers to employment</p> <p><b>Dislocated Worker:</b> Individuals who are unemployed due to a business closure or general economic conditions in area in which they reside</p>	<p>Individuals age 16 and older who are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school and who are basic skills deficient, do not have a secondary school diploma, or are an English language learner</p>	<p>Public housing residents</p>	<p>Public housing residents</p>	<p>SNAP recipients between the ages of 16 and 59</p>	<p>Work-eligible individuals who are adults age 18 or older or single minor parents who receive assistance for both themselves and their children</p>	<p>Individuals with disabilities</p>	<p>Low-income out-of-school youth, ages 16–24 and in-school youth, ages 14-21</p>

# Data collection sources and methods

**Occurred between November 2017 and October 2018:**

- **Scan of publicly available documents**
- **Review of federal program administrative data**
- **Semi-structured discussions with:**
  - 29 national and federal stakeholders
  - 15 state program administrators in three states
- **In-depth case studies in three localities**
  - Arlington, VA
  - Chicago, IL
  - Greater Boston, MA

# Performance measure study objectives

- **Describe the similarities in constructs and performance indicators that exist across programs**
- **Better understand the challenges and opportunities for aligning performance indicators**
- **Capture the range of relevant and meaningful participant outcomes, especially for low-income populations with significant barriers to employment**



# Federal indicators and program goals

- **Five of eight study programs share common federal WIOA performance indicators**
  - Local staff across programs generally agree that employment indicators can help capture progress; however, more immediate or short-term indicators are useful
  - State data systems often capture limited information on participant characteristics and barriers
- **TANF staff focus on employment and self-sufficiency**
  - WPR viewed as administrative function rather than measure of program or client success
- **Housing programs use indicators as part of broader effort to understand outcomes of residents' families**

# Building a Performance Alignment Framework



# Participant characteristics

- **Help programs understand who they serve**
  - Identify participant needs, barriers, and referrals
  - Manage caseloads
- **Can inform program accountability and budgeting**
- **Examples include:**
  - Number of participants who receive housing subsidies
  - Number of participants who have a criminal background

Participant characteristics

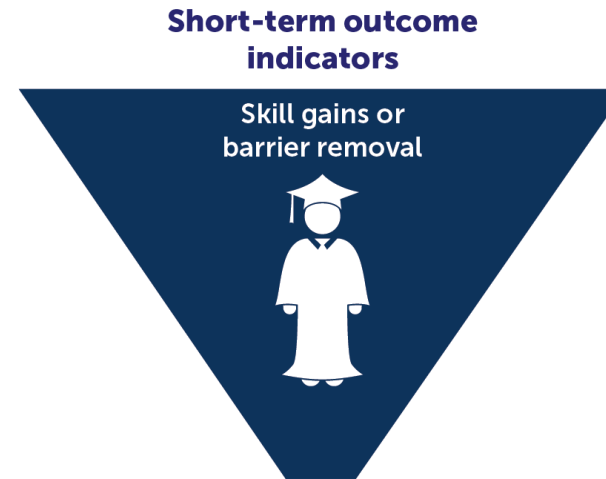
# Program participation



- **All programs used program participation indicators**
- **Immediate indicators for program management**
  - Manage staff workloads
  - Help programs target services for intended populations
- **Examples include:**
  - Number of participants who are in job training
  - Number of participants are attending life skills classes

# Skill gains or barrier removal

- **Short-term indicators to provide information on whether a participant is on a path to self-sufficiency**
- **Helpful for programs that serve individuals with multiple barriers**
- **Examples include:**
  - Attainment of an industry recognized credential
  - Access to child care services or transportation assistance



# Employment

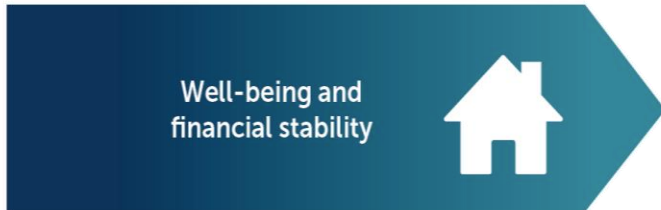
Long-term outcome  
indicators



- **Long-term indicators show participants' progress toward finding and keeping work**
- **Multiple definitions of employment**
- **Examples include:**
  - Employment one year after program exit
  - Wage growth

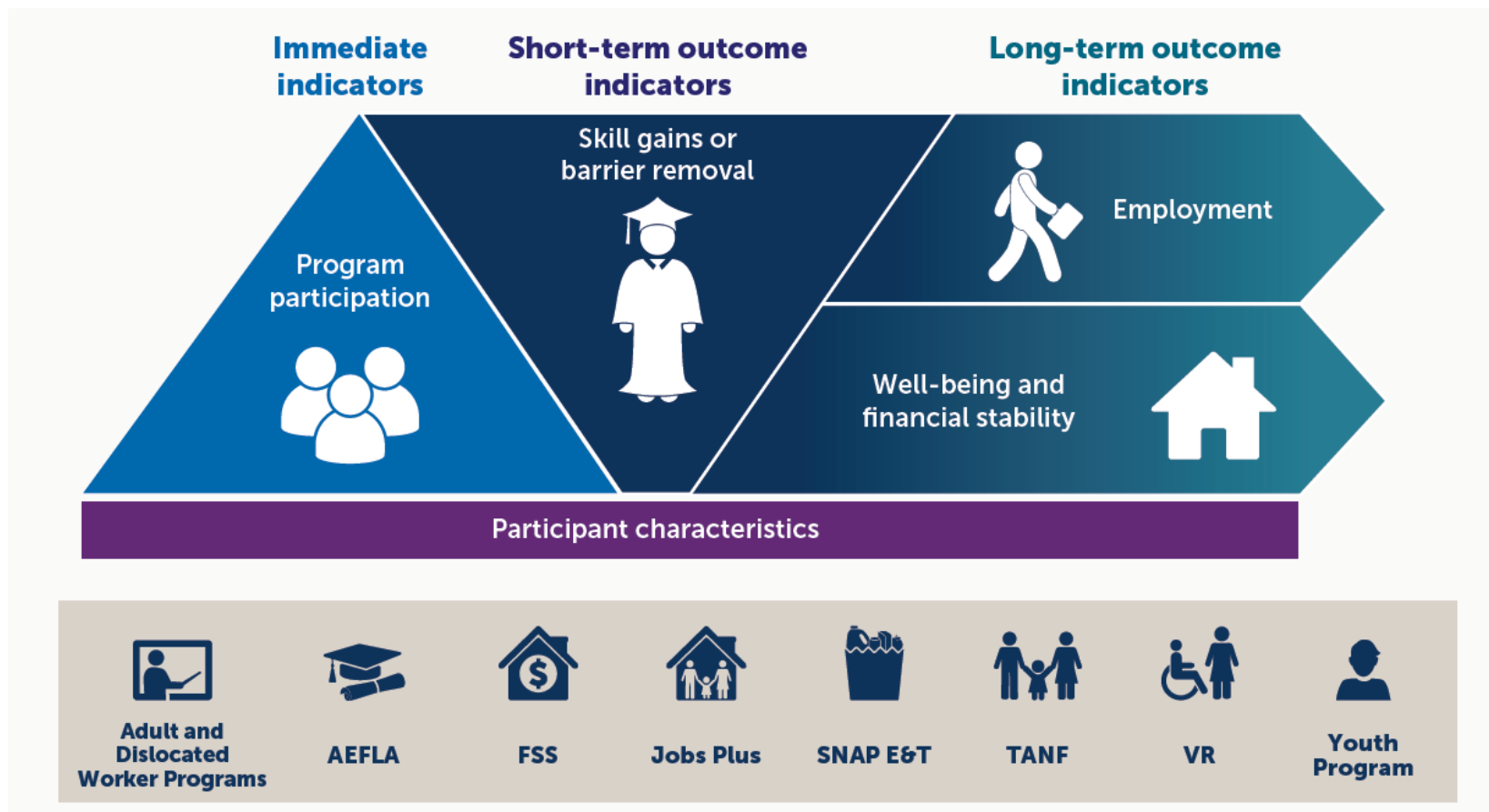
# Well-being and financial stability

- **Long-term indicators show participants' progress toward increased stability**
- **Useful for programs that serve the whole family**
- **Examples include:**
  - Reaching financial savings goals
  - Attending counseling services over a period of time
  - Social network support



Financial Stability

# Flexible framework



# Use framework to take actionable steps to align performance indicators

- **Develop shared concepts and use of common definitions (sounds easy, so hard!)**
- **Develop and align measures to promote common goals while making room for programs' diversity (e.g., goals, target populations, services)**
- **Seek and use staff input at all levels to develop meaningful measures**
- **CRITICAL! Invest in data infrastructure to support alignment**

# Additional resources from the EMPOWERED project

- [Aligning Federal Performance Indicators Across Programs Promoting Self-Sufficiency: Local Perspectives](#)
- [Aligning Federal Performance Indicators Across Programs Promoting Self-Sufficiency: Actionable Steps for Program Design and Practice](#)
- [Aligning Federal Performance Indicators Across Programs Promoting Self-Sufficiency: Key Considerations for Policymakers](#)



Questions?

# For more information

## Elizabeth Brown

- [EBrown@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:EBrown@mathematica-mpr.com)

## Gretchen Kirby

- [GKirby@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:GKirby@mathematica-mpr.com)

## Pam Holcomb, Project Director

- [PHolcomb@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:PHolcomb@mathematica-mpr.com)

## Erica Meade, ASPE Federal Project Officer

- [Erica.Meade@hhs.gov](mailto:Erica.Meade@hhs.gov)