Tool 1.3 – Project Scope: Sample State TANF Caseload Dynamics

1. **Project Name:** State TANF Caseload Dynamics

2. **Project Description:** What do TANF families look like, what services do they receive, and what does it mean for their well-being and economic stability?

3. **Project Goals/Objectives:** To understand the families served in our state TANF cash assistance program, and the services that they use before and after leaving the program and how those dynamics relate to outcomes, if at all, we will:

   a. Create a longitudinal file with data over time that describes demographics of the TANF caseload and other descriptors (duration, other benefits, etc.).

   b. Analyze the file and identify key themes, customer profiles, etc.

   c. Understand demographic correlations to outcomes (eventually).

4. **Who are the groups that will need to be involved?** Governor's Office, Department of Healthcare Financing, Department of Labor, Department of Public Health, and the Best University in America.

5. **Analysis.** This will be a descriptive analysis. The unit of analysis will be the household. We are interested in looking at all households that received TANF in 2018. We will use unemployment insurance (UI) wage data and independent variables will be created from UI, TANF, Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Women, Infant, Children (WIC) data. We plan to use correlation and regression analysis.

6. **Data.** We have internal access to various systems that we manage providing eligibility data and case management records. Each record contains a unique identifier, name, address, income, race/ethnicity, age, for the adult applicant, and number of children in household. It is collected upon initial eligibility determination and updated monthly. It is at the person-month level. It is stored on a network drive that all team members have access to. The state TANF agency is the owner.

   The external data we have access to includes unemployment insurance data, Medicaid, SNAP, and WIC data through long-standing data sharing agreements with three peer state agencies. The Medicaid, SNAP, and WIC data contain a unique identifier, name, address, income, race/ethnicity, age for the adult applicant, and number of children in household. The data are all collected upon initial eligibility determination and updated monthly. It is at the person-month level. The UI data contains a unique identifier, quarterly wages, unique employer identifier, and employer industry code. These data are at the person-employer-quarter level. We have copies of these data stored on a network drive that all team members have access to.

Our partner, the Best University in America, has a data sharing agreement with all three state agencies listed in No.4 and has created the skeleton/outline of a longitudinal file containing these benefits and services data.

The data would have to be merged and transformed into household level data for the analysis. Monthly benefits data should be put into variables that are relative to the last TANF exit date. Given changes in how the data were stored prior to 2016, data before 2016 should be excluded from the analysis (set to missing).

7. **Results or Deliverables.** We expect these analyses to inform how we further assist individuals who might need additional support. We expect to use the results to inform frontline case worker onboarding, ongoing training, as well as policy. We want to develop a set of training and staff onboarding materials such as curricula, desk guides, and manuals. In addition, we want to draft policy memos that will inform discussions about changes to program policy, administrative rules, or legislative/statutory changes. Our primary audience is the TANF program staff.

8. **Schedule/Milestones.** The project has already started, and we estimate the training and policy implications will be understood by March 1, 2021. Major milestones of the project include:

    a. Analysis plan created by July 1, 2020

    b. Data cleaning by August 1, 2020

    c. Data linkage by September 1, 2020

    d. Analysis variables created by December 1, 2020

    e. Analyses tabled and reviewed by team January 15, 2021

    f. Data reviewing to ensure data and file accuracy by February 15, 2021

    g. Results to be presented to broader audience by March 1, 2021

9. **Risks.** The eligibility determination system that all caseworkers use just moved from a mainframe to a web-based platform in the first quarter of this year. There may be data quality issues or delays due to system changes.

10. **Needs.** We have asked for funds to pay for a data analyst. All the work outlined in No. 9 is dependent on hiring a dedicated data analyst. Hiring typically takes 2-3 months, and if the recruitment fails, this project might be delayed.