SELF-SUPPORT INDEX MEETING SUMMARY

The Economic Assistance and Employment Supports division and Human Services Performance Management team at the Department of Human Services (DHS) held a daylong meeting on March 19, 2019. The purpose of the meeting was to review the Self-Support Index measure and discuss potential variables that could be included in future iterations of the measure’s range calculations. Participants included representatives from tribes, counties and DHS.

Measure review

The three-year Self-Support Index is a measure that tracks all adults receiving Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) or Diversionary Work Program (DWP) cash assistance in a quarter, and calculates what percentage have exited cash assistance programs or are working at least 30 hours a week during the same quarter three years later. The measure focuses on outcomes for people rather than program requirements.

- The measure includes participants who are extended beyond the 60-month time limit, participants in the Family Stabilization Services (FSS) track, teen parents and two-parent families.
- The measure looks at the entire caseload each quarter. This means that many of the same people are in the baseline cohorts from quarter to quarter.
- Most success occurs when a caregiver is off of cash assistance for an entire quarter. It does not reward negative outcomes such as cases closing due to sanctions and time limits.
- Data is pulled from MAXIS, therefore careful MAXIS coding is important.

How is the measure calculated?

The Self-Support Index includes two parts: The index (score) and the range (target). The range of expected performance is unique to each county, tribe and service delivery area. The range uses information about people and the local economy (i.e. age, gender, county unemployment rate) to estimate where providers will score. It levels the playing field by taking into account factors that are outside of providers’ control.

- Providers cannot influence the range of expected performance because it is calculated from regressions predicting success on the Self-Support Index based on demographic and economic characteristics beyond the control of service areas and providers.
- Providers can, however, influence the index through the services they provide to help MFIP and DWP participants increase their employment and earnings enough to exit cash assistance.

Methodology

The Economic Assistance and Employment Supports division is working with the University of Minnesota to revisit the measure’s methodology, including estimation methods and predictor variables. Professor Joe Ritter noted that MFIP participation is a dynamic process, and data for any one quarter has many cohorts within the larger cohort. Therefore,
attempting to predict multiple outcomes is a significant challenge. Meeting participants were asked about additional variables or factors to consider. Ideas included:

- Number of cohort members in extension (post 60 months)
- Job openings that are reflective of participants’ skillsets
- Multi-generational history of MFIP and DWP
- Density of mental health and other social service supports
- Lack of affordable housing and homelessness
- Availability of culturally appropriate child care, off-hour child care and providers who accept child care assistance
- Transportation
- Crime rates
- FSS participants
- Criminal records
- Employability Measure scores

Additionally, the need for looking at the measure through an equity lens was noted on multiple occasions. Cultural differences and disparities must be considered in the process.

**Measure success**

Meeting participants were also asked about specific initiatives, programs or services that contribute to measure success. Participant training and education leading to job readiness was the top recommendation. Others included:

- Plain language to ease access and navigation through the programs
- Collaboration and good communication between employment services and financial workers
- Employer partnerships
- Secondary school and college partnerships
- Referrals to WIOA and youth programs
- Presumptive eligibility for child care assistance
- Integrated services with parties involved (e.g., employment specialist, financial workers, child protection, child support officer, public health, etc.)

**Ongoing workgroup**

Meeting participants were invited to an ongoing economic assistance workgroup and several expressed interest in meeting at least three times per year to discuss topics such as training, reports and best practices. Some volunteered to be on a workgroup planning team and will be contacted soon to get started.
The Self-Support Index
What it is and how to use it
Click here to watch the Self-Support Index Video on Vimeo.
History of the Self-Support Index

2001/2002
A workgroup of state staff and local partners developed this measure.

Focuses on what happens for people (outcomes) rather than program requirements (process).
Two Parts of the Self-Support Index

The Index
Your Score

The Range
Your Target
The Index

Your Score
The Index

Goals of MFIP

- Increase employment and earnings
- Decrease use of cash assistance
# What’s My Role?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Counselor</th>
<th>Financial Worker</th>
<th>Child Care Worker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop employment plan</td>
<td>Timely benefits</td>
<td>Timely child care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide support services</td>
<td>Accurate benefits</td>
<td>Consistency of care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of labor market</td>
<td>Knowledge of programs</td>
<td>Knowledge of providers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Index: Definition

- Every adult receiving MFIP or DWP in a quarter
- Counts how many are off MFIP and DWP cash assistance or working at least 30 hours per week three years later
The Index: Ratio

\[ \text{Self} - \text{Support Index} = \frac{\text{Successful participants now}}{\text{All participants three years ago}} \]
The Index: Components

Total adult participants

All adults 3 years ago

3 years pass

Successful participants

Off MFIP or DWP cash assistance

Working at least 30 hours
The Index: Example

Self-support index Q3 2016 Widget County

Widget County Participants Q3 2013

- 756 adults on MFIP or DWP cash assistance

Widget County Participants Q3 2013 in Q3 2016

- 457 off cash assistance
- 30 on cash assistance but working at least 30 hours
- 269 still on cash assistance
The Index: Example

\[ \text{Widget Count Self – Support Index Q3 2016} = \]

\[ \frac{457 \text{ off cash} + 30 \text{ working 30 hours}}{756 \text{ participants Q3 2013}} = \]

\[ \frac{487 \text{ successful cases}}{756 \text{ participants Q3 2013}} \approx 64.4\% \]
Does Not Reward Bad Outcomes

If someone leaves MFIP for the following reasons, the Self-Support Index does not count them as successful

Successful

Sanctions

Time limits

Not (yet) successful
Where do the data come from to produce the Index?

MAXIS!
The Index: Careful MAXIS Coding is Important!

- Hours: on STAT/JOBS, BUSI and RBIC
- Supplemental Security Income: on STAT/UNEA
- Relationships: on STAT/MEMB & STAT/PARE
- Sanctions Countable Months: on STAT/SANC
- Countable Months: on STAT/TIME
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE INDEX?
Two Parts of the Self-Support Index

The Index
Your Score

The Range
Your Target
Two Parts of the Self-Support Index

The Index
Your Score

The Range
Your Target
Putting the Index in Context
The Index Provides a Score – but does it really tell you how well you did?

Self Support Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Area</th>
<th>Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Area A</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Area B</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Area C</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Area D</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statewide</strong></td>
<td><strong>67.4%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What the Range Does...

It takes into account the labor market and the people being served...

...and levels the playing field across the state – something counties requested
The Range – Providing Context to Targets

Puts the Self-Support Index in context
Creating the Range for a County

Information about those you serve

Self-Support Index Range

Information about the local economy
Information about Participants

- Ever married
- Gender
- Race and ethnicity
- High school diploma or GED
- Student
- Two-parent case
- Assistance from another state
- Inter-county moves
- Chemical dependence diagnosis
- Mental health diagnosis
- SSI child in family
- SSI adult in family
- Immigrant
- Interpreter needed
- Age of youngest child at baseline
- Age of adult at baseline
- Age of adult at birth of first child
- Number of children in family
- Average child support
- Housing subsidy
Information about the Local Economy

- County unemployment rate
- County child poverty rate
- Population density
- Child Care Availability
Local Targets Changes Success

Self-Support Index and Range of Expected Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service area</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Upper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service area A</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>88.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service area B</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service area C</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service area D</td>
<td>75.5%</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td></td>
<td>67.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What can we do to get a more favorable range?

Nothing

Factors that predict the range are outside of the control of counties and tribes

You can test out strategies to improve your score
Context matters in the Self-Support Index!
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LOCAL TARGETS AND THEIR RANGES?
Thank you!

Additional MFIP Reports and Resources.
Theme 1: Revisit the methodology

• Estimation methods

• Revisit predictor variables

• Bootstrapping step (going from estimation to ranges)
  – What kind of uncertainty are we trying to capture?
Theme 2: Deeper structure of the model

- MFIP participation is a dynamic process.
- Data for any quarter has many “cohorts.”
- Response to variables probably varies across cohorts.