
ACF's Family Self-Sufficiency and Stability Research Consortium (FSSRC): Resources for Conducting and Using Quality Research Studies

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ACF Regions V&VII TANF Priority Update Meeting

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MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

Context and Motivation

- **Since welfare reform there has been a significant decline in 3 areas related to welfare research:**
 - 1. State and local welfare and family self-sufficiency research capacity**
 - 2. State-generated research and state-specific program evaluation**
 - 3. Academic interest in TANF program operations including the use of administrative and program evaluation data**

- **Simultaneously, there have been a number of advances in welfare research including:**
 - **Acceptance and adoption of RCT's as the “gold standard” for answering causal questions**
 - **Advances in alternative methodologies examining causal relations**
 - **Increases in data and computing power which make it easier and faster to conduct research**
 - **Improvements in the academic training of new graduates entering the field**

The Family Self-Sufficiency and Stability Research Consortium (FSSRC) – The Response

- A unified, multi-component approach
 - No one entity or funding mechanism could meet all research and program needs and address all issues
 - Diversity is a strength
 - Based on a network theory of implementation and change
 - FSSRC > sum of the parts
- Consortium – “An association of two or more individuals or entities with the objective of participating in a common activity or pooling their resources for achieving a common goal.”
- Family Self-Sufficiency and Stability Research Consortium (FSSRC) Components
 - Advancing Welfare & Family Self-Sufficiency Research Project (a.k.a. Project AWESOME)
 - Family Self-Sufficiency & Stability Research Scholars Network (Scholars Network)
 - Data Center for Family Self-Sufficiency

Project AWESOME

- **OPRE contract with Mathematica Policy Research**
 - **Key Personnel: Michelle Derr, Alicia Meckstroth, Matt Stagner**
- **Primary Activities**
 - **Document the state of the field**
 - Development of a strategic plan for the FSSRC
 - **Maintain engaged communication with key constituencies**
 - **Be “on call” to respond rapidly to emerging policy and research needs**
 - **Produce and disseminate products that enhance the knowledge base in family self-sufficiency research**
 - **Support collaboration and coordination of activities of the Consortium including related cooperative agreements and research contracts**

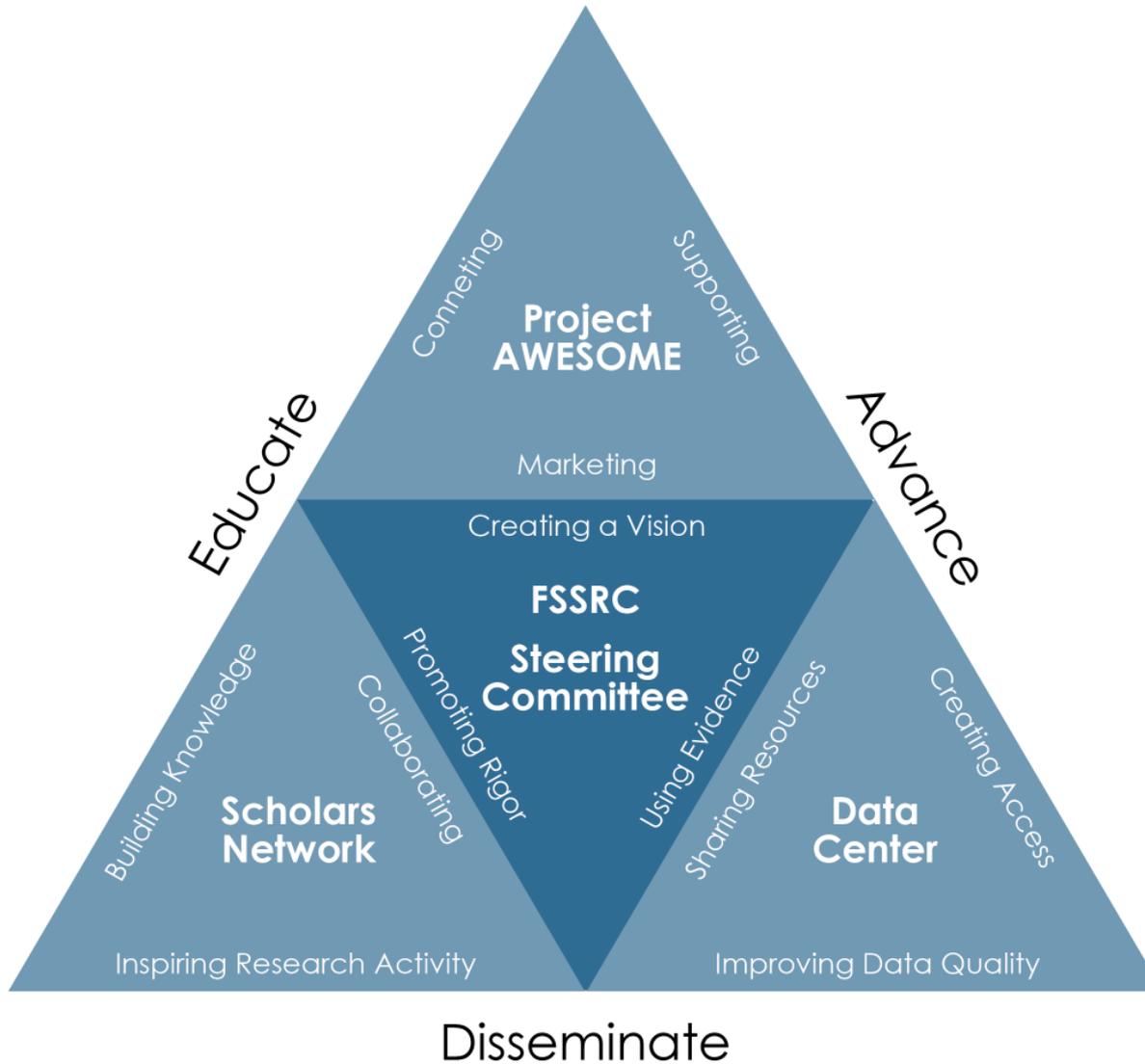
Family Self-Sufficiency Data Center

- **Cooperative agreement to develop, implement and support ongoing operations of a Data Center related to Family Self-Sufficiency programs and research.**
- **The Center will serve as a hub to support the development of state and institutional capacity for data collection, linkage, and, where necessary, data storage.**
- **Possible Center activities include:**
 - **Conducting a national assessment of state and needs of the field**
 - **Negotiating, supporting and maintaining ongoing access agreements for administrative and program evaluation data**
 - **Facilitating expedited data access and streamlined processes for accessing data**
 - **Engaging in activities to support secondary analysis of data**
 - **Conducting supporting activities**
 - **Working with State and local human services to improve data quality**

Family Self-Sufficiency Research Scholars Network

- **7 grants to Principal Investigators to join a network of scholars**
- **The Scholars Network will be a collaborative enterprise of scholars who undertake research in family self-sufficiency and stability that is both scientifically rigorous and highly relevant to family self-sufficiency programs and research.**
- **Cooperative agreements with scholars to :**
 - **Work independently and collectively to undertake a systematic, multi-disciplinary examination of the current gaps in family self-sufficiency and stability policies, programs and existing research focusing on two areas:**
 - **Research on the institutional state of the field of State and local human service agencies, CBOs and systems of support for children and families,**
 - **Contributions of stability and instability within and across various domains and disciplines.**
 - **Execute research and program evaluation activities in collaboration with human services agencies and CBOs**
 - **Participate in a multi-disciplinary learning community by collaborating with other members of the Network , Data Center and affiliated scholars**

Family Self-Sufficiency and Stability Research Consortium (FSSRC)



Collectively, what will the Consortium do?

- **Maintain, elevate and promote an emphasis on rigor**
 - For example, through Project AWESOME the Consortium will support the activities of the NAWRS Research Academy at the NAWRS Conference
- **Supplement state and local research capacity**
- **Stimulate academic interest**
 - Develop a multi-disciplinary conceptual framework
 - Focus on unanswered, but emerging interests
 - Exploit variation across states and localities as an opportunity for research, rather than a constraint
- **Facilitate research partnerships**
- **Provide an institutional mechanism to be nimble and respond rapidly when policy and research issues arise, such as natural experiments**

Timeline

- Consortium is in its formative stages
- Project AWESOME began October 2012
- Scholars Network and Data Center grants will be awarded by Fall 2013
- FSSRC Steering Committee will begin planning October 2013
- Ongoing – Engage stakeholders and seek out opportunities for program and research collaborations
 - We want you to be engaged with us!

For More Information

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