CAREER PATHWAYS TOOLS FOR TANF PROGRAMS: GUIDED USE CASES

What are Guided-Use Cases?

Guided Use Cases are scenario-based examples grounded in real context. Each use case starts with a specific situation—such as expanding work-based learning options, strengthening career coaching, or aligning services with high-demand industries—and then points to tools in the catalog that can help support that goal.

Each use case highlights:

- *A common TANF program challenge or decision point*
- *The most relevant toolkit(s) to use*
- *Practical steps for applying the tools in a TANF context*
- *Considerations related to TANF policies, participants, and service delivery*

Introduction

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs play a critical role in helping families move toward employment, stability, and long-term economic mobility. To accompany the Career Pathways Toolkit Catalog, these Guided Use Cases offer short, practical explainers that show how TANF programs can apply selected tools to common implementation challenges.

Rather than reading every toolkit from start to finish, TANF administrators and staff can use these Guided Use Cases to quickly identify which tools are most relevant, when to use them, and how they can support TANF program goals.

How to Use

TANF programs can use the Guided Use Cases flexibly, based on their role and needs:

- *TANF administrators can use them to inform planning, policy alignment, and cross-agency coordination.*
- *Program managers and supervisors can use them to guide service design and partner engagement.*
- *Case managers and employment counselors can use them to support participant planning and goal setting.*

Each use case can be used on its own or alongside others.

Use Cases Provided in This Resource

Use Case 1: Using Evidence to Strengthen TANF Career Pathways Investment

When to Use This Use Case:

Your TANF program is determining which education and training strategies to fund or scale.

Who This Is For:

- TANF administrators

Suggested Tools to Use:

- *Evidence Snapshot: Career Pathways (page 11 of the Catalog of Toolkits)*
- *Evidence Snapshot: Occupational and Sectoral Training (page 12 of the Catalog of Toolkits)*
- *Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse Case Studies (page 19 of the Catalog of Toolkits)*

How TANF Programs Can Use These Tools:

1. Review Evidence Snapshots on interventions with positive employment and earnings outcomes.
2. Identify approaches that align with TANF participant needs.
3. Use Case Studies to understand implementation challenges and solutions.
4. Apply findings to program design and performance management.

What Success Looks Like:

TANF-funded initiatives are evidence-informed and outcome-driven.

Considerations:

Use evidence to support state plan updates and funding decisions.

Use Case 2: Assessing Whether TANF-Funded Programs Qualify as Career Pathways

When to Use This Use Case:
Your TANF program needs to assess whether TANF-funded education and training activities align with the WIOA career pathway definition and support long-term economic stability.

Who This Is For:
- TANF administrators
- Program managers

Suggested Tools to Use:
- *Career Pathways Checklist (page 6 of the Catalog of Toolkits)*
- *Career Pathways Toolkit: An Enhanced Guide and Workbook (page 7 of the Catalog of Toolkits)*

How TANF Programs Can Use These Tools:
1. Apply the Career Pathways Checklist to TANF-supported programs.
2. Identify strengths and gaps related to employer engagement, credential alignment, and work-based learning.
3. Use the Enhanced Guide and Workbook to guide program improvements.
4. Document alignment for reporting, planning, and cross-agency coordination.

What Success Looks Like:
TANF-funded services clearly support participant progression toward credentials and employment.

Considerations:
Align enhancements with allowable TANF expenditures and state policies.

Use Case 3: Designing Career Pathways That Work in Rural TANF Contexts

When to Use This Use Case:
Your TANF program wishes to support rural participants facing limited local employment options, transportation barriers, or geographic isolation.

Who This Is For:
- TANF administrators
- Program managers

Suggested Tools to Use:
- *[Design and Implementation of College and Career Pathways in Rural Communities (page 9 of the Catalog of Toolkits)](#)*
- *[Empowering Michigan's Workforce Framework (page 10 of the Catalog of Toolkits)](#)*

How TANF Programs Can Use These Tools:
1. Apply the Design and Implementation of College and Career Pathways in Rural Communities toolkit to identify local economic strengths and regional workforce opportunities.
2. Incorporate remote training, virtual services, or mobile instruction into pathway design.
3. Apply the Empowering Michigan's Workforce Framework to support partnerships with employers beyond immediate geographic boundaries.
4. Align the career pathways with broader community and economic development efforts.

What Success Looks Like:
Rural TANF participants can access viable career pathways.

Considerations:
Address access barriers through supportive services and flexible service delivery.

Use Case 4: Using Registered Apprenticeship to Support TANF Participants' Employment Goals

When to Use This Use Case:

Your TANF program is seeking work-based learning options that count toward work participation requirements and lead to stable, higher-wage employment.

Who This Is For:

- Program managers

Suggested Tools to Use:

- *A Quick-Start Toolkit: Building Registered Apprenticeship Programs (page 2 of the Catalog of Toolkits)*
- *Registered Apprenticeship Academy (page 20 of the Catalog of Toolkits)*
- *National Occupational Frameworks Guide (page 16 of the Catalog of Toolkits)*

How TANF Programs Can Use These Tools:

1. Use the Quick-Start Toolkit to determine whether Registered Apprenticeship is an appropriate strategy for your TANF participants.
2. Work with workforce and employer partners to identify occupations accessible to entry-level workers.
3. Use the National Occupational Frameworks to define training benchmarks and competencies.
4. Support partners in completing registration requirements using the Registered Apprenticeship Academy.

What Success Looks Like:

TANF participants are enrolled in Registered Apprenticeships that provide paid employment, structured training, and advancement opportunities.

Considerations:

Coordinate supportive services (childcare, transportation) to improve participant retention.

Use Case 5: Using Sector Strategies to Improve Employment Outcomes for TANF Participants

When to Use This Use Case:

Your TANF program wants to move participants into occupations with stronger wages and advancement potential.

Who This Is For:

- Program managers
- Case managers

Suggested Tools to Use:

- *Business Engagement Collaborative: Sector Strategies Resources (page 5 of the Catalog of Toolkits)*
- *Competency Model Clearinghouse (page 8 of the Catalog of Toolkits)*

How TANF Programs Can Use These Tools:

1. Use sector data from the Business Engagement Collaborative to identify high-demand industries suitable for TANF participants.
2. Engage employers to validate skills and entry-level requirements.
3. Use competency models from the Clearinghouse to align training and supportive services.
4. Develop career ladders that allow participants to progress over time.

What Success Looks Like:

Participants enter jobs with clear pathways to higher wages and stability.

Considerations:

Coordinate with WIOA partners to braid funding and services.

Use Case 6: Using Career Pathways–Informed Career Counseling in TANF Case Management

When to Use This Use Case:

Your TANF program's case managers need practical tools to help participants connect immediate work requirements with longer-term career goals.

Who This Is For:

- Case managers

Suggested Tools to Use:

- *Achievement in Career Engagement: A Guide to Career Counseling (page 3 of the Catalog of Toolkits)*
- *Ohio Aspire Career Pathways Toolkit (page 17 of the Catalog of Toolkits)*

How TANF Programs Can Use These Tools:

1. Apply Achieve in Career Engagement to adapt career counseling worksheets for TANF intake and ongoing case management.
2. Use the Ohio Aspire Career Pathways Toolkit to apply career pathway maps that help participants understand credential and employment options.
3. Incorporate work experience, job shadowing, and short-term training into Individual Responsibility Plans (IRPs) developed with participant input.
4. Reference back to Achieve in Career Engagement to support staff in managing caseloads while maintaining individualized planning.

What Success Looks Like:

Participants co-develop with case managers clear, achievable plans that integrate employment, education, and support services.

Considerations:

Ensure plans meet work participation requirements while supporting long-term advancement.