Introductions

Today's Objectives

1. Review updated flowcharts for categorizing individuals as current recipients or exiters for the secondary school attainment measure

2. Discuss steps for collecting data through self-attestation

3. Review best practices for collecting data through self-attestation

Agenda

1. Review updated flowcharts and cases

2. Plan for now and the future

3. Steps for collecting data through self-attestation
   - Determining eligibility
   - Data collection options (TANF system and surveys)

4. Example of survey timeline

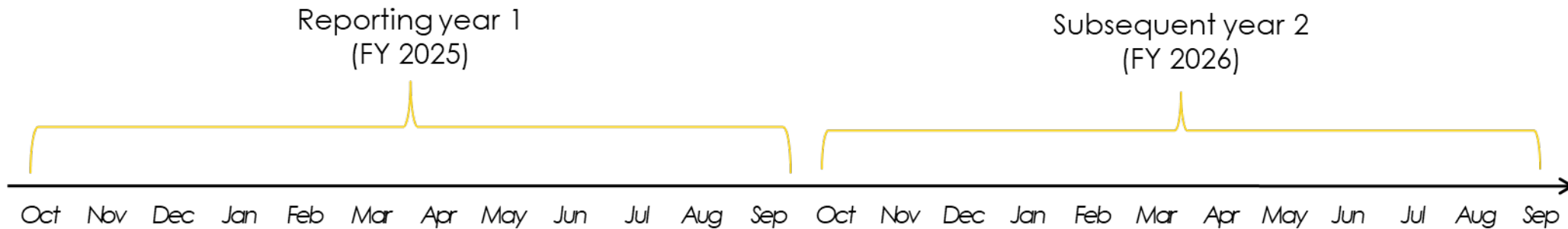5. Best practices for conducting surveys and collecting data using TANF systems

Reporting Requirements

[Definition] Time Period

To be included in the secondary school attainment rate, the individual must obtain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent…

Reporting year 1
(FY 2025)

Subsequent year 2
(FY 2026)

Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep

During the reporting period <u>if a current recipient</u> *or*

During the reporting period or during the following fiscal year <u>if an exiter</u>

[Definition] Exit

Exit is the date that a family with a work-eligible individual (WEI) ceases to receive assistance from the TANF program.

> <u>Note</u>: *The last day of assistance cannot be determined until 90 days or three months have elapsed since the participant last received assistance.*

For reporting purposes, a family means:
a) all individuals receiving assistance as part of a family under the state's TANF program; and
b) the following additional persons living in the family, if not included under (a) above:
   (1) Parent or caretaker relative of any minor child;
   (2) A minor child; and
   (3) Any person whose income or resources are counted in determining the family's eligibility for or amount of assistance.

[Definition] Exiter

A work-eligible individual will be included as an exiter in these measures only when their **family** ceases to receive assistance.

A work-eligible individual will **NOT** meet the definition of an exiter when the needs of the work-eligible individual are removed from the assistance payment, but the family continues to receive assistance and the individual remains work-eligible.

An individual in the family must have been "a work-eligible individual," as defined in 45 CFR 261.2(n)(1), in their last month of assistance.

**For the secondary education attainment measure, count the individual as an exiter if they ever met the exit definition at any time during the reporting period. Once an exiter, always an exiter during the reporting period.
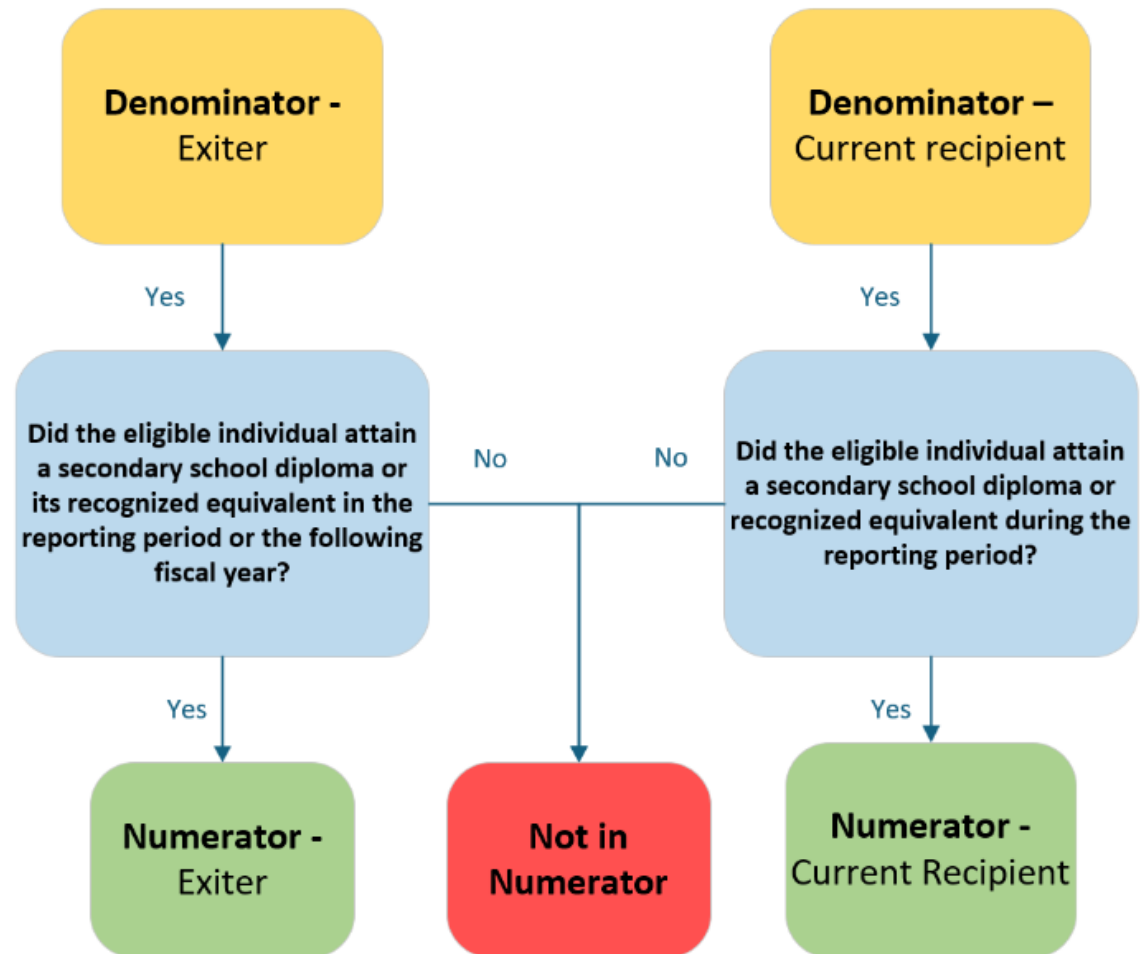
Steps to determine if individuals should be included in the denominator
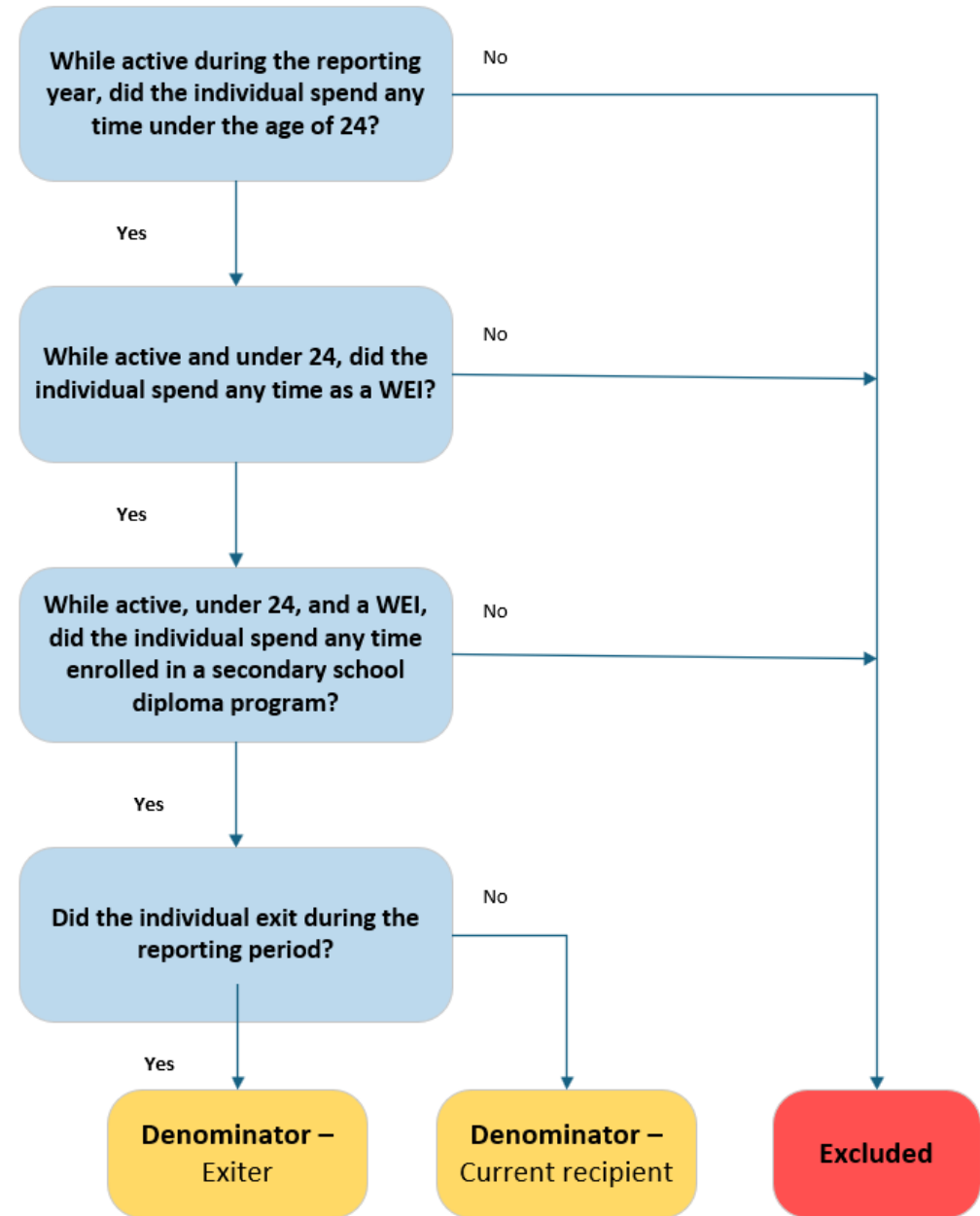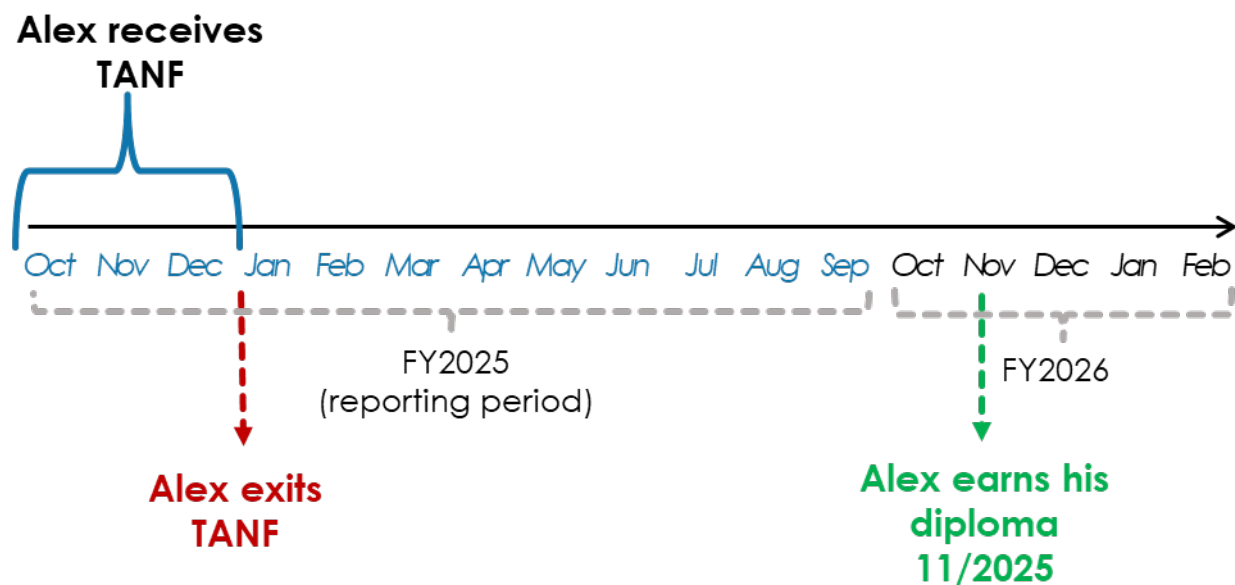

Note: "Active" = family receiving TANF assistance

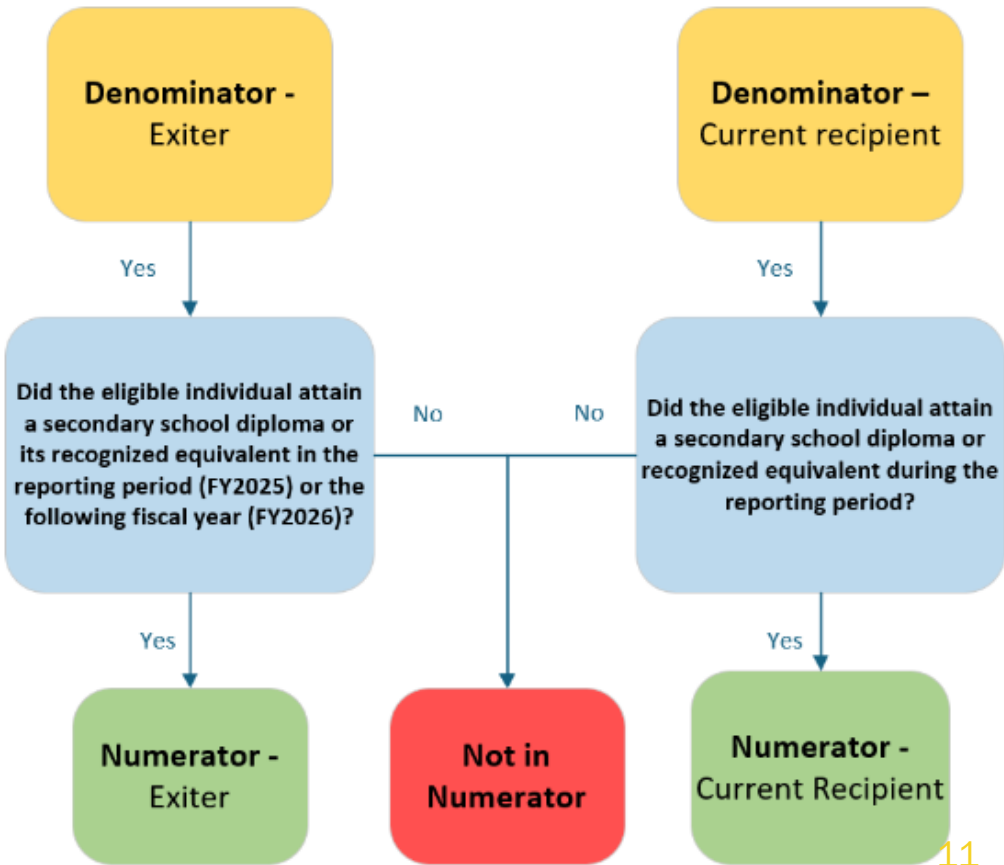# Steps to determine if individuals should be included in the numerator

Case 1 – Which denominator and numerator category should Alex be included in?

Alex receives TANF

Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb

FY2025 (reporting period)

FY2026

Alex exits TANF

Alex earns his diploma 11/2025

Answer: Alex is included in the underlined exiter denominator because he stopped receiving TANF assistance for at least 90 days.

Alex is also included in the numerator because he received his diploma in FY2026.

Denominator - Exiter

Yes

Did the eligible individual attain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent in the reporting period (FY2025) or the following fiscal year (FY2026)?

No   No

Denominator – Current recipient

Yes

Did the eligible individual attain a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent during the reporting period?

Yes

Numerator - Exiter

Not in Numerator

Yes

Numerator - Current Recipient

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Case 2 – Which denominator and numerator category should Kelly be included in?

Kelly receives TANF

Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep | Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb

FY2025
(reporting period)

FY2026

Kelly exits TANF

Kelly earns her diploma
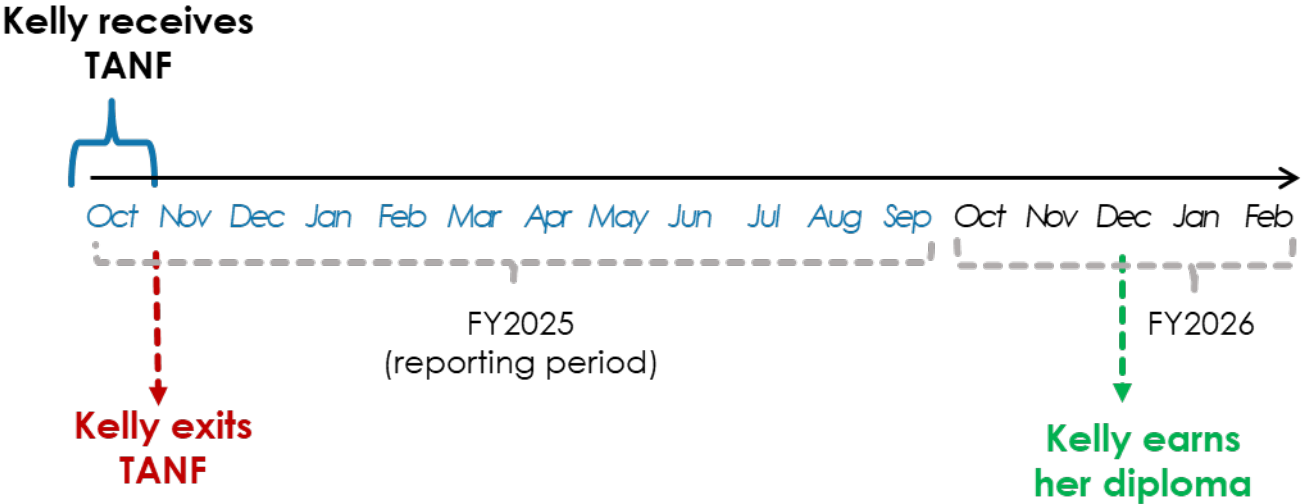
Answer: Kelly is included in the exiter denominator because she stopped receiving TANF assistance for at least 90 days during the reporting period.

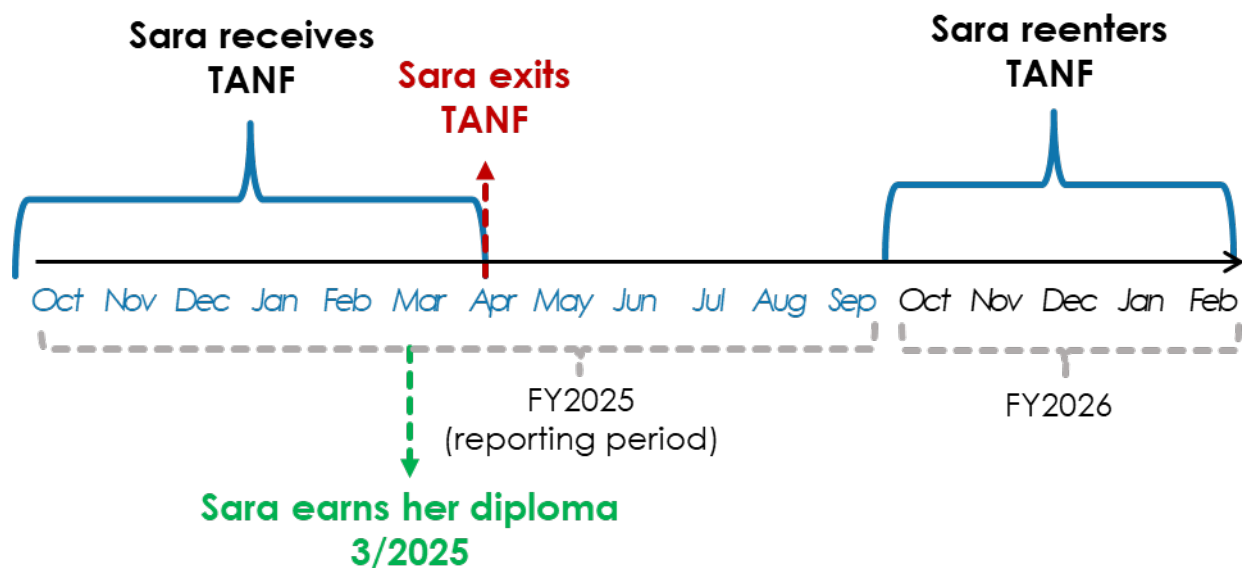Kelly is included in the numerator because she received her diploma in FY2026.

Denominator - Exiter

Yes

Did the eligible individual attain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent in the reporting period (FY2025) or the following fiscal year (FY2026)?

No   No

Yes

Numerator - Exiter

Not in Numerator

Denominator – Current recipient

Yes

Did the eligible individual attain a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent during the reporting period?

Yes

Numerator - Current Recipient

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Case 3 – Which denominator and numerator category should Sara be included in?

Sara receives TANF

Sara exits TANF

Sara reenters TANF

Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb

FY2025 (reporting period)

FY2026

Sara earns her diploma 3/2025

Answer: Sara is included in the <u>exiter</u> denominator because she exited during the reporting period, and she is in the numerator because she attained her diploma during the reporting year.

Denominator - Exiter

Denominator – Current recipient

Yes

Yes

Did the eligible individual attain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent in the reporting period (FY2025) or the following fiscal year (FY2026)?

No

No

Did the eligible individual attain a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent during the reporting period?

Yes

Yes

Numerator - Exiter

Not in Numerator

Numerator - Current Recipient

Planning for Now and the Future

Balancing Two Key Priorities

Short-Term Goal:
Prepare for the Fiscal Year 2025 submission (report due November 2027) by gathering the necessary data on secondary school attainment. This includes identifying data sources (e.g., surveys, case management systems, administrative records) and establishing a timeline.

Long-Term Goal:
Build and strengthen data systems and processes to support sustainable, ongoing education outcome tracking.

This may include:
➢ Enhancing case management systems
➢ Training staff to consistently capture education data
➢ Exploring partnerships with education agencies or other organizations (e.g., SLDS or colleges)

Steps for Collecting Data through Self-Attestation

First Step: Determine Eligible Population

Data Needed

- Age (less than 24 years of age)
- Work-eligible individual (WEI) status
- Enrollment in secondary education

✓ **NOTE:** *Exclude individuals who attained a credential prior to the reporting period.*

Poll

Does your TANF agency currently collect information on whether participants **are enrolled** in secondary school (e.g., high school or GED)?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

If yes to the previous question, how current is the secondary education information in your system?

- Up to date for the entire eligible population
- Up to date for a subset of the eligible population
- Collected once, rarely updated
- Varies by caseworker or office
- Not sure/other

Second Step: Categorize Individuals as Exiters or Current Recipients

Data Needed

- Case status
- Exit date

✓ **NOTE:** *The distinction is necessary to determine the appropriate period for capturing secondary education attainment: for recipients, the reporting period; for exiters, the reporting period or the subsequent fiscal year.*

Third Step: Collect Secondary Education Data

Data Needed

- Secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent completion date

Poll

Does your TANF agency currently collect information on whether participants **completed** secondary school (e.g., high school or GED)?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

If yes to the previous question, how current is the secondary education information in your system?

- Up to date for the entire eligible population
- Up to date for a subset of the eligible population
- Collected once, rarely updated
- Varies by caseworker or office
- Not sure/other

Possible Data Sources

- **State Education System:** Centralized data on public K–12 and higher education (e.g., enrollment, graduation).

- **Local Secondary School or Equivalent Systems:** School district-level data on enrollment and completion.

- **Self-Reported from Participants:** Survey or interview data.

- **TANF Work Program Data:** Tracks participant-level data on work-related activities, such as enrollment, services received, attendance, and program outcomes.

- **Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS/P20W):** Linked data from preschool through workforce, enabling long-term tracking.

- **Community College or State Postsecondary System:** Collects data on college enrollment and participation in secondary school equivalency programs.

Self-Attestation

What is Self-Attestation and When to Use It?

Self-attestation means that a participant reports their own secondary education enrollment and attainment information via a survey or interview.

- **When it's used:**
  - Administrative data is unavailable or incomplete
  - Document collection is burdensome for participants
  - Quick data collection is needed (e.g., during intake)

Using the TANF Case Management System to Collect Education Data

1) **Leverage existing systems:**

   - Secondary school enrollment and attainment information may already be captured in the TANF case management system, including through self-attestation during interviews.

2) **Identify opportunities to collect or update secondary school enrollment and attainment information:**

   - During initial intake or application (may involve self-attestation through interview)
   - At recertification or redetermination appointments
   - When participants report changes (e.g., employment or training updates)
   - As part of their work activities requirements

Using the TANF Case Management System to Collect Education Data (cont.)

3) Standardize data collection and responses

4) Integrate data collection into different touchpoints:
- Train staff to verify or update education status during each visit

5) Make it easy for case managers to collect information:
- Provide script for case managers to use
- Embed question into system
- Make fields required

6) Ensure data quality
- Periodically review data entries for completeness and accuracy
- Cross-check with administrative records when available

Using Surveys to Collect Education Data

When to use surveys:

- When administrative data is incomplete or unavailable
- To reach participants not currently receiving TANF cash assistance (exiters)

Key benefits:

- Flexible format (online, phone, paper, text)
- Has the potential to reach large or dispersed populations
- Opportunity to gather self-attested and timely information

Downsides:

- Low response rates
- Self-reported errors
- Access & literacy barriers
- Cost and effort

Example of Survey Questions

A1.   Since [START OF REPORTING PERIOD], have you participated in any classes to prepare for a regular high school diploma, GED (General Educational Development) test, or another recognized equivalent?
   1) YES
   2) NO (GO TO END)
   7) DON'T KNOW (GO TO END)
   8) DECLINE TO ANSWER (GO TO END)

A2a.   Are you currently taking GED or high school diploma classes?
   1) YES
   2) NO
   7) DON'T KNOW
   8) DECLINE TO ANSWER

Example of Survey Questions (cont.)

A2b.   Where [were/are] you taking these classes?
1) Elementary/middle school
2) High school
3) American Job Center or Career One-Stop
4) Community college
5) Church or community organization
6) A private proprietary or trade school
7) Other (please specify)_____
97) DON'T KNOW
98) DECLINE TO ANSWER

A2c.   When did you enroll in these classes?

MM/YYYY
97) DON'T KNOW MONTH   9997)   DON'T KNOW YEAR
98) DECLINE MONTH   9998)   DECLINE YEAR

Example of Survey Questions (cont.)

SKIP INSTRUCTIONS: ASK A2d IF A2a=2 (NO LONGER ENROLLED IN CLASSES)

A2d. Why are you no longer taking GED or high school classes?
1) Received GED or High School Diploma
2) Took a break from taking the classes
3) School is not in session
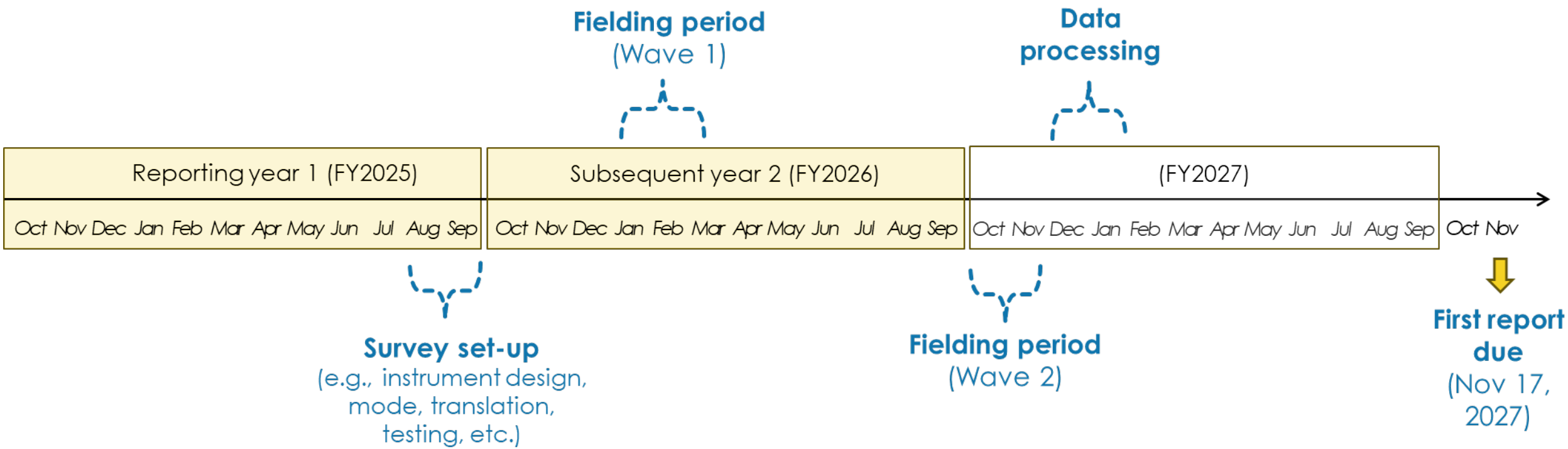4) Other (please specify) _____
7) DON'T KNOW
8) DECLINE TO ANSWER

SKIP INSTRUCTIONS: ASK A2e IF A2d=1 (RECEIVED GED OR HS DIPLOMA)

A2e. When did you receive your High School Diploma or GED?

MM/YYYY

97) DON'T KNOW MONTH	9997) DON'T KNOW YEAR
98) DECLINE MONTH	9998) DECLINE YEAR

Example of Survey Timeline

Fielding period (Wave 1)

Data processing

Reporting year 1 (FY2025)	Subsequent year 2 (FY2026)	(FY2027)
Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep	Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep	Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep	Oct Nov

Survey set-up
(e.g., instrument design, mode, translation, testing, etc.)

Fielding period (Wave 2)

First report due
(Nov 17, 2027)

Survey Best Practices – Handout

- Flexible and inclusive delivery methods

- Trust-building communication

- Timely follow-up and support

- Thoughtful use of incentives

- Fielding period that works for data collection and TANF agency

- https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/

Best Practices to Improve TANF Survey Response Rates for the FRA Secondary School Attainment Measure

The Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA) requires states and territories to report secondary school attainment outcomes for TANF recipients. Although this information may be available from administrative data sources, for some states or recipients, it may be necessary to gather data through surveys. This resource offers helpful guidelines and tips to improve response rates to surveys, organized into the following sections:

1. Designing the survey
2. Selecting the survey mode
3. Recruiting the participants
4. Timing the survey
5. Enhancing engagement
6. Reminding the participants

When conducting a survey with a small number of target respondents, every additional response is critical. High response rates lead to more reliable data and ensure that the experiences of hard-to-reach participants—who may differ from the majority—are not missed.

Use these simple tips to improve response rates and gather accurate, actionable insights. Appendix A provides an example of survey questions that collect secondary education information.

 # 1 Designing the survey

- **Keep it short:** Limit the number of questions to keep completion time under 10–15 minutes.
  Pro tip: Most online platforms can estimate the completion time—use this feature to adjust your survey length.

- **Keep it simple:** Use straightforward, simple language that avoids jargon.
  Example: A technical term such as "secondary education" could be replaced or enhanced with a plain language explanation such as "high school diploma or GED."

- **Use clear skip logic:** Design skip patterns so respondents only see relevant questions based on their earlier answers.

- **Offer translation:** Provide translations into key languages based on your audience's needs.
  Pro tip: Verify that translated versions maintain clarity and are culturally appropriate.

- **Ensure quality:** Check that the survey is free of typos, awkward formatting, and confusing skip patterns.
  Pro tip: Pilot test the survey with a few participants to verify clarity and overall functionality before wide distribution.

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Summary of Best Practices Using TANF Case Management System

- Standardize data collection: include consistent questions and response options

- Ask questions during multiple touchpoints: intake, recertification, employment/training updates

- Make it easy for case managers: embed question into required field prompts

- Periodically review data entries

- Cross-check with administrative records data when available

- Request proof of educational attainment when possible

UPCOMING EVENT

**September Info Session:
Education Outcomes Special Topic –
Obtaining Data from Administrative
Records
Date: 9/25/2025**

Additional guidance:
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/law-regulation/tanf-provisions-fra-2023

Final report forms and instructions:
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/programs/tanf/reporting-instructions

Secondary School Attainment Measure Instructions:
https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ofa/2A.Instructions-secondary-school-attainment-measure.pdf

Technical Assistance Resources: https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/total

For questions and requests for assistance, contact the TANF Data Division:
tanfdata@acf.hhs.gov

mdrc
BUILDING KNOWLEDGE
TO IMPROVE SOCIAL POLICY

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