



TANF Online Work Readiness Assessment (OWRA) Technical Aspects Overview Summer 2011



Purpose

This document is intended for use by State, Tribal and county Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program staff to share with appropriate IT staff to begin the necessary planning for State, Tribal, and county implementation of the Online Work Readiness Assessment (OWRA) application, described below. This application is being provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, in support of moving families toward self-sufficiency. The OWRA tool is intended for use by case managers in assessing strengths for and barriers to work activities, and provides general guidance on next steps, relative to strengths and barriers revealed during the questionnaire/assessment with the TANF participant. Additionally, the tool links participants to pertinent development and work activities and allows the case manager to track and monitor participant activities.

Background

The Online Work Readiness Assessment (OWRA) Intake, Assessment, Self-Sufficiency, Work Readiness, and Reporting Modules are being provided to interested States, Tribes, and counties for use in their own operating (programmatic and technical) environment. The application¹ and deployment package/instructions are being provided to interested agencies. Once deployed and implemented according to State, Tribal, and county requirements (security, etc.), staff are then free to use the tool as deemed appropriate by/within the State, Tribe, and county.

OWRA's functional components include:

- online data collection and questionnaire for caseworkers to use with TANF participants;
- print view of questions and responses;
- work readiness recommendations from the assessment;
- guidance for career preparation;
- reporting tools; and
- user administration interface (separate from online data collection system).

Licensing

The U.S. Government is making this software available to State, Tribal and county Governments under the MIT License (see: <http://www.opensource.org/licenses/mit-license.php>). No form of product registration will be required for use of the OWRA application.

Access

The necessary files are available for download at: <http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/tanftc>. Documentation is available for reference. The actual downloading of code will require users to enter their associated entity name (State, Tribe, and county, etc), contact name and email to track what locality and usage statistics, as well as contact information should any future communications regarding OWRA be necessary.

Individual State Responsibility

Customization

Each State, Tribe, and county will be responsible for deployment, hosting, and maintenance of the OWRA tool. We recommend customizing only the particular aspects of the application for which instructions are provided. The tool's contents have been extensively field tested and vetted through research, focus groups, two pilot projects, and two implementation sites covering 21 localities across 5 States, 2 Tribes, and District

¹ [source code for the system as well as a .war file (Java Application archive) for the application and administration modules plus the database schema]



of Columbia. However, the assessment recommendations can be easily customized in the database for the existing questionnaire. It is strongly recommended maintaining the integrity of the tool by **not** changing the application other than those features provided in the customization instructions, which are also found at: <http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/tanftc>.

Security

States, Tribes, and counties are responsible for determining how the tool should be deployed programmatically (e.g., by State, Tribal, or county administration) as well as technically. We are providing standard security measures including password protection and field-level encryption in the database. The following outlines key security measures of note:

- Password-protection is administered through a separate interface;
- Predefined access roles are provided with the install and currently include: admin, supervisor, case worker, and a quality assurance role that provides view-only access. Additional levels of supervision can be accommodated by the system, such as the center and district;
- States, Tribes, and counties can set up the structural hierarchy (e.g., by district/county) in the database, instructions (found at <http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/tanftc>.) are provided on setting this up in the database;
- All roles (with the exception of admin) are associated with a county or similar entity. This association is completed in the account set up through the user admin interface. This allows program staff the ability to manage accounts rather than requiring IT staff assistance; and
- A default encryption mechanism is provided for encrypting customers' personally identifying information (first and last name, date of birth, full residential and mailing addresses, and social security number) contained in the database. We are providing an interface and instructions (found at: <http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/tanftc>) for customizing the encryption, as well as for selecting what information the system will encrypt.

States, Tribes, and counties are responsible for completing the "Worksheet for OWRA Assessment: Recommended Action and Guidance." The document presents the rules which govern the recommendations provided by the assessment that are based upon responses to the questionnaire. Program staff will complete the final column of the worksheet, and those values must then be entered in the database by IT staff. This needs to be completed prior to deployment of the application.

Technology Overview

OWRA was created to operate on open-source technologies for ease of use and minimal budgetary impact:

- No licensing is required;
- Frameworks used (such as Hibernate and Java Server Faces v1.2) are open source; and
- Cross platform (runs on Windows/Linux/MacOS/etc.).

The following technologies outline the development and implementation of the OWRA tool:

- Built in Java;
- Runs on any standard compliant Java application server (e.g., Tomcat, Glassfish, Weblogic, and Websphere). The OWRA pilot ran on Sun GlassFish Enterprise Server v2.1.1;
- Relational database (e.g., MySQL, Oracle, MS SQL Server) The OWRA pilot ran on MySQL;
- Application is built on a standard 3-tier architecture (web, application, and database) for scalability and security, and uses a Model-View-Controller framework;



- The browser's pop up blocker should be disabled as certain views open in new windows;
- Javascript is used extensively in the application; and
- Adobe PDF.

Integration

States, Tribes, and counties may integrate OWRA with existing systems via web services. OWRA uses a 'pull' to bring in demographic information from other systems for purposes of avoiding duplicative data entry by case managers. Additional instructions are provided as part of this package.

System Requirements

Browser Requirements

- Requires modern browser (e.g., Firefox 3 or higher, Internet Explorer 7 or higher, Safari 3 or higher) with Javascript enabled.
- Pop up blocker should be disabled as certain views open in new windows.

Hardware Requirements

- A dedicated Java application server is recommended. (The pilot phases were run on a single CPU server with 2GB of RAM).

Network Requirements

- The pilot application was designed with three instances of the application for load balancing purposes. This is recommended for State, Tribal, and county deployment as well to handle a potentially high volume of users.
- There are no inherent requirements for firewall/port considerations.

Deployment Package Contents

The following resources are included as part of our deployment package:

1. High-level documentation (this document)
2. Deployment instructions
3. Source code:
 - a. OWRA application
 - b. User account interface
 - c. Administration component
4. Database schema
5. Entity-relationship diagram
6. Data dictionary
7. Instructions for:
 - a. Integration guide for pulling information in from other systems via web services
 - i. Includes a separate file for the Web Service Description Language: CustAppLookUp.wsdl
 - b. Customizing the database encryption
 - c. Customizing the recommendations
 - i. Includes Word document "Worksheet for OWRA Assessment: Recommended Action and Guidance" which must be customized for specific recommendations based upon responses to the questionnaire



Recommended Implementation Checklist/Steps

1. Determine how the application will run – State, Tribe, or county administered and implications for load handling;
2. Determine hardware set up for application;
3. Determine security requirements:
 - a. HIPAA implications for health and personally identifying information
 - b. Customize encryption as necessary;
4. Deploy application to test/stage;
5. Determine and secure DNS and domain names;
6. Set up users and hierarchy;
7. Consider help desk support;
8. Enter recommendation information for assessment;
9. Test application;
10. Deploy to production; and
11. Inform users of url/account information.

