

## CalWORKs Logic Model: Keeping Program Management Decisions in Scope

The CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review (CalOAR) process promotes program accountability, continual quality improvement, and meaningful tracking of program participation and outcomes by emphasizing metrics that counties can consider when making program management decisions.

A statewide work group consisting of stakeholders including state agencies, counties, advocacy groups, research teams, the legislature, and CalWORKs recipient populations developed a plan for systematically collecting and disseminating data. This plan serves two purposes: (1) promoting continuous improvement in CalWORKs program management and (2) ensuring program expectations are prioritized and aligned while statewide baselines are established for future accountability. By prioritizing data that are more meaningful, the CalOAR process helps county staff improve their decision making about program management.

Legislation required the work group to develop three elements: (1) process and outcomes indicators, (2) a county self-assessment process, and (3) a county CalWORKs system improvement plan.

To achieve these objectives, the stakeholder work group used a high-level CalWORKs logic model, developed by CDSS and research partners.

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### What is the CalWORKs logic model?

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A logic model is a simplified visual description of a program. This visual portrays the theoretical underpinnings of CalWORKs by illustrating operationally how (1) inputs flow to (2) activities, and how those activities produce (3) outputs that enable us to see intended outcomes.

The logic model can help counties and stakeholders focus on program activities that lead to meaningful participant progress toward key outcomes. It can also help counties pinpoint strategic areas for both real-time and long-term program improvements, while realistically considering elements that program staff, county management, and state policymakers can influence (and, conversely, those they cannot).

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## What are the foundations of CalWORKs, and how does CalOAR support them?

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CalWORKs is founded upon the following principles:

- Effective engagement is a necessary first step to helping participants see the program as a safe and meaningful program for them, and is key to reducing sanction rates.
- People are more motivated to participate in a program that helps them realize their goals and enables them to pursue those goals within their reach.
- Executive function and self-regulation skills are key to long-term job success and resilience, but these skills are sometimes not fully expressed when people have high stress and live in poverty.
- Positive, supportive relationships in the TANF program environment are key to building and modeling executive function skills, and are critical to effective engagement.

The CalWORKs logic model helps us see how the program's approach must facilitate meaningful staff interactions and effective participant engagement to maintain participation. Only when customers are regularly participating can we see progress toward skill building, academic achievement, life stability, and steps to long-term employment and economic independence. Therefore, CalOAR has two main areas of emphasis: (1) process measures related to key engagement points of the program that align with early activities in the logic model and (2) outcome measures that naturally result from successful customer engagement.

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## What does this mean for program management?

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- When making program management decisions, counties should focus on the CalWORKs outcomes of interest documented in the logic model. Achieving these short-, medium- and long-term outcomes should drive decision making and determine what activities to emphasize as part of customer engagement and resource allocations.
- The state regulatory framework defines some CalWORKs activities, but counties influence how to operationalize and connect them to meaningful outputs. Counties should target their improvement planning around activities that influence the outputs contributing to areas of challenge and look to learn from areas of success.
- As counties adopt and track the CalOAR metrics, all program improvement considerations should fit clearly within the CalWORKs program scope (inputs, activities, outputs) as defined by the logic model.
- Counties should note that WPR is not an outcome of interest in the logic model. Please recognize that WPR can only improve if the CalWORKs program is meeting the needs of customers by engaging them with appropriate activities and sufficient resource allocations to activities that are the building blocks for medium- and longer-term outcomes. Customers will fulfill WPR hours as a byproduct of their meaningful engagement and progression through planned activities.

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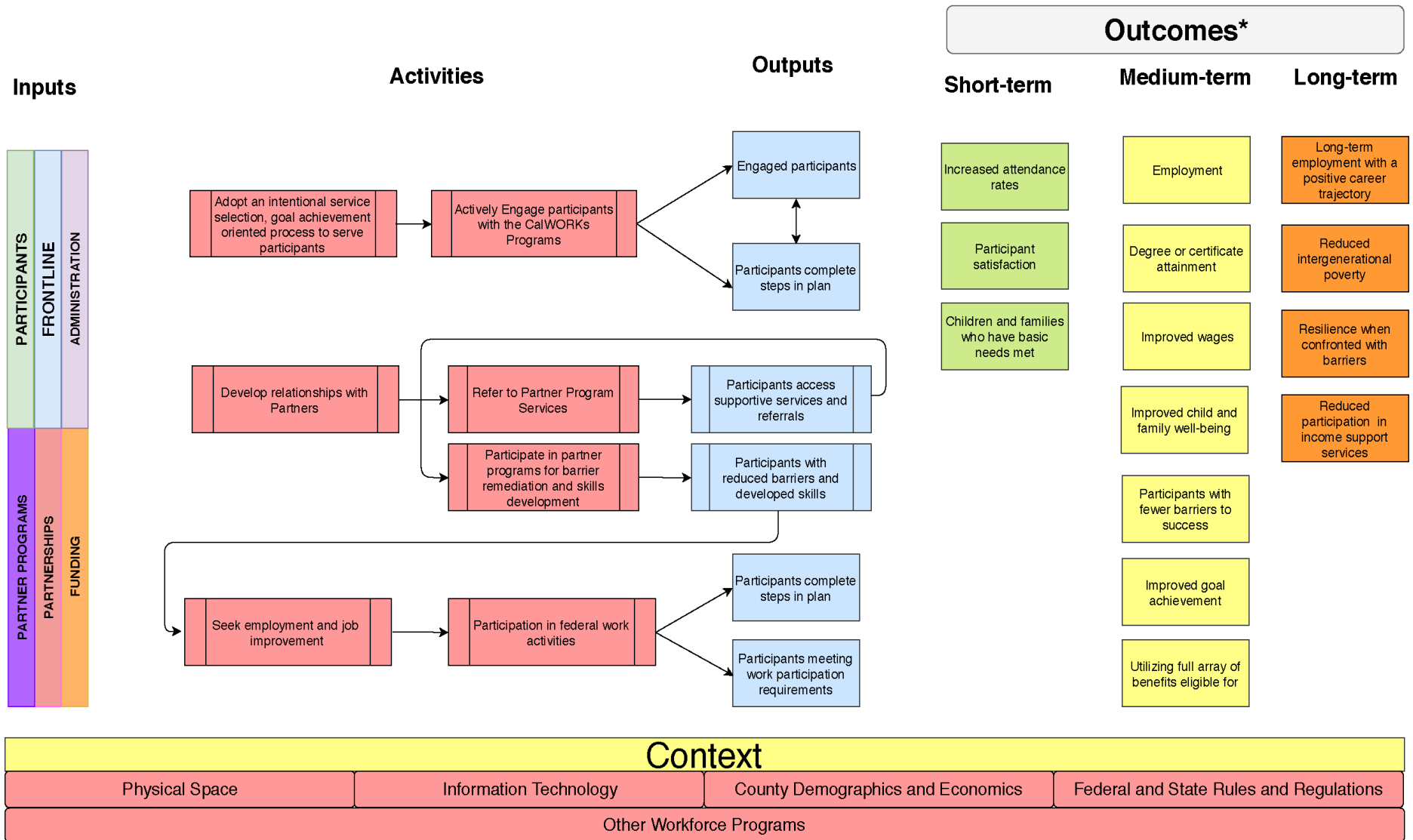
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### Draft CalWORKs High Level Logic Model



\*Note: Time frames are general guidelines associated with where a family is in the CalWORKs process. Short, medium, and long-term may vary due to the family's circumstances.