

Upward Mobility Program Assessment

This assessment can be used to help local government stakeholders understand whether their programs embody the principles and factors that evidence shows boost mobility from poverty.¹⁸ As you use this assessment, please remember this is **not** a program evaluation tool and will not tell you whether your programs are boosting mobility from poverty. Places interested in understanding the answer to this question might consider engaging evaluators or internal research teams to design and execute an impact evaluation. This assessment is also not a budgeting or prioritization tool. Keep in mind that one program is insufficient for boosting mobility from poverty. Rather, places seeking to boost mobility from poverty and advance equity must be prepared to make transformative, systems-level changes. The goal of this assessment is to understand whether your program environment is suitable and to what extent it can bolster mobility from poverty and advance equity.

How to Use this Assessment

Select a program that your jurisdiction operates that is intended to support mobility from poverty and equity. Respond to the series of questions below and write down your responses in the spaces provided. Terms in **bold** text are defined in the key terms box just to the right of where the term is used. Once you are finished responding to the questions, review your responses to identify areas of strength and elements your program might be lacking. You can find additional resources about each of these question groups at the end of the document.

Program Name:

Operating Department:

Other Program Information:

Assessment Group 1: Alignment with the Three-Part Definition of Mobility from Poverty

<p>Does your program positively affect your participants' economic success? How?</p>	
<p>Does your program positively affect participants' power and autonomy? How?</p>	
<p>Does your program help participants to feel a sense of being valued in community? How?</p>	

Key Terms

Three-part definition of mobility from poverty:

Meaningful and sustainable mobility from poverty encompasses three dimensions: economic success, power and autonomy, and being valued in community.

Economic success: Adequate income and assets that support individuals' and families' material well-being.

Power and autonomy: Control over one's life, the ability to make choices, and the collective capacity to influence larger policies and actions that affect one's future.

Being valued in community: Feeling the respect, dignity, and sense of belonging that come from contributing to and being valued by people in one's community.

Assessment Group 2: Program Evidence Base & Continuous Learning

What outputs are you tracking for this program?	
Which of the Mobility Metrics or predictors do these outputs align with?	
What are the intended outcomes of this program?	
What evidence do you have that your intended outputs and outcomes will help advance upward mobility?	
Has a program evaluation been conducted on this program? If yes, what type of evaluation was conducted and what was found? If not, does it replicate a program from another place that <i>has been</i> evaluated?	
What is the evidence base behind this program? ¹⁹	

Key Terms

Outputs: the short-term, more immediate results produced by your strategic actions that could plausibly lead to your outcomes/goals.

Mobility Metrics: A set of 26 indicators that reflect predictors of upward mobility. The Mobility Metrics were developed by a Working Group of distinguished scholars and staff at the Urban Institute.

Predictors: Policy factors that research shows boost long-term upward mobility at the community level.

Outcomes: The measurable effects that a program will accomplish for people or places.

Program evaluation: A method of determining a program's effects on the people, families, or communities it serves. Program Evaluation is a discrete effort that answers a predetermined set of questions, and typically involves collecting data beyond what is routinely collected during program implementation (Tatian 2016).

<p>Do you have a mechanism for regularly gathering and analyzing program data? For example, you might use a survey, intake form, satisfaction interviews, or a regular data review. Do you have ways to adjust the program in response to poor results?</p>	
<p>What will be the process for collecting data and analyzing it over time? Will there be money to continue this analysis even if the program itself ends? This is important to detect effects that would only be measurable after the intervention has ended.</p>	

Assessment Group 3: Community & Practitioner Engagement

<p>Have direct service providers (for example, program staff or grantees) been engaged to help shape the program or provide feedback on the program's delivery? If so, how were they engaged?</p>	
<p>Have community members or program recipients been</p>	

<p>engaged to shape the program or provide feedback on its delivery? If so, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being no community engagement, 3 being you solicited feedback from community members on the program, and 5 being you engaged community members in the <i>design and delivery</i> of the program, how would you rate your community engagement? Please describe your engagement in more depth.</p>	
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Assessment Group 4: Scale of Impact

<p>Who does the program support (i.e., residents with incomes below 50 percent of the area median income, Asian American and Pacific Islander residents, residents living in the Tall Oaks neighborhood, residents receiving Medicaid, etc.)? How many people does the program currently serve? What share of the eligible population does the program serve?</p>	
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<p>If it were feasible, would you want to expand this program to reach more people? If yes, what is needed (e.g., political capital, financial resources, council approval)? If no, why not?</p>	
<p>Are there nongovernmental programs that are similar to this program (for example, run by nonprofits)? If yes, would you consider aligning efforts to increase the scale of your work?</p>	
<p>If there are other aligned programs, have you worked to learn about and, if possible, adopt best practices from these programs?</p>	
<p>How will this program be funded in the future: through the regular budgetary process or through new federal, state, or foundation grants?</p>	

Assessment Group 5: Targeting Inequities

<p>Does this program allocate resources, services, or funds based on a universal approach, a targeted universal approach, or a targeted approach aimed at eliminating disparities? Please describe.</p>	
<p>How is the program designed to be culturally appropriate for the communities it aims to serve?</p>	
<p>Does this program address the root causes of inequities?²⁰ If yes, how does it do that?</p>	

Key Terms

Universal approach: An approach where an intervention or service is available to everyone without regard to their group membership, status, or income (powell, Menendian, and Ake 2019).

Targeted universal approach: An approach where program designers set universal goals but apply targeted approaches for achieving them based on the varying circumstances of different groups (powell, Menendian, and Ake 2019).

Targeted approach: An approach that singles out specific populations or makes provisions for selected groups. These programs are generally tailored to the needs of the people it aims to serve (powell, Menendian, and Ake 2019).

Culturally appropriate programming: Programming that is designed to reflect the culture, community norms, traditions, and values of the populations it aims to serve.

Root causes of inequities: The underlying causes that create an unfair or unjust outcome. Root causes can include institutional policies, practices, or barriers; structural and individual racism; discrimination; conscious and unconscious bias; and unequal distribution of power and resources.

Assessment Group 6: Removing Barriers

<p>What have you heard about any obstacles (unintentional or intentional) that program participants face when accessing this program? How might you address these barriers?</p>	
<p>Does this program help participants meet immediate, basic needs? Meeting basic needs may be a necessary precondition to ensuring participants can access and make use of other services.</p>	

Key Terms

Immediate, basic needs: The fundamental things that people need to subsist, such as having enough to eat, being able to pay housing and utility bills, having a safe place to live, being able to pay for medical costs, and being able to pay debts.

Assessment Group 7: Mitigating Unintended Consequences

<p>Does the program intersect with other programs/policies outside of its policy area? If yes, is there a cliff effect²¹ that could limit both programs from achieving their intended purpose?</p>	
<p>Does the program have the potential to lead to displacement or gentrification? If so, how do you plan to mitigate this risk?</p>	

Key Terms

Cliff effect: When a family's income increases above a program's eligibility requirements, but the new wages are less than the benefits the family loses.

Displacement: Forced or involuntary household movement from a place of residence. For example, people can be displaced by being evicted (forced displacement) or by unaffordable rents (involuntary displacement) (Cohen and Petit 2019).

Gentrification: Transformation of areas historically inhabited by marginalized groups, usually racial or ethnic or class groups, into areas used by the dominant class or racial or ethnic group. Gentrification is usually characterized by increased investments in areas that have long experienced disinvestment (Cohen and Petit 2019).

Upward Mobility Program Assessment Additional Resources

Assessment Group 1: Alignment with the Three-Part Definition of Mobility from Poverty

- [Boosting Upward Mobility: Metrics to Inform Local Action Summary](#) (Urban Institute)
- [Measuring Mobility from Poverty](#) (US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty)

Assessment Group 2: Program Evidence Base & Continuous Learning

- [Performance Measurement to Evaluation](#) (Urban Institute)
- [Performance-Based Strategies: Defining Terms and Comparing Common Strategies](#) (Urban Institute)
- [Economic Mobility Catalog](#) (Results for America)
- [Evaluating Programs and Impact with Promise Neighborhoods](#) (Urban Institute)

Assessment Group 5: Targeting Inequities

- [Next 50 Catalyst Brief: What Would It Take to Overcome the Damaging Effects of Structural Racism and Ensure a More Equitable Future?](#) (Urban Institute)
- [Targeted Universalism: Policy & Practice](#) (Haas Institute at the University of California Berkeley)
- [Action Learning Guide: Understand and Identify Root Causes of Inequities](#) (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps)
- [Building Culturally Relevant Nutrition Assistance on Tribal Lands](#) (Urban Institute)

Assessment Group 6: Removing Barriers

- [Many Families in Arlington, Virginia, Struggle to Afford Basic Needs. A Flexible Safety Net Can Help](#) (Urban Institute)

Assessment Group 7: Mitigating Unintended Consequences

- [Reducing the Cliff Effect to Support Working Families](#) (Aspen Institute)
- [The Cliff Effect in Arlington](#) (Arlington Community Foundation)
- [Guide to Measuring Neighborhood Change to Understand and Prevent Displacement](#) (National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership)
- [To Understand a City's Pace of Gentrification, Look at Its Housing Supply](#) (Urban Institute)