

## DWP/MFIP ES POLICY

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**FROM:** Kate Probert Fagundes – Employment Services Division Manager

**SUBJECT:** My Bridge of Strength (MBS), Goal Action Plan (GAP) and Employability Measure (EM)

**PURPOSE:** This memo provides guidelines for using MBS, GAP and EM tools with participants.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Borrowing from Crittenton Women’s Union’s evidenced-based concept of outlining a path of incremental vertical and horizontal objectives, Workforce Solutions (WFS) has adapted the detail of the Employability Measure (EM) assessment to create the MBS and GAP tools for strengths identification.

On July 1, 2015, WFS implemented the MBS and GAP tools for use with DWP and MFIP participants Ramsey County. Implementation of these tools blends a strength-based approach with ongoing assessments aimed at clarifying the participant’s goals and creating their unique plans for achieving engagement, education, employment and employment retention. At the foundation of this strength-based approach is the belief that families have unique talents, skills, and life events to apply as a resource to addressing specific goals.

The MBS and GAP are key tools for the participants to self-identify needs, dreams, strengths, goals, and actions to reach their desired future. Participant and counselor learn ways in which the participant increase his/her role in choosing their own goal within MFIP requirements. Through counseling and coaching by the counselor, the participant maximizes his/her power to self-determine their goals and actions by building on their strengths. This includes the completion of the MBS, as well as set specific, measureable, attainable, relevant and time-limited (SMART) goals on their GAP.

The MBS does not replace the completion of the EM in WF1, but may be used to assist the counselor In completing the EM, which is required to be completed once in a lifetime.

### **PROCEDURES:**

#### **My Bridge of Strength**

1. MBS should be completed during initial meeting(s) with the counselor. This is completed with all MFIP and DWP participants that are new to the counselor (regardless of whether they have completed the MBS in the past). MBS will be completed within the first three months of engagement and can be updated as often as needed but at least annually. Existing participants should also have an MBS completed.

Note: There are two different versions of the MBS.

- *Version 1:* Used for general program participants
- *Version 2:* Alternate form used for non-English speaking participants. The language is simpler to translate and incorporates another column to acknowledge and celebrate the strength of being fluent in multiple languages.

2. The purpose of the MBS is explained to the participant.
  - MBS purpose: to help participants identify their areas of strength and possibly areas to focus on or reinforce.
3. The participant and the counselor have a conversation, and go through each column of the bridge together.
  - For each column, the participant chooses the statement they believe is most representative of their current situation and circles the box with that statement in it.

Note: There is no wrong answer, as the participant chooses the statement, not the counselor.
4. Strengths participant have within themselves are discussed and the participant lists them on the bottom of the MBS form.
  - It is the counselor's role to assist with identifying strengths observed from the participant such as, "If we asked your best friend/parent/significant other, what would they say were your greatest strengths?" and providing feedback (not using checklists, strengths list).
5. The MBS in a visual roadmap for the participant and should be continuously referred to when celebrating participants' accomplishments, and to acknowledge progress towards goal as well as:
  - To help the participant center their focus and identify for which goal they may write a Goal Action Plan (GAP). The participant may also identify broader goals, as well as reevaluate current ones.
  - Develop discrepancies between goal and participant's steps towards the goal, to have a further discussion if progress is not being made.
6. A copy of the MBS should be provided to the participant and a copy should kept in the case file.
7. Based on the conversation during the MBS process, the participant identifies the goal they will work on first, and then complete the GAP.
8. Follow-up progress with the participant regarding MBS should be case noted in Workforce One.

**Goal Action Plan**

1. The GAP is completed with a participant who has a clearly identified goal. Goals may be identified during the conversation while completing the MBS, or the participant and counselor may work together to identify them at another time. The counselor may use their MI skills to draw out the participant's goals and strengths they will use to accomplish them.
 

Note: There are two different versions of the GAP, either one can be used.

*Version 1: ladder format*

*Version 2: list format*
2. The purpose of the GAP is explained to the participant.
  - GAP purpose: Break down the participant-identified goal into smaller, tangible steps.
3. The participant and the counselor have a conversation, and the participant chooses a goal to work on.
  - The counselor teaches the participant how to write their goal in the SMART format: Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-limited.

4. Once the SMART goal is developed, the participant writes their SMART goal on the GAP after the statement: My Goal is: \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The participant talks through the steps needed to obtain their SMART goal, and writes down the steps on the GAP for themselves as well as deciding due dates for each step to be completed.
  - The counselor’s role is to be a champion and supporter of the participant’s goals and to educate the participant about their choices.
  - The counselor and participant talk through details regarding how the steps will be accomplished, and adjust steps as needed. In order to work through all that needs to be done to accomplish a goal, it may be helpful to take notes and talk through how the goal will be obtained before writing the steps out on the GAP.
  - The participant and counselor plan ahead and discuss possible obstacles to attaining the goal and how to overcome them, as well as what resources (both internal and external) the participant has and will use to accomplish their goal. This may be other people who are supportive or have information that they may need. The participants own internal resources (strengths and virtues) will also be identified to access during their pathway to accomplishing their goal.
  - Accountability is an important component to building essential skills, staying motivated and reaching milestones. The counselor will encourage the participant to hold themselves accountable to their goals, and also explain that once the goal has been identified, it will be expected that the participant work towards reaching their goal in the time-frame outlined on the GAP.
6. The participant compares their goal and action steps against the SMART criteria and checks off the boxes on the GAP, accordingly.
7. Strengths that the participant has within themselves to accomplish their SMART goal are discussed and the participant lists them on the top of the GAP form.
8. At the close of the meeting, schedule the next meeting.
  - More frequent meetings/check-ins will be necessary and may occur as often as weekly or every two weeks.
9. At the next meeting, participant and counselor review GAP, and determine whether goal has been reached. Discuss progress, and whether to discontinue, revise, or write new GAP. As goals are obtained, discontinued or changed, so is the GAP.
10. A copy of the GAP should be given to the participant and a copy should be kept in case file.
11. Follow up with participant regarding GAP should also be case noted in Workforceone.

**Employment Plan (EP)**

- MBS - No reference of the MBS is needed in the EP, however, the strengths that the participant has identified (on MBS and/or GAP) should be clearly written on the EP under the **strengths section**.
- GAP – In **comment section** of EP, counselor writes: “Follow through with ongoing Goal Action Plan.”

**Case Note**

The counselor writes a detailed case note “telling the story” of the meeting including explaining each area on the MBS discussed with the participant.

## **Workforce One case note type: Counseling and Guidance**

### **Case note subject line:**

- Enter the letters **MBS** in the subject line of the case note if the MBS was completed during the meeting that is being case noted.
- Enter the letters **GAP** in the subject line of the case note if the GAP was completed during the meeting that is being case noted.
- Enter both acronyms **MBS/GAP** in the subject line of the case note, if both the MBS and the GAP were completed during the meeting.
- Case note follow-up progress. Enter acronyms in the subject line based on whichever area is being followed-up on.

\*subject line should not include additional information except for the acronyms.

### **Employability Measure (EM) - (MFIP Only)**

1. ES providers are encouraged to utilize other credible employability and skill assessment questionnaires, such as the MBS, to gather information but these tools do not supplant the EM.
2. The Employability Measure (EM) will be used with all new and returning Employment Services (ES) participants. DHS requires an EM to be completed once in an MFIP lifetime for participant.
3. Only one completed EM is required of each participant served. There are options for the counselor to conduct another EM:
  - a. Extension Services (EXS) counselors have the option, only if it is necessary to conduct an in-depth assessment with the participants, to complete another EM.
  - b. An ongoing EM can be completed once every 12 months if the Employment Counselor deems it necessary to assess the participant's progress. Completing an EM every 12 months is not mandatory.
4. The EM must be completed with the participant within the first 90 days of the overview. In an effort to strengthen Employment Counselor/ participant rapport, prolonging completion of the EM to nearer to the 90 day deadline is acceptable.
5. When completing an EM with the participant, ES staff is expected to work within parameters received during EM training, using the EM manual as a guide. Note that new ES staff must attend DHS *Employability Measure* and *Employment Plan* trainings.
6. All EM results must be recorded onto the *Assessment* tab in WF1.
7. When using MBS as an information gathering tool, each section of the EM will still need to be "scored" on a scale of 1-5 and entered in Workforce One. To avoid duplication of work, the counselor may write, "see case note" under the reason section of the EM if they are using the MBS to complete the EM. Because the columns of the MBS correspond to the areas of the EM (with the exception of safety), this will already be detailed in the case note. Keep in mind that the safety reasoning will still need to be discussed and case noted even though it is not on the MBS if you are using the MBS to complete the EM
8. When necessary, ES staff should ensure that an interpreter is present during the EM interview.

### **MONITORING:**

- ✓ Data will be collected from Workforceone:  
*Subject line key word search.* Data will be pulled through a key word search on the case note subject line to quantify the amount of MBS and GAP forms completed within each agency.  
*Case note detail.* Case notes will be reviewed for accuracy and thoroughness.

- ✓ Planners will review case files for the quality of service
- ✓ Planners may pull data for discussion during their monthly meetings with the agencies.
- ✓ Agency Supervisor/Manager provide ongoing coaching to counselors and review at least 3-5 MBS/GAP case files per month.

**LINKS to MBS/GAP DOCUMENTS:**

- ❖ [\*GAP Form version 1\*](#)
- ❖ [\*GAP Form version 2\*](#)
- ❖ [\*MBS Form version 1\*](#)
- ❖ [\*MBS Form version 2\*](#)
- ❖ [\*MBS/GAP Sample Packet\*](#)
- ❖ [\*MBS/GAP Training PowerPoint\*](#)

**WFS CONTACT:** Your Agency's Planner