



October 27, 2023

Wisconsin Works Contractors
via email

Re: Recommendations Report for the Wisconsin Works Program

Dear Wisconsin Works agency partners:

First, I want to thank you all for the participation, candid input, and assistance in the evaluation of the Wisconsin Works (W-2) program. The W-2 program has not been evaluated for state administration and contract agency service delivery effectiveness since enactment in 1996.

As you know, Social Finance, a non-profit advisory firm that specializes in outcomes-based contracting, was awarded the contract to advise BWF during the W-2 re-procurement and contracting process for 2025. Social Finance began its assessment of the current program in January 2023. Over the course of their assessment, they conducted over 70 hours of interviews with program stakeholders and W-2 participants, examined TANF programs in other states, and analyzed program data to make recommendations for program improvements to pursue in the next contract period. Social Finance completed the evaluation with the following guiding principles in mind:

- Improve access to the program;
- Incorporate a whole-family approach;
- Integrate performance data, to identify problems and drive decisions;
- Prioritize incremental progress;
- Incentivize quality outcomes; and
- Change the program narrative.

According to the assessment, the program is not meeting its potential to aid participants and their families. In many ways, we already knew that. Although participants and other program stakeholders indicated that the program has successfully provided meaningful assistance in some cases—and we've seen your commitment to change over the past year—the program falls short in delivering consistent, effective support that meets participant family needs in preparing them for work.

The final recommendations report from Social Finance contains a variety of recommendations across nine key areas, all with the potential to improve the program.

Initially we were not going to release the report, but as we dive into the research, it's clear that many pieces, like the participant experience map and case studies on TANF innovations in other states are important to share, especially as we move toward collective goals. As providers of the program, I'm sure it comes as no surprise to you that there are limits on what we can and cannot change with W-2. Much of the program is prescribed in statute and administrative rule, and budget constraints may limit the full scope of changes we make to the program. Nevertheless, there are many opportunities for policy changes that will have a direct impact on the populations we serve. Many changes may be within our own internal systems and operations, while some may be programmatic in nature. Our work for the next few months will be focused on determining the feasibility and scope of any recommendations we decide to adopt and preparing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the new program, pending release in early 2024.

While we have determined we can share the report with you all now, in the spirit of a level playing field, we are unable to discuss or respond to specific recommendations or implementation questions related to the report from Social Finance or expected changes to the W-2 program. Everyone will find out the scope of changes to the program with the release of the RFP, which will be posted on the Wisconsin Department of Administration's [eSupplier Portal](#). Following our regular processes, all procurement-related questions would then be directed to DCFProcurement@wisconsin.gov.

When the time comes, we will begin transitioning to the new contract, with an effective date of January 1, 2025. In the meantime, it is "business as usual" for your current contracts. We look forward to continuing this work with you throughout the transition process and encourage you all to submit proposals when the time comes for the new W-2.

Sincerely,



Connie Chesnik
Administrator, Division of Family and Economic Security

Encl: W-2 Recommendations Report from Social Finance

cc: Linda Richardson, Deputy Administrator, Division of Family and Economic Security
Patara Horn, Director, Bureau of Working Families
Sue Handrich-Herr, Grants and Contracts Section Manager, Bureau of Finance