



Advancing the Self-Sufficiency and Wellbeing of At-Risk Youth: A Conceptual Framework

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MATHEMATICA
Policy Research



Purpose and Motivation

- **ACF-initiated effort to develop a research-based conceptual framework for programs to help at-risk youth move toward self-sufficiency and healthy functioning as adults**
- **Through multiple programs, ACF serves many at-risk youth**
 - Foster youth aging out of care
 - Homeless or runaway youth
 - Teen parents
- **Framework designed to guide implementation and evaluation of youth programs**

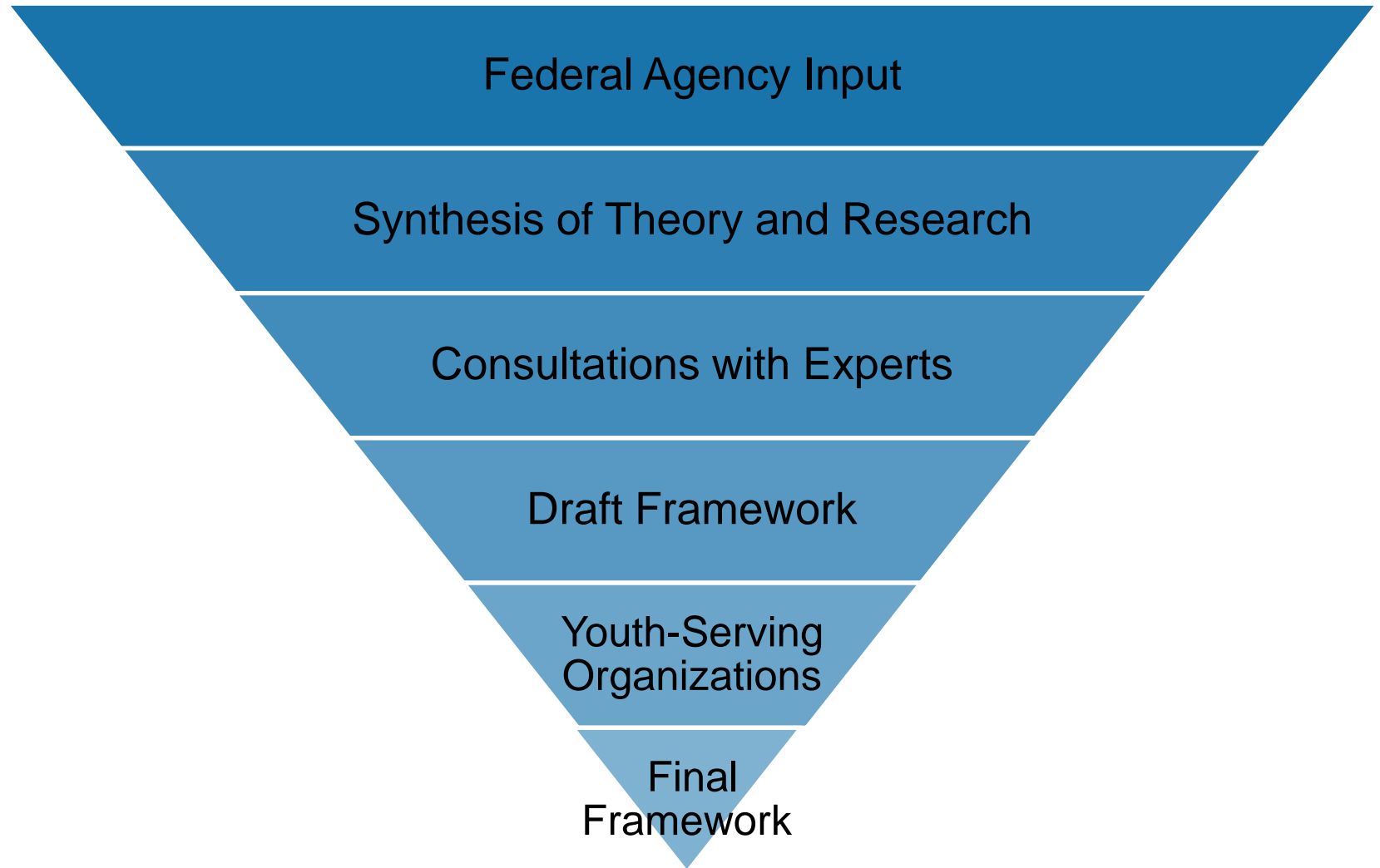


Programs for Youth Transitioning to Adulthood

- **Path to self-sufficiency is challenging for many disadvantaged youth**
- **Programs take a wide range of approaches**
 - **Education; Mentoring; Life Skills; Mental Health; Pregnancy Prevention, Employment**
- **Programs not always grounded in research, theory or evidence about what works**
- **Federal interest in learning which programs are effective**



Integrating Policy, Theory, Practice, Evidence





Guiding Theoretical Perspectives

- **Risk and Resilience**

- Build resilience by reducing risk and promoting protective factors
- Factors exist at level of individual, family, community

- **Capital Development**

- Human capital
- Social capital
- Cultural
- Economic capital



Integration of Evidence-Informed Models

Resilience	Capital
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Connect to caring adult▪ Address mental, emotional health▪ Strengthen family▪ Develop life skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Promote educational achievement▪ Career exploration▪ Connect to workforce



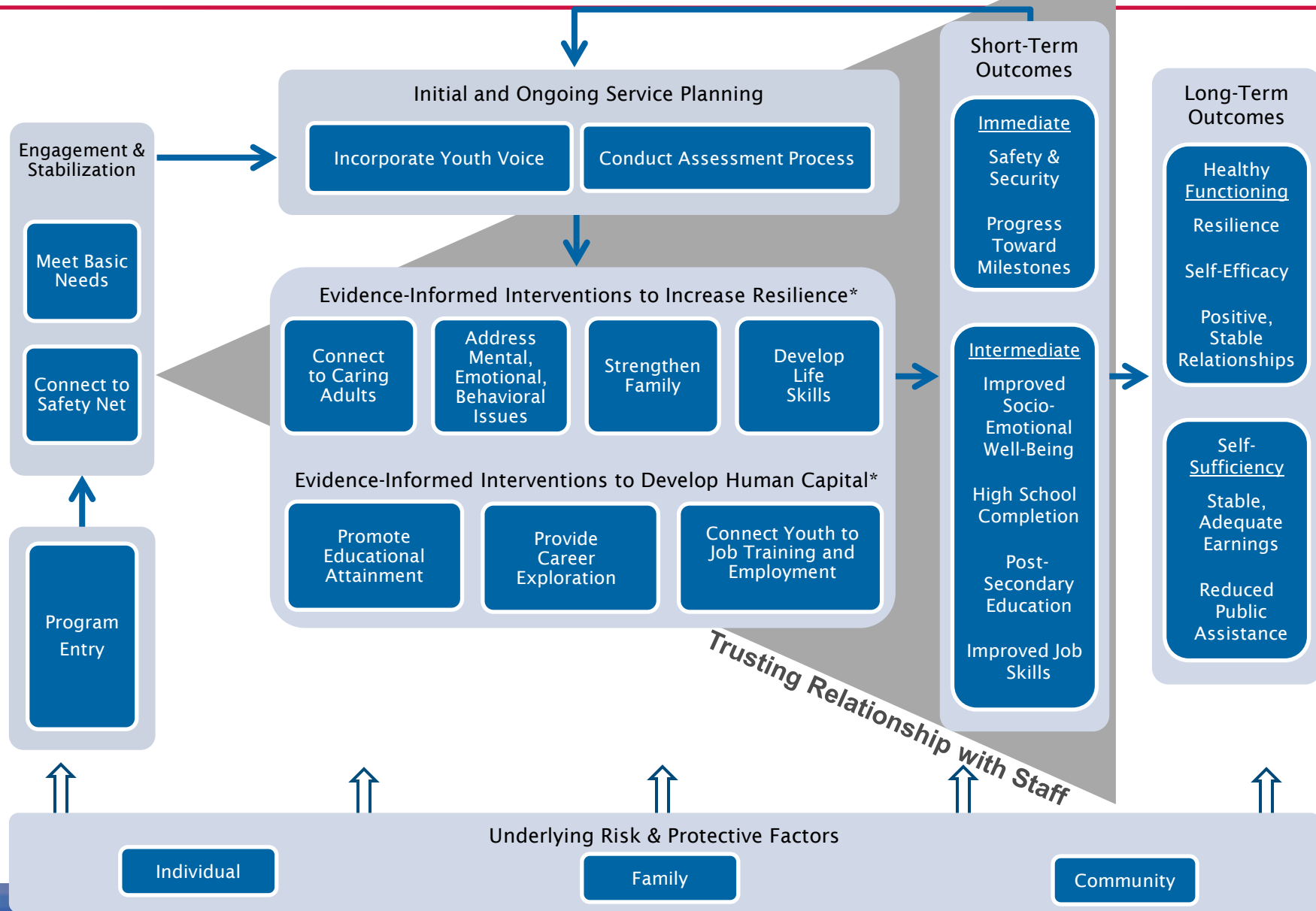
Tailored Service Delivery Approach

- **One size fits all unlikely to work**
 - Some first need basic services, safety net help
 - Some need more resilience building than capital development and vice versa

- **Identify which services are most needed for each youth**
 - Assessment and reassessment
 - Youth's needs change over time as they develop

- **Assessment can be difficult for some youth**
 - Programs must develop trusting relationship with youth; incorporate youth voice in planning services

The Final Framework



* Interventions are selected based on each youth's assessment results.



How Can Practitioners, Researchers and Policymakers Use Framework?

- **Inform programming decisions**
 - What to keep
 - What to add, or whether to partner with others
 - What to track, monitor

- **Inform development and selection of programs in grant solicitations**

- **Inform design of program evaluations**



For More Information

- **Please see project products:**

- <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/acf-youth-demonstration-development-project-0>

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