

Article 52: Human Development and the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix (ASSM) in Tucson and Pima County

The **Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix (ASSM)** has become an important assessment and planning tool for organizations throughout **Tucson and Pima County** seeking to improve individual and family well-being. Rather than measuring success solely through service delivery, the matrix provides a structured approach for evaluating multiple dimensions of self-sufficiency, allowing providers to identify client needs, monitor progress, and guide interventions across housing, employment, education, health, financial stability, and other essential life domains. Its implementation has also strengthened outcome measurement, supported data-informed decision-making, and encouraged greater coordination among service providers, public agencies, and community organizations. By tracking changes over time, the ASSM helps organizations in **Tucson and Pima County** evaluate program effectiveness while promoting more individualized support strategies for vulnerable populations. Collectively, these efforts advance human development through initiatives that promote greater economic stability, independence, and long-term well-being (Arizona Department of Economic Security et al., 2014; Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System, 2025; Interfaith Community Services, 2016; Pima County Community Action Agency, 2024; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2015).

Uses and Impact of the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix (ASSM) in Tucson and Pima County

Several organizations and agencies throughout Tucson and Pima County have incorporated the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix into their service delivery and evaluation practices. For instance, the Pima County Community Action Agency integrates the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix into case management services provided through its Emergency Services Network for low-income households receiving emergency assistance. Additionally, the agency requires participating organizations to develop individualized case plans, identify household strengths and needs, establish measurable goals, provide referrals to community resources, and conduct follow-up activities to monitor client progress. Thus, movement towards self-sufficiency must be documented using the Self-Sufficiency Matrix, making it an essential component of program reporting and accountability. The agency also requires case management procedures to comply with the Arizona Department of Economic Security standards while promoting consistent service delivery across the county's provider network. Furthermore, participating organizations use the matrix to help connect individuals and families with employment, job training, housing, childcare, health care, transportation, behavioral health, and other supportive services based on their specific circumstances. The agency also includes the complete Self-Sufficiency Matrix as the standardized assessment tool within its funding requirements. Consequently, integrating the matrix into coordinated case management helps foster human development by supporting individualized pathways toward greater self-sufficiency and improved quality of life for low-income households (Pima County Community Action Agency, 2024).

Similarly, the Arizona Homeless Evaluation Project utilizes the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix as a standardized statewide framework for evaluating homeless assistance programs, including those operating within the Pima Continuum of Care. The initiative was developed through collaboration among the Arizona Department of Economic Security, the Arizona Department of Housing, HUD partners, service providers, and the three Arizona Continua of Care—including Pima—to strengthen outcome measurement and improve program effectiveness. Likewise, the project establishes the matrix

as a standardized assessment tool for measuring participant progress across 17 life domains while providing agencies with guidance on consistent data collection, scoring procedures, and reporting practices. The training further emphasizes integrating the matrix into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and conducting assessments at program entry, exit, and designated follow-up periods to monitor changes over time. The statewide framework also outlines standardized procedures for collecting universal and program-level data, helping agencies improve the accuracy, consistency, and completeness of participant information across programs. At the same time, high-quality data collection enables providers to better understand service utilization patterns, evaluate client outcomes, and support informed policy and funding decisions. Therefore, participating programs are encouraged to collect high-quality data that inform investment decisions, evaluate service outcomes, and improve coordinated service delivery. In turn, the matrix helps support human development by improving organizations' capacity to monitor participant progress, evaluate program effectiveness, and tailor services to the diverse needs of vulnerable populations (Arizona Department of Economic Security et al., 2014).

Following that lead, HUD recognizes the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix as one of the assessment tools supporting homelessness prevention efforts in communities that include Pima County and Tucson. The organization states that effective assessment and service planning require carefully selected tools capable of identifying client needs, guiding assistance packages, and supporting accurate evaluations of program performance. It also cautions providers against relying on overly rigid scoring practices or collecting unnecessary information that may lead to inaccurate conclusions about participant outcomes. Moreover, HUD describes how communities incorporated supplemental information into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), noting that Pima County and Tucson stored eviction notices and lease agreements as part of their monitoring efforts while other jurisdictions recorded self-sufficiency matrix scores. Hence, communities adapted prevention assistance packages according to participant needs, including the duration of financial assistance, available supportive services, and progress toward individualized goals. HUD highlights that strengthening coordination among service providers and improving prevention capacity helped communities build more effective approaches to addressing housing instability. Hence, the organization identifies the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix as a widely adapted assessment tool and dedicates an appendix to discussing its background, applications, and potential limitations. Taken together, these findings suggest that thoughtful assessment and data collection practices help support human development by enabling organizations to better understand participant needs and improve service planning for individuals and families experiencing housing instability (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2015).

Furthermore, Interfaith Community Services (ICS) employs the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix to evaluate client progress and guide individualized case management for community members experiencing financial hardship across Pima County and Tucson. Specifically, ICS staff and volunteers work directly with participants to identify barriers to long-term stability, establish personalized goals, and connect them with employment assistance, financial education, emergency services, and other community resources. The organization also reports that more than 80% of emergency financial assistance clients stabilized their circumstances and demonstrated progress based on pre- and post-assessments using the Self-Sufficiency Matrix, with overall self-sufficiency scores having increased by 13% during fiscal year 2015–2016. ICS also connects participants to a broader network of support designed to address the root causes of financial instability and encourage sustained self-reliance. As

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part of these efforts, the organization reported that 944 participants improved their employment readiness and 76 secured jobs through the Job Resource Centers, reinforcing the role of employment-focused services in promoting long-term economic stability. Additionally, the Resource Centers provide job search assistance, résumé preparation, interview coaching, financial literacy training, and money management education to strengthen participants' capacity for long-term independence. These coordinated services address the underlying causes of financial instability rather than only immediate crises. Ultimately, the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix helps support human development by enabling organizations to monitor meaningful progress while promoting greater economic stability, self-reliance, and improved quality of life for vulnerable communities (Interfaith Community Services, 2016).

Lastly, the Arizona Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) program incorporates the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix into case management services provided for adults experiencing homelessness and serious mental illness, including participants served in Pima County and Tucson. PATH outreach workers determine eligibility through community outreach, referrals, participant interviews, and documented observations before guiding individuals through engagement and enrollment processes. During enrollment, participants complete the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix to evaluate multiple life domains, including housing, mental health, safety, legal issues, food and nutrition, and other areas affecting long-term stability. The assessment is updated throughout case management and completed again at program exit to monitor individual progress over time. PATH providers also maintain participant information within the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), allowing case plans, assessments, referrals, and service activities to be documented consistently across providers. In addition, the program coordinates behavioral health services, housing assistance, public benefits, and other community resources according to participants' identified needs while promoting collaboration among partner organizations. Arizona further projected that PATH providers would contact approximately 6,070 individuals and enroll 1,215 participants during fiscal year 2025–2026, demonstrating the program's broad reach across vulnerable populations. Ultimately, integrating the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix into coordinated outreach and case management advances human development through individualized service planning, continuous monitoring of participant progress, greater housing stability, and long-term self-sufficiency (Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System, 2025).

References

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