

**Temporary Assistance and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment Plan  
January 1, 2016 – December 31, 2017**

**Essex County**

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**Temporary Assistance and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment Plan  
January 1, 2016– December 31, 2017**

**Section 1- Assurances**

As a condition of the receipt of federal and State funds the Essex County Department of Social Services submits this Temporary Assistance and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment Plan (Plan) to the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. The Plan outlines the administration of employment services for Temporary Assistance (TA) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applicants and recipients for the period January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2017. As Commissioner of Essex County Department of Social Services, I hereby affirm that employment services programs will be administered in accordance with all applicable federal and State policies, laws, regulations and provisions of this Plan.

John O'Keefe, Social Services Commissioner

3/2/16 Date

Amendments to this Plan:

Date Approved OTDA	Section Amended	Pages Effected

(To be completed by OTDA)

**Section 2 Administration**

**Section 2.1 Administrative Structure**

This agency's organizational chart is attached. It identifies the units and staff within the agency that are involved in the operation of the district's employment program.

Following is a description of the office(s) in and/or outside of the Department of Social Services that are involved in the operation of the district's employment program. The responsibilities of each office are described below.

**Essex County Department of Social Services:**

- **Employment Plan**
- **Employability Assessment /Reassessment**
- **Work Activity Assignment& Participation monitoring**
- **WTWCMS data entry associated with the above**
- **Monitor treatment plans of non-exempt & exempt individuals engaged in treatment or rehabilitation, making adjustments as indicated, with activity participation geared toward self-sufficiency**
- **Conciliation, sanction, and dispute resolution also to include monthly sanction call-ins**
- **Review of medical information in order to determine employability status/disability determination which is performed by DSS Employment Supervisor/staff**
- **Supportive Services delivery**

**Section 2.2 TA and SNAP Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) Provider Agencies**

**Table 1 - Contracts Associated with TA and SNAP Employment Programs and Services**

Table 1 lists the local contracts or agreements with agencies to provide employment services to TA and SNAP clients. These activities and services may include, but are not necessarily limited to, employability determinations, development of assessments and employment plans, conciliation and grievance activities, provision of work activities such as job readiness training, education and job skills training, monitoring and support for compliance with treatment plans for exempt individuals with the potential for restoration to self-sufficiency, job development, job placement and retention services, and other employment related activities.

Each contract listed in Table 1 contains an assurance that the activities are not otherwise available from that provider on a non-reimbursable basis, and, if not a performance-based contract, a statement regarding use of a cost allocation methodology that satisfies Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, as well as the requirements of U.S. Office of Management and Budget Circulars A-122 for nonprofit organizations, A-21 for educational institutions, or A-87 for State and local governments.

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Total Contract Cost (per year)</b>	<b>Funding Source(s) (Check all that apply)</b>	<b>Categories of Clients Served (Check all that apply)</b>	<b>Programs, Services or Activities Provided</b>
St. Joseph's	\$8,750.00	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FFFS <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP E&T <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Family <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	Substance abuse assessment
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,750.00</b>			

**Table 2 – Other Service Providers**

Table 2 includes agencies/providers that offer services to participants and to which the district expects to refer participants but which have no direct financial agreement with the district (e.g., WIOA programs, SED funded services, OTDA Wage Subsidy providers).

Provider	Funding Source(s) (if known)	Categories of Clients Served (Check all that apply)	Programs, Services or Activities Provided
ACCESS-VR	NYSED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Family <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	Vocational and Educational Training, Case Management, Support services
OTDA JOBS	OTDA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Family <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Individual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	Job referral, Job placement, Job development, Job readiness, pre-employment
CV-TECH (BOCES)	NYSED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Family <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Individual <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP <input type="checkbox"/> TANF 200%	Adult Basic Education, HSE, Vocational and Educational Training

**Section 2.3 OTDA Jobs Staff Agreement**

**OTDA Jobs Program Services – Target Groups** (“X” signifies those that apply in this district)

**Services**

**Target Groups**

Assessment/Employment Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	Applicants	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Supervised Job Search	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	FA & SN with children	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Job Readiness Training	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SN without Children	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Job Club	<input type="checkbox"/>	SNAP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Job Placement Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	TANF 200%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Grant Diversion	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Job Development (employer outreach)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
WOTC pre-certifications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

**Other Services Requested**

Described below are additional services/duties which will be requested of Jobs staff (e.g., WTWCMS data entry, case conferencing, job fairs): **None identified at this time.**

### **Section 3 Engagement and Work Preparation**

#### **Section 3.1 Federal “Engaged in Work” Requirement (Reference 18 NYCRR 385.2 (f))**

For purposes of satisfying the federal requirement which states that parents or caretakers must be engaged in work as soon as the district determines they are ready, but no later than within 24 months of receiving federally funded assistance, the district’s definition of “Engaged in Work” is:

Compliance with assessment, employment planning, all activities included in the individual’s Employment/Self-Sufficiency plan including any need to attend treatment/rehabilitation programs, or any of the work activities listed in Section 3.4. Also included is pursuit of other forms of income such as SSI and SSD.

#### **Section 3.2 Orientation (Reference 18 NYCRR 385.5)**

Check one of the following:

- The district provides orientation in accordance with 18 NYCRR Section 385.5 and no additional information is provided at orientation.
- In addition to the requirements outlined in 18 NYCRR Section 385.5 of the regulations, the district’s orientation provides the following:

Described below is the manner in which the district completes the required orientation for all applicants and recipients of Temporary Assistance (e.g., done in a group setting or individually or a combination of both), including the orientation procedure for exempt individuals and non-exempt individuals, if different:

**Group applicant orientations are conducted by the DSS Employment staff on a weekly basis. Individual orientations can be scheduled if needed.**

**Recipients are seen at DSS on an individual basis at Recertification**

### **Section 3.3 Assessment and Employment Planning**

#### **Temporary Assistance Assessment**

(Reference 18 NYCRR 385.6 and 385.7)

a. Check one of the following:

The district conducts assessments as required by 18 NYCRR 385.6(a) and 385.7(a):

- The district enters assessments directly into WTWCMS
- The district uses the LDSS 4980 (New York State Assessment) and later enters information into WTWCMS.
- The district conducts assessments using a local equivalent tool, and later enters information into WTWCMS. Attached is the local equivalent.
  - The local equivalent does not contain additional elements other than what is required.
  - The local equivalent does contain additional elements beyond what is required, listed below:

b. Describe the local district procedure for the completion of an employment assessment:

**Immediately following the Group Orientation, all applicants complete an employment assessment with DSS Employment staff on an individual basis that will assist in completing the LDSS 4980 and will also perform the ABLE (Adult Basic Learning Examination) - It is a screening battery for reading comprehension. There are 48 questions measuring grade levels from 1st grade to PHS. This test is manually administered and scored.**

c. The district administrative unit or contractor responsible for conducting assessments is:

**DSS Employment staff**

d. The qualifications of the employees conducting the assessment are at minimum: [Refer to requirements listed in 18 NYCRR 385.6(c) and 385.7(c)]

**Social Services Worker-(a)graduation from a regionally accredited or NYS registered two year college or university with an associate degree; or (b)graduation from high school or possession of a high school equivalency diploma AND two years of full-time paid experience in examining, investigating or evaluating claims for assistance, financial support, veterans or unemployment benefits, insurance or similar program operating under established criteria for eligibility; or(c) an equivalent combination of training and experience as defined within the limits above.**

e. Applicants in households **with** dependent children are required to participate:

Yes  No

f. Applicants in households **without** dependent children are required to participate:

Yes  No

### **Temporary Assistance Employment Plans**

(Reference 18 NYCRR 385.6(b) and 385.7(b))

a. Check one of the following:

The district develops individual employment plans as required by 18 NYCRR 385.6(a) and 385.7(a):

The district enters employment plans directly into WTCMS.

The district uses the LDSS 4978 (New York State Employment Plan) and later enters information into WTCMS.

The district develops individual employment plans using a local equivalent tool, and later enters information into WTCMS. Attached is the local equivalent.

The local equivalent does not contain additional elements other than what is required.

The local equivalent does contain additional elements beyond what is required, listed below:

b. Check one of the following:

The same administrative unit or contractor that conducts employment assessments also develops employment plans.

A different district administrative unit or contractor develops employment plans, and their qualifications include:

**Section 3.4 Participation Rates and Work Activities (Reference 18 NYCRR 385.8 and 385.9)**

- a. Described below is how the district plans to meet federal and State Temporary Assistance participation rate requirements. Included is the weekly hours standard participation requirement for individuals in the different case and household types, along with the typical time period it takes for nonexempt individuals to be engaged in activities for both newly opened cases and individuals who status changed from exempt to nonexempt. Information regarding engaging exempt individuals is entered in Section 6:

**The district plans to meet participation rate requirements through a process of ongoing screening, assessment, determination, involvement in work activities in a timely manner, striving for gap-free service provision, and tracking of participation status via available reporting tools such as COGNOS and WTWCMS. Specifically, at time of application, all nonexempt individuals will be engaged in a job search activity enabling their participation to begin at case opening. Once a case opens, or there is a change from exempt to nonexempt, the individual is scheduled via US Mail for a work activity meeting with a DSS Employment staff member within 10 calendar days. Unless barriers to participation are evident, a placement in a work activity usually takes place within two weeks. The district will make every attempt to engage recipients up to 40 hours per week.**

- b. Estimate the number of individuals served averaged monthly:

	Households with Dependent Children	Households without Dependent Children
Individuals	20	50

- c. Described below is a description of how the district uses work participation management reports available through Cognos or other reports and activities to monitor district progress toward meeting work participation requirements and ensuring full engagement by adults in work or work preparation activities:

**WTWCMS and COGNOS reports including Participation & Engagement Status Report, Employability Code Change & Duration Reports, and Earned Income/Employment Report to assist in identifying deficiencies.**

- d. Describe the extent to which the district requires Non-Temporary Assistance Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (NTA SNAP) applicants and recipients to participate in SNAP E&T work activities. If the district is not mandating SNAP E&T work activity assignments, please describe how NTA SNAP work registrants are informed of the services available, upon request, for assistance with job search activities. Please note: At a minimum, districts are required to make available job search as a SNAP E&T activity to NTA SNAP applicants and recipients:

**NTA SNAP applicants and recipients are informed of Job Search availability at intake and recertification either through face-to-face or telephone interview.**

e. Please describe the local district procedure for Job Search, including the required number of job search contacts and hours per week assigned. Also include a description of how often individuals are generally required to report job search outcomes and if activities other than job search are routinely expected:

1. The district assigns TA applicants to Job Search.  Yes  No

If yes, the process for engaging TA applicants is:

**All nonexempt applicants are referred to the OTDA Jobs specialist immediately following the orientation process once they have completed their individual assessment.**

Applicant Job Search	Number of Contacts	Number of Hours	Additional Information
TANF and SN MOE	5	10	weekly meetings
SN Individuals	5	5	weekly meetings

2. The district assigns TA recipients to Job Search.  Yes  No

If yes, the process for engaging TA recipients is:

**All nonexempt recipients are referred to the OTDA Jobs specialist and are enrolled into the Job Search work activity.**

f. The allowable work activities that are available in the social services district are listed and defined as follows. An "X" in the appropriate check box indicates the activity is available for individuals receiving Family Assistance (FA), Safety Net Assistance for households with children (SN Fam), Safety Net Assistance for households without children (SN IND), and/or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. If a check box is blank it indicates that the activity is not available for that household/case type. See the table on the next two pages.

Activity and Definition	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Unsubsidized Employment</b> - Full time or part time employment in the public or private sector that is not subsidized by TANF or any other public program (excluding employer tax credits). Unsubsidized employment includes self-employment and/or paid internships.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Subsidized Private Sector Employment</b> - Employment in the private sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds (excluding tax credits) to offset some or all of the wages and costs of employing and training a recipient in accordance with New York State Social Services Law 336-f. Subsidized private sector employment will include positions subsidized through grant diversion/Transitional Employment Advancement Program (TEAP), supported employment programs, and paid college work study programs at private institutions. Individuals participating in subsidized private sector employment are paid wages and receive the same benefits as unsubsidized employees who perform similar work. An employment situation will be subsidized for up to the full amount of wages/benefits provided to the program participant and will be subsidized for the length of time as determined appropriate by the State or social services district.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Subsidized Public Sector Employment</b> - Employment in the public sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds (excluding tax credits) to offset some or all of the wages and costs of employing and training a recipient in accordance with New York State Social Services Law 336-e. Subsidized public sector employment will include positions subsidized through grant diversion/TEAP, supported employment programs, and paid college work study programs at public institutions. Individuals participating in subsidized public sector employment, and work study unless otherwise permitted under a federal work study program, are paid wages and receive the same benefits as unsubsidized employees who perform similar work. An employment situation will be subsidized for up to the full amount of wages/benefits provided to the program participant and will be subsidized for the length of time as determined appropriate by the State or social services district.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Work Experience</b> - Unpaid work performed at a public or not-for-profit organization to enable a participant who cannot find unsubsidized employment to improve his or her employability. Work experience provides participants with an opportunity to acquire, training, knowledge, work habits, and work references necessary to obtain and retain employment. Participation in work experience includes training required for the participant to complete the work experience assignment. For example, an individual who is expected to provide clerical support in a government agency may be provided training to develop or refine filing and data entry skills as needed to perform the tasks required as part of the work activity assignment.</p> <p>In addition to those components noted above, work experience will include unpaid internships that are part of any non-graduate student's education curriculum. (Note: Paid internships are to be reported as employment.)</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>On-the-Job Training (OJT)</b> - Training in a public or private sector employment setting during which the participant receives work-essential paid training while he or she is engaged in productive work that provides the knowledge and skills essential to attain full and adequate performance of the job.</p> <p>OJT will be unsubsidized (for which the employer does not receive a subsidy) or subsidized using TANF funds or other funds to offset the cost of the training provided to the participant. A subsidized OJT will be subsidized for up to the full cost of providing such training and wages/benefits provided to the program participant. Positions will be subsidized for the length of time determined appropriate by the State or social services district. OJT is distinct from subsidized employment due to the fact that the individual must participate in workplace training to attain full and adequate job performance and the subsidy provided is intended to offset the cost of such training.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Ind <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Community Service</b> - A structured program in which participants perform work for the direct benefit of the community under the auspices of public or nonprofit organizations. Community service placements must be projects that serve a useful community purpose in fields such as health, social services, environmental protection, education, urban and rural redevelopment, welfare, public recreation, public facilities, public safety, and childcare. Community service programs are designed to improve the employability of participants not otherwise able to obtain unsubsidized employment. Participation in community service may include training that is directly required for the participant to complete the community service assignment. For example, an individual who is expected to provide clerical support to a food pantry may be provided training to develop or refine filing and data entry skills.</p> <p>Community service assignments will primarily be voluntary in nature including participation in VISTA, Americorps, and unpaid volunteer activities at a school, Head Start programs, religious or faith-based institutions, community organizations or a nonprofit or public agency but will also include such mandated participation when court ordered. Participation in activities to support these organizations is deemed to provide a service to the community. In those instances where the participation could meet the federal definition of work experience or community service and the district or program provider would like to have another recipient provide childcare for the community service individual, such hours of work may be reported as participation in community service.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Job Search</b> - The act of seeking or obtaining employment or preparing to seek or obtain employment and will include looking for suitable job openings in a group or individual setting, making contact with potential employers, learning appropriate workplace expectations and behaviors in preparation for submitting job applications and interviewing, preparing to or applying for and/or interviewing for jobs and related activities.</p>

Activity and Definition	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Job Readiness Training (JRT) Activities</b> - Participation in programs that include seeking and preparing for work. JRT includes two types of activities: (1) traditional activities of resume preparation, training in interviewing skills, and instruction in workplace expectations, training in effective job seeking, including life skills training; and (2) activities that improve an individual's employability, such as substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, or rehabilitation activities in which a qualified medical or mental health professional has certified that such treatment is necessary.</p> <p>Traditional JRT activities will include: resume preparation, training in interview skills, instruction in workplace expectations, training in effective job seeking, life skills essential to workplace success, time management, goal setting, budgeting, basic math and literacy skills, household management, interpersonal skills, decision making skills, anger management, parenting skills when it has been determined that such training could help reduce unplanned work leave or apprehension toward entering employment.</p> <p>For TANF and SNA MOE families, JRT also includes substance abuse and other treatment and rehabilitative services that are required for individuals who are unable to work or individuals whose employability and employment retention requires such services. Such services, which should be reported on WTWCMS as such, will be deemed within WRTS participation rate logic to be JRT for recipients of TANF and SNA MOE but will be deemed to be Community Service for recipients of SNA non-MOE, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical health treatment and rehabilitation services including attending necessary physical therapy, and doctor appointments. Such treatment will include medical, behavioral and other treatment necessary for individuals suffering from substance abuse (current and former users) with such required treatment ranging from detoxification services to after care/abstinence maintenance.</li> <li>Mental health services including therapy, counseling, and other services to address mental or emotional disorders that can interfere with an individual's daily life functions, ability to work, looking for work or the ability to retain employment.</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Vocational Education</b> - Vocational education is defined as an organized educational program that directly relates to the preparation of individuals for current or emerging occupations that require training up to a four year degree. Vocational education does not generally include basic or remedial education or English as a Second Language (ESL) but may include work focused general education and language instruction that is a regular or integral part of a vocational education program. Social services districts are responsible for ensuring that any such remedial education or ESL is a regular part of the program for participants with similar skill sets as the TANF/SNA MOE client, is determined necessary by the program provider, and is limited in hours to less than one half of program participation. Vocational education programs include the completion of activities that provide individuals the knowledge and skills to perform a specific trade, occupation or vocation. Vocational education must be provided by an education or training organization.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Job Skills Training</b> - Training or education in job skills to improve a participant's employability, to ensure clients have the basic skills competencies required by employers to support job entry and/or to advance or adapt to the changing demands of the workplace. Where identified as needed, such training may include the development of basic workplace skills including professional workplace behaviors and decision making skills. Job skills training may include customized or technical training designed to provide participants with additional workplace skills, post-secondary education courses leading to a bachelor's or other advanced degree, or other training included under the definition of vocational education training. Job skills training may include literacy instruction, English language instruction, or other basic education for an individual who has already obtained a high school diploma or equivalency when determined from a client's assessment that such instruction is needed to improve the participant's employability.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Education Training</b> - Education directly related to employment for a recipient who has not received a high school diploma or equivalency must be related to a specific occupation, job or job offer or otherwise determined based on a client assessment as necessary to improve the participant's employability to support job entry, retention or advancement. Education directly related to employment may include courses designed to provide the knowledge and skills for general or specific occupations or work settings to ensure clients have the basic skills competencies required by employers and may also include adult basic education, ESL instruction and education leading to a high school equivalency diploma as determined as necessary to improve the participant's job opportunities in potential occupations. Where identified as needed such training may include the development of basic workplace skills including professional workplace behaviors and decision making skills.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Ind <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Secondary School</b> - Regular attendance in accordance with the requirements of the secondary school or a course of study at a secondary school or other State accredited institution leading to a high school equivalence (HSE) diploma, in the case of a recipient who has not completed secondary school or received a certificate of general equivalence. Secondary school participation may include general adult basic education or ESL if it is linked to attending secondary school or leading to a HSE diploma as determined necessary by the educational institution. Secondary School or HSE programs that routinely include ESL, career training, alternative school, tutoring, dropout prevention, teen pregnancy or parenting programs as a requirement of program participation as determined by the educational institution will also be permitted.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Fam <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SN Ind <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Provision of Childcare for Individual Participating in Community Service</b> - Providing unpaid childcare to enable another Temporary Assistance (TANF/SNA MOE funded) recipient to participate in a community service program.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SN Fam <input type="checkbox"/> SN Ind <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP	<p><b>Other</b> - Any work activity that does not meet the criteria of any of the above countable activities constitutes participation that is not countable toward federal and State participation rates.</p>

### Section 3.5 Job Development

The district conducts or accesses job development services to expand job opportunities for TA and SNAP clients.  Yes  No

If yes, the district participates in job development activities in the following manner:

- District staff contacts employers to solicit jobs for Temporary Assistance participants.

Below is the description of how this is done, including number of staff, frequency of contacts, etc.:

- District contracts or has an agreement with another agency to contact employers and solicit jobs for Temporary Assistance and/or SNAP participants. Below is the description of how this is done, including number of staff, frequency of contacts.
- OTDA Jobs Program staff are charged with job development as indicated in section 2.3. Additional information, if any, is described below:

### Section 3.6 Training Approval and Activity Enrollment Policies

(Reference 18 NYCRR 385.9)

- a. Describe how the district identifies appropriate education program providers for services of Adult Basic Education, High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma preparation, and English Language Instruction that are available to clients whose assessment indicates such services would be an appropriate work activity assignment:

**The only available provider in Essex County is CV-Tech (BOCES) and they have a full-time onsite HSE/Adult Education instructor at the local One-Stop and referrals are made on an ongoing basis**

- b. Describe how the district identifies appropriate providers of Vocational Education and Job Skills Training programs that are available to clients whose assessment indicates such services would be an appropriate work activity assignment:

**Essex County is a rural county and does not have a centralized location for all providers of Vocational Education and Job Skills Training programs. The limited array of providers is approved by the local WIA agency, ACAP, Inc., located near the district office.**

- c. Describe the process and guideline workers follow to ensure that individuals who have not attained a basic literacy level and/or have not attained a high school diploma are offered the opportunity to participate in an educational activity:

**Education activities are identified at the individual assessment and activity referral is done immediately to the One Stop Literacy provider, CV-TECH (BOCES).**

- d. Describe the district's process and policy, including the guideline workers follow, when determining whether participation in educational activities is approved for individuals who have not attained a high school diploma who are interested in participating in an educational activity. Include in this section instances when the agency would deny participation in education activities:

**As part of the individual's Employment Plan, all non-exempt participants may be referred to and required to participate in educational activities if they are not in possession of a high school diploma or HSE. District disapproval may occur if it is determined that the individual's request is not necessary to improve their employability to support job entry, retention or advancement.**

e. Describe the district's process and policy for determining whether or not a participant is approved/assigned to participate in job skills or vocational education activities:

- **Appropriate skills and capabilities required for enrollment in specific training.**
- **Completion of the Employment Plan.**
- **History of compliance with prior activity participation.**
- **District approval of training program resulting in sustainable employment.**

f. Describe the highest level of post-secondary level education that the district will approve as a work activity, up to a four year college program:

**If applicable, the district will approve up to four year college program taking into consideration the individual's curriculum.**

g. Describe how the district will ensure that enrollments in post-secondary education beyond the 12 month lifetime limit are combined with a weekly average of at least 20 hours in paid employment activities, work experience or community service:

**The district will monitor attendance during the first 12 month period of post-secondary level education. Once the timeframe has elapsed, the district will contact the individual for a reassessment amending their Employment Plan accordingly to ensure that the individual is being enrolled in an appropriate work activity for at least 20 hours.**

h. Education and training providers are evaluated by the following standards:

**Providers will be evaluated based on the ability of the training to increase the participant's progress in or to competitive, unsubsidized employment in a demand occupation in the local district or region.**

i. The district procedure for advising participants of approved training providers is:

**Applicants/recipients are advised at time of assessment and orientation of approved training providers if appropriate.**

j. The district procedure for notifying participants of approval for training or enrollment in a work activity is:

**Notification of enrollment in an activity is sent to the individual via US Mail within 10 days of the report date and time.**

k. In accordance with 18 NYCRR 385.9(b), regardless of whether the college program is approved for the participant as an employment work activity, the district will approve as a work activity a work-study, internship, externship or other work placement that is part of a non-graduate student's curriculum unless one or more of the following conditions applies as checked below:

- It has been determined that the student voluntarily quit a job or reduced earnings to qualify for initial or increased Temporary Assistance.
- A job or on-the-job training position that is comparable to the work-study, internship, externship or other work placement cannot reasonably be expected to exist in the private, public or not-for-profit sector.
- The student is not maintaining a cumulative C average (or the equivalent). The district may disregard this provision if the student documents an undue hardship.
- The institution or student fails to monitor and report information regarding the student's attendance and performance as required.

- The student fails to progress toward the completion of a course of study without good cause, as determined by the district.
- The student has previously enrolled in work-study, internship, or other work placement and failed to complete the work placement without good cause as determined by the district.
- Additional reasons as stated below:

l. To verify continued exempt status, the local district will monitor the high school attendance of 16-18 year old students in the following manner:

**High School enrollment is monitored through submission of report cards and/or school statements that verify attendance; documentation is requested as part of the initial and/or recertification process and as case record changes warrant.**

m. The district's procedure for ensuring that an individual's health related limitations are accommodated when assigning the individual to a work activity is:

**As part of the process for appropriate placement in a work activity, the DSS Employment staff will review each individual's medical status as documented through completion of the DSS-4526. Work activity providers are notified in writing of an individual's limitations prior to final site assignment.**

### Section 3.7 Work Verification

Consistent with New York State's approved Work Verification Plan (WVP), and in accordance with the requirements established by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, districts must develop a quality assurance plan to ensure that the data reported, from which their work participation rates are derived, are accurate. The plan must include the district's procedure for monitoring reported scheduled and actual attendance in paid employment and unpaid work activities and the controls in place to ensure that reported exemption statuses resulting in federal exclusions from the work participation rate calculation are accurately made, work eligible individuals are correctly identified, hours of attendance reported are accurate and documented, data entry is accurate and that the district and its providers adhere to the approved work activity definitions and the determination of countable excused absences and holiday reporting within federal limits. Each district must maintain the documentation to verify what is being reported to NYS OTDA.

Each district must describe how it will conduct periodic self-audits to determine that system entries are consistent with documentation in case files. The district must also explain how it will choose the sample size, select sample cases and establish the review period (no less frequently than semi-annually). The plan must indicate the district will maintain documentation on all pertinent findings produced through its self-audit process and that case records for all reviewed cases will be available for State and other auditors in their review of the local work verification system for the standard 6 year period associated with such reviews.

After each self audit is completed, the district must submit a summary of findings for State review including specific information on each of the errors identified. In addition, when monitoring reveals substantial problems, the district must describe the corrective action it will take.

The Quality Assurance plan must explain how staff will:

- Ensure that documentation of wages and actual hours of employment is verified and accurately projected/reported and present in the case file, is actual and is projected correctly;
- Ensure that the documentation for actual hours, supervision/attendance, excused absences, and holidays in other activities is present in the case file;

- Assess whether participation in the work activities reported for work eligible individuals meets the approved federal definition for the activity;
- Assess that the data entered into either WTWCMS, NYCWAY or other automated systems used for reporting work activities is accurate, including actual hours, excused absences and holidays; and is based on documentation in the case record; and
- Ensure that documentation necessary to determine an individual to be exempt due to being the caretaker of a disabled household member (Employability Code 38 or 48), and/or parent or caretaker relative of a child in the household under 12 months of age, (Employability code 31), is present in the case file and that individuals meet the exempt status based on the required documentation.

Please describe the process the district will use to review district worker collected documentation and data entry of the above listed elements (include a description of how a case sample for review will be selected, sample size and frequency of reviews):

The district will perform a random sample of (4) cases semi-annually for paid work activities to review district worker collected documentation and data entry. Both the temporary assistance and employment case files will be reviewed. Hours of employment will be verified through receipt of pay stubs, employer verification forms or collateral contact with the employer. The review will ensure the hours of employment on the ABEL budget are consistent with the hours reported on WTWCMS and documentation is in the file to support hours reported on WTWCMS and that the scheduled hours on WTWCMS is consistent with the documentation.

The district will perform a random sample of (4) cases semi-annually for participation in unpaid work activities to review district worker collected documentation and data entry. The employment case files will be reviewed. Actual hours of attendance will be documented by attendance sheets showing actual hours of attendance, any excused absences during the month, any unexcused absences during the month, and holiday time. The review will ensure the actual hours of attendance reported on the monthly attendance sheets has been correctly reported on WTWCMS, excused absences and holiday time are documented in the case file and correctly reported on WTWCMS in accordance with federal limitations, and documentation of actual hours of attendance is accurate and matches the hours of participation reported on WTWCMS by district or provider staff.

The district will perform a random sample of (2) cases semi-annually in which a case member is reported as an employability code 38-needed in the home fulltime or employability code 48-time limit exemption to care for a disabled household member to review district worker collected documentation and data entry. The temporary assistance case file will be reviewed to ensure there is presence of medical documentation to support the exemption and that the documentation has a timeframe for the exemption and that the individual is the appropriate caretaker.

The district will perform a random sample of (2) cases semi-annually in which a case member is reported as an employability code 31-caretaker of a child under the age of 12 months to review district worker collected documentation and data entry. The temporary assistance case file will be reviewed to ensure there is documentation from hospital, birth certificate or social security card present to verify the child under the age of one. Temporary assistance records will also be reviewed to ensure that the household composition is in fact a one parent case and that the individual has not exceeded the 12 month lifetime limit.

In each of the above samples, the district will assess and verify that participation in the reported work activities meets the State approved definition for the activity.

The district will sample cases from each month within in the (6 month) semi-annual period. The October to March review will be due by May 20<sup>th</sup>. The April to September review will be due by November 20<sup>th</sup>.

The district will maintain supporting documentation for the cases that are reviewed and make them readily available for review by A&QI auditors upon request.

The results of these audits will enable the district to identify policies, processes or cases that may need corrective action. We will ensure that a summary report will be prepared following each review period and forwarded to Kathy Nagy, [Kathleen.Nagy@otda.ny.gov](mailto:Kathleen.Nagy@otda.ny.gov), and Kyle Miller, [Kyle.Miller@otda.ny.gov](mailto:Kyle.Miller@otda.ny.gov).

Please describe the process the district will use to review provider collected documentation and data entry of the above listed elements (include a description of how a case sample for review will be selected, sample size and frequency of reviews):

**The district does not utilize provided collected documentation. The district collects and reviews monthly timesheets signed by the site supervisor and enter the pertinent information onto the WTCMS for each individual before submitting the documentation to Essex County. Once received the district reviews the timesheets for signatures of the site supervisor as well as the attendance for each individual. Any discrepancies are addressed by the district. Non-compliance issues are handled through the conciliation process.**

### **Section 3.8 Strategies/Procedures for Accommodating Individuals with Limited English Proficiency**

Following is a description of how the district accommodates the needs of Non-English speaking participants in accessing employment activities and services:

**The district has the NYS Language Identification Tool posted in the lobby and utilizes the Language Access line through OTDA, (518) 402-3096, to provide interpretation services when necessary. Also, the district currently has an onsite DSS employee who is fluent in Spanish, and the nearby school has staff which can assist in both the Spanish and French language.**

### **Section 3.9 Strategies/Procedures for Increasing Program Attendance**

Describe district policies and/or procedures in place to reduce the amount of time participants fail to participate in work activities, including absences that are with good cause:

- **Transportation barriers are being addressed by the offering of CHAMP bus tickets or CARTE bus tokens (public transportation) when needed for work activities.**
- **The district has adopted a stronger Orientation presentation that includes a detailed explanation of the Work Requirements, child care, benefits of Work Experience, non-compliance consequences, and Job Readiness activities including practice applications and resume workshops.**
- **DSS Employment staff is responsible for the monitoring of work activity attendance and initiates the conciliation process reducing the time between non-compliance and conciliation.**

### **Section 3.10 Strategies/Procedures for Engaging Sanctioned Temporary Assistance Participants**

District attempts to engage sanctioned participants as soon as they are sanctioned using the following strategies:

**The district plans on returning to the monthly call in appointments of sanctioned individuals to meet with the DSS Employment staff and the Investigative Unit to discuss the impact of the sanction on the existing household budget.**

- District attempts to engage sanctioned participants when the durational period of the sanction is completed using the following strategies:

**The client is advised by letter once the duration has ended and again verbally at TA recertification of their ability to end their sanction and how they may do so.**

**The district will include the individual in the monthly sanction call in appointments to meet with the DSS Employment staff and the Investigative Unit to discuss the impact of the sanction on the existing household budget.**

- District attempts to engage sanctioned participants during different times in the sanction period using the following strategies:
- District has no specific strategies to engage sanctioned participants.

### **Section 3.11 Strategies for reducing the need for Temporary Assistance:**

District's strategies for reducing the need for Temporary Assistance are described below:

- **Diversion is explored by screening performed by a TA worker at the intake interview.**
- **Supportive Services based upon documented employment or the promise of employment.**
- **Applicant job search activities.**

### **Section 4 Support Services** (Reference 18 NYCRR 385.4)

#### **Section 4.1 TA and Non-TA SNAP Applicants and Recipients in Work Activities Approved by the District**

- a. The social services district will provide childcare in accordance with the childcare section of the district's Child and Family County Services Plan. The district will also provide for participants the following expenses which the district deems necessary for the individual to participate in orientation, assessment, employment planning, approved work activities and activities to restore self-sufficiency:
- **Mileage reimbursement for gas costs of vehicle will be at the IRS medical/moving rate**
  - **Relocation assistance including security deposit to alleviate transportation barrier**
  - **License or other work related fees**
  - **Tools or equipment**
  - **Clothing/Uniforms**
  - **DMV fees, car insurance and repairs. (Expenditure will be authorized only when deemed to be the least costly means of providing transportation)**
  - **North Country Legal Services to assist in settling legal disputes presenting as barriers to employment**
  - **All Support Services will be provided to participants on a case by case basis and are not to exceed the maximum of \$1800.**
- b. The district will use the following approach to assist those participants who need transportation to and from an approved work activity site, including any applicable mileage reimbursement rate, and the method used by the district to arrive at that reimbursement rate. OTDA policy establishes a mileage reimbursement rate of no less than the IRS established rate for medical/moving purposes. In all instances, should the actual cost of transportation needed to participate in an assigned work activity exceed the reimbursement rate determined by the district, the district will reimburse for the actual costs based on reasonable documentation submitted by the work activity participant.

Please check all that apply:

- Bus pass/token
- Gas card/voucher
- Mileage reimbursement at IRS Business rate, (effective 1/1/16 is 54 cents/mi)
- Mileage reimbursement at IRS Medical/Moving rate, (effective 1/1/16 is 19 cents/mi)
- Other mileage rate, (please explain methodology used to establish reimbursement rate):

**The district will provide the participants with bus tickets, tokens, or by supplementing their benefit card in advance. The district may also approve a taxi at times upon their discretion.**

**The district will reimburse mileage for those who own their own vehicle when a mileage reimbursement form is submitted and signed by the DSS Employment staff as being authorized for the work activity.**

- c. OTDA policy establishes a distance not to exceed 2 miles as the maximum distance that the district can require a participant to walk to a work activity assignment or to access public transportation. The district's policy states that an individual may be required to walk up to the distance described below each way to a work activity or to access public transportation:

**Participants may be required to walk up to a maximum of two miles to participate in a work activity due to the rural nature of the county and lack of public transportation services. Weather, child care, and medical limitations are considered when making these determinations. Every attempt by the district will be made to use alternate methods of transport.**

- d. The district will provide the following services to assist individuals at risk of needing temporary assistance to improve their opportunities for employment or to maintain their employment:

**As long as funds are available, the following work related expenses will be authorized for applicants and recipients of Temporary Assistance when deemed necessary by DSS staff, to enable the individual to accept or retain employment. Approval is based upon documented evidence of a job and funds from other sources must be sufficient to meet the individual's needs**

- **Post-Employment services/counseling**
- **Transportation: bus tickets or tokens/gas coupons/ actual travel reimbursement/mileage at the IRS medical/moving rate.**
- **Relocation assistance including security deposit**
- **Work related clothing, not limited to uniforms or footwear**
- **Tools or equipment**
- **Licensing or other work related fees**
- **Vehicle repairs, insurance premiums, DMV fees, and car or lease payments (documented evidence of ownership/title and valid driver's license is required)**

**All support services requested for diversion will be on a case by case basis and are not to exceed the maximum of \$1800.**

## **Section 4.2 Transitional Support Services**

The district will provide the following supports and strategies to support job retention:

**Post-employment services provided by DSS Employment staff including Congratulations letter offering support services as listed in Section 4.**

The district will provide the following support services, for up to 90 days after case closing, to individuals whose Temporary Assistance cases have closed due to employment:

- **One month's rent**
- **Three month's medical insurance premium**
- **Expense to obtain or retain phone services needed for job retention**
- **Post-employment services**
- **Gas cards**
- **Car insurance**
- **Car repairs**
- **Transportation costs for up to one week if vehicle is in repair and deemed cost effective**
- **Services referenced in Section 4.1**

The district maximum for the above mentioned services is not to exceed \$1800.

### **Section 4.3 Extended Support Services**

As long as funding is available (through FFFS, etc.), the district will provide the following supportive services for individuals who are eligible under the TANF Services 200% of poverty eligibility guidelines:

- **Gas cards**
- **Car repairs**
- **Auto insurance**
- **Auto registration**
- **Tires**
- **Uniforms/work clothing**
- **Case Management/Post Employment services**
- **Other emergency support services deemed necessary to assist in job retention and prevent an individual from returning to assistance on a case by case basis**

The district maximum for the above mentioned services is not to exceed \$1800.

### **Section 5 Conciliation, Sanction and Dispute Resolution Procedures**

(Reference 18 NYCRR 385.11 and 385.12)

#### **Section 5.1 Conciliation**

The district's conciliation process for Temporary Assistance applicants and recipients is in accordance with 18 NYCRR 385.11(a). Conciliations are conducted (check all that apply, and describe the procedure.):

- in person
- by phone
- by mail, etc.:

**Once the district has been notified of a participant's failure to comply, a notice is sent to the non-compliant participant to inform them of the right to conciliation. If the TA recipient responds to the conciliation, the reasons for non-compliance are collected and a decision is made by the DSS Employment worker and his/her Employment Supervisor.**

The Temporary Assistance good cause/willfulness determination is made by:

- client's employment worker
- a supervisor
- separate entity:

**If the individual does not respond to the conciliation notice within the required timeframe or the person responds and the district determines that the noncompliance was willful and without good cause, a Notice of Intent to Discontinue or Reduce benefits will be issued. The notice includes the right to a Fair Hearing.**

The district's conciliation process for SNAP recipients is in accordance with 18 NYCRR 385.11(c). Conciliations are conducted (check all that apply, and describe the procedure.):

- in person
- by phone
- by mail, etc.:

**The district will send a notice to the non-compliant SNAP recipient to inform them of their right to conciliation. The notice will advise the SNAP recipient to contact the DSS Employment worker to discuss their desire to demonstrate compliance to avoid a SNAP sanction.**

The SNAP E&T good cause determination is made by:

- client's employment worker
- a supervisor
- separate entity:

The district's procedure for engaging SNAP recipients in a work activity to demonstrate compliance to avoid a SNAP E&T related sanction is:

**If the SNAP recipient responds to the conciliation notification and advises of their willingness to demonstrate necessary compliance, the DSS Employment worker will send the SNAP recipient the Demonstrate Compliance with SNAP Work Activity form allowing them to obtain and submit for Agency review the required 5 job searches needed for the individual to be deemed as in compliance.**

**Should the non-compliance issue involve the individual's failure to have an employment assessment, it would be necessary that the individual actually complete an employment assessment to avoid a SNAP E&T sanction.**

## **Section 5.2 Sanctions**

The district's procedure for determining compliance for those individuals who wish to end their employment sanction (18 NYCRR 385.12, 385.13), including the time period established for demonstrating compliance to the satisfaction of the district is:

**The sanctioned individual must sign an "Agreement to Comply with Employment Program Requirements" form. They will then be required to perform a work activity deemed appropriate by the district for five consecutive days before the sanction will be discontinued and they are considered as compliant. Benefits are restored retroactive to the date the individual indicated a willingness to comply (but no earlier than the expiration of the minimum duration period).**

## **Section 5.3 Dispute Resolution**

The district's procedure for individuals who wish to dispute their work activity assignments, including individuals who dispute the district's response to their request for health-related accommodations is conducted in accordance with 18 NYCRR 385.11(b).

The grievance is mediated by:

- An agreement with an independent entity

- Supervisory staff who are trained in mediation and who have no direct responsibility for the individual's case
- Designated supervisory staff who have no direct responsibility for the individual's case and who are not trained in mediation

**Section 6 Disability Determinations, Documentation and Requirements of Exempt Individuals**

(Reference 18 NYCRR 385.2)

**Section 6.1 Disability Determination Process and Tools**

The district's process for determining an individual's disabilities and/or work limitations is in accordance with 18 NYCRR 385.2(d). Check all that apply, and describe the process:

- District participates in the OTDA managed contract for independent medical evaluations.
- District contracts directly with a physician to provide independent medical evaluations.
- District accepts physician's statement provided by participant.
- District accepts physician's statement provided by participant but refers for an independent evaluation when deemed necessary.
- Other process (please describe):

**To determine an individual's disability and/or medical limitations, a current medical statement is required at application, recertification or at intervals determined by the circumstances. The DSS medical or mental evaluation is completed and submitted to the department within 10 days; once received, is reviewed to determine initial ability to work or address work limitations. Once all documentation to be reviewed is obtained and a determination is made, the individual will be notified of such, and the right to a fair hearing. The district will inform activity providers of any individual's limitations; to ensure the worksite is responding to the respective limitations of each participant, the DSS Employment staff contacts the site supervisor regularly, making adjustments in work assignment/location when necessary, or as warranted upon receipt of updated medical statements. The district will inform providers of any limitations in writing.**

The local process for reviewing the medical documentation to determine if the individual is exempt, nonexempt, or work limited is as follows:

- District directs the contracted physician or individual's physician to determine status.
- District review team reviews and determines status (described below).
- Specialized disability/medical staff or unit reviews and determines status (described below)
- Other:

**Medicals submitted by participants from their practitioner are used for employability determination by the Employment Supervisor & staff to determine what and if any activities can be done within the documented limitations/restrictions listed. Additional medical or psychological evaluations may be requested should the district feel it is warranted.**

**Section 6.2 Mental Health Screening and Assessment**

The district is administering a screening tool for Temporary Assistance participants to help determine whether a referral for a mental health evaluation is warranted, in addition to screening for a disability that occurs as part of the application or disability determination process  Yes  No

If yes, describe the district's policy for determining when a program participant is offered a mental health screen.

If yes, does the district use or intend to use the LDSS 5009 - Mental Health Screening Tool and/or the computer assisted version of the Modified Mini Screening tool (MMS)?  Yes  No

If yes, indicate the district's cutoff score (7, 8 or 9) for referral to a mental health evaluation:

If using a screening tool other than the MMS, indicate the screening tool used:

Describe the district procedure for referring a participant for a mental health evaluation, when warranted by the screening result:

### **Section 6.3 Requirements for Exempt Temporary Assistance Participants**

(Reference 18 NYCRR 385.2 (e))

An exempt individual who has the potential to be restored to self-sufficiency through rehabilitation may be required to accept medical care to assist the individual in recovering from a mental or physical impairment, accept referral to and enrollment in a program of vocational rehabilitation, training, and/or other essential rehabilitation, and provide requested evidence that he/she is participating in the assigned program.

- a. Following is the district's procedure for determining if an individual who is unable to work due to a mental or physical impairment has the potential through treatment or other rehabilitative activities to improve the ability to work. This determination is different from the determination of the individual's disability exemption as covered in Section 6.1 of this plan. Included here is who (e.g., medical practitioner, employment worker, Temporary Assistance worker, local review team, etc.) makes or assists in this determination that an individual can restore or improve employability through treatment or other rehabilitative activities. Also included is the source and type of information used to make the determination (e.g., information from individual's medical practitioner, district contracted provider, specialist evaluation obtained as result of district referral, etc.):

**The Employment Supervisor will review the medical evidence provided to the Agency and determine based upon the physician/provider information whether or not the individual may be capable of being restored to self-sufficiency. In some instances, the Employment Supervisor may feel it necessary to contact the provider to clarify the medical information submitted (ie: definition of moderately limited).**

- b. Following is the district's procedure for developing a treatment plan and for referring the participant to appropriate treatment, etc. Please be specific:

**The Employment Supervisor will review all medicals submitted and based upon the recommendations from the provider will ensure that the DSS Employment staff notify the individual that as a condition of eligibility they are required to follow through with the treatment recommendations listed on the current medical (i.e.: physical therapy, neurological consult, etc.). The DSS employment staff will be responsible for tracking the cooperation of the individuals on a case by case basis.**

- c. Following is the district's procedure for tracking the participant's compliance with the treatment plan, including who in the district is responsible for monitoring compliance. Include elements such as monthly confirmation of attendance at rehabilitation or other factors to judge participation and progress, along with how often the treatment plan is updated:

**The DSS Employment staff will be responsible for the monitoring of all treatment requirements and will obtain monthly time sheets from rehabilitation providers which will then entered onto the WTWCMS in a timely manner. Progress reports will be periodically sent to the providers and the updating of the treatment plan will be determined on a case by case basis.**

