

While many frameworks and models help people and systems make change, orienting systems and services around the Five Domains of Wellbeing helps ensure that change is sustainable—even for people who are facing multiple challenges and are caught up in multiple systems. The Five Domains of Wellbeing¹ is a strengths-based, evidence-informed framework which recognizes all people—individuals, families and communities—have universal, interdependent needs for **social connectedness, safety, stability, mastery and meaningful access to relevant resources**. This framework has been used as a common language across systems to make them more effective, efficient and humane. Deep application of the Five Domains of Wellbeing helps shift systems to a people- and family-centered response that improves outcomes and increases the efficiency of existing programs and systems, and that ultimately improves the wellbeing of people in these same programs and systems.

1 Why should policymakers consider incorporating the Five Domains of Wellbeing into their systems change initiatives?

Because using the Five Domains of Wellbeing establishes a common language across different systems, creating more efficiency and leading to better results.

Many marginalized members of our communities who face multiple challenges—like homelessness, poverty and violence—end up stuck in a “revolving door” of services, repeatedly involved with and coming back to a variety of services provided by or funded by different state agencies. While most services succeed in helping people *make change*, they struggle to ensure that change *lasts*. Efforts at coordination often fall short because each agency has its own mandate, each seemingly trumping the others. Without a common language and a shared framework to reconcile these sometimes opposing mandates, creating an efficient and effective set of systems isn’t possible.

The Five Domains of Wellbeing framework helps systems respond to the reality that all change—required or voluntary—requires tradeoffs (i.e., making progress in one area, while giving up assets in another).

2 Is the Five Domains of Wellbeing framework effective and does it improve outcomes?

Yes, the Five Domains of Wellbeing is an evidence-informed framework, and early evidence shows that using this framework results in better outcomes.

A wealth of research, from a range of fields, documents: the importance for health and success in each of the five domains; the interactions among the domains; and the relation these domains have to people’s ability to make sustainable change.²

¹ Please see the attached *Five Domains of Wellbeing* overview document for more information.

² Fact sheets providing some of the research supporting the Five Domains of Wellbeing may be downloaded at <http://fullframeinitiative.org/the-five-domains-of-wellbeing-fact-sheets/>.

The framework itself is drawn from the practice of some of our country's most innovative and effective programs and systems, and it has been refined in concert with a growing group of public systems and nonprofit programs. Today, the Full Frame Initiative is supporting programs and public agencies in applying the framework to improve outcomes across the country. For example, early evidence from work with Missouri Division of Youth Services shows that systems change efforts that include the Five Domains of Wellbeing as a core element are leading to better outcomes, including: higher levels of educational attainment, more productive community involvement and reduced recidivism for juvenile offenders.

3 Will incorporating the Five Domains of Wellbeing require creating new programs and increasing funding?

No. The framework uses existing services and resources to achieve more efficient and effective outcomes.

Rather than expecting all needs will be met by services, application of the framework helps agencies align and coordinate more effectively, and leverage—not replace—community assets and the social networks that are important for people's wellbeing.

By supporting *lasting* change for the people in systems, agencies will ultimately *reduce* the demand on systems.

4 We are already coordinating among our various agencies to improve efficiency and outcomes. Why do we need to incorporate the Five Domains of Wellbeing to do that?

The Five Domains of Wellbeing framework goes beyond coordination to create deep alignment across state agencies, programs and systems.

Most governments operate as a set of specialized systems, each focused on addressing a specific problem (e.g., child welfare, mental health, housing, etc.) without fully considering the other problems at play. A person with more than one challenge often experiences confounding and harmful systems fragmentation, which compromises the effectiveness of each of the services. **The logical response, improving coordination among programs, often falls short** because in achieving a given purpose, each agency each may be creating unsustainable tradeoffs that mean giving up the very progress that another system enabled.

The Five Domains of Wellbeing framework addresses this systemic fragmentation by providing a mechanism to identify and minimize tradeoffs within and between agencies. Beginning with the Five Domains of Wellbeing as a common language means agencies can actually prevent unsustainable tradeoffs for people and effectively support them in making lasting change and progress.

5 Does using the Five Domains of Wellbeing mean that every agency has to do everything for everyone?

No, the Five Domains of Wellbeing simply allows for a people-centered response that is more effective and longer-lasting.

While the Five Domains of Wellbeing can be a common language across agencies, it doesn't mean that every agency does everything or every agency becomes a generalist practice. Indeed, it supports a people-centered response, not a problem-focused response, which helps systems respond to fundamental human needs. However, at the same time, it encourages the expertise, perspective and priorities of particular systems or agencies to be considered and drawn upon.

What does using the Five Domains of Wellbeing look like at the policy level?

At the policy level, using the Five Domains of Wellbeing means considering the tradeoffs that may be set up with each policy and minimizing those tradeoffs.

When all agencies are aligned with the Five Domains of Wellbeing, they are able to anticipate and discuss the potential tradeoffs of a policy and collectively design and implement ways to minimize tradeoffs that might undermine success.

For example, a policy to place foster children with family or relatives has an intention of supporting children in maintaining social connections. However, for a high school kid, moving to another school two months before the end of the school year may result in large, unsustainable tradeoffs. That youth may drop out and run away—negative outcomes from a well-intentioned policy. Using the Five Domains of Wellbeing identifies and minimizes tradeoffs to help ensure that policy is able to achieve its intended effect.

This doesn't mean that the policy should be abandoned or changed, or that we need more services. Sometimes having a different conversation that anticipates tradeoffs can make all the difference between sustaining and not sustaining change. Other times, identifying tradeoffs means that action may be taken to leverage existing assets people have.

Who, or what populations, can benefit when the Five Domains of Wellbeing framework is applied?

Everyone can benefit.

The Five Domains of Wellbeing framework is based on the recognition that all people are more alike than different, and that in order to achieve wellbeing and thrive, we all strive to build resources in and minimize tradeoffs among these domains.

This framework is being used in fields as diverse as juvenile justice, domestic and sexual violence, housing and homelessness, child welfare, parenting support, and programs serving people with mental health, physical health, and addiction challenges. The universality of the Five Domains of Wellbeing—across races, cultures and backgrounds; life stages; demographic groups; individuals, families and communities; and more—makes the framework particularly valuable for integrating services across silos of issues and populations.

In particular, the Five Domains of Wellbeing framework helps marginalized people and communities because these are the people often involved with multiple agencies, any of which might require them to make unsustainable tradeoffs in order to receive the resources they need.

How can agencies incorporate the Five Domains of Wellbeing into their work?

Connect with us or our partners.

The Five Domains of Wellbeing framework itself is simple, perhaps deceptively so. However, agency staff and practitioners require training and support to fully understand the framework and apply it in a responsible, safe, meaningful and effective way.

The Full Frame Initiative partners with ambitious programs, systems and agencies to incorporate the Five Domains of Wellbeing, helping to identify funding sources for, and participating deeply in, their change efforts.

We offer technical and capacity building support as well as strategic support. We are committed to helping leaders across the country apply the framework in their own contexts and settings to improve systems for everyone.

We encourage you to connect with us, or our partners, to learn more about what it takes to apply the Five Domains of Wellbeing framework.

**The Full Frame Initiative
308 Main Street, Suite 2A
Greenfield, MA 01301**

**413.773.3400
learn-more@fullframeinitiative.org**

The Full Frame Initiative's mission is to change systems so that people and communities experiencing poverty, violence and trauma have the tools, supports and resources they need to thrive.

THE FIVE DOMAINS OF WELLBEING

All of us—from president to postal worker, single mother to senior citizen, adolescent to adult—share a set of universal needs that are critical to our wellbeing. These essential human needs are what the Full Frame Initiative defines as the **Five Domains of Wellbeing**.

We all need: 1) **social connectedness** to people and communities, in ways that allow us to give as well as to receive; 2) **safety**, the ability to be ourselves without significant harm; 3) **stability** that comes from having things we can count on to be the same from day to day, and knowing that a small bump won't set off a domino-effect of crises; 4) **mastery**, feeling that we can influence what happens to us, and having the skills to navigate and negotiate life; 5) and **meaningful access to relevant resources** to meet our basic needs without shame, danger or great difficulty.



While we share a common need for assets in these domains, each of us experiences the domains in different and deeply personal ways, influenced by many factors, including our personal history, race, gender, age, community, family, values and context. A returning veteran may feel physically vulnerable sitting in traffic. A young black man may face extra scrutiny from security guards at a department store when he's buying clothes for school. A pick-up soccer game might give one person a sense of belonging and connectedness, but make another feel awkward and isolated.

Those same factors also influence what we are (or are not) willing to give up in order to increase our wellbeing. Increasing wellbeing doesn't happen by making progress in each single domain independently. The domains are interconnected. Sometimes, building assets in one

domain means giving up something we value in another: a tradeoff. We all ask ourselves, "Is it worth it?" *Is it worth it to take a job that gives me a big raise?* If it means waking up 20 minutes earlier, maybe so. But if it means always missing visiting hours at a parent's nursing home, maybe not. Sometimes we can find a way to minimize the tradeoff so that what wasn't worth it before, now is: convincing the nursing home to make an exception for visiting after hours twice a week. Being able both to decide for *ourselves* what's "worth it," and to navigate life in ways that build our assets and minimize tradeoffs, fosters wellbeing.

Yet many people, families and communities living at the intersection of poverty, violence and trauma face constant threats to their wellbeing, and services designed to help them address a challenge in one domain—gaining access to housing for example—rarely are set up to take into consideration the tradeoffs that might be an unintended by-product of this progress. And sometimes those tradeoffs aren't worth it, and so the progress doesn't stick. For example, if turning down available housing automatically disqualifies a person who is homeless from other housing options, the system has decided housing is "worth it," no

matter what the cost of the tradeoff. But what if taking that housing means a mother has to move across the state, away from her job and the grandmother who provides care to her child who has a disability? That housing placement probably won't last, even if she takes it.

To create change that *will* last, systems and services must help people minimize tradeoffs and build assets in the **Five Domains of Wellbeing**. Doing so will begin to break the cycles of poverty, violence and trauma that undermine wellbeing for us all.

WHAT THE FIVE DOMAINS OF WELLBEING MEAN FOR INDIVIDUALS

Social Connectedness

The degree to which a person has and perceives a sufficient number and diversity of relationships that allow her or him to give and receive information, emotional support and material aid; create a sense of belonging and value; and foster growth.

Related concepts: belonging, social capital, social networks, social support, reduced social isolation and exclusion

Stability

The degree to which a person can expect her or his situation and status to be fundamentally the same from one day to the next, where there is adequate predictability for a person to concentrate on the here-and-now and on the future, growth and change; and where small obstacles don't set off big cascades.

Related concepts: resiliency, permanency, certainty

Safety

The degree to which a person can be her or his authentic self and not be at heightened risk of physical or emotional harm.

Related concepts: security; absence of harm, risk or danger

Mastery

The degree to which a person feels in control of her or his fate and the decisions she or he makes, and where she or he experiences some correlation between efforts and outcomes.

Related concepts: control, choice, self-efficacy, self-esteem, self-confidence, empowerment, applying knowledge

Meaningful Access to Relevant Resources

The degree to which a person can meet needs particularly important for her or his situation in ways that are not overly onerous, and are not degrading or dangerous.

Related concepts: having knowledge, meeting "basic" needs, cultural competence (of resources), utilization rates, service integration/defragmentation, reduced barriers, information and referral, navigation

The Full Frame Initiative believes that everyone needs and has a right to wellbeing. Our mission is to change systems so that people and communities experiencing poverty, violence and trauma have the tools, supports and resources they need to thrive.

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