



TANF Works!

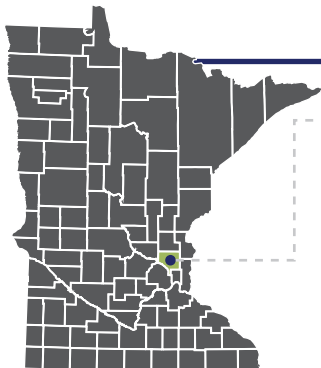
TANF/WIOA
COLLABORATION SERIES
2019 - 08

Anoka County, Minnesota

TANF/WIOA COLLABORATION

Since the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in 2014, many state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and workforce system leaders have focused efforts to coordinate client services serving low-income or vulnerable populations. WIOA makes TANF a mandatory partner unless the Governor opted out. Coordination efforts are meant to improve service delivery and reduce duplication.

FIGURE 1: Map of Anoka County, Minnesota



Anoka County, one of the top five most populated counties in Minnesota, is a mostly suburban area located north of Minneapolis. Key industries within the county include advanced manufacturing, health care, construction, retail, and back-office administrative services. Anoka County makes

up a single local workforce development area under WIOA. Anoka County is also part of a regional workforce development area that encompasses metropolitan Minneapolis-St. Paul (one of the twenty largest metropolitan regions in the U.S., based on GDP).

This brief highlights emerging TANF and WIOA agency collaboration practices between TANF and the American Job Center in Anoka County, Minnesota in the following areas:



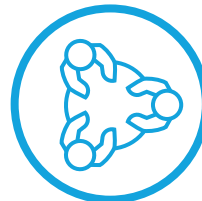
Joint Service Delivery

through a common program application, co-enrollment, a team of intake and eligibility specialists, and a youth focus



Resource Sharing

through a diverse mix of funding and resource monitoring



Shared Learning

through data sharing, cross-training of staff, and high standards for documenting interactions



Managing Collaborative Activities

through close ties and direct accountability to county government and agencies

Local Services Overview

The Anoka County Job Training Center provides all the county's publicly funded employment services, including Title I WIOA. It is the only WIOA job center serving Anoka County. All public assistance programs are located within the same building, including TANF (called the Minnesota Family Investment Program) eligibility and employment services, the Diversionary Work Program, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T).

On-site WIOA partners include the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (or DEED, which provides WIOA Career Services, Unemployment Insurance, and Vocational Rehabilitation Services); Minnesota State Vocational Rehabilitation Services; Metro North Adult and Basic Education Consortium (WIOA Title II); a TRIO Educational Opportunity Center; Economic Assistance (TANF); and Anoka County Community Action Program. The center also offers on-site child care services: child care case management, child care application assistance, and a child care provider that clients can elect to use. As of 2018, approximately 25 organizations operate programs within the building.



JOINT SERVICE DELIVERY

Anoka County uses a streamlined application and intake process, as well as targeted co-enrollment and programming, to serve more diverse clients.

A common program application. The Anoka County Job Training Center is the only career center in Minnesota that uses a universal application for employment and training services. Center managers indicate that this common form allows intake and eligibility staff to identify and then communicate with other staff about which programs might best fit an individual client's interests and needs.

“Behind the scenes, we'll deal with the money; it's important that the individual understands that they will be helped.

- ANOKA WIOA/TANF MANAGER

A team of intake and eligibility specialists. Anoka County has a dedicated Intake and Eligibility Team to work with both walk-in and referred clients. This team of four technicians and one supervisor determines eligibility for any employment-services

client at the center (except for initial TANF eligibility, which is performed separately). The team supports the center's goals in several ways – spanning administrative, programmatic, and monitoring functions.



ELIGIBILITY PAPERWORK

A technician reviews the universal application, collects verification paperwork, and identifies for which programs the client is eligible. The client's eligibility status and potential next steps are summarized in an internal staff-to-staff communication cover sheet, which serves as a program eligibility checklist. This document is sent to the employment services staff for the program(s) in which the client intends to enroll. Employment counselors can then concentrate on employment-related activities with their clients.



PROGRAM STAFF SUPPORT

The technicians support program staff on an ad hoc basis. For example, they help deliver a weekly TANF employment services overview session to new clients, and help orient new walk-in clients to the job training center. The technicians' offices are located near the center's reception desk and Resource Room, making it easy for other center staff to drop in with questions. Technicians can also answer questions from existing clients about their case or program status when case management staff are not available.



BACK-UP SUPPORT

Each technician has expertise across all the center's employment and training programs, but specializes in (and is funded by) a particular program. Each serves as a back-up specialist for an additional program. For example, one technician spends about 90 percent of her time working with clients and employment counselors for TANF and TANF diversion programs. She also is a back-up for the WIOA Dislocated Worker Program when its routinely-assigned technician is away from the office. In turn, another technician on the team is a back-up for this TANF-specializing technician.



PROGRAM TEAM MEETINGS

Technicians attend program team meetings (e.g., for the Dislocated Worker Program or one of the center's youth programs), inform program managers about emerging trends in demand for particular center services, and help ensure that program intake and exits align with program goals and compliance requirements.

Co-enrollment. An Anoka County Job Training Center client might be enrolled in two or three programs, or on rare occasion as many as five. In a given month, a dozen TANF clients may be enrolled in WIOA Adult or WIOA Youth. More typically, co-enrollment of TANF clients spans a wider group of work readiness and job training programs offered at the center, such as the state-funded occupational skills program Pathways to Prosperity or the state-funded Minnesota Youth Program.

Program managers note that co-enrollment offers both advantages and disadvantages: clients can obtain as many supports and services as they need, and the services are more universally accessible to a diverse set of clients. When one program has a waiting list or is running low on funds, the job center team can identify other employment program services to engage the clients. For example, if a vocational rehabilitation service has a waiting list, the staff may first direct the client to career exploration and career planning through WIOA Title I or through a state-funded employment program. Staff can then connect the client with a vocational rehabilitation counselor or a disability resource coordinator.

Co-enrollment has also encouraged strong cross-program collaboration. For example, Anoka's state-funded career pathways occupational training program, "Career Connections," is available to job center clients with income levels below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Individuals do not need to co-enroll in TANF, WIOA, or other programs offered at the center. However, a cohort of Career Connections trainees may include individuals who are enrolled (and sometimes co-enrolled) in WIOA Youth, WIOA Adult, TANF, or SNAP E&T. Career Connections or one of these other programs may cover training costs, depending on whether the trainee is eligible for or already enrolled in one of the programs.

Yet co-enrollment can increase burdens of planning, delivering, monitoring, and ensuring compliance across the requirements of multiple funding streams. Co-enrolled clients may also encounter greater complexity: unless the clients are assigned to a dual-role counselor, they typically must interact with multiple employment counselors.

Youth focus. The Anoka County Job Training Center offers a rich mix of youth programming, using state and federal funds to

provide employment and training opportunities to out-of-school residents ages 16 to 24 and in-school residents ages 14 to 24. These programs emphasize work readiness, high school dropout recovery, attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials, and connections to work experience and permanent employment. The center's youth-focused programs heavily emphasize community-based outreach to recruit program participants, such as alternative high schools, shelters and drop-in centers for homeless youth, juvenile justice programs, and community-based organizations.

The mix of youth programming sometimes leads to co-enrollment between TANF and WIOA Youth, or co-enrollment of TANF recipients in the state-funded Minnesota Youth program, which is open to at-risk youth ages 14-24. In Anoka, this program focuses on work readiness and high school completion. By offering these options, the center can focus its WIOA Youth Program on serving out-of-school youth. Anoka also has a work experience program for youth ages 14-16 who live in TANF households.

A Human Services Youth team coordinates services for young TANF recipients. This team includes a TANF employment services counselor who works with 18- and 19-year-olds on high school completion; an economic assistance worker who focuses on 18- and 19-year-olds; a social worker who works with minor caretakers; a child care specialist; and a WIOA Youth employment counselor. (In late 2018 the center planned to add a public health nurse to this team.) For out-of-school youth, the team can coordinate their enrollment in paid work experience or occupational skills training through WIOA or through other center programs, such as the state-funded Career Pathways program.



RESOURCE SHARING

The center carefully monitors and adapts the use of resources across programs.

A diverse mix of funding. As of 2018, the Anoka Job Training Center uses a combination of 28 federal, state, and local funding streams, including both formula-funded programs (such as WIOA, TANF, and SNAP E&T) and competitive grant programs. Each funding stream is associated with a particular set of activities or services, usually for a target population. An accounting manager develops the center's budget by fitting together the activities, target populations, and resources associated with each program, instead of hosting multiple providers or subcontracting with independent providers for each program. Facility costs are distributed among core on-site WIOA partners (including TANF) through infrastructure funding agreements. Partners share Resource Center costs based on how many resource room users are served by each program.

Planning and accounting for staff expenditures. Many TANF and WIOA employment counselors are assigned to two or more programs. For example, an employment counselor might split her time between TANF and WIOA Dislocated Worker, or SNAP E&T, or WIOA Youth. Staff assignments are made based on the funding available for each program, and then adjusted based the actual caseloads. The accounting team performs quarterly studies to determine how much time is spent on clients associated with each program or funding stream. This information is used for billing and adjusting staff profiles.

Resource monitoring. If one program is running short on funds for occupational training, or for supportive services, the accounting team usually can identify alternative program funds for which certain clients may be eligible. A management information system (MIS) manager uses cross-program enrollment data to identify when a particular program track is running behind schedule (increasing the risk that a particular funding stream may be underspent). Additional caseload reports can signal upcoming milestones that could affect clients' continuing program eligibility – for example, by identifying youth who are nearing the age when they must register for Selective Service (age 18) or when they could exit a youth program (and potentially transition to another program at the center).



SHARED LEARNING

Strategies for improving cross-program communications include a shared data system, cross-training of staff, and consistent documentation practices.

Data sharing to support service delivery and program management. The center's TANF employment and WIOA programs (except for Adult Basic Education) share a common employment case management system, Workforce One. This database allows employment counselors to coordinate services by viewing case notes and client activities across multiple programs. The center's program managers, administrators, and accounting team members can export data from Workforce One (into an Access database) to review automated reports on client activities, expenditures, and outcomes for a single program or across multiple programs.

Accounting technicians assist program staff by entering supportive service requests – for example, for a client transportation voucher – within Workforce One (in addition to the center's accounting system), and then delivering the voucher to the Resource Room staff for the client to pick up. Assigning accounting staff to perform this role allows the center to streamline the process of issuing vouchers, providing them more quickly to clients and reducing paperwork for employment counselors.

Cross-training of staff. Each member of the Intake and Eligibility team is trained across all of the center's employment and training programs. All the other direct County staff – whether delivering public assistance or WIOA – receive similar training. The center's TANF and WIOA partners encourage staff to help clients literally navigate throughout the center by walking them to partners' offices and introducing them to program staff when making a referral. Program managers regularly present at other programs' staff meetings, and then send follow-up emails. Center administrators note that cross-training also enables the staff to adapt their roles as customer demand or funding resources change over time.



Once an individual enters the building, there is the expectation that we can walk the individual from one partner office to another... Were we to just tell the individual to “go down the third floor,” we could lose that person, even though we are co-located. We don't want that person to have a negative experience and not come back. You'll see this in the outcomes.

- TANF TEAM MEMBER

High standards for documenting interactions with clients, staff, and agency leaders. The center's leadership team encourages all staff to document decisions and activities in writing to prevent misunderstandings, ensure follow-up, and minimize inefficiencies such as duplication of services and repetitive meetings. Managers review Workforce One case notes (and follow up with staff when needed) to ensure that conversations are documented. Managers and administrators are expected to disseminate meeting minutes quickly, simply, and clearly. Strict adherence to this standard has resulted in high attendance and engagement levels at non-mandatory staff meetings and at workforce board and committee meetings.



MANAGING COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

Coordination of TANF and WIOA services are in part facilitated by close ties and direct accountability to county government and county agencies.

Participation in local workforce development board and the ACEA. The center's leaders serve as staff to the local workforce development board, which meets ten times per year. Anoka

County cites its workforce board attendance rates as one of the highest in the region. The center is administered by Anoka County Economic Assistance (ACEA), the same county agency that administers TANF benefits locally. The center operates as part of ACEA to manage the center's activities, and to directly deliver TANF employment services, SNAP E&T services, and WIOA Title I employment and training services.



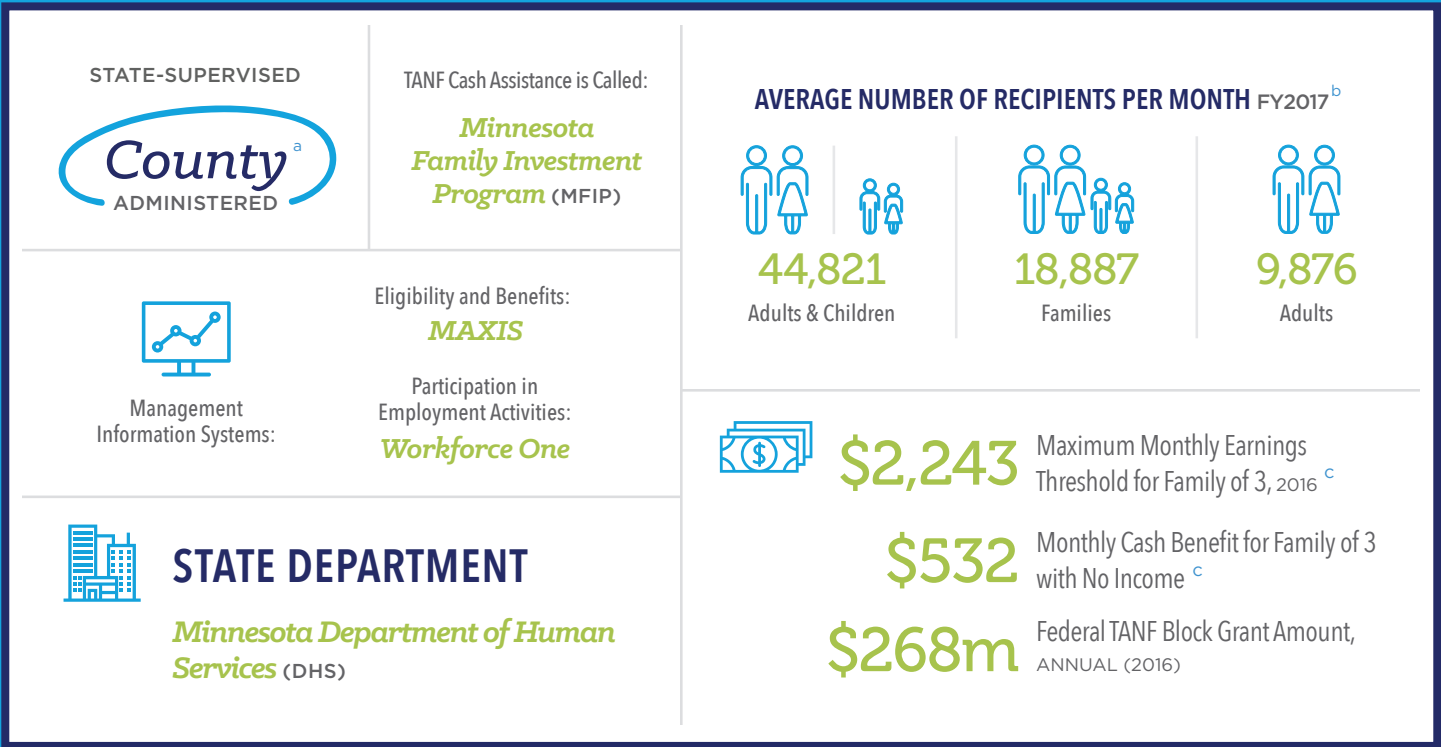
TANF and WIOA Eligibility and Services in Minnesota

TANF. Minnesota's TANF cash benefit program is known as the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). Each county administers MFIP programming under state guidelines, providing cash payments to low-income families with dependent children, for up to five years (**SEE TABLE S.1**). In addition to TANF block grant funding, MFIP receives some state funding that allows the program to serve certain populations who would not qualify

for TANF, such as groups of non-citizens. MFIP recipients automatically qualify for food assistance, and work-eligible adult recipients receive employment services. Employed TANF recipients may also request employment supports. After an MFIP case closes, working parents may continue to receive child care assistance for up to a year.

Counties administer the Diversionary Work Program (DWP), which offers assistance for up to four months as an alternative to enrolling in MFIP. Families may be referred to MFIP when they first apply for assistance or after they finish four months of DWP. DWP participants must seek full-time work immediately, but can receive help with the job search, employment barrier removal, limited job training (that can be completed in less than four months), and time-limited funds for housing and utility costs.

TABLE S.1: Minnesota TANF Snapshot


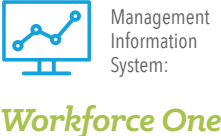




SOURCES: (a) A Descriptive Study of County- versus State-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Programs (https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/county_tanf_final_report_submitted_to_acf_b508.pdf); (b) TANF Caseload Data 2017 (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/resource/tanf-caseload-data-2017>); (c) State TANF Policies: A Graphical Overview of State TANF Policies as of July 2016 (https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/wrd_2016_databook_companion_piece_05_15_18_508.pdf); (d) Minnesota Family Investment program (<http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/pubs/ss/ssmfip.pdf>)

WIOA. Minnesota's WIOA implementation began in 2015. Minnesota has six regional workforce development areas that represent a combination of sixteen Local Areas (as defined in WIOA) and Economic Development Regions (as defined in other federal law). Following the state's lead, regional and local workforce areas have developed local WIOA implementation plans to align TANF/WIOA services. The principal WIOA services offered statewide include labor-exchange/job search

assistance, individualized career services, work readiness preparation, adult basic education, and occupational skills training (TABLE S.2). Some WIOA-funded programs also offer supportive services such as child care, transportation, tools and equipment, and uniforms. Most WIOA-funded services are available to individuals regardless of income, but most programs prioritize serving low-income individuals or those having one or more barriers to employment.

TABLE S.2: Minnesota WIOA Snapshot

		One-Stop Job Centers: Minnesota CareerForce Centers (Formerly called Minnesota WorkForce Centers; to be implemented Oct 2018)
 STATE DEPARTMENTS^a Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker (Title I); Employment Service (Job Service) /Wagner-Peyser (Title III); and Vocational Rehabilitation Services & State Services for the Blind (Title IV) Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Adult Education and Family Literacy (Title II)	 2017 ALLOTMENTS^b \$10.9m Employment Service (Wagner-Peyser) Federal Appropriation \$7.2m WIOA Adult Federal Appropriation \$8.6m WIOA Youth Federal Appropriation \$7.7m WIOA Dislocated Worker Federal Appropriation	

SOURCES: (a) Minnesota's Strategic Workforce Plan 2016-2020 (https://mn.gov/deed/assets/wioa-state-strategic-plan_tcm1045-264923.pdf); (b) Program Year (PY) 2017 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Allotments; PY 2017 Wagner-Peyser Act Final Allotments and PY 2017 Workforce Information Grants (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/06/15/2017-12336/program-year-py-2017-workforce-innovation-and-opportunity-act-wioa-allotments-py-2017-wagner-peyser>)

Resources

- **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Overview:**
<https://www.doleta.gov/WIOA/Overview.cfm>
- **USDHHS OFA PeerTA TANF/WIOA Resource Hub:**
<https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/ofa-initiative/426>
- **USDOL TA Hub:**
<https://ion.workforcegps.org/>

This brief is based primarily on conversations conducted with WIOA and TANF administrators, managers, and staff at the Anoka County Job Training Center, an American Job Center located in Blaine, Minnesota. For more information about the content in this brief, contact Jody Schanilec, Employment Services Manager, WorkForce Center of Anoka County (jody.schanilec@co.anoka.mn.us). Caroline Schultz (MDRC) and Audrey Hathorn (Public Strategies) were the IIEESS site visit team members.

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The Integrating Innovative Employment and Economic Stability Strategies (IIEESS) initiative of the Office of Family Assistance (OFA), under contract number HHSP23337005T, publishes briefs and materials that document the collaboration between Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and public workforce systems under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This material is intended to encourage peer learning among state and local actors so that low-income individuals can effectively access employment and family support services.