



Scotts Valley Tribal TANF Program LASER TLC Site Journey

The Office of Family Assistance initiative, “Leveraging America’s Social and Economic Resilience TANF Learning Community” (LASER TLC), joins 10 TANF Programs across the country as they worked to address the challenges of human service delivery following the COVID-19 pandemic. The collaboration focused on improving responsive services for TANF families.

Goals & Objectives

The Scotts Valley Tribal TANF (SVTT) program team has always put the community at the center of its work. SVTT has an ongoing commitment to reflect the community values and cultural background. It also builds trust and sensitivity between participants and staff. To achieve these aims, the LASER TLC provided an opportunity for the Scotts Valley team to explore ways to make progress on the following goals:

- Reflect the community’s cultural values to reduce stigma.
- Streamline the application processes to ease the burden on applicants and free up staff time.
- Encourage self-care and wellness among staff to improve case management and client interactions.

Change Strategies

With these goals in mind, Scotts Valley identified the following strategies:

Modifying the TANF application process:

- Staff mapped the client experience.
- During work sessions, staff identified information requests in the application that were redundant or unnecessary for determining TANF eligibility.
- The team co-designed a new application. It also held discussions to ensure that questions and documentation aligned with determinants of eligibility as expressed in its TANF plan and federal policy.

Implementing self-care sessions:

- Staff facilitated meetings focused on wellness practices. This helped to reduce stress among the team.
- Program leaders took initiative to encourage time and space for wellness. They also sought to model these behaviors themselves.

Scotts Valley Journey

The Scotts Valley Tribal TANF program serves tribal members in Contra Costa, Lake, Mendocino, and Sonoma Counties in northern California. The program operates two office locations. Each program has unique cultural needs. The program in rural Lake County largely serves members of the Scotts Valley Band and Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians. The other program in urban Contra Costa County serves members of several Native American tribes.



Challenges & Supports

Challenges:

- Staff felt overburdened with the traditional application process.
- Response to COVID-19 and local wildfires left staff constantly in reactive mode.
- Historical trauma, distrust of government institutions, and welfare stigma are common among community members.

Supports:

- A supportive tribal council and deep understanding of community needs.
- Financial resources to increase caseload and provide additional TANF program supports.
- A dedicated management team that provides immediate onsite management assistance.



Journey Lessons Learned

- Prioritizing program staff self-care and wellness facilitates better community-level service.
- Being critical is important to creating progress.
- Through the streamlining of the application, staff learned it is okay to question the process and the ways things have always been done.
- Remembering that every staff member is a person. Keeping their health in mind is fundamental to maintaining communication.

Journey Insights

“By doing less, we can do more.”

“The relationships we have been able to repair with the community shows our resilience. Community resilience.”

“Don’t collect what you don’t need.”

What’s Next ...

- Road test the revised application package.
- Collect feedback from staff and participants on how to improve the process.
- Implement motivational interviewing training for all program staff.
- Sustain and expand self-care practices among the staff team.



— Leveraging —
America’s Social &
Economic Resilience



Application for Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

✦ Note: This icon means you will need to provide supporting documentation to verify your answers on the application.

Part 1: Basic information about you

Full legal name		Social Security Number ✦	
Preferred or other name(s)	Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy) ✦	Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male	
Marital status ✦ <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed <input type="checkbox"/> Separated <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced		Are you a U.S. citizen? ✦ <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Physical address (where you primarily live) ✦		City	Zip code

Focus on Results

The application and accompanying process has been transformed to gather required information in a less burdensome way. It strengthens empathy and rapport between staff and participants in ways that combat TANF stigma.

Success Metrics:

- The application package decreased from 14 pages to 5 pages.
- The in-house documentation verification process was significantly simplified. It was changed to collect only essential information, reduce duplication, and streamline staff responsibilities.
- The application interview was redesigned based on motivational interviewing techniques to support stronger rapport between staff and participants.

Desired Outcomes:

- All Scotts Valley program staff will be trained on motivational interviewing, cultural sensitivity, and a foundational knowledge of TANF.
- Applicants complete the application process and experience less burden in doing so.
- Staff practice routine self-care and strengthen their well-being. This in turn leads to higher job satisfaction and overall program quality.