



Fostering TANF/WIOA Collaboration *Sustainability in Action: The Weld County Story*

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Weld County was one of the first localities nationwide to co-locate all TANF case management and employment services through Employment Services of Weld County (ESWC).
- Fostering career success through teamwork, access to services was not disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The team has a special focus on serving immigrant and refugee populations across TANF/WIOA programs, and also prioritizes services to veterans, youth, people experiencing homelessness, and individuals with disabilities.



OVERVIEW

Since 2014, states have embarked on coordination between Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs and the workforce system to improve service delivery and reduce duplication. The passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in 2014 served as a catalyst for many state TANF and workforce system leaders to coordinate client services serving low-income or vulnerable populations. In 2018 and 2019, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance (OFA), developed a [series of briefs on TANF/WIOA collaboration](#) that highlight innovative coordination strategies between TANF and WIOA programs.

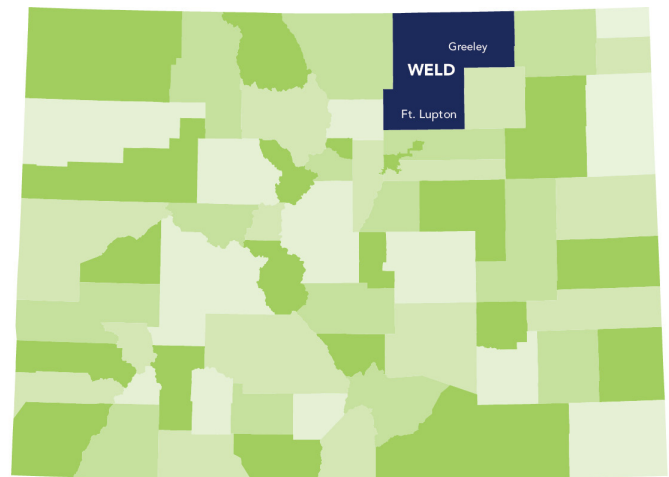
In 2022, OFA conducted an update of five collaborative efforts to share best practices around how the collaboration has sustained through time and evolved as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This brief highlights the TANF and WIOA Collaboration in [Weld County, Colorado](#). (Note: TANF is recognized as “Colorado Works” in Colorado. For the purposes of this document, TANF is referenced.)



BACKGROUND

The Weld County Department of Human Services (DHS) administers TANF and WIOA services. Weld County was one of the first localities nationwide to co-locate all TANF case management and employment services through Employment Services of Weld County (ESWC), where TANF and non-TANF customers receive employment services even prior to the passage of WIOA in 2014. This arrangement has optimized Weld County’s ability to offer flexible resources, ensuring customers have access to quality services for their future of work.

ESWC oversees TANF and WIOA staff within a large territory of nearly 4,000 square miles. This requires service delivery to take place outside of the largest metropolitan statistical areas in the county to ensure accessibility for rural residents in Ft. Lupton, located in the southeast side of the county, a satellite office in the southwest area of Weld County in Del Camino, and a main office located in northern Weld County in Greeley.



From July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021, 19,853 individuals were served by ESWC. Customers who are enrolled in TANF (known as Colorado Works) and/or WIOA Title I (Youth, Adult, or Dislocated Worker programs) receive the benefit of a strong partnership with many programs “in-house,” co-located at the ESWC, a part of the American Job Center network.

Individuals apply for TANF cash assistance in multiple ways – online, where incoming applications are monitored and processed by the Assistance Payments Division, as well as by mail or in person at the Assistance Payments Division located on the same campus as ESWC. Once a TANF application is submitted and either pending eligibility or approved, work-eligible applicants are scheduled to attend a TANF orientation at ESWC where they learn about employment or upskilling opportunities.

ESWC provides TANF/WIOA customers with opportunities to engage in experiences to enhance their work readiness or move directly into employment. Additional resources are available for family and work-related needs, such as childcare, transportation, adult basic education, occupational training, and direct connections to employers.

Since all TANF/WIOA staff work directly for Weld County, staff have multiple roles, dividing their time amongst two or more programs. For example, the Business Services team is funded primarily through WIOA Title III; however, when working with a TANF customer, or when they host orientations or seek placements for TANF customers, they will code this effort to TANF on their timesheet. Colorado Works Case Managers and the Colorado Works Supervisor are housed at the ESWC center, while TANF eligibility staff are located on the DHS Campus. As program needs require, staffing can be adjusted to accommodate needs, in accordance with fiscal guidelines. This process has remained in place since before 2018, and leadership feels this strategy aids in their staffing structure and reduces disruptions to service during times of staffing influx.

For Title I, customers can qualify for priority access to WIOA services if they have low educational attainment, are unemployed or underemployed, or because they are current recipients of public assistance benefits such as TANF. When a customer co-enrolls in Title I, the TANF case manager coordinates services jointly with a WIOA case manager, and they work in tandem with the customer. When a customer is referred from DHS TANF Eligibility to the ESWC Colorado Works Team, the case manager develops an individualized plan (also referred to as a “Roadmap”) with each customer. A Roadmap is a contract between the county and the customer.

It is tailored to each customer’s specific needs and situations, including an analysis of strengths, barriers, desires, and agreed-upon goals that will move the customer to employment.

Cross-program knowledge allows both case managers to assist customers, assess their needs, and create the greatest plan for success, while simultaneously upholding guidelines for TANF and WIOA. Staff work across TANF/WIOA programs, and the physical infrastructure of co-location minimizes silos. Staffs’ shared knowledge of TANF/WIOA programs enhances productivity and builds sustainability of the TANF/WIOA collaboration. Customers benefit from this shared understanding and the efficiencies created from shared service plans and the Roadmap. Since services are not duplicated, there is seamless service delivery.



COVID-19 PANDEMIC MANAGEMENT

ESWC remained committed to their community during the COVID-19 pandemic. They kept their offices open with limited capacity and increased virtual services, including case management services and employment and training supports. COVID protocols were put into place, and health and safety guidelines were followed.

Access to TANF/WIOA services was not disrupted.

The ESWC team made every effort to assure that customers were supported in person and virtually despite the uncertainty that the COVID-19 pandemic caused the community. The team believed that human interaction was important, and many staff took on additional responsibilities and worked a rotating schedule to assure access to services was not disrupted. The team implemented newsletters to share information, developed and refined in-person protocols for services, and visited customers in the community.

ESWC leveraged CARES Act dollars to prioritize families receiving public assistance benefits for services such as additional cash, food, or medical

“Partnership and teamwork are what we thrive on in Weld County.”

– DEPUTY DIRECTOR, WELD COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

care. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of individuals applying for Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB) greatly increased. ESWC staff provided over 24,000 UIB services which included 5,057 intensive UIB services and assisted over 700 individuals with completing the mandatory ID.Me verification process.

ESWC closed for less than three weeks for in-person services and never had all staff out of the office during this estimated three week period. They were quick to re-open their lobbies and Resource Room. ESWC staff supported in-person registration of many claimants through the Connecting Colorado system, including support to claimants from outside of Weld County who could not receive in-person services. [Connecting Colorado](#) is the system that UIB claimants are required to use to register for work as a condition of ongoing receipt of UI benefits.

In Weld County, childcare is considered a workforce need. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the childcare provider shortage in Weld County. Childcare providers were required to pause services temporarily, and some closed permanently. Childcare is both a barrier to employment and a necessity for most families. To support families, ESWC created a “Weld Child Care team” which organized multiple outreach and recruitment events for prospective childcare providers, as well as held subsequent orientations at ESWC with these recruited providers to help them understand licensing and contracted childcare processes.

Weld County increased its Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) contracted childcare providers, and TANF/WIOA customers found it much faster and easier to access care through the CCCAP unit. CCCAP provides monetary assistance for childcare services to eligible families who are employed, job seeking, and participating in education or job training. This federally-funded program was instrumental during COVID-19, as childcare became expensive due to school closures. Since the program is administered in Weld County through DHS, and both eligibility and benefits are managed through ESWC, it allowed TANF/WIOA staff and customers essential access to these resources.

ESWC maintained its support to youth during the pandemic. COVID-19 presented surmountable challenges to the ESWC team who continued to offer youth in-person services and workshops. Whereas tours of colleges and of some work sites were closed, ESWC worked with its partner, the City of Greeley, to quickly implement safety protocols and keep the youth in its programs, attendees of job fairs, customers, and staff safe as they continued with a provision of services.

For example, signage was displayed to discourage handshakes, replacing it with waves and eye contact. Hand sanitizer was placed throughout the job fair, and shared use of pens was discouraged. ESWC prioritized its ability to identify employers struggling to find workers and connected them to young adult job seekers who needed work.

On March 11, 2020, with shutdowns from the pandemic imminent, ESWC held a job fair attended by 328 young adults and 34 multi-industry employers. In August 2020, DHS initiated a Youth Employment Program to purposefully serve in-school youth who were actively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. [Weld CARES 4 Youth Workers \(Weld CARES\)](#) had great success serving youth 14- through 18-year-olds, promoting a continuum of community and strengthening work readiness and on-the-job skills. From August through December 2020, 48 youth were served through paid work experiences throughout Weld County in industries such as: animal care, automotive, healthcare, retail, and hospitality. TANF and WIOA subsidized salaries and benefits paid out to youth in this program totaled \$108,997.98, with most of the youth working 20-30 hours a week. Twenty-one different worksites were utilized, and five of the youth served were directly hired by the employer that provided its work experience. These employers included Ben’s Furniture, Greeley Subaru, Milliken Animal Clinic, and Winchell’s Donut House (Downtown). Two of the youth directly hired entered career pathways related to their employment and plan to attend post-secondary education and advance their career. Ten of the eligible youth were enrolled into the WIOA Youth program.



COLLABORATION SUSTAINABILITY

ESWC continuously looks at how to improve efficiency for TANF/WIOA customers by evaluating how it issues benefits based on eligibility requirements, helping customers become employed, and connecting customers to supportive services. TANF/WIOA staff interface with state human services agencies, the workforce, and community-based organizations to achieve positive outcomes for parents and their children, such as building relationships between early childhood development and workforce development services, ensuring families have access to workforce and community supports to increase their economic mobility, and providing resources to support the customers’ child/children’s development and employment.

TANF/WIOA Collaboration improves work-based learning outcomes. It is a continuing goal for ESWC's Business Services Unit to address the workforce needs of Weld County's employers and assist in building a stronger workforce within in-demand work sectors. To accomplish success in this area, ESWC participates in the Weld County Work-Based Learning Alliance, a collaboration of education and workforce partners who strive to increase access to work-based learning.

"NoCo Inspire" is a platform that was created to provide Weld County practitioners with one-point access to valuable work-based learning resources. From July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021, ESWC secured 79 work-based learning placements. ESWC attributes its ongoing commitment to these services to the high-utilization of TANF/WIOA services in Weld County.

Work-based learning is an important strategy used by ESWC to engage customers in the workforce by giving them access to different occupations and experiential learning that is based on the customer's interests and skills. This earn and learn model allows customers to generate income as they engage in work-related activities and skill building. ESWC expedites work-based learning, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships (including registered apprenticeships) by offering this program specifically as a skill building component for parents. These work-based learning experiences often result in direct hires.

Fostering career success through teamwork. TANF/WIOA Collaboration has remained a priority for Weld County since 2018. Most TANF customers enter the workforce system through shared referral processes and are required to register with Connecting Colorado. The Business Services team, funded in Weld County primarily by WIOA Title III, supports the orientation process and hosts employer sessions and recruiting events, which are open to all Employment Services Center customers and are scheduled to occur in tandem with TANF orientations to encourage TANF participation. The team has found that having shared meetings and retreats with one another fosters teamwork and a spirit of partnership. They conduct "T-3 meetings" together (Thursday Think Tanks) where knowledge sharing is prioritized. Here TANF and WIOA case managers can share thoughts about service delivery or process improvement, and make sure that they understand all the resources available to maximize success for their customers. These meetings have led to closer collaboration, increased utilization of funding, and decreased duplication of services. Due to co-location and nearby offices, informal conversations can take place amongst TANF/WIOA staff, and the team feels supported by its leadership when and if there are questions or successes to share.



COLLABORATIVE IMPACT

The collaborative impact of the TANF/WIOA Collaboration extends to its valued WIOA Title II providers and others who offer essential resources and training to TANF/WIOA customers, such as the Immigrant & Refugee Center of Northern Colorado (IRNOCO), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Aims Community College, and the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE). The ESWC upholds collaboration through shared space – completing a remodel during the pandemic. Partner space is available with programs such as Job Corps already co-located with ESWC and DVR planning to do so in 2023.

Joint TANF/WIOA case management creates a unified plan. Using either dual case managers or a flexible staffing structure allows staff to perform multiple TANF and WIOA functions so customer service is streamlined. TANF/WIOA staff sit side-by-side, working closely together and with community partners, often meeting with customers at the same time so customers and staff have a shared understanding of the customers' situations and do not suggest pathways that lead to more stress and compete with other demands.

Simultaneous services reduce the impact of a cliff effect, which occurs when a household loses eligibility for public assistance programs when family income surpasses the threshold set by Federal Poverty Guidelines. In some cases, the value of a lost or reduced benefit can exceed an increase in wages. TANF/WIOA Collaboration helps people focus on gaining additional funds in their households through financial planning and connections to long-term resources, such as employment and housing services.

Taking a 2Gen holistic approach to service delivery has had great success. The approach to service delivery in Weld County centers on the whole family's economic security and well-being, as opposed to focusing only on an individual adult or child. The collaboration with WIOA adds a workforce component that allows the team to uphold the shared vision of not only the customer achieving economic self-sufficiency, but also having an impact on future generations.

In 2Gen services, work-eligible customers, and at times their young adult children, can engage in an array of services such as career assessments and job training. The funding for all services is routinely leveraged to offer options for vouchers or related support to offset expenses for needs related to work.

WORKFORCE CHALLENGE:

When Sheridan came to me as a TANF client in November of 2021, she was going through a rough divorce. She had been attending school prior to the separation, but due to financial pressures, she had to put her education on hold and start working to support herself and her children.

WORKFORCE SOLUTION:

During our first initial appointment she expressed interest in training and/or internship options. Sheridan and I met with a WIOA Case Manager who co-enrolled her into WIOA to see what assistance she could get through that program. She met with one of our WIOA Case Managers, and they set her up to complete an internship with our



Outreach Department working in the short-term Emergency Rental Assistance Program. Shortly thereafter she started to receive her much-needed child support with help from our child support unit and no longer qualified for TANF. She was a great candidate for the position WIOA placed her in and finished up her internship with new skills and confidence. She stated at the end of the internship that this opportunity will help her to do what she's always wanted to do, and that's to help others.

OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS:

She now has a full-time job with United Way and loves it. She let us know that she couldn't have done it without our help.

—**KARLA MASTERS, COLORADO WORKS CASE MANAGER**



SPECIAL FOCUS

FOSTERING INNOVATION

Serving immigrant and refugee populations across TANF/WIOA programs. Since 2018, Weld County has continued to broaden service delivery to refugees, including those from Burma and Somalia. It is not uncommon for refugees to request TANF upon entry into the United States, and for years after to sustain their families and acclimate to work in the U.S.

ESWC supports these customers by referring them to WIOA Title II providers, such as the Immigrant & Refugee Center of Northern Colorado (IRCNOCO), which has expertise providing instruction to English Language Learners (ELL) and work-readiness supports. IRCNOCO has been a valuable resource to customers and staff, offering cross-cultural sharing and resources to the Weld community. As an example of its community commitment, IRCNOCO translated the TANF team's orientation PowerPoint presentation into four different languages so that it can be presented in the respective communities. A key goal is to develop a refugee services Community of Practice" (CoP) where collaborators can continue to work together on projects such as their recently completed "[New American](#)" toolkit.

ESWC prioritizes services to Veterans, youth, those experiencing homelessness, and individuals with disabilities. Veterans receive priority for services in all ESWC programs. In 2021-2022, WIOA funding helped more than 300 veterans to secure job training, job placement assistance, or critical in-demand credentials, such as Commercial Driver's License (CDL), which is offset by expenses that are not usually covered by the GI Bill.

During Summer 2019, 65 youth ages 14 to 15 years old were placed in worksites throughout Weld County. Most of the youth served were from rural locations with 70% being non-Greeley residents. During Summer 2020, 83 youth were served. The youth were placed in worksites throughout Weld County. Of the youth served, 48% were non-Greeley residents from rural locations. This was an increase of youth served in 2019 and 2020, despite the challenges of COVID-19.

ESWC works closely with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to support individuals with disabilities as they enter or re-enter the workforce. In 2022, ESWC hopes to hire a Disability Navigator, who will act as a liaison between DVR and ESWC workforce services. This role will create a bridge between ESWC work programs, with an emphasis on WIOA Titles I and III, and align services between the agencies to decrease duplication of services and increase accessibility in the workforce center.

TANF SNAPSHOT

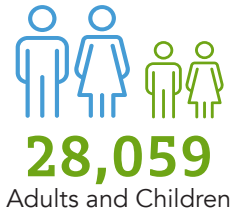


Management Information System Name:

Colorado Benefits Management System

TANF Workforce Programming is called:
Employment Services of Weld County

AVERAGE NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS PER MONTH FY2021



STATE DEPARTMENT
Colorado Department of Human Services

\$421 Max Monthly Earnings for Single Parent/2 Kids



\$508 Max Monthly TANF Cash Benefit for Single Parent/2 Kids

\$161,840,092 Federal TANF Expenditures FY 2020

WIOA SNAPSHOT



Management Information System:

Colorado Benefits Management System

American Job Center is called:
Workforce Center in Weld County



STATE DEPARTMENTS
Colorado Department of Labor and Employment
Colorado Department of Education
Colorado Department of Human Services

Governor-Appointed Board Overseeing WIOA:
Colorado Workforce Development Council

EMPLOYMENT SERVICE (WAGNER-PEYSER) FEDERAL APPROPRIATION



\$12,535,126
Program Year (PY) 2022



WIOA ADULT FEDERAL APPROPRIATION

\$12,435,718
Program Year (PY) 2022



WIOA YOUTH FEDERAL APPROPRIATION

\$13,703,11
Program Year (PY) 2022



WIOA DISLOCATED WORKER FEDERAL APPROPRIATION

\$15,998,009
Program Year (PY) 2022



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