

Ramsey County, MN, TANF Racial Disparity Reduction Measures February 24, 2016

Presenters:

Leigh Ann Ahmad, Planning and Evaluation Analyst
Larry Timmerman, Senior Program Evaluator

Ramsey County's TANF Caseload

- Population-wise, the caseload was at its historic low during the summer of 2015 - consistent with State and Federal caseload reduction trends
- Based on MN Department of Human Service (DHS) analysis, Ramsey County has the most difficult county caseload in Minnesota, but families are less likely to return to Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) within 12 months of closing than the State average
- 51% of the participants have a high school diploma or GED, whereas the state of MN average for graduation rates is 91%
- Communities with disparities make up about 43% of the caseload (40% African American and 3% American Indian)

Ramsey County Workforce Solutions Strategic Priorities

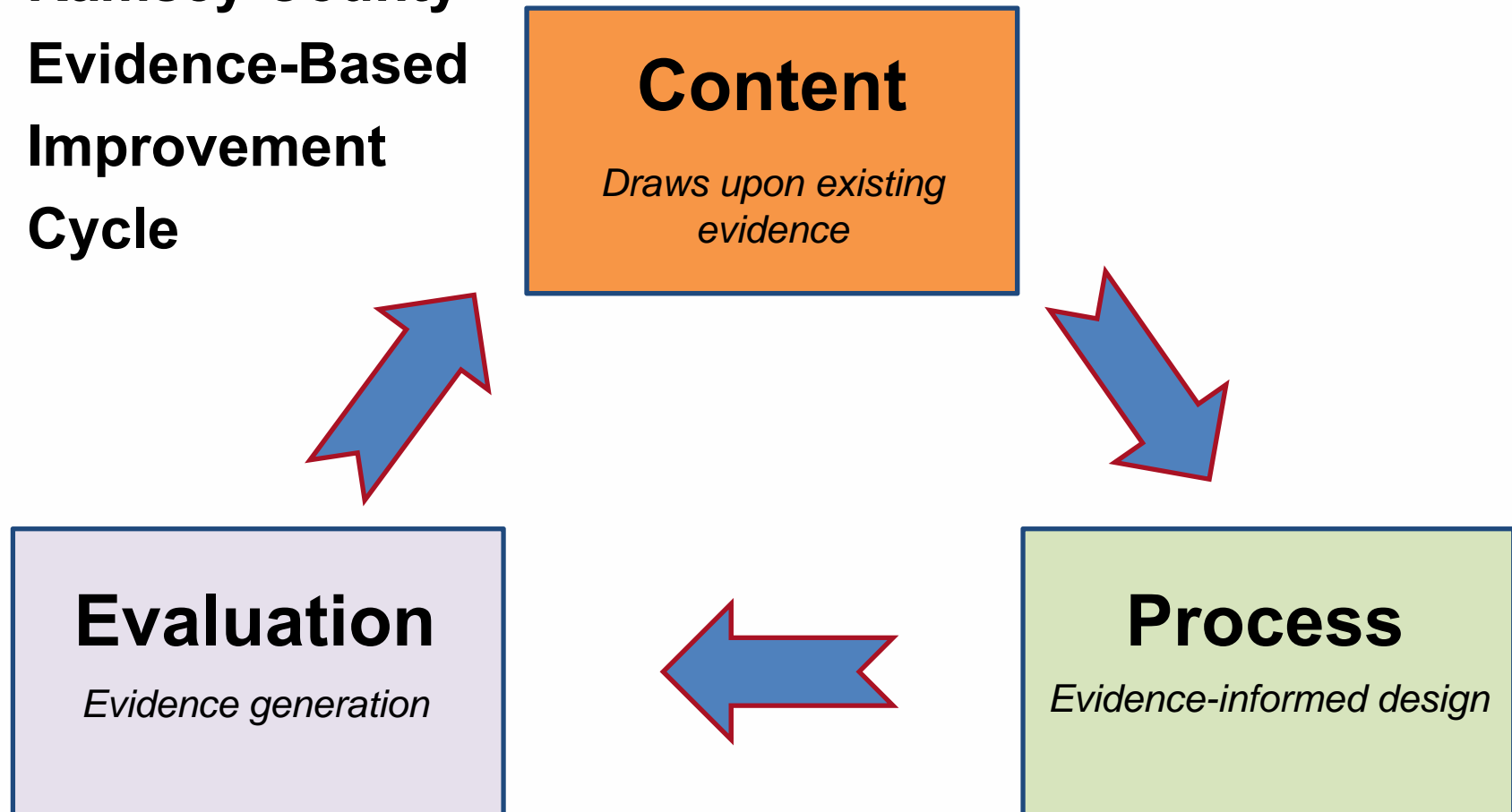
1. Reduction of racial employment disparities
2. Strategic partnership
3. Program integration of 4Es – engagement, education, employment, and employment retention
4. Full-family approach and family well-being measurement
5. Career pathways
6. Integrating executive skills development for residents and staff
7. Increase WIOA and TANF program collaborations
8. Investment in staff development
9. Strive for continuous improvement/evaluation

Building a Foundation for Family Economic Stability: 2013 to Present

Paired the MFIP work requirement activities more closely with career coaching and education (especially GED and stackable certificates)

- Placed a new emphasis on the participants' pathway to work (career pathways)
- Developed and executed in-depth strategies to reduce racial employment disparities
- Shifted from a process outcomes-based system to:
 - family-centered
 - guided self-determination-based
 - life-long learning informed

Ramsey County Evidence-Based Improvement Cycle



The History of “Culturally Specific” Services

- *Consultant-informed and community-defined definition*
- Culturally Specific means:
 - 1) the agency employs, or intends to employ, management and direct services staff who reflect the race, ethnicity, and cultural values of participants;
 - 2) services to increase participants employability incorporate and build on the resources of cultural values and strengths, beliefs, traditions, and worldview; and
 - 3) services are delivered in a manner that acknowledges (or is responsive to) the historical legacies of racism, inequality, and poverty which have negatively (or profoundly) impacted African Americans’ and American Indians’ access to, and success with, education and employment opportunities.
- Issued RFP soliciting culturally specific employment services’ vendors

Culturally Specific Providers

- Selected for meeting definition and demonstrating strong commitment to partner with the County with shared goals to reduce disparities
- Accountable to unique report card measures related to Self-Support Index (S-SI) disparity reduction
- Participate in Disparity Reduction Task Group that includes strategy sharing, report sharing, and focus group evaluation
- First priority for internal/county- based initiatives such as career pathways and GED projects
- Additional monies in contract for culturally specific activities; used for client outings to theater, family picnics, trainings, staff development, mentoring, and pow wows
- Looking to see if best practices shape future intervention strategies that might better serve those least effectively served – as evidenced by the employment disparity outcomes between African American and American Indians and whites

Culturally Specific Providers, Continued

- Culturally Specific Services
 - YWCA
 - American Indian Family Center
 - Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD)
- Families Achieving Success Today Two (FAST2), a TANF/Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Disparity Reduction program funded through a competitive grant issued by the State of Minnesota in 2014
- Lifelong Learning

Partnership = Learning from One Another

What we say, matters; how we recognize participant engagement, matters

- Use of “Unleash Power” and “Guided Self-Determination,” rather than “Empower”
- Finding creative ways to build relationships and count hours which leads to trust and, ultimately, more engagement and employment hours
- Cultural wellness is important, as is family stability, and these steps are recognized as part of employment readiness in the career pathways model
- Act as mediator: lessons about building trust with the County and affiliated vendors infused throughout 9-week Parent Power training, reminding participants that it’s okay to prioritize family stabilization employment plan goals as a means of getting to future stable employment
- Breaking the myths of “isolation” and “self-made success”

The Lifelong Learning Initiative (LLI)

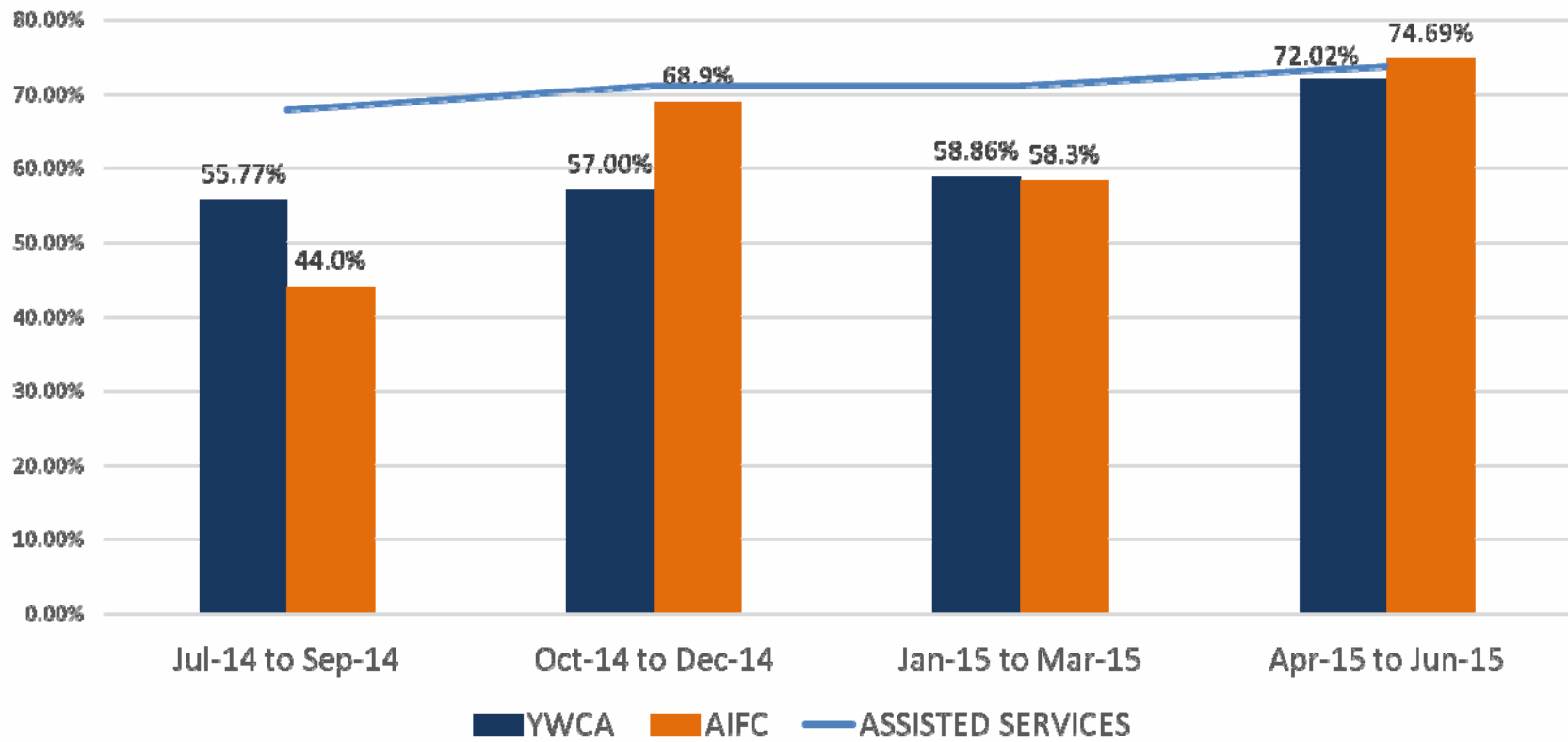
- LLI is a cutting-edge, individualized employment program for TANF recipients built on principles of goal achievement/executive functioning
- Support from a team of nationally recognized Mathematica and external experts
- Initial onsite implementation assessment and observations
- Design teams for preparing the environment and intervention
- Pilot testing will begin in January 2016

How is a racial disparity determined for Minnesota TANF programs?

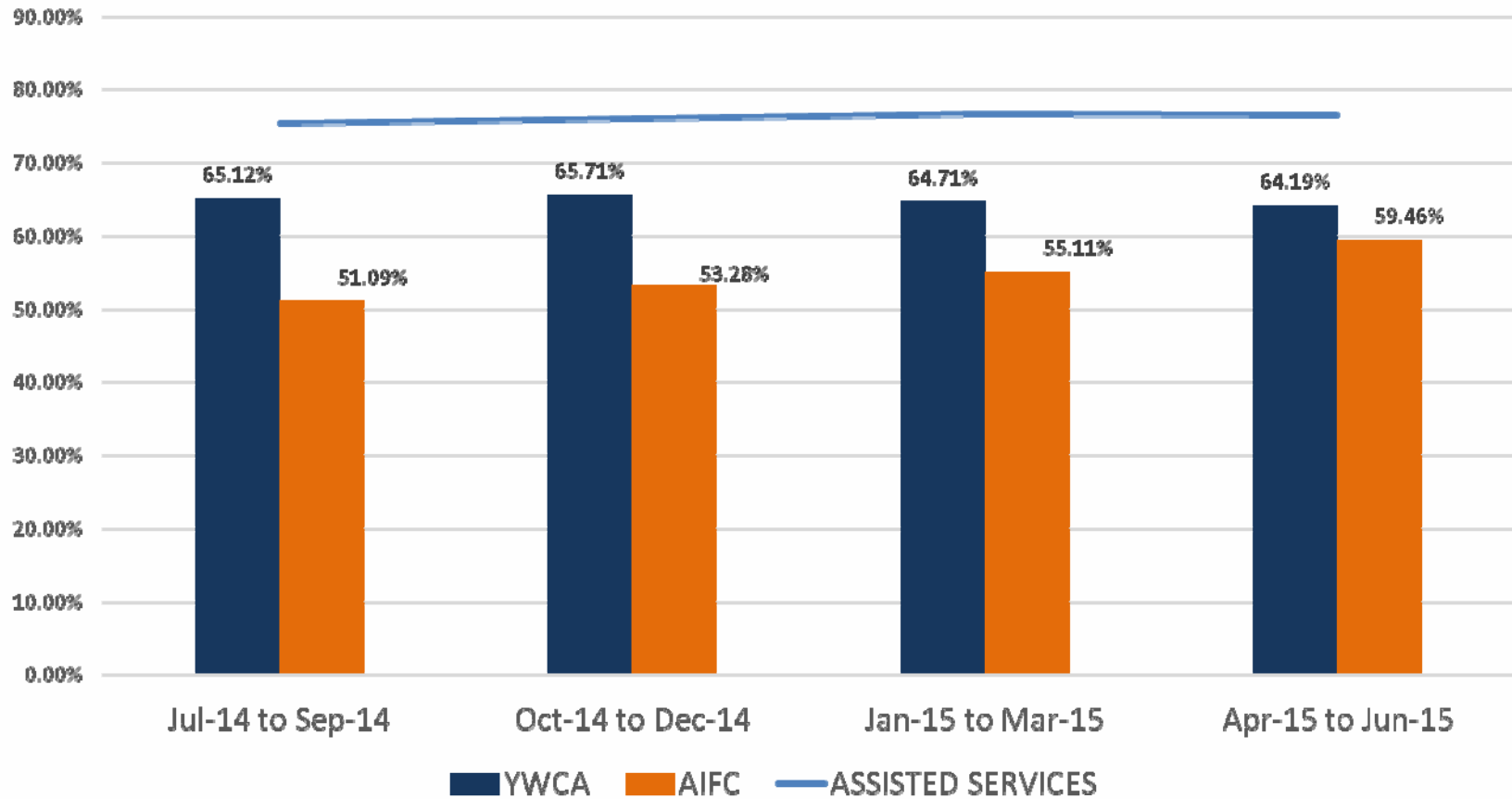
MN racial disparities are determined using the Self-Support Index (S-SI), which is Minnesota DHS's highest priority measurement and the only measure supported with bonus funding for exceptional performance.

- Successful participants work 30+ hours/week or are off TANF cash grant and the MN Diversionary Work Program (DWP) during the measurement quarter
- Measured at one, two, and three years with funding tied to the three-year measure
 - Ramsey County was one of 18 Minnesota counties to receive a bonus allocation in 2015
 - Three of seven metropolitan counties received the bonus
- Racial disparities exist for any racial group that is five percentage points lower than white participants of the same cohort. Funding is not tied directly to reducing racial disparities.
 - Ramsey County and the State of MN experience racial disparities primarily in the African American and American Indian communities
 - Most recent Ramsey County results for the one-year S-SI are: White 53.5%, African American 44.7%, and American Indian 37.9%

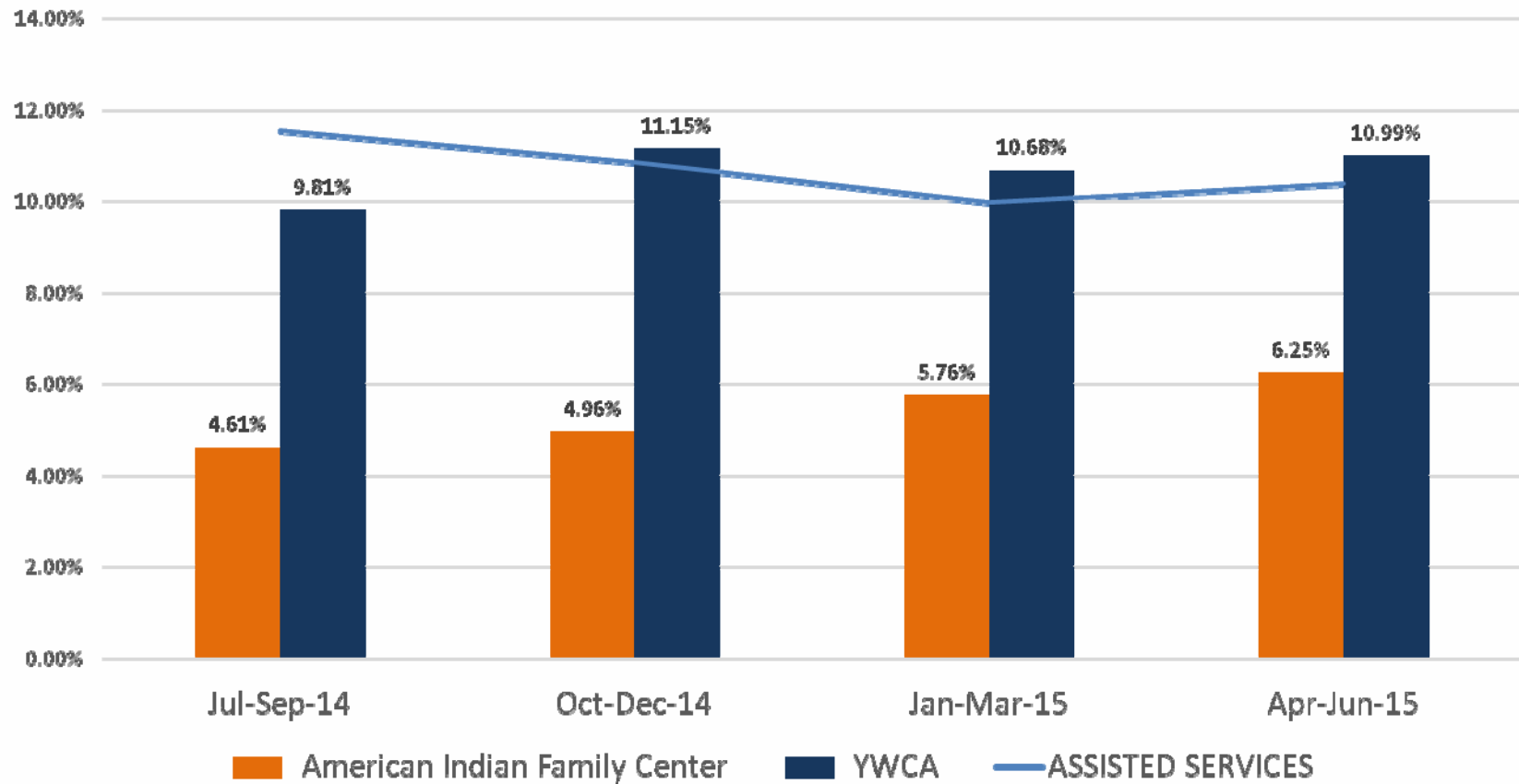
Percent Enrolled in at Least Three Hours of Work-readiness Activity each Month



Three-Year Self-Support Index



Off MFIP Three Consecutive Months with Income



NdCAD Summary of Learning to Date

- On average, participants who completed NdCAD programs by mid-2015, are now more likely to be engaged in employment service activities, enrolled in education, and/or employed than they were prior to their enrollment in NdCAD
- 89% of 112 K-3rd grade students, attending schools in the Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood (SPPN), completed the Sankofa reading intervention (May 2013 to April 2015); 96% of students increased reading levels; and 100% demonstrated increased reading skills
- 300% increase in employment engagement hours (e.g., job skills training, GED completion, college enrollment, and securing jobs) after completing our literacy-based, family stabilization programs and services (2011-2012 Pilot)

Families Achieving Success Today Two (FAST2)

FAST2 includes:

- Skilled Employment services counselors (FSS Coordinators), who make use of career coaching and motivational interviewing tactics, support the development of participant EF skills and enhance participant “buy in” of their customized employment plans
- Use of IPS principles of co-location and consumer/individualized choice, including tailored employment plans and intensive and comprehensive case management
- Integrated services that include culturally specific, adult and children’s mental health, health navigation, and employment training and placement specialist services all embedded into the traditional ES mode
- Career pathway planning, which includes increasing the number of participants who obtain their GED and participate in relevant, short-term stackable credential employment training programs
- Racial disparity reduction strategy services including in-depth discussions about race and equity and the necessary resources families need in order to achieve sustained, long-term success as measured by the S-SI

FAST2 First-Year Outcomes for African American and American Indian Participants

Employment Service Activity	FAST2 Group	Control Group	1 st Year Impact
Participated in activity (%)			
Assessment	25.9%	10.8%	15.1%
Job Search	29.8%	23.3%	6.5%
Education or Training	17.5%	13.8%	3.7%
Work Experience	1.3%	4.3%	-3.0%
Social Services	80.7%	66.5%	14.2%
NdCAD	1.8%	.6%	1.2%
Pipeline to Prosperity	1.3%	3.0%	-1.7%
MFIP cases coded employed at some point	32.5%	28.5%	4.0%
Sample size	228	463	

Bold activities are statistically significant

Proposed Strategic Directions Toward RFP release in 2018

- By January 1, 2018, strategies and tactics to meet the following outcomes (and others to be developed) will be established:
- Evidence driven, supported, and informed interventions that support the mission and vision and goals
- Increased skill and ability in helping families receive services through the most appropriate intervention, including those most negatively impacted by historic trauma and racism
- Breaking the cycle means sufficient interventions created to serve the range of family needs