



TANF Works!

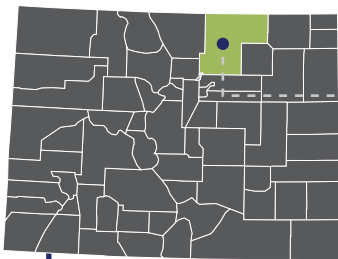
TANF/WIOA
COLLABORATION SERIES
2019 - 06

Weld County, Colorado

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: Weld County Geographic Map



Weld County is in northern Colorado with a population of approximately 300,000. The southern portion of Weld County, about an hour's drive from

Denver, is its most populated area. Agriculture and energy (oil, gas, and wind) are chief industries. The county has two Workforce Centers: one located in Greeley, Weld's largest city, and one located in Fort Lupton.

This brief highlights collaboration practices among TANF and WIOA programs in Weld County, Colorado in the following areas:



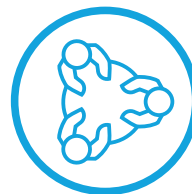
Joint Service Delivery

through a joint, work-based learning team and two-generation services



Resource Sharing

through co-location and sharing costs associated with staffing and infrastructure



Shared Learning

through cross-program staff assignments



Managing Collaborative Activities

through local oversight and direct accountability to elected officials



Special Focus

on serving immigrant and refugee populations across programs

Local Services Overview

The Weld County Department of Human Services administers TANF and WIOA services. Most of these services are delivered within the county's Workforce Centers that are part of the American Job Center network authorized by WIOA. The Centers, called Employment Services of Weld County, provide employment services to both TANF and non-TANF clients. Individuals in Weld County may apply for TANF cash assistance online, by mail, or in person at an office located near the Employment Services Center. Once a TANF application is approved, work-eligible applicants are scheduled to attend a TANF orientation at one of the Employment Services Centers. During orientation, they learn about the education, training, and employment-related services offered, are assigned a TANF case manager, and complete an employability assessment with their case manager. All TANF case management—including connections to employment and training services—is then conducted with the client at the Employment Services Center.

Programs at the Centers offer job readiness services, skills assessment, access to adult basic education and occupational training, job search assistance, and direct connections to employers. Clients who are enrolled in TANF (known as Colorado Works) and/or WIOA Title I (Youth, Adult, or Dislocated Worker programs) may also receive vouchers or supports to help cover the costs of work-related or training-related expenses, including tuition, child care, transportation, tools and equipment, and uniforms.

In addition to pre-employment training, Weld County's TANF and WIOA program staff can arrange work-based learning opportunities, including paid work experience, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships (including registered apprenticeships). Work-based learning strategies have been an important strategy in Weld County in an effort to promote high work-participation rates among TANF recipients. Most adults who receive TANF cash assistance must work or take part in work-readiness or other employment-related activities.

engagement with their case manager. In addition, the Business Services team (funded in Weld County primarily by WIOA Title III) works with both TANF and WIOA case managers to facilitate job placement and training opportunities with local employers.

Beginning in 2018, the Employment Services Center piloted drop-in informational sessions that each feature a single employer (in addition to job fairs and other larger-scale hiring events with multiple employers). During these drop-in sessions, job seekers can ask an employer questions about particular job openings, conduct an informal interview, or submit a job application. These "featured employer" sessions are open to all Employment Services Center customers—but they are timed to occur on the same day as the TANF orientations, immediately following the orientation. Newly enrolled TANF clients are encouraged to attend these sessions

Intensive workforce services. Approximately 90 percent of Weld County's Title I participants qualify for priority access to WIOA services because they have low educational attainment, limited employment history, or other potential barriers to employment, or because they are current recipients of public assistance benefits. When a client co-enrolls in Title I, the TANF case manager coordinates services jointly with a WIOA case manager, and both case managers continue to work directly with the client.

Work-based learning team. Since 2016, Employment Services of Weld County has held a monthly cross-program working meeting with front-line staff, including TANF case managers, WIOA case managers, Business Services staff, and other program staff whose clients seek entry into paid work experience, on-the-job training, pre-apprenticeships, or apprenticeships. Characteristics of the monthly meeting include:

- Meeting agendas developed by a small team of front-line staff;
- Updates on participation targets for each program. If a program is falling behind, team members may discuss ideas to close the gap;
- Updates about employers who are interested in placements;
- Case conferencing/brainstorming ideas for placing clients who may have particular occupational interests or preferences for a particular geographic area of the county; and
- Informal cross-program conversations among front-line staff and supervisors.

Between monthly meetings, staff and supervisors follow up on new program opportunities, needs, or hurdles. Business Services staff follow up by determining next steps for each placement. Weld County's implementation of the Colorado Works Subsidized Training and Employment Program (CW STEP), which began in early 2018, built on these initial work-based learning meetings. These meetings have led to closer collaboration between TANF case managers and Business Services—while decreasing the demand for co-enrollment of TANF clients into Title I.



JOINT SERVICE DELIVERY

Weld County uses several strategies to leverage WIOA services for TANF-eligible adults and their families.

Employment Services. All Employment Services Center clients in Weld County, including TANF participants, enroll in WIOA Title III (Wagner-Peyser). They can access Resource Room services, attend workshops on topics such as resume development, and receive individualized help with their job search. Most clients may also register themselves on Connecting Colorado, the WIOA system's labor exchange website that is available to all job seekers and employers. However, TANF participants are required to register on Connecting Colorado as part of their initial orientation and

Two-generation engagement. The Weld Works for Youth program offers jobs to 14- and 15-year-olds who live in TANF households—that is, households headed by an adult who already participates in Colorado Works. (In more heavily rural parts of Weld County, where job opportunities for teenagers are scarcer, Weld Works for Youth also engages 16- and 17-year-olds.) Participating in this youth employment program may serve as a first step for teenagers to engage in other services that are offered through the workforce system. For example, some participants transition to enroll in WIOA Youth, often with the same case manager.



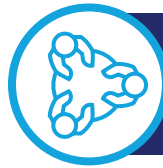
RESOURCE SHARING

Under the umbrella of the Department of Human Services (DHS), Employment Services of Weld County directly administers—and to a great extent, directly provides—both TANF and WIOA services, making resource deployment easier.

Co-location. Weld County was one of the first localities nationwide to co-locate government-funded “labor exchange” activities—that is, services to help job seekers find jobs, and help employers fill vacant jobs—alongside federally funded job training programs (WIOA and its predecessors). Subsequently, all TANF case management and employment services have been co-located as well. A TANF eligibility technician and TANF supervisors are available at the Employment Services Center, while TANF eligibility staff are in a separate building on the DHS Campus. The co-located TANF eligibility technician is a resource for both TANF case managers and WIOA staff who may have questions about TANF eligibility requirements.

Staff costs across programs. Since all TANF and WIOA staff work directly for Weld County, staff split their time among two or more programs. For example, although Business Services staff are funded primarily through WIOA Title III, staff members may charge blocks of time to TANF when they speak to clients at TANF orientations, or when they work directly with TANF case managers on work-based learning placements. Additionally, staffing dollars can be reserved or repurposed (within each funding stream’s guidelines) when program needs change. When a funding stream or program initiative begins or ends, or when demand for particular services increases or decreases, DHS can easily reassign staff to additional or different duties. Local administrators credit this approach for stabilizing staffing and eliminating disruptions such as layoffs.

Infrastructure costs across programs. Facility costs are similarly charged to each program funding stream based on staff labor hours.



SHARED LEARNING

Organizational values and staffing structure of the local workforce system reward staff who demonstrate cross-program knowledge and versatility.



Flexible staff with cross-program knowledge and experience.

Many of Weld County’s Employment Services staff are routinely assigned to run multiple programs, or periodically reassigned from one program to another. Case managers, supervisors, and program managers are expected to learn about all the programs housed at the Employment Services Center because they could be reassigned to deliver additional or different services. This expectation, combined with activities such as occasional cross-program job shadowing and regular cross-program team meetings, promotes a shared knowledge base across the combined team of TANF, WIOA, and other workforce staff.

“ Staff here can be asked to wear a lot of hats. Our program supervisors and managers need to have the expertise and experiences of front-line services across programs to be most effective. Utilizing a general management approach [to] managing people as opposed to programs does not work for us.

- A TANF & WIOA TEAM MEMBER



MANAGING COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

Weld County DHS leaders emphasize that direct accountability to local elected officials helps the Employment Services Center succeed.

Local oversight and direction. Elected representatives pay attention to the outcomes of DHS's workforce programs and how those results are communicated to the public. They attend local workforce development board meetings and help clear a path at county and state levels for DHS to integrate program activities, where allowed, into federal and state rules. For example, County Board commissioners, along with other local elected officials, successfully advocated for the State of Colorado to allow Weld County flexibility to:

- directly operate programs;
- weave its federal, state, and local funding streams; and
- manage reserve funds across funding periods.

Additionally, an intense local focus on fiscal responsibility (as an indication, Weld County carries no budgetary debt) and an emphasis on work-first programming have helped DHS to build credibility and trust, which further supports flexibility for designing and delivering services.

“ It takes work on the state legislative side, looking closely at program allocations to make our funding as flexible as we can. We still have accountability to each of our funders, but we have to pay close attention to how each source of funding works in order to find the flexibility to fill some of the gaps, combining with funding streams that are in more of a stovepipe.

- A TANF & WIOA ADMINISTRATOR



SPECIAL FOCUS

Serving immigrant and refugee populations

Weld County has many immigrants, including refugees from Burma (Myanmar) and Somalia. Many refugees enroll in TANF during their first five years in the U.S. Employment Services of Weld County helps to connect these TANF participants to WIOA Title II providers who have expertise providing English language instruction, adult basic education, and other work-readiness services. Weld County plans to remodel one of its Employment Services Centers to create a shared space for these providers to offer on-site services at least one day per week.

“ In a community that is pretty rural, pretty traditional...how do you work with [immigrant communities]? A strong workforce board is essential to the success of serving diverse populations while addressing community needs. The Weld County Workforce Development Board is actively engaged and represents an array of populations of our community to ensure innovative strategies are identified and creative solutions are implemented. Local employers serving on the Workforce Development Board has led to incredible outcomes and increased employment outcomes for all participants, including individuals with significant barriers to employment.

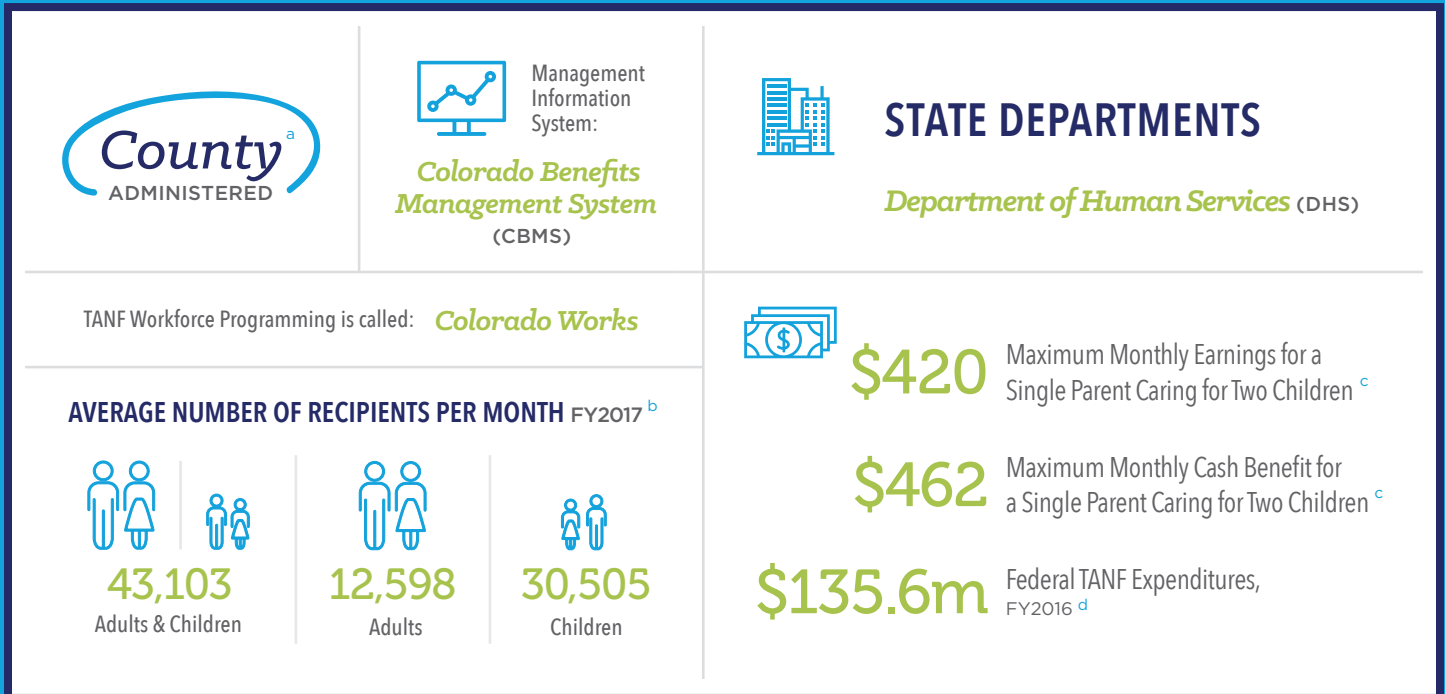
- A TANF & WIOA ADMINISTRATOR

TANF and WIOA Eligibility and Services in Colorado

TANF. Nearly 13,000 of Colorado’s low-income adults are enrolled in Colorado’s TANF program, called Colorado Works, which provides temporary financial assistance to households

with children. Colorado Works financial payments vary according to the size of the family and the income of the parents. The maximum monthly income threshold is \$420 for a single parent with two children (SEE TABLE S.1). TANF clients have access to a variety of employment, work support, training, and education programs, depending on the type of services they need to become self-sufficient.

TABLE S.1: Colorado 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) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): Eligibility and Benefit Amounts in State TANF Cash Assistance Programs (<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43634.pdf>); (d) TANF Financial Data in FY 2016 (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/resource/tanf-financial-data-fy-2016>)

WIOA. Most WIOA-funded services are available to individuals in Colorado regardless of income, but many programs prioritize serving low-income individuals or those having one or more barriers to employment. The principal WIOA services offered to job seekers statewide include labor-exchange/job search

assistance, individualized career services, work readiness preparation, adult basic education, and occupational skills training. Some WIOA-funded programs also offer supportive services such as child care, transportation, tools and equipment, and uniforms. TABLE S.2 provides a snapshot of WIOA in Colorado.

TABLE S.2: Colorado WIOA Snapshot

	<p>American Job Center: Workforce Center (in Weld County, called Employment Services of Weld County)</p>	 <p>Management Information System: Connecting Colorado</p>
 <p>STATE DEPARTMENTS^a</p> <p>Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) 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):</p> <p>Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Adult Education & Family Literacy (Title II):</p>	 <p>2017 ALLOTMENTS^c</p> <p>\$10.5m Employment Service (Wagner-Peyser) Federal Appropriation</p> <p>\$9.3m WIOA Adult Federal Appropriation</p> <p>\$10m WIOA Youth Federal Appropriation</p> <p>\$11m WIOA Dislocated Worker Federal Appropriation</p>	
<p>GOVERNOR-APPOINTED BOARD OVERSEEING WIOA^b</p> <p>Colorado Workforce Development Council</p>		

SOURCES: (a) WIOA State Plan for the State of Colorado (https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/17-0125_WIOA_State_Plan_Final_112016.pdf); (b) The Colorado Workforce Development Council (<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cwdc/council-0>); (c) 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 in summer 2018 with WIOA and TANF program staff at Employment Services of Weld County located in Greeley, Colorado. For more information about the content in this brief, contact Tami Grant at tgrant@weldgov.com. Marissa Strassberger (MDRC), Jack Myrick (Public Strategies), and Caroline Schultz (MDRC) 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.