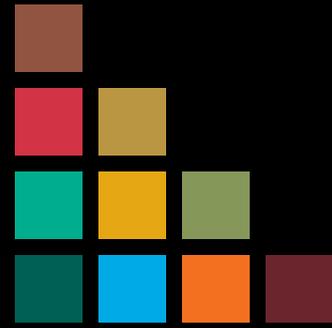


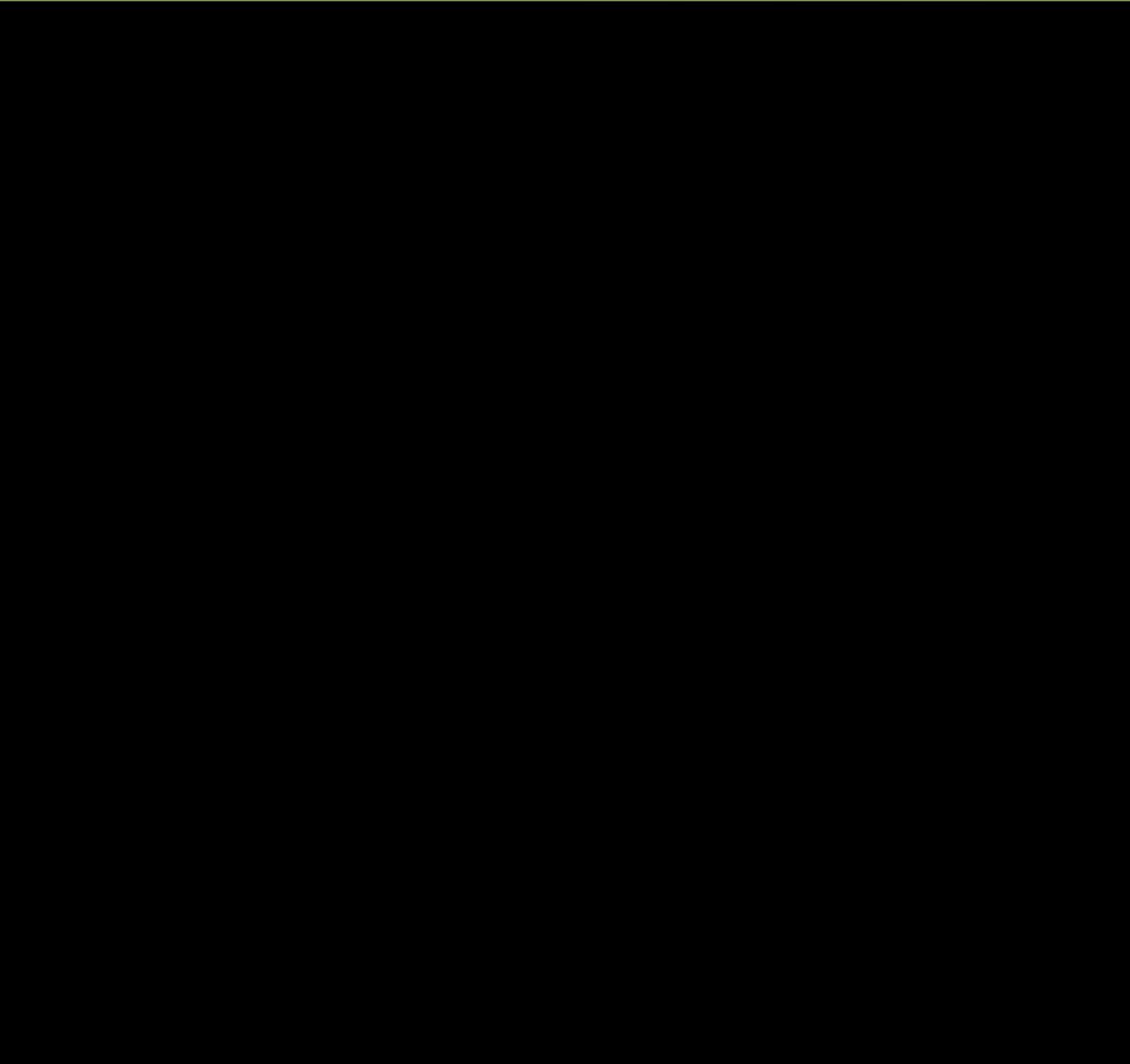
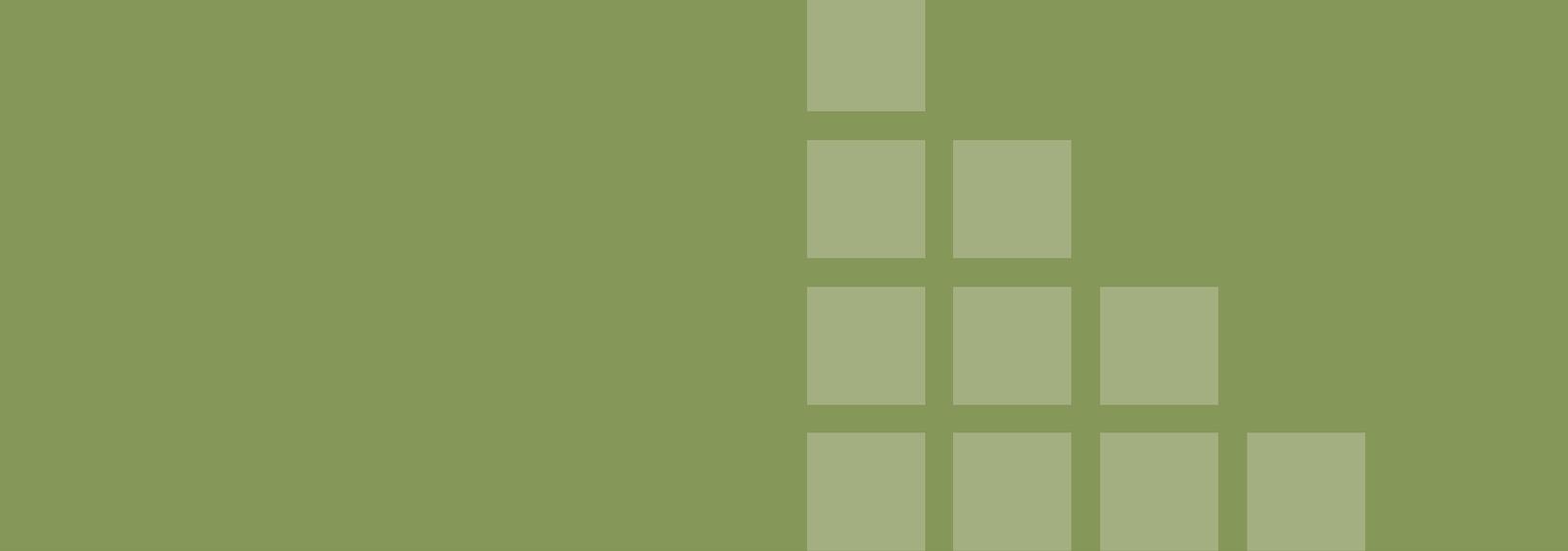
# *A Tale of* Ten Cities



CREATING WELFARE REFORM PROGRAMS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families





## Welfare Reform— A New Beginning

The purpose of this publication is to showcase the outstanding efforts of ten cities that implemented groundbreaking programs to meet the needs of families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). We want to demonstrate how these innovative efforts can be applied in other urban areas throughout the Nation. The goal is to make TANF program staff in cities across the United States aware that tools are available to help with the implementation of their own groundbreaking programs that will enable their city to write their own success story during the next decade of welfare reform.

With the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1996, the role of the States and the Federal government, and in particular the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Administration

for Children and Families/Office of Family Assistance (ACF/OFA), shifted significantly as OFA began providing States with TANF block grants through the TANF program. These grants gave States a new level of flexibility in program design and operation. Working closely with State programs, OFA is well positioned to assist States in making effective programmatic changes as a result of Federal legislation.

With the allocation of TANF block grants to the States, welfare reform introduced two new themes: empowerment and achievement. The block grants provided a new flexibility that empowered States and communities to support families in achieving positive outcomes and enact programs that met their own needs. Many States created “work-first” systems, changed the rules to allow more earned income, reduced lifetime limits, and adopted tougher sanctions for noncompliance with work requirements.<sup>1</sup> This led to a significant reduction in caseloads, which allowed many States to shift TANF resources to work supports and other systems, such as transportation, marriage incentives, and individual development accounts.

<sup>1</sup> The Urban Institute. (2006). A Decade of Welfare Reform: Facts and Figures. [http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/900980\\_welfarereform.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/900980_welfarereform.pdf).



# A Novel Success

*“The ladder of success is best climbed by stepping on the rungs of opportunity.”*

*–Ayn Rand*

The story of welfare reform is, for the most part, a story of success. Since the passage of welfare reform, thousands of families have been presented with new opportunities that they have used to climb the ladder of success toward self-sufficiency. This success is reflected in numerous statistics from the past decade:

- From 1996 to 2002, the national TANF caseload declined from 4.6 million to 2.1 million families, as TANF clients were able to secure stable employment.<sup>2</sup>
- More than 63 percent of never married single mothers are employed, up from 49.3 percent in 1996.
- Child poverty rates have declined from 20.5 percent in 1996 to 17.8 percent in 2004, with 1.4 million fewer children in poverty.
- The percentage of single mothers working outside the home increased from 49.3 percent to 63.1 percent.<sup>3,4</sup>
- The median income for TANF participants has increased from \$7,196 to \$11,820.<sup>5,6</sup>
- The source of income for female-headed families has reversed. In 1993, 30 percent of the income of low-income, female-headed families came from



earnings, and approximately 55 percent came from welfare and payments from other sources. By 2000, female-headed households were earning 60 percent of their income and receiving only 23 percent of their income from welfare.<sup>7</sup>

- In 2003, 56.4 percent of single mothers<sup>8</sup> with children under 18 that had incomes below 200 percent of the poverty level were employed.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> ASPE Research Brief: Indicators of Welfare Dependence (2005). <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/indicators05/rb.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> From 1996 to 2004.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2006). Reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program: Interim Final Rule. National Archives and Record Administration. <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ofa/tfinrule..pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> From 1997 to 2002.

<sup>6</sup> The Urban Institute. (2006). A Decade of Welfare Reform: Facts and Figures. [http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/900980\\_welfarereform.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/900980_welfarereform.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means. Testimony of Ron Haskins, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution; Senior Consultant, Annie E. Casey Foundation. July 19, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> “Single mothers” refers to all never-married, widowed, separated, and divorced mothers.

<sup>9</sup> Office of Family Assistance. (2006). Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Seventh Annual Report to Congress. <http://acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/annualreport7.ar7index.htm>.





## Reauthorization: The Sequel to Welfare Reform

*“What we call results are  
beginnings.”*

*–Ralph Waldo Emerson*

While ACF/OFA and many others were pleased with the results of welfare reform, they also realized that these results were just the beginning, and more work was needed to support families. The Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) of 2005 reauthorized welfare reform and also refocused attention on improving employment

outcomes among participants and on engaging all participants in appropriate work activities. In addition, the DRA focuses funding and support to States and communities for the development of healthy marriage and fatherhood initiatives.

The DRA will carry on the success story of welfare reform started in the mid-1990s. Working families also have access to support services to help foster their economic independence, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit. After participating in an employment-focused TANF program, attaching to the labor force, and beginning to build financial assets, families are well-situated to remedy other circumstances associated with poverty including food insecurity, housing instability, and transience.



## A Tale of Ten Cities

The purpose of the Urban Partnerships Initiative is two-fold. First, the Initiative convenes National Academies of key stakeholders from urban areas to develop strategies to meet the needs of TANF families. Second, the Initiative provides follow-up technical assistance to cities to support the development of relationships between systems, identify and remove barriers to collaboration between those systems, and develop strategic plans to address the needs identified during the National Academies.

The next section of the publication introduces profiles of the original ten cities involved in the Urban Partnerships Initiative. Each profile includes a success

4  story, along with lists of lessons learned, tips, or advice about how to implement programs or take advantage

of the assistance provided through ACF/OFA and the Urban Partnerships Initiative.

Each of these ten cities worked on addressing the challenges that were most pressing to them. Because of the Urban Partnerships Initiative, they were able to realize substantial outcomes:

### Atlanta

- Increased work participation rate from 2003 to 2006 from 9 percent to 60 percent, and TANF adult cases have been reduced from 5,975 to 1,800.

### Baltimore

- Increased engagement rate from 50 percent to 90 percent.

### Boston

- Reduced the food stamp error rate.



#### **Dallas- Fort Worth**

- Reduced caseload by 50 percent.

#### **Detroit**

- Strengthened system-wide accountability and more recipients retain employment.

#### **Minneapolis**

- Reduced TANF caseload by 22 percent; reduced food stamp error by 50 percent; increased work participation rate to 43 percent.

#### **Oakland**

- Eliminated \$3 million worth of overpayments by implementing a tracking system.

#### **Omaha**

- Increased engagement in TANF populations from 40 percent to 87 percent.
- Increased EITC uptake to \$51 million returned into the community.

#### **Seattle**

- Utilized the GMAP process to monitor and improve program outcomes.

- Developed a transportation initiative for the WorkFirst participants in partnership with faith-based organizations.

#### **St. Louis**

- Successfully partnered with community- and faith-based organizations to support recipients in finding and maintaining employment.

The ten cities profiled in this volume have been the leading lights of this Initiative. They have exceeded even the highest expectations for communication, sharing, and partnership development. The success stories described in a *Tale of Ten Cities* began with a commitment from these ten cities to exemplify the objectives of the Urban Partnerships Initiative, and they have done nothing less.





## City Profile

# Atlanta



### *City Background Information*

Agencies in two counties—Fulton and DeKalb—administer most of the TANF programs and services for the City of Atlanta through their Departments of Family and Children Services. Both counties provide temporary cash assistance and other support services, with a 48-month time limit, to needy families with dependent children who are deprived of the support of at least one parent and whose family income is below the State's Standard of Need. The grant amount depends on family size and income. The counties also provide temporary cash assistance with a 48-month time limit for two-parent families as long as the assistance unit meets the definition of a two-parent household.

### *Success Story*

In recent years, Atlanta has implemented several innovative and successful programs. In particular, Fulton County implemented the Performance Management Report Card in 2003. This system generates monthly reports that show each caseworkers' performance and holds workers on all levels accountable for the outcomes of their cases and for meeting specific participation rates. The original goals set by Fulton County for its caseworkers were structured so that Atlanta could meet a 40-percent work participation rate. Fulton County later changed their goals so Atlanta would comply with the 50-percent Federal standard.

Caseworkers who achieve their monthly goals are inducted into the "50-percent club," treated to lunch at a local restaurant, and presented with certificates of achievement and other gifts. Workers who fail to meet their goals must attend a meeting with management, where the caseworker discusses why they were unable to meet their goals and what support management can provide in the future.

In addition to the report card system, several other innovative programs are underway in the Atlanta



Atlanta's recent experience has led to the following lessons learned:

- Systems that hold staff accountable for their efforts are instrumental in making personnel changes, developing leadership, and improving the overall effectiveness of an agency. These types of systems enable poor performance to be addressed through transfers or terminations, and good performance to be rewarded through incentives and promotions. For example, in 2005, Fulton County promoted five case managers based on their performance as documented through the report card system.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Atlanta's innovative programs have been successful because they are shaped around the following principles 1) TANF is a work program; 2) TANF is not good enough for any family; 3) excellence is expected from all staff; and 4) all staff on all levels are accountable.
- The representatives from all of the agencies that support TANF programs in Atlanta, including staff at both the State- and county-level, have found the onsite visits conducted through the Urban Partnerships to be helpful. This includes both their visits to other cities, and when representatives from the around the Nation have visited Atlanta. These visits provided opportunities for staff to see programs and people in action.

area, including the implementation of a performance measurement data system to monitor work participation rates, and a program that monitors vendor work participation rates. If vendors fall below expectations, the contracts are either terminated or not renewed.

### *Program Impact*

Atlanta's innovative programs have had the following effects:

- Management initially met with some resistance when it started sharing the monthly report card with all staff. Over time, however, the report card system has created a friendly competition between case managers, supervisors, and service centers, and created an incentive for caseworkers to work harder to meet their monthly goals.

*“Fulton County fully supports the Urban Partnership, which is why we send such a large team to each Urban Academy. These teams include not just management, but staff from all levels, because at the end of the day, it is staff from every level that are responsible for making our programs a success.”*

William Cook

Fulton County Department of Family and Children Services

- As a result of these innovative programs, Atlanta's work participation rate increased from 9 percent to 60 percent, and TANF adult cases fell from 5,975 to 1,800, from December 2003 to January 2006.
- Because caseloads have declined, Fulton and DeKalb County are now able to provide more intensive services to the recipients who need them most.

### *Looking to the Future*

Due to declining caseloads, Fulton and DeKalb Counties are now focusing some of their efforts on providing new types of programs, such as healthy marriage services and programs to reunite fathers with children. In addition, Atlanta is moving toward an integrated system that addresses both employment and family issues. The State has already conducted two pilots with this type of system.

### *Contact Information*

William Cook

Program Director

Fulton County Department of Family and Children Services

1249 D.L. Hollowell Parkway

Atlanta, GA 30318

404-206-5660

wpcook@dhr.state.ga.us





## City Profile



# Baltimore

### *City Background Information*

The city of Baltimore accounts for approximately 53 percent of Maryland's total assistance payment expenditures. These expenditures, as well as all TANF-related programs in Baltimore, are administered by the Baltimore City Department of Human Services, in conjunction with the Maryland Department of Human Resources.

The city's TANF program is characterized by a full-family sanction. If a family receives a sanction, it can only be cured by 1 day of work program compliance for the first violation, 10 days of program

compliance for the second violation, and 30 days of program compliance for the third and all subsequent violations.

Baltimore's full-family sanction along with other efforts have helped the city's TANF program succeed over the past few years. For example, in July 2006, the caseload of persons receiving temporary cash assistance and who were mandated to work was 4,995, the lowest since the inception of the TANF program. Also impressive is Baltimore's improvement in their work participation rate, from a low of 5 percent in January 2004 to 23.4 percent by July 2006. In addition, the average number of people receiving TANF benefits each month in Baltimore has declined by more than 25 percent in recent years, from a monthly average of 47,873 in 2000 to 35,680 in 2005.

### *Success Story*

Several years ago, after a visit from Turner Government Operations (TGO), a consultant for the Urban Partnerships, Baltimore implemented a universal engagement program for all work-eligible TANF recipients from the day they submit their applications. Prior to this, Baltimore focused on a



After participating in the Urban Partnerships for several years, Baltimore has this advice for getting the most out of an Urban Academy:

- When attending the Academies or other events, be open and honest about what is working and what is not working. You have to be willing to let other people help you solve problems.
- Recruit people beyond your TANF office to join your Partnership team. In January 2004, Baltimore asked

## LESSONS LEARNED

representatives from State agencies to join their team because State support is critical to the City's success. For example, the State controls all of the data systems needed to operate and improve Baltimore's work program, and only the State can make changes to the system.

- Bring staff to the Urban Academies from throughout your organization so everyone can get a feeling for the big picture. In particular, Baltimore has brought field office staff with them because they actually implement the welfare-to-work program and interact with customers.

24-month program, where people received cash for 24 months and were not required to participate in work activities or search for jobs until the end of the 24-month period. Universal engagement, which is the first part in Baltimore's 3-step strategy to improve its work participation rate, now requires every applicant to become engaged in work activities from the first day they apply for assistance. Baltimore implemented this program because their goal is to be at 50 percent workforce participation by October 2007.

### *Program Impact*

Due to universal engagement, more than 98 percent of recipients in Baltimore currently are engaged in work activities, which is an increase of 45 to 50 percentage points from the level before Baltimore met with TGO.

*“ While you can learn a lot from the other people when attending the Urban Academies, and from the Urban Partnerships in general, let other members of the Partnerships also remind you of what you are doing right because it's easy to get bogged down in the day-to-day details and always focus on what you're doing wrong. This attitude has helped us realize a 30-percent caseload reduction since joining the Urban Partnerships.”*

Tracey Paliath  
Baltimore City Department of Social Services

### *Looking to the Future*

In the future, Baltimore plans to implement a work program for pregnant women, an idea they received from Seattle's Urban Partnership team. Baltimore will implement the program in partnership with the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Baltimore and the Baltimore City Head Start Program. Baltimore also is actively searching for partners who can provide employment services to its disabled population.

### *Contact Information*

Tracey Paliath  
Assistant Director  
Baltimore City Department of Social Services  
1510 Guilford Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
443-423-4300  
tpaliath@dhr.state.md.us





## City Profile

# Boston



equals approximately 50 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), and the standard for case closure for earnings is 82 percent of FPL.

### *Success Story*

The Boston city team joined the Urban Partnerships Initiative with a firm commitment to improving collaboration and systems integration. This commitment is evidenced in their success around reducing the food stamp error rate – without increasing staff at the TAFDC case manager level.

Boston has also made improvements in their contracting process by moving to a performance based system that is fully cognizant of the program realities mandated by the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA). For example, Boston has embraced the universal engagement model and changed contracts to require vendors to provide screening, assessment, and program services to formerly exempt populations (e.g. individuals with disabilities).

### *City Background Information*

TANF services in Boston are delivered at the Commonwealth level via the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance's (DTA) Temporary Assistance to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) program. Suffolk County (Boston) is home to approximately 20 percent of the State's TANF caseload and, as with many other urban areas, trends in caseload and work participation are very similar in Boston and the entire State. The maximum TANF grant available to families



Boston offers the following as important lessons learned from their experiences:

- Performance based contracting is an important tool for ensuring vendor services are aligned with agency directions.
- A streamlined sanction process improves customer service and supports improved data reporting with respect to the Federal work participation rate.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Industry-based skills training is critical to developing a stable workforce.

### *Program Impact*

- In addition to the significant change in moving toward a universal engagement model, Boston has had to learn a new way of doing business after time spent under a Federal waiver. This change to understanding that all program participants are included in Federal work rates has been a paradigm shift for the city.
- Related to these changes, Boston continually reviews their TANF caseload for accuracy of participation data and “lives the idea” that all participants can be engaged in meaningful work activities. This idea is supported at all levels through staff training, service design, program requirements, and a constant feedback loop.

*“ The Urban Partnerships Initiative has helped to clarify and illustrate our goals and objectives. We have been able to connect with our partners, find commonality among the participants, and learn some valuable new ideas.”*

Yasmin Otero  
Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

### *Looking to the Future*

As Boston grapples with transitioning out of wavier status and faces the new requirements associated with the DRA, they are committed to developing and implementing a management information system (MIS) that allows them to capture and report high-quality, verifiable data. This will support them in increasing countable work hours and establishing appropriate work activities.

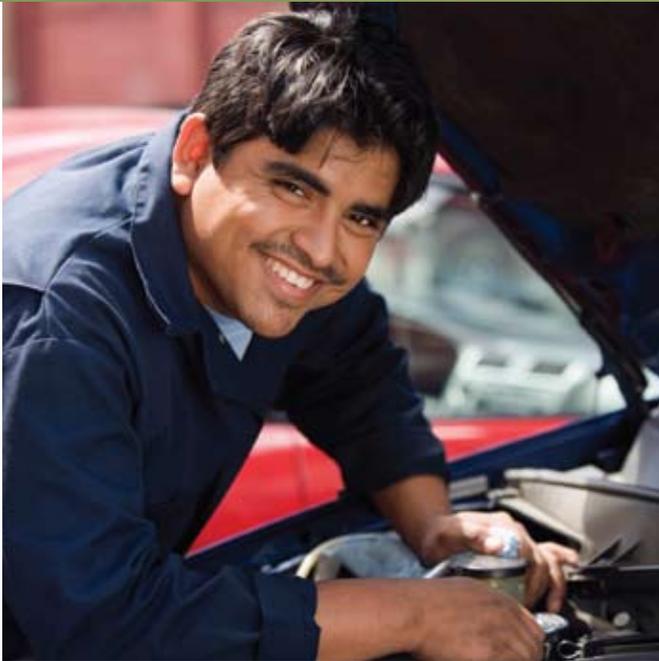
### *Contact Information*

Yasmin Otero  
Regional Director  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Department of Transitional Assistance  
600 Washington St., 4th Floor  
Boston, MA 02111  
617-348-5725  
[yasmin.otero@state.ma.us](mailto:yasmin.otero@state.ma.us)



## City Profile

# Dallas-Fort Worth



### City Background Information

In the Dallas-Ft. Worth (DFW) area, the State of Texas Health and Human Services Commission is responsible for eligibility determination for TANF programs. Employment programs, however, are delivered locally by two separate workforce development boards: WorkSource for Dallas County and Workforce Solutions of Tarrant County. The population receiving TANF benefits has decreased over the years in the DFW area and local agencies are now working with the hardest-to-serve clients, many of which are child-only cases.

### Success Story

The staff in the DFW area responsible for TANF programs have had tremendous success with their Business Access Distance Learning Project, which originated in Dallas County under welfare-to-work funding. The County designed the program as a retention project for welfare recipients who had accepted entry-level employment and offered participants an in-home computer so that they could access additional training from home, without after-hours daycare and travel expenses. Once participants complete their assigned curriculum, they earn ownership of the computer equipment.

So far, Dallas County has enrolled more than 3,000 participants using a variety of funding sources, including a National Emergency Grant for Katrina evacuees, Welfare-to-Work funding for welfare recipients meeting certain criteria, and funding from the Workforce Investment Act for Youth.

The Business Access program offers training on numerous subjects, including basic accounting and banking; basic computer literacy, business

Since 2005, the DFW area has faced numerous challenges, as evacuees from Hurricane Katrina have sought employment and housing services in the region. Even faced with this challenge, DFW has continued to reach out to those in need through the Business Access Distance Learning Project. The project has been a success because it relies on the following principles to help move clients toward self-sufficiency:

- Communication is key.
- Change management is necessary to adapt to new challenges and embrace new opportunities.
- Coordination with partner agencies is absolutely necessary.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Networking can be eye-opening and offer new insights and lessons.
- Flexibility enables staff to reach out to those people who they have not reached out to before.

communication, an introduction to healthcare, and sales. Participants also can access remedial assistance in various subjects, including English as a second language and job search skills.

The staff that administer the Business Access program in Dallas have established relationships with various area employers to train participants for specific job openings. These companies include Microsoft, Neiman Marcus, Texas Instruments, and the Raytheon Company.

### *Program Impact*

The program has had a significant impact on the participants' lives in the DFW area. For example, 86 percent of the TANF participants who have received training through the program are no longer receiving TANF benefits. Due to its success in Dallas County, the project has been expanded into other areas of Texas. In total, the State of Texas has 1,453 participants.

*“ I have been off welfare for about 5 months now with no intention of getting back on public assistance. I would like to open my own daycare. The [Business Access] computer is a big inspiration in my life as well as my home.”*

Recent Participant  
Business Access Distance Learning Project<sup>10</sup>

### *Looking to the Future*

Dallas' goal for the future is to provide universal access to its Business Access program and distance learning opportunities. Dallas also would like to continue improving its programs for recipients with multiple barriers and re-focus its goals toward serving the disabled population.

### *Contact Information*

Amy Cuellar  
Lead Program Manager  
Office of Eligibility Services  
Health and Human Services Commission  
909 W. 45th Street  
Building 2, 9926  
Austin, TX 78751  
512-206-4539  
amy.cuellar@hhsc.state.tx.us

<sup>10</sup> Source: [http://www.business-access.com/learning/user\\_feedback.asp](http://www.business-access.com/learning/user_feedback.asp)



## City Profile

# Detroit



### *Success Story*

The Work First program has been Detroit's most successful welfare reform initiative and instrumental in getting thousands of Detroit residents off welfare. The Work First program helps TANF recipients, non-custodial parents, and recipients of non-cash assistance with support, such as child day care, Medicaid, and food stamps, establish and maintain a connection to the labor market.

In collaboration with DHS, the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth administers Work First. Funding for Work First is allocated to 25 Michigan Works! agencies that contract with local organizations to deliver services.

In Detroit, the Detroit Workforce Development Department (DWDD), a Michigan Works! Agency, administers the Work First program. DWDD uses its funds to provide job search services, education and training programs, and employment-related supportive services, such as transportation allowances, uniforms, tools, and automobile repairs. Participants enter the program after being referred by the Wayne County Department of Human Services.

With the assistance of the Urban Partnerships, multiple agencies across the Detroit region were involved in team meetings to address and resolve barriers faced by TANF recipients. Team partners included representatives

### *City Background Information*

The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) is the State agency responsible for administering TANF programs. Under the directive of DHS, the Wayne County Department of Human Services is charged with overseeing the TANF operations for Wayne County, which includes Detroit. As of July 2006, Wayne County had 34,947 Family Independence Program cases, 165,663 food assistance cases, 246,490 medical assistance cases, and 19,403 child day care cases.

Staff from the various State and local agencies in Michigan has attended several Urban Academies, each of which proved extremely valuable by:

- Providing technical assistance to help the city develop a plan to determine its needs.
- Helping staff learn unique ways to maximize limited resources.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Helping to bring new partners to the table.
- Giving staff the time to get to know each other and talk about, brainstorm, and modify ideas.

from the following agencies: Wayne County Department of Human Services, Detroit Workforce Development Department, Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, Michigan Department of Human Services, Detroit Regional Chamber, City of Detroit Department of Human Services, and the Detroit Housing Commission. This partnership approach created opportunities to discuss effective ways to introduce and improve services that each agency provides to Detroit TANF recipients.

### *Program Impact*

The partnership formed between the Detroit TANF program and local community partners has helped enhance service delivery. Specifically, Detroit has started to implement a pilot Jobs, Education, and Training (JET) program (see below), which has enabled the City to join with community colleges and faith- and community-based organizations. In addition, Detroit has successfully worked with several partners to increase systemwide accountability and upfront client engagement. Through these strategies, Detroit has increased job placement and retention among its TANF population.

### *Looking to the Future*

Michigan's newest welfare reform initiative is the JET program, which will replace the Work First program. So far, Michigan has run pilot JET programs at four sites, including a district office in city of Detroit.

*“Participating in the Urban Partnerships has helped us realize that Detroit’s problems are not unique, and that many other cities have overcome the same problems we face and are willing to help us solve our challenges.”*

Deborah Watson  
Detroit Workforce Development Department

The JET program provides a blended approach to helping welfare recipients become self-sufficient and permanently attached to the labor force. This approach is based on the workforce needs of Michigan's current emerging economy. The components of the JET program include:

- A joint and coordinated planning process to ensure that participant needs are met using all available Federal, State, and community resources.
- A comprehensive intake process and orientation to help determine the readiness of FIP applicants and recipients to effectively engage in employment and training services.
- Individual family self-sufficiency plans that describe explicit steps for each family and case manager(s), and expected time frames for completion of these actions.
- Post-employment support for a minimum of 180 days after initial placement.

### *Contact Information*

Deborah Watson  
Manager I  
Detroit Workforce Development Department  
A Michigan Works! Agency  
707 W. Milwaukee Avenue  
Detroit, MI 48202  
313-664-2202  
dwatson@detroitmi.gov





## City Profile



# Minneapolis

From about 2000 to 2003, total unduplicated TANF cases went from 20,290 to 21,452. Since then, however, these numbers have declined, with just 18,985 TANF cases reported in 2005.

The Federal work participation rate also has varied over the past several years in Hennepin County, from a high of 40.5 percent in 2002 down to 25.2 percent in 2004. This decrease is due in large part to the loss of a Federal waiver that previously allowed Hennepin County to disregard exempt participants from inclusion in the participation rates.

### *City Background Information*

In Minneapolis, the Hennepin County Human Services and Health Department administers TANF, including the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), the State's welfare reform program for low-income families with children.

Through MFIP and other initiatives, Hennepin County serves approximately 29 percent of Minnesota's TANF cases. More than one-third of these participants are non-citizens or naturalized citizens.

In recent years, TANF cases in Hennepin County have fluctuated, but now appear to be shrinking.

### *Success Story*

Minnesota is responsible for introducing the highly successful Diversionary Work Program (DWP). Implemented in July 2004, DWP is a work-focused initiative that enables families to meet employment goals quickly through a short-term, intensive effort. The purpose of DWP is to move people immediately to work, thereby diverting families away from ever enrolling in MFIP.

For families participating in DWP, all adults in the family are considered jobseekers and must focus on obtaining immediate employment. Before families receive any benefits, jobseekers must work with counselors to develop employment plans that focus

Through their experience implementing DWP, Hennepin County has the following insight to offer to cities who want to implement a similar program:

- DWP works very well when you need to engage participants quickly.
- DWP is especially effective for individuals who have suffered a recent job loss.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- For many clients, the diversion payment can help reduce barriers to employment and provide the foundation to foster and maintain employment.

on employment skills, strengths, and barriers. If a jobseeker does not meet DWP requirements, the family will be disqualified through a 100-percent sanction and may return to the program only after complying with all requirements.

Families can participate in DWP for 4 consecutive months in a 12-month period. These 4 months do not count toward the 60-month lifetime assistance limit. During the 4-month period, families receive limited cash benefits based on need. Even after Hennepin County has approved a family to participate in DWP and a jobseeker begins working, DWP cash benefits remain unchanged during the DWP period. Families also may receive other services, such as health care, child care, transportation, and food.

### *Program Impact*

Since its implementation, Hennepin County's DWP has had numerous positive impacts:

- From July 2004 when DWP was implemented through December 2005, the average employment rate was nearly 42 percent and the average wage rate was \$10.26 per hour.
- After 4 months, more than 26 percent of DWP recipients are ineligible for continued cash assistance due to their increased income, and more than 42 percent do not go onto MFIP in the month following the end of DWP.

*“ Hennepin County has benefited immensely from the Urban Academy, and we hope that other Academy members and cities have learned from some of the successes that Hennepin County has shared and will continue to share at Urban Academy events.”*

Lee Berger  
Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department

- Through this Diversion Program, Hennepin County solidified partnerships with other agencies and programs, including those that control child support collection, child care, employment services, and income maintenance programs.

### *Looking to the Future*

In the future, Hennepin County plans to study the effect of DWP on MFIP participation rates, implement longitudinal studies to evaluate the success of DWP, and evaluate what engagement strategies from DWP can be used in MFIP to help document formalized activities and meet the Federal participation rate.

### *Contact Information*

Joe Gaspard  
Human Services Area Manager/Eligibility and Work Supports  
Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department  
Century Plaza  
330 South 12th Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55404  
612-348-8188  
joseph.gaspard@co.hennepin.mn.us





## City Profile

# Oakland



### *City Background Information*

In Oakland, CA, the California Department of Social Services supervises and the Alameda County Social Services Agency administers the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program, California's version of TANF. The State sets overall policies, makes rules, determines eligibility criteria, and sets benefit levels. State agencies also monitor local practices and provide technical assistance to counties to ensure State policies are followed. Within these parameters, counties have varying amounts of administrative flexibility.

### *Success Story*

The Urban Partnerships Initiative's focus on tracking performance management provided Alameda County with new insights to solve a pressing problem in a related area—child welfare. In 2003, the Alameda County Social Services Agency developed and implemented an award-winning automated voice response system after realizing that the agency had overpaid its foster care providers by millions of dollars. This error was largely due to the inability of the agency to accurately track payments. The agency also had difficulty recovering funds when they discovered overpayments.

Working directly with their telephone and computer vendors, Alameda County developed the new foster care tracking system, which requires case workers to report any change in the placement of a child via telephone. In addition, foster care providers must use either the telephone tracking system or the related web site option to report on each child's status during the prior month before the agency will issue any payments.



While developing and implementing its voice response system, Oakland learned two important lessons:

- Look at your current technology to see what you can do with it. Oakland was able to develop a relatively inexpensive, but highly effective system by examining the technologies already available, and integrating them into a new system. This helped Oakland avoid purchasing entirely new equipment and technology, saving thousands of dollars.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Don't be afraid to apply private sector technologies at public agencies. By identifying what was being done in the private sector, Oakland was inspired to develop its phone system. They learned that technologies used in the private sector are not necessarily too expensive or complex for use by public agencies.

This system enables caseworkers and care providers to file reports about changes in the placement of children anytime, day or night. After reports are filed, the system activates the changes and automatically issues payments that are accurate and timely. Costing just \$157,000 to develop and implement, Oakland's automated voice response system can be easily replicated, is inexpensive, and helps reduce fraud.

### *Program Impact*

In 2005, Oakland's automated voice response system was a winner of the California State Association of Counties Award because of the system's outstanding impact. For example,

- The system saved Oakland \$1.7 million in overpayments in the first 2 years.
- In 2001, the monthly high was \$242,000 in overpayments. In May 2005, the monthly overpayment was just \$7,500.
- The system saved thousands of dollars in administrative costs because it has kept Alameda County from needing to hire additional staff to deal with the overpayment problem.

*“ In the past, Oakland’s payments were often slow and inaccurate. With the automated voice system, foster care parents can spend less time worrying about when their payment is coming, and more time caring for the county’s children who so desperately need their love and affection.”*

Don R. Edwards  
Alameda County Social Services Agency

### *Looking to the Future*

Oakland also implements a similar voice-activated system with a web-interface system to help administer its Workforce and Benefits Administration programs. Through this system, callers are able to determine the status of their benefits, aid, and payroll. Oakland also is looking into other uses of the current system and ways to enhance its capabilities.

### *Contact Information*

Don R. Edwards  
Assistant Agency Director  
Agency Alameda County Social Services Agency  
2000 San Pablo Avenue  
Oakland, CA 94612  
510-763-6898  
don.edwards@acgov.org



## City Profile

# Omaha



family that turns to public assistance. Omaha accomplishes this by promoting personal responsibility and empowering parents to support their families.

Over the past 10 years, Omaha's historic caseload has declined from a high in 1996 of 6,912 families, to 4,672 families in 2007. Similarly, the State's work participation rates have risen, from just over 28 percent in 2002 to nearly 33 percent in 2005. The 2006 targeted work participation rate is 32 percent.

### *City Background Information*

The City of Omaha accounts for more than 50 percent of the TANF cases in Nebraska. This caseload is served through Omaha's Employment First program. The goal of Employment First is to provide temporary, transitional support for Nebraska families so that the provision of training, education, and employment preparation will assist the families in attaining their maximum level of economic independence possible.

With this mission, Omaha is dedicated to improving the standard of living and quality of life for every

### *Success Story*

After attending an Urban Partnerships Academy several years ago, Omaha, with support from the United Way, developed a program to ensure that families involved in the Employment First program were receiving their Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Prior to implementing the program, the tax credit money was previously sitting untouched, and families were not receiving the money they deserved.

To implement the EITC program, Omaha formed a coalition with various organizations, including the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, local chambers of commerce, Goodwill Industries, and others, to disseminate information to targeted areas regarding

Omaha has found participation in the Urban Academy to be valuable in numerous ways. For example, the Urban Academy has:

- Helped Omaha learn to better manage contracts, and each service area now reports the same statistics to the central office on a monthly basis. This enables Omaha to compare the service areas and provides a starting point for evaluating programs.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Afforded staff an opportunity to share and gain knowledge of innovative approaches to engaging participants in countable work participation activities.
- Enabled Omaha and other cities to learn about best practices and choose the most applicable ones to bring home.

the EITC. This was done through a marketing program in which the coalition partners came together to publish articles in local newspapers and advertise the program on local cable access television. In addition, United Way distributed packets in January 2004 to targeted areas on child care tax credits and advanced EITC. The Omaha Chamber of Commerce also created a link on its website to EITC information.

After implementing the Omaha program, staff in Omaha's central office brought together a committee on EITC to spread the program throughout Nebraska.

### *Program Impact*

Since its inception, the EITC program has had an enormous impact in Nebraska. For example, in 2002, there was an increase of 13 percent, or more than \$6.2 million, in the amount of money claimed under the tax credit in Omaha over the previous year, before the campaign was started. The specific number of households affected is unknown.

*“ Omaha’s EITC program has led to numerous stories of hope and encouragement. In particular is the married couple with four children, who used their EITC of approximately \$3,000 in 2005 to buy a family van, which enabled the mother to seek employment and allowed the family to come off TANF.”*

Dianne Stewart  
Nebraska Health & Human Services

### *Looking to the Future*

In the future, Employment First participants will be engaged in a countable work activity within the first 30 days after the initiation of the intake process. Other facets on the horizon for Omaha include the reengagement of sanctioned participants within 30 to 45 days; total engagement of all TANF participants including two-parent families and exempt participants; and continuous monitoring and tracking to quickly move participants after 6 weeks of job searching or job readiness training to other countable activities.

### *Contact Information*

Dianne Stewart  
Administrator I  
Nebraska Health & Human Services  
1215 South 42 Street  
Omaha, NE 68105  
402-595-3780  
dianne.stewart@hhss.ne.gov





## City Profile

# Seattle



### City Background Information

In Washington State, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is responsible for issuing TANF benefits, case management, and social services. The responsibility for administering the State's welfare-to-work program, known as WorkFirst, is in the hands of a joint partnership between several State agencies, local employers, tribal governments, workforce development councils, and community organizations. Implementation and coordination of the WorkFirst program is handled at the local level by 32 local planning areas (LPAs), 3 of which cover the City of Seattle. The LPAs are comprised

of representatives from State and local agencies, community and technical colleges, nonprofit organizations, tribes, and contractors.

Until recently, Washington State did not track its workforce participation rates at the local level. It did, however, keep historic caseload data and trends for Seattle and surrounding King County. These data show that the WorkFirst program has been a success in the region over the past several years, as caseloads have dropped from a high of 8,374 cases in October 2005 to 7,319 cases in June 2006, a reduction of more than 12 percent in less than a year.

### Success Story

Several years ago, Seattle started the Food Stamp Employment & Training (FSET) pilot program, after receiving related technical assistance funded by the Urban Partnerships. The FSET project is a partnership of community organizations and colleges that use private grants, State and city funds, and partner revenues in an innovative way to draw matching Federal monies. For the pilot project, Seattle used these funds to expand job search, employment training, and job placement services to recipients of

Seattle, which has received much value from their participation in the Urban Partnerships, offers the following advice for other cities:

- Participate in the Urban Partnerships with an open mind.
- Creative approaches that include public-private partnerships, such as the FSET project, can be very successful at resolving poverty issues and lack of access to employment opportunities in vulnerable communities.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Joining the Urban Partnerships gives representatives from your organization a chance to think outside the box and meet face-to-face with representatives from other cities who are solving similar problems.

Food Stamps living in White Center, an economically depressed community in Seattle that faces high unemployment and few coordinated resources.

### *Program Impact*

Currently in its fourth quarter of operation, the pilot project has led to a consistent increase in workforce participation levels in White Center. To date (July 2007), more than 1,507 people have received services that they would not have been eligible for without the FSET project. In addition, South Seattle Community College has seen an increase in the numbers of Food Stamp recipients enrolled in vocational training and adult basic education classes. The Seattle Jobs Initiative, the Port Jobs organization, Goodwill, and YWCA also have continued to increase enrollments in their job readiness training classes.

The FSET program has enabled more than 299 participants to be placed into jobs through July 2007. In February 2006, a program audit found that the pilot also had increased referrals for Basic Food benefits to DSHS as a result of coordinated outreach efforts. More food benefit referrals means that the FSET program is extending the safety net available to working families, while simultaneously providing services to help families achieve self-sufficiency.

*“ Seattle’s FSET program has helped many people. One young man, for example, enrolled in training provided by the program shortly after being released from prison. This training led to two job offers with proposed starting wages of more than \$13 per hour.”*

Rick Krauss  
Washington Department of Social and Health Services

### *Looking to the Future*

While Seattle has accomplished a lot in recent years, there is still work to be done. Some of Seattle’s upcoming efforts include:

- Expanding the FSET program to serve a broader population in King County and across the State.
- Continued implementation of the State’s redesigned WorkFirst program, including implementation of a comprehensive evaluation process.
- Overcoming the challenge of engaging the harder-to-employ populations in Seattle.

### *Contact Information*

Rick Krauss  
WorkFirst Program Coordinator  
Washington Department of Social and Health Services,  
Community Service Division, Region 4 Office  
400 Mercer Street, Suite 600  
Seattle, WA 98109  
206-272-2160  
krausr@dshs.wa.gov





## City Profile

# St. Louis



In St. Louis, the local workforce investment board, known as the St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE), is responsible for administering the TANF program for the City through a contractual agreement with the Missouri Division of Workforce Development.

In St. Louis, the total number cases and recipients have declined in recent years. In 2001, St. Louis had a total of 16,980 cases and 49,983 recipients. By 2005, these numbers had gone down to 12,668 cases and 33,376 cases, a reduction of 25 percent and 33 percent, respectively.

### *City Background Information*

In Missouri, the employment and training component of the TANF program is administered by the Missouri Division of Workforce Development, per executive order of the Governor in 2003. The Missouri Department of Social Services' Family Support Division, however, retains the role of the State TANF agency, and therefore continues to determine eligibility and make initial decisions on whether or not an individual is a mandatory work participant according to the Federal and State TANF laws.

### *Success Story*

In fiscal year 2005, TANF recipients and other low-income individuals began participating in a new pilot initiative called the Career Pathway Life Sciences program. Designed by Better Family Life, Inc. (BFL) and the Metropolitan Education and Training Center, in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the program offers an innovative approach to creating educational "stepping stones" for the advancement of workers and job seekers, including those with basic skills deficiencies, to provide a qualified workforce to local employers. Participants in the program receive training for entry-level careers in the life sciences, including biotechnology, biomedical devices, pharmaceuticals, health care, and food and beverage industries.

Through their participation in the Urban Partnerships, officials in St. Louis have learned the following lessons:

- The Partnership has given St. Louis the ability to look at new and improved ways to reach out to people and increase workforce participation rates.
- The Partnership enables St. Louis to draw upon other proven strategies.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- After an Academy, the St. Louis team was able to go back and make changes to the TANF Training and Employment program.
- St. Louis has appreciated the technical assistance from HHS and learning from HHS about the changes that will be coming under reauthorization.

The program offers four training cycles annually. The class sizes are reasonably small to assure participants receive the individual attention necessary to be successful. Through St. Louis Community College/BFL, the program integrates targeted technical, academic, and experiential training, focused career mapping/ planning, retention and advancement support as well as life skill development, thereby ensuring that both employer needs and workforce issues are appropriately addressed for the professional development of the students and the growth of the industry.

### *Program Impact*

A pilot of the Career Pathway Life Sciences program was successfully completed over a 2-year period. More than three-quarters of the participants in the pilot graduated, and more than half of the graduates found jobs almost immediately. The participants who went on to entry-level positions are expected to make anywhere from \$25,000 to \$30,000. Of the participants who did not pursue immediate employment, several decided, instead, to continue on to college to pursue degrees in the life sciences.

Another great success for the program has been the ability to leverage dollars and create new partnerships and collaborations. For example, the Missouri Division

*“ I had never been a fan of math and science, but the program made science or biotechnology more user-friendly. It gave me the opportunity for a type of employment that I had never considered.”*

T’Lisa Muhammad

Participant in the Career Pathway Life Sciences program.<sup>11</sup>

of Workforce Development contributed over \$100,000 to the program, while the East-West Gateway Council of Governments has provided transportation services with a value of more than \$300,000. In addition, the Workforce Strategy Center, a national consulting firm, provided technical assistance to develop the career pathway ladder to sustainable employment. Finally, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has acted as a primary sponsor of the program and has provided funding and numerous other supportive programs.

### *Looking to the Future*

As St. Louis looks to the future, officials would like to adopt a diversionary strategy similar to that being implemented in Minneapolis. St. Louis also is moving toward policy changes that will enable them to implement more innovative strategies. Officials also would like to move to a full-family sanction.

### *Contact Information*

Mary Bell

TANF Liaison

St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment

1017 Olive Street

St Louis, MO 63101

314-552-7656

mbell@stlworks.com

<sup>11</sup> Pathway to success in life sciences,” Meliqueica Meadows, *The St. Louis American*, 10/5/05, [www.workforcestrategy.org/inthenews/st\\_louis\\_american\\_10.5.05.pdf](http://www.workforcestrategy.org/inthenews/st_louis_american_10.5.05.pdf)



## Ten Cities, Ten Lessons

As Urban Partners, the participants have been change agents in their home cities. Over the course of their participation in this Initiative, great progress has been made in serving TANF families and supporting their journey to self-sufficiency. Urban Partnerships' Academies foster the peer-to-peer methodology of the Initiative and support TANF stakeholders in large

urban centers from around the country. The following include key lessons learned that have helped advance the Urban Partnerships cities implement innovative, successful work-first TANF programs.

- **Institute change at all levels – empower staff to implement new programs.** Moving in new directions can be challenging. It is critical to clearly articulate programmatic directions and empower staff with the training, skills, and information necessary to effectively carry out the agency vision.
- **Promote universal engagement and develop programs and policies that support staff to do the same.** The Urban Partners recognize that all recipients have the capacity to work in a rewarding and meaningful placement. Universal engagement at the front end operationalizes this commitment.

- **Innovate, innovate, innovate. Don't be afraid to try new things in response to the needs of your city.** The DRA provides a great opportunity to change policies to enhance your program's ability to serve recipients. Taking risks can lead to positive, identifiable changes.
- **Embrace partnerships; bring new partners to the table; avoid turf wars.** Remember that anyone can be a potential partner to help support families in the path to job attainment and retention. Keep the common goal in mind.
- **Meet recipients where they are. Collaborate with your vendors to learn about recipient needs and develop programs that meet them.** Even the most well-planned and articulated strategies will fail if they are not targeted to the needs of your population.
- **There is always something more to do. The work is never done and it is important to maintain your momentum.** Collaborate together to meet the changing needs of your caseload. Initiate new programs to better serve families.
- **Respect the cultural diversity of your clientele and empower them to make positive change in their own lives.** A well-organized business process can help meet diverse needs in a timely and efficient manner.
- **Hold contractors accountable for high standards and outcomes.** Don't be afraid to cut ties with groups who do not meet performance measures.
- **Draw on the resources of your community to provide stabilizing services to families.** Use the EITC and partner with your employers for the benefit of recipients. The EITC and other tax credits make work more attractive than welfare and can help families move above the poverty line to reduce intergenerational poverty.
- **Always remember that your families are very often involved in more than one system.** If you can't work successfully across agency boundaries, how do you expect recipients to navigate the system? Streamline your assessment process and utilize a "no wrong door" strategy to help recipients access all appropriate benefits.
- **Keep your eye on the prize. Remember that you are trying to support people in finding stable employment opportunities.** Wraparound services can help support employed recipients and reduce the risk of recidivism and foster economic stability.

The Urban Partnerships Initiative has been built upon successful communication and collaboration from large urban centers around the country. Through such projects like the Urban Partnerships Initiative, ACF is committed to supporting the work of stakeholders around the country to improve outcomes for children and families.

# For Additional Information

## *Atlanta:*

William Cook  
Program Director  
Fulton County Department of Family and Children Services  
1249 D.L. Hollowell Parkway  
Atlanta, GA 30318  
404-206-5660  
wpcook@dhr.state.ga.us

## *Baltimore:*

Tracey Paliath  
Assistant Director  
Baltimore City Department of Social Services  
1510 Guilford Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
443-423-4300  
tpaliath@dhr.state.md.us

## *Boston:*

Yasmin Otero  
Regional Director  
Department of Transitional Assistance  
600 Washington Street  
Boston, MA 02111  
617-348-8450  
yasmin.otero@state.ma.us

## *Dallas-Fort Worth:*

Amy Cuellar  
Lead Program Manager  
Office of Eligibility Services,  
Health and Human Services Commission  
909 W. 45th Street  
Building 2, 9926  
Austin, TX 78751  
512-206-4539  
amy.cuellar@hhsc.state.tx.us

## *Detroit:*

Deborah Watson  
Manager I  
Detroit Workforce Development Department  
A Michigan Works! Agency  
707 W. Milwaukee Avenue  
Detroit, MI 48202  
313-664-2202  
dwatson@detroitmi.gov

## *Minneapolis:*

Joe Gaspard  
Human Services Area Manager/Eligibility and  
Work Supports  
Hennepin County Human Services and  
Public Health Department  
Century Plaza  
330 South 12th Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55404  
612-348-8188  
joseph.gaspard@co.hennepin.mn.us

## *Oakland:*

Don R. Edwards  
Assistant Agency Director  
Agency Alameda County Social Services Agency  
2000 San Pablo Avenue  
Oakland, CA 94612  
510-763-6898  
don.edwards@acgov.org

## *Omaha:*

Dianne Stewart  
Administrator I  
Nebraska Health & Human Services  
1215 South 42 Street  
Omaha, NE 68105  
402-595-3780  
dianne.stewart@hhss.ne.gov

## *Seattle:*

Rick Krauss  
WorkFirst Program Coordinator  
Washington Department of Social and Health Services,  
Community Service Division Region 4 Office  
400 Mercer Street  
Suite 600  
Seattle, WA 98109  
206-272-2160  
krausr@dshs.wa.gov

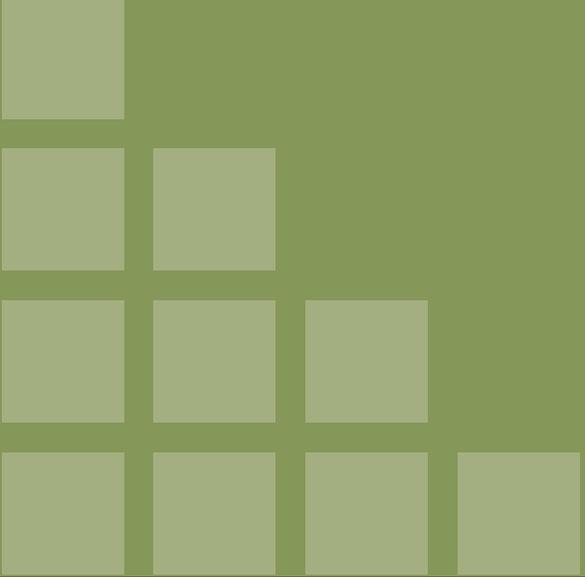
## *St. Louis:*

Mary Bell  
TANF Liaison  
St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE)  
1017 Olive Street  
St Louis, MO 63101  
314-552-7656  
mbell@stlworks.com

## *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:*

Al Maurice Fleming  
Senior Program Specialist  
Division of State and Territory TANF Management  
Office of Family Assistance  
Administration for Children and Families  
370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW  
Fifth Floor East  
Washington, DC 20447  
202-401-4977  
al.fleming@acf.hhs.gov





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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Administration for Children and Families

Office of Family Assistance

370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW

Washington, DC 20447

[www.acf.hhs.gov](http://www.acf.hhs.gov)