

WASHINGTON STATE'S WORKFIRST PARTNERSHIP AND LOCAL PLANNING AREAS

WorkFirst, Washington's welfare reform & service program, is designed to help parents prepare for and go to work. WorkFirst is a partnership between state agencies and communities that work together to provide the services and resources families need.

State Level: *The WorkFirst Partnership*

Formed by the state legislature in 1996 to implement the new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, the WorkFirst Partnership involves multiple state level agencies tasked with managing the Federal TANF Block Grant and program design. The Partnership formed as part of a three-tier executive power structure that originally included agency executives, leadership, and program staff. It has since evolved into what is now two levels of cross agency collaboration, which report to a formal statewide TANF oversight task force that includes a broader range of state agencies and members of the state legislature. Importantly, this task force has the broader goal of poverty reduction as well as monitoring TANF.

The WorkFirst Partnership currently consists of the following agencies in Washington State:

AGENCY	ROLE/FOCUS
Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)	<i>Eligibility intake, assessment and ongoing case management</i>
Department of Commerce (Commerce)	<i>Job readiness, community service and subsidized employment</i>
Employment Security Department (ESD)	<i>Job search and job readiness</i>
State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC)	<i>Vocational education and other education related activities</i>
Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF)	<i>Child care subsidy programs</i>
Office of Financial Management (OFM)	<i>Executive fiscal/budget oversight</i>

This partnership manages WorkFirst program design with the goal to provide the best possible services to families on TANF and move them toward economic stability. The Partnership meets regularly at both the leadership and program staff levels, establishing workgroups as needed, preparing recommendations and reports as directed, and assisting in determining program improvements. Its goal is to successfully implement the TANF/WorkFirst Program, including tactical service delivery, to meet desired outcomes.

Local Level: *WorkFirst Local Planning Areas*

With the formation of the WorkFirst Partnership, a formal process to coordinate between state agencies and other WorkFirst partners at the community level was also adopted – referred to as WorkFirst Local Planning Areas. Washington State has 26 local planning areas, with representatives from the “core” service and case management agencies (DSHS, ESD, Commerce & SBCTC). Participants

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work together to strategize and meet WorkFirst performance goals and targets. In addition, a Local Planning Area liaison contributes to and reports out at the state level WorkFirst Partnership gatherings.

Local Planning Areas meet regularly and while the core focus of these groups is on TANF-WorkFirst services, many have expanded their gatherings to include community partners who serve those impacted by poverty, beyond the TANF population. This work may include tribal governments, Workforce Development Councils, community action agencies, non-profit agencies of all types, schools, labor organizations, and childcare/early learning, transportation, mental health and substance abuse treatment providers.

Additional information regarding Washington's WorkFirst Program, the Partnership, and Local Planning Areas is available at www.WorkFirst.wa.gov.