



INTRODUCTION

TANF FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS INITIATIVE

A Case Study





INTRODUCTION

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 established the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and created new requirements for State governments to move welfare recipients into work by reducing welfare dependency and encouraging self-sufficiency. Section 104 of PRWORA, commonly known as Charitable Choice, sought to promote self-sufficiency, in part, through reduced legal and regulatory barriers to partnerships between government-funded welfare programs and faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs). Section 104 requires that States permit FBCOs to compete on an equal basis for State contracts to provide social services to low-income families and individuals. The goal was to allow government to more easily enlist the unique attributes and resources of FBCOs—such as knowledge of the low-income communities they serve, large numbers of volunteers, and the provision of “whole-person” services—thereby improving programs and increasing the leveraging of scarce public dollars with private cash and in-kind resources.

Since the implementation of Charitable Choice, the number of contracts between States and FBCOs has increased significantly. Recent studies have shown that when faith-based and community organizations partner with government agencies, families often have greater success in moving toward economic self-sufficiency.¹ Faith-based organizations appear to be particularly successful with hard-to-serve populations facing multiple barriers to employment.²

To identify promising practices and disseminate useful information to public agencies, in 2007 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families’ Office of Family Assistance (OFA) developed the TANF-FBCOs Initiative to document and increase understanding of the types of partnerships that had developed between TANF and FBCOs. The study sought to catalog promising practices for potential use by other State and local TANF programs seeking innovating service delivery strategies, and by FBCOs looking for more constructive models of government partnership. In the wake of Charitable Choice, the project’s fundamental objective is to help educate TANF administrators and FBCO leaders about how to adapt these strategies and practices to their local contexts and conditions.

The TANF-FBCOs Initiative compiled data across a common set of indicators for 139 faith-based and community organizations that had existing relationships with TANF agencies or One-Stop Career Centers. In 2009, an environmental scan³ of these programs was published, and 23 programs were selected for further study. After in-depth phone discussions with each organization’s executive director to better understand its local partnerships, the project published a *Snapshots of Promising Practices*⁴ review of all 23 innovative FBCO collaborations with local TANF agencies—including secular programs, faith-based organizations, intermediary programs, and government-sponsored partnerships. The project’s findings described each FBCO’s target population, staff structure, core services, and partnerships with Federal or other public agencies at the local level.

¹ Schneider, J.A. (2006). *Social capital and welfare reform: Organizations, congregations, and communities*. New York: Columbia University Press. See also Reingold, D.A, Pirogl, M., & Brady, D. (2007, June). Empirical evidence on faith-based organizations in an era of welfare reform, cited in the *Compendium of research papers presented at the faith-based and community initiatives conference on research, outcomes and evaluation*, online at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/fbci/comp08/report.pdf>.

² Banks, D., Hercik, J., & Lewis, R. (2004). *Rediscovering compassion: An evaluation of kairos horizon communities in prison*. Fairfax, VA: Caliber Associates.

³ Good, J., and Hercik, J. (2008). *Environmental scan of 139 faith-based and community organizations*. Fairfax, VA: ICF International.

⁴ Good, J., Hercik, J., and Williamson, E. (2009). *Snapshots of promising practices*. Fairfax, VA: ICF International.



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The 23 programs were ranked according to the following domains of activity:

- **Organizational performance** – general program results, networking and external relations, constituency empowerment, and application of technical knowledge relating to TANF and workforce development
- **Organizational capacity** – institutional infrastructure, history, and sustainability
- **Community and economic support** – links to the economic recovery efforts and other forms of community connectedness
- **Relationship with TANF and/or WIA agencies** – formal or informal partnerships in connection with HHS and U.S. Department of Labor sponsored programs, designed to promote self-sufficiency
- **Unique characteristics** – innovative strategies, including target population, interfaith collaboration and ease of replicating of innovative practices

Based on these rankings, which took into account organizational representation (i.e., balancing the number of faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, collaborative partnerships, and intermediaries/intermediary affiliates), regional accessibility, and urban vs. rural target populations—eight leading FBCOs or intermediary affiliates were selected for follow-up site-visits.

The selected organizations are:

- **Bethel Development Corporation**, a faith-based social service program in Millville, NJ;
- **Faith Connections**, a faith-based intermediary in Wilson County, NC;
- **Faith Partners**, a faith-based organization in El Paso, CO;
- **Future Foundation**, a community-based youth services program in Atlanta, GA;
- **Henry Street Settlement House**, a community-based intermediary partner in New York City;
- **Missouri Valley Community Action Agency**, a community-based program in Marshall, MO;
- **Pathways-VA, Inc.**, a community-based job-training program in Petersburg, VA;
- **Sacramento Healthy Marriage Project**, a community-based relationships program in Sacramento, CA.

During two-day site visits with each organization, the project team used the discussion guide included as Exhibit 1, below.

Exhibit 1: The TANF Faith-based and Community Organization Initiative Site Visit Discussion Guide¹

Organizational Background

- Please identify and describe the programs operated by your organization. Which of these programs provide services to individuals who are TANF-eligible or TANF recipients?

Partnership with the local TANF Agency

- Describe your agency's partnership with TANF. How was this partnership created? How long has the partnership existed? How has this partnership changed over time?
- Who at your organization works directly with TANF agency representatives? Have any protocols or systems been established to facilitate data tracking between your organization and the local TANF agency?
- Describe the benefits that partnering with TANF brings to the clients you serve. How do the outcomes from this partnership impact the broader goals of TANF?
- What has supported the partnership between your organization and the local TANF agency? What challenges has the partnership between your organization and the local TANF agency faced?

Faith-based and Community Partnerships

- Describe your various faith-based and community partnerships.
- Describe the benefits that partnering with faith-based and community organizations brings to the TANF clients you serve.
- What has supported the partnership between your organization and the faith-based and community organizations you partner with? What challenges have these partnerships faced?

Lessons Learned

- Describe what it takes to build successful partnerships between faith-based and community organizations and TANF agencies. What is needed to sustain these partnerships?
- If you were in a position to enhance local, State, or Federal policy to better build partnerships between faith-based and community organizations and TANF agencies, what policy recommendations would you suggest?

¹ Questions were adapted for each interview participant. For additional information on the interview protocol, please contact Josh Good at jgood@icfi.com.

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