

# ***Building Partnerships and Collaborative Funding Streams: Colorado Works and Colorado Refugee Services*** **Webinar Transcript**

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**June 26, 2013**

**Coordinator:** Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time I'd like to remind all participants that today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections you can disconnect at this time. If anyone needs assistance please press star 0. Now I would like to turn the meeting over to Makda Belay. You may begin.

**Makda Belay:** Hello everyone and welcome to this Office of Refugee Resettlement webinar on Building Partnerships and Collaborating Funding Streams: Colorado Works in Colorado Refugee Services.

My name is Makda Belay at the Office of Refugee Resettlement Administration for Children and Families US Department of Health and Human Services. Today I'm filling in for my colleague, Peirrot Rugaba. This webinar is sponsored by the US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families and ORR.

ORR in partnership with the Office of Family Assistance is focused on promoting increased collaboration between the federal agencies through technical assistance such as this webinar highlighting the collaborative partnership between Colorado Works and Colorado Refugee Services. We hope to highlight how collaboration can happen at the state and local levels as well as between TANF and refugee agencies.

Many refugees accessing TANF utilize cash assistance but continue to return to their resettlement agencies for employment and support services even though quite a few state TANF programs offer support services to TANF participants.

ORR is also collaborating with the Employment and Training Administration at the US Department of Labor to focus on identifying vocational training programs and to highlight employment programs and relevant resources that might be available to assist ORR partners to improve the connection between agencies. The agency serving refugees is a key starting point to providing the best opportunities for refugees to succeed in obtaining employment and a stable career path.

Before we get started with introductions our partners wanted to know a little information about our attendees so they best address the needs of webinar participants to enhance their current or future collaboration between refugee agencies or organizations and TANF programs.

I will now turn it over to Louisa Jones and Lynn Carrier of ICF International to run several poll questions and to discuss the survey questions and answers throughout the webinar. They'll also introduce our speakers. Thank you very much for attending this webinar today.

**Louisa Jones:** Hello everyone. Good morning and good afternoon wherever you may be. My name is Louisa Jones with ICF International and I am helping support ORR's Bridges for Refugees Project.

As Makda let you know this is a technical assistance initiative trying to help refugee service providers and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs develop robust relationships focused on leading their participants toward self-sufficiency.

We have some poll questions that we wanted to use to get a feel for who is actually on the webinar today so that our speakers can perhaps tailor some of their comments and know who is on.

We wanted to see what agency or organization you work for – ORR, TANF, Other Social Service Agency, nonprofit/vendor, and you can just click on the screen.

Okay our second questions, what stage of collaboration are you in, in your State or local area, on collaboration between TANF and refugees? (1) We have had initial conversations and we share basic information and resources; (2) we have some aspects or services of our State/local agencies that are connected; (3) our State/local agencies have an integrated approach to connecting refugees with TANF services; or (4) we have TANF policies that accommodate refugees.

Okay so we're going to move to the third question. What is the largest barrier to collaboration between agencies and organizations serving refugees? Is it (1) forming partnerships across agencies and organizations, (2) addressing language needs (assessment through education/training), (3) navigating fiscal/funding streams, (4) finding employment training opportunities; or (5) TANF policies around grant levels, income disregards, time limits and allowable activities which are unfavorable to refugees?

Okay great. And before I turn over to Lynn to introduce our speakers we did want to show everyone how to actually submit questions and answers throughout the webinar. The only way to submit questions is actually via the Web platform. If you go to the top it says Q&A. And then you can type in your question at the top. Then you click on the word Ask to submit your questions. That will go into the queue and questions for us. At the end we'll ask our presenters those questions. We will also remind people how to do this after our presenters finish their part of the presentation.

**Lynn Carrier:** Thank you, Louisa. We are joined on today's webinar by two presenters from Colorado, Levetta Love and Paul Stein.

Levetta Love is the Director of the Colorado Works Division with the Colorado Department of Human Services. As Director, she guides the state's efforts to help vulnerable and struggling families become safe and economically stable in partnership with 64 counties and numerous nonprofit organizations. This is primarily accomplished by helping those with a variety of skill levels and job experience prepare for, find, and then keep civil employment. Prior to joining the state staff, Ms. Love spent many years in county human services departments managing assistance programs including TANF, food assistance, Medicaid, childcare, adult

protective services, and workforce development. Ms. Love was instrumental in the development of Option for Change with its emphasis on prevention and integration. This TANF program focused on specific strategies to answer federal work participation requirements while offering customer choice, support, and individualized service. With over 25 years of experience, Ms. Love's career has included work with domestic violence survivors, Cliff effect mitigation, poverty, employment programs. And early childhood development. She has served on many workgroups, committees, and boards, collaboratively developing policy and providing guidance throughout Colorado and nationally. Ms. Love's lifetime of experience working on behalf of vulnerable people speaks for itself. She received her Bachelor of Science degree from Illinois State University but is most proud of the education she received as a frontline worker which fuels her passion for this work and the people we serve.

Paul Stein is also joining us today. Mr. Stein has been the Colorado State Refugee Coordinator within the Colorado Department of Human Services since September 2005. He is the President of the State Coordinators of Refugee Resettlement and most focused on policy and integration issues. From 2000 until 2005, he was the Executive Director of the Rocky Mountains Survivors Center in Denver, a torture treatment program. From 1988 until 2000, he worked as a national consultant to immigration attorneys on asylum applications and appeals providing documentation and developing expert testimony concerning the home country conditions of asylum applicants. He previously worked as a multidisciplinary artist. I will now turn it over to our speakers who will share their information with you, Paul and Levetta.

**Levetta Love:** Good morning this is Levetta Love. So, can we proceed to the first slide? Thank you.

I'm going to start by setting the stage for how TANF is being administered in Colorado. We do have a state supervised county administered model with 64 different counties. As a result we have 64 different ways in which our program is implemented within this state under a structure and a format designed by the State Department.

Along with the four federal purposes of TANF Colorado also added two additional purposes. One was to develop strategies and policies that focus on ensuring that participants are in work activities as soon as possible. The other was to ensure that our counties continue to have responsibility for the administration of the work programs on a local level.

Next slide. A little bit about our caseload. I think that's always interesting to try to make those comparisons among the state. We are currently serving approximately a little over 16,000 households. And we serve about 35,000 households each year. Our average time on assistance through our basic cash assistance program tends to be about six months. That has really doubled since 2008. Our caseload was below 8000 and has now increased, partly in response to the economic decline. It's the same decline as the entire country experienced; however, in Colorado, we tended to move into that economic decline at a later date.

But we're very proud of our response to the economy and, as a result, our caseload increased. I believe we really did serve and act as a safety net for low income Coloradans.

Next slide. This gives you an idea of the types of cases that we're currently serving. Approximately one-third of our caseload is child-only cases that include our nonrelative and specified caretaker cases, our Social Security, SSI, and non-custodial parents.

This particular caseload, although they are on and not subjected to time limits, has a really considerable amount of services and supports especially in the area of child wellbeing and it's an area that we're really promoting statewide.

Our two parent households have increased over the last few years, but certainly most of our increases have been in the areas of single parent households and we believe that again is in response to the economy.

Next slide. A little bit about the fiscal fundamentals. We receive a little bit more than \$136 million as our base grant. We've added to that more recently contingency funds, prior to that we received the supplemental.

About 85% of those dollars are sent directly to states to, I mean to counties, excuse me, to implement the program. Our funding has virtually been unchanged since 1997. We've basically replaced the supplemental using that TANF contingency fund that we were qualified for in state fiscal years 2012 and 2013.

In Colorado funding can be spent at the family level on benefits and services or at the community level for community investment initiatives that meet the four federal purposes of TANF. Counties also have the opportunity to transfer up to 30% of their allocation to child care and child welfare issues.

Our counties are also responsible for the maintenance of efforts dollars. And those state-county or state general fund dollars are included in the maintenance of effort.

Next slide please. So that's a little background about how we implement the program, but moving forward, we really wanted to look at changing an environment and what that meant to the Colorado Works program over the last two years.

There's something that we call the Colorado Blueprint. As a result our new Governor, John Hickenlooper, has a very strong commitment to employment and economic development that also includes making sure that low-income and low-skilled workers are included in the workforce.

The Colorado Blueprint requires coordination across state agencies and special efforts in education and training basically from birth through the adult arena. One example of this effort is our new transitional jobs program that we call Rehire Colorado which uses state general funds to provide an employment subsidy for low-income citizens, basically veterans, those over age 50, and noncustodial parents. It's a brand new program that began in July 1 of this year.

The other piece we wanted to speak to was our 2-Generation Lens. This is an opportunity for us to start to look at our programs from a two or three generation perspective, looking at how are we serving adults, recognizing, in TANF specifically, that not only are TANF participants being considered as workers but we also need to consider them as parents. How do we provide services that support both of those aspects of their responsibilities?

Being very customer centric is very huge for us. All of our programs are being looked at with an eye and impact on customer and customer outcomes. This is happening through C-Stat. C-Stat is initially experienced by some as sort of a top down compliance process. But over the past year it's really proven to be a very collaborative, solution-oriented way to align our efforts across our department.

Basically, it uses data to examine performance in each one of our divisions and offices. And it allows for root cause analysis to identify processes that work and processes that need improvement.

Next slide please. Specifically in TANF our environment, Colorado ReWorks is used as a catchall for our huge shift from engagement to employment entry and retention. During that we have implemented a number of strategies over the past year. The shift is to focus statewide on moving from process to employment entry and retention. It really started with the realization that if this is a state supervised program that, at the state, we were accountable for work of the counties.

There have been several efforts that we've been involved with over this period but I'll just mention a few. We have a memorandum of understanding with our counties. We recognize that the sole performance measurement that was included in this document was work participation rate. We've decided that we didn't want to focus on process; we wanted to focus on the outcome. So that is in the process of being revised to include other outcome measures.

Second a realignment of our program integrity efforts includes business process reengineering and technical assistance. We really moved to a more proactive versus reactive process of case reviews and monitoring after the fact and pushed more staff development, business process reengineering, technical assistance on the front end.

It also included a revision of our Colorado Works training curriculum moving away from pure eligibility and understanding work activities and hours and how those are captured in order to meet work participation to include more of a focus on case management, workforce development skills, and how to engage customers.

We've improved our data collection. We understand more about our caseload, our caseload characteristics, trends for our caseload, reporting requirements, and what strategies tend to result in the best outcomes.

Reworks itself was a policy change. Simply put Reworks was about a realigning or redetermination across multiple program groups. It increased our basic cash assistance grant. It reviewed relationship requirements. It eliminated monthly status reporting in favor of a six month certification period. During that certification period, grants are stabilized as long as income does not exceed our needs standard. We do not reduce our grant during the six month certification period which is a huge change for us. As a result of that, we've been able to promote family wellbeing. We've reduced administrative burdens for workers and for our customers. We've increased efficiency and timeliness.

For the last 12 months, 99.4% of our cases are processed timely. Even though our regulation requires a 45 day processing time frame, we've initiated a process called In Time On Time with a goal of having 90% of our applications processed within seven days. We're already at 69% of our cases for Colorado Works being processed now within seven days recognizing that we need to process cases in time for the needs of the family as well as on time based on regulations.

And finally we've diverted a lot of this time from the administrative part, processes that our workers were responsible for towards our employment-related outcomes, shifting the focus from eligibility and continuing to

determine eligibility on a monthly basis to have the opportunity to engage in more employment-related outcomes.

Ultimately, we've not abandon work activities. And I think that's important for us to share. We've not abandoned work activities. We still understand that work participation continues to be a state responsibility. However, we've shifted how we look at work participation. We view work participation as a goal for the entire time that the customer was receiving benefits and not necessarily tied to a monthly period. We think that work participation is a responsibility of the worker and the program and not necessarily the customer.

We understand that these activities makes sense in many of the federal work activities and are absolutely activities that our customers should be engaged in, but that they should be appropriate based on their goals and their needs. We should make plans and work with them specifically about their needs and build on their strengths that are tied to an individualized needs assessment.

Work activities should really be the goal of management to structure program activities and program design around the hours required to meet the rate as opposed to making customers' activities meet the rate.

I'm going to turn this over the next slide to Paul, and Paul is going to talk more specifically about the relationship between Colorado Works and the refugee services.

**Paul Stein:** Thank you very much Levetta for that overview of what I think is a wonderful program here in Colorado. We've got an excellent array of tools through TANF to help all citizens of Colorado not just refugees achieve success.

Here in Colorado, refugees and refugee services were not at the TANF party until the beginning of fiscal year 2010 in October 2009 when Colorado Refugee Services Program (CRSP) began to use TANF funds for assistance for eligible refugees. This was brought about because Colorado, like six other Wilson/Fish programs that had funding through Office of Refugee Resettlement, had an exemption from TANF-eligible clients having to access the state TANF program for income maintenance. It became apparent to us before the beginning of FY10, many years before as I'll explain, with the funding that this was going to be an outcome of decreasing funding and parity issues.

We began to work closely with our colleagues in Colorado Works to have very soft landing at the beginning of FY10 for refugees to begin to receive services upon arrival. Refugees had consistently received services through the counties beyond their initial eight months but our program was very disconnected from the services those refugees were receiving in the counties, so we tended to have a couple of tracks of clients – those in the counties, those in the voluntary agencies (VOLAGs) – and not a lot of program compatibility and not a lot of thinking on holistic services for clients.

This was actually an opportunity to begin thinking about bringing all clients under a more unified approach to services and outcomes. The model we developed is one that mirrors our state supervised County administered structure whereby CRSP functions that the state and Colorado Works, with its voluntary agency partners, to administer services for refugees. CRSP does not deliver any direct services. All services are delivered by our VOLAG contractors.

In Colorado we have a firewall really between eligibility and workforce activities. The counties have consistently delivered eligibility determination in our model that's not anything that we've really wanted to tamper with. There would be a lot of change even constitutional change required in shifting eligibility for no real benefit to the refugees. But we do provide the case management and workforce development activities and supportive services. And that's the component that has evolved over the recent years to the model I'll talk about in a minute' so next slide please.

I've got a few bullet points about our refugee demographics that are important for us in thinking about how to best serve refugees. We track arrivals. A lot of our funding formula is based on arrivals. But you can see that roughly half of our annual caseload consists of carryover individuals – those are individuals who received service at any point in the year prior to the commencing fiscal year. Easily half of our caseload is composed of carryover clients.

We pay a lot of attention to that carryover caseload for a couple of reasons. One because our funding is geared more towards newly arrived refugees. We tend to pay less attention to the carryover caseloads with the assumption that they can access mainstream services and many times they cannot. Oftentimes, the carryover caseload is really an indication of the fact that we, as programs, not clients themselves failed to participate adequately in programs, failed to develop and deliver programs that met the needs of clients.

Levetta talked about the new approach to looking at services more as a partnership between programs and clients and that's something we believe in very much. Looking at the carryover caseload in particular gives us a way to fine tune our thinking about what's really working.

The next data point is important because it shows that of all of the services we deliver of all the service participants only about 58.7 on the five year average are really related to services tied to maintaining cash assistance whether that's Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) or Basic Cash Assistance (BCA).

And that again is important. And when you consider the four purposes of TANF and our purpose as a program to help refugees achieve self-sufficiency and integration a lot of our services, close to 40%, are really dedicated to areas other than cash assistance. That cuts across all of our clients regardless of the source of that cash assistance.

Next data point is just important for us in terms of a percentage of the overall TANF caseload. Since we moved to this model in FY10, we've been fairly consistent in having our own 650 individuals and 410 cases. This was a number that was larger than we anticipated. It's been steady since the beginning but larger than we anticipated because it was a case of "if you build it, they will come."

One of the things we noticed was, as soon as the word got out in our expatriate communities that the refugee services program was now going to provide case management and workforce services for TANF-eligible, there was an influx of new clients to our program – individuals who had possibly stopped participating or dropped out of the program because of the knowledge we could meet the linguistic and cultural needs of the individuals and their families.

The last point is interesting for future planning. Our caseload of TANF-eligible has been steadily declining over the past five years. The five year averages around 53.5%. And that's what we use in our projections. But if you look at a trend line year-to-year, it's been a fairly steady decline from 64.7% in FY08 to 38.7% in FY12. It's bouncing up a little bit in FY13. This reflects a trend in Colorado resettlement towards more singles than families with children. And that will have some impact on our funding as we move forward if this trend really continues.

So next slide please. So speaking of funding one of the things that I think is unique to Colorado is that the Colorado Refugee Services Program receives a direct appropriation from the state legislature from the state TANF block grant for us to provide services specific to refugees. So the funding doesn't go through a state or county program. We've got great relationships at both the state level with Colorado Works and with the counties but our funding comes directly straight off the top of the TANF block grant.

Now when we first began our work on TANF issues going back to federal FY06 we established a relationship with the legislature, with Colorado Works, with the impacted counties to make an argument that by providing social services funding to us through TANF to provide English as a second language coursework, cultural orientation, and job readiness programs for TANF-eligible clients that we would perhaps mitigate the use of and duration of BCA. We did assure everyone that we could document TANF eligibility.

So we weren't involved initially with workforce activities and programs tied to BCA. We were really more meeting the needs of clients so that they would perhaps have less of an impact on the counties. We had a steady increase as you can see in the slide of our funding through supplemental funding and legislative decision items. I will go into the differences in our state funding but it's just a steady increase in funding.

One of the arguments for that was that we could demonstrate a decrease in our per capita of refugee social services funding as that was tied to arrivals. And as you could see in our previous slide, we serve a carryover caseload not just a newly arrived caseload. So when you look at the per capita funding for all services we provided you can see a steady decline which was part of the justification for the need for TANF to backfill and make sure that were providing a firm foundation for success for clients through culturally and linguistically appropriate services.

Between fiscal state FY09 and FY11, we received an additional \$4.3 million through additional TANF expenditures that qualified for our priorities. This enabled some of our entrepreneurial activities that are still creating jobs to this day. And we're very proud of the work we could do for refugees through ORR.

Beginning in state FY10, there was a big bump in our funding to our current level of \$2.7 million. This corresponded to our working with the counties for them to provide BCA and eligibility and for us to continue to provide workforce development. Just in case some of you aren't familiar with the acronyms BCA Basic Cash Assistance. It mirrors RCA in terms of intending to support families as they work toward self-sufficiency. The difference between BCA and RCA rates differs from state to state. In Colorado the difference is not as drastic as it is in some states. Our funding was accompanied, not tied to but accompanied, by a change in state rule over two different rule rewrites. One of them created a disregard for funding towards income determination. And another created a disregard for what we call a differential payment.



The differential payments are one of the brilliant and much appreciated components of the Wilson/Fish program that allow us to use 50% of RCA savings based on early entered employment. So getting a refugee employed before eight months, we can use 50% of those savings towards the difference between the BCA and the RCA rate.

In Colorado because the differences vary depending on the number of children in the case or whether it's a one parent or two parent household but on average that's about \$90 a month. And that \$90 really makes the difference in some families between affordable and non-affordable housing that's what it's supposed to have been used for. So we greatly appreciate that.

Next slide please. Just a couple of core principles in our work with Colorado Works and our approach, the first is that refugees are best assisted through a network of providers dedicated to assisting refugees. This is important for moving away from thinking that our work with TANF is all about BCA maintenance. Our work is really all about family self-sufficiency and integration and about helping individuals regardless of the funding source of the cash assistance. And then the other principle, something Levetta touched on, is that the most efficient use of resources is achieved through defining program outcomes and through frequent reassessments of progress towards negotiated goals with both clients and agencies. We monitor that adaptation frequently. And that's an important component of our changing model to constantly adapt to changing situations.

So next slide please. Our service delivery model is based on the fact that we have a strong partnership with the county's most impacted by refugees. In Colorado, that's our four largest counties of Denver, Adams, Arapahoe, and El Paso. A unique aspect of this is in many cases in Colorado, the counties strive to retain the authority to administer services. In our case, there was agreement that the counties with CRSP were best positioned to administer those services.

This is an acknowledgment of the fact that both the counties and the state have the best interest of the client in mind and are really understanding of the fact that, through CRSP, cultural, linguistically appropriate services are best delivered.

And our model is based on not using Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds exclusively that might end up warehousing clients and cause you to find activities. Nor is our approach to set up refugees to fail by expecting full attainment of countable activities.

As Levetta said we are changing our approach to working more towards success over the duration of engagement rather than slicing and dicing the counting of that success in monthly installments.

So next slide please. What we currently do is CRSP supervises the individualized client assessments and case planning Individual Responsibility Contracts (IRCs). But they are implemented through the voluntary agencies. And we braid MOE and TANF resources and accountability as we meet the client's needs at the state of their progress toward self-sufficiency.

So at one point in time it would make sense to have the clients on a county defined MOE activity. At another time, when the client is more ready, it's more appropriate to use Federal TANF funds that have an expectation of countable activities.

The key here is assessing. And the other key is that it's the VOLAGs rather than CRSP that now have the responsibility to complete the data elements for workforce development and to monitor progress. I think that's one of the features of our program that is working especially well. And very special is that the voluntary agencies now function effectively as the 65<sup>th</sup> county in full partnership with Colorado Works and the counties at the monthly county administrators meetings. That partnership and the empathy that's been built between the counties and the VOLAGs is really the key to our success.

Next slide. Here are a couple of data points over two years showing the self-sufficiency at 8 and 12 months from admission, broken out by funding source. You can see that the red bars for TANF consistently lag behind the yellow bars for RCA type clients at eight months and 12 months. And over the past two years, you'll see comparable data this year as well.

One of the things that we're excited about is that with our new approach and partnership with Colorado Works to moving towards a more long term understanding of engagement with the client, we fully anticipate that the TANF bar will increase and you'll see much more parity between our TANF and RCA caseload for employment outcomes at 8 and 12 months.

Next slide please. One of the challenges in our program because of the partnership between the state and the county through CRSP has been around workforce, specifically workers' compensation issues concerning who has a responsibility to pay for workers' compensation.

The definition of responsibility hinges in Colorado law on the definition and assignation of the sponsoring agency. Is CRSP the sponsoring agency because we develop and assign workforce activities or is the county that sponsoring agency because they require workforce activities as part of maintaining BCA eligibility? We've had an opinion from the Attorney General on this. Hopefully the issue diminishes as we move forward into a new model that is again not looking at counting activities but promoting success.

So next slide please. Just to emphasize what Levetta shared with you that this is a very strong partnership. We both share the same goal as elaborated in Colorado ReWorks which is to create a holistic client-centered program that allows workers to have the ability to case manage and work with participants to meet their individual goals.

This is exactly what we now do with greater emphasis with the voluntary agency partners. We spend much more time focusing on assessing, reassessing, and developing programs that meet not only the clients' goals but also programs that meet the employers' goals.

It's very much an employer driven approach that we now have to providing clients for employers that meet the employer's needs with an emphasis on being partners in employment not partners in charity.

We also share the same generation, 2-Generation Lens, focus that Levetta mentioned bringing some unique focus through refugee lens to this. In particular looking at a cohort of refugee youth who are over aged and undereducated who, with support, can function as a parental role model in their families for a younger generation but not necessarily their own children.

CRSP has reorganized our own program and our own staffing to better reflect this model of not having services siloed according to funding source. We now have staff that is focused on all programs and grants, all client services, all employment and training, regardless of funding source, that mirrors a more holistic approach to services than we had had before.

None of this would have been possible without both Levetta and me working. And I think a very vibrant environment in the Department of Human Services with leadership from Executive Director Reggie Bicha. This leadership asked us constantly through the C-Stat process and through our own interactions with colleagues, what measurable difference are we making today in the lives of Colorado families? We're held accountable for answering that and for developing programs and collaborations that demonstrate that. And we're glad to work together towards that.

We have a couple of slides next that demonstrate this from a client success story. Let's see - next slide please. It's stuck great. We do have releases from these individuals to share their stories. One aspect of our work is to tie workforce development activities to ESL levels which we measure using some standardized testing through our primary partners, Denver Public Schools and Emily Griffith Technical College.

We have aggressive engagement with both English as a second language and training programs that meet the client where they are in terms of their aspirations and skill sets.

The Commercial Food and Safety Sanitation Training (CFSST) featured here is a program developed through one of our voluntary agencies, African Community Center and ECDC affiliate. It's not only a wonderful program for helping refugees become employed. It's a wonderful program for building social capital by partnering with the University of Denver Hospitality Program and developing mentoring relationships with the mainstream program and students in that program.

Next slide please. This is another slide I will go through in detail again. This is a CFSST program based on progressive engagement with group of TANF-eligible women who are all achieving goals far beyond what they thought was possible when they first resettled. It is just a tremendous example excellent case management working across multiple programs with multiple funding sources and really using TANF as a resource and not a barrier toward success.

And next slide please. Finally just to emphasize our long term goals, we firmly believe it's really a cornerstone of our work in Colorado Refugee Services Program that economic self-sufficiency is measured by departing income maintenance programs. It's just one of many pathways to integration. It may be an early metric of integration but it's not a long term metric.

And so we really focus a lot on asking ourselves what are the pathways to integration? How can we contribute to them because we're not funded to achieve them but how can we contribute to them? How can we help refugee families have a solid sendoff along those pathways to achieve success? How do we define social capital from both the refugee perspective and a mainstream perspective? How do we measure when we have it? How do we measure when we lose it? And how do we empower refugees to build it on their own?

So we try and strategize every one of our programs, including TANF and workforce development, towards building this social capital that contributes to integration. We are not satisfied with simply saying somebody is no longer receiving an RCA or BCA payment we simply say that that is the first step on a long journey towards integration. We congratulate ourselves when an individual departs RCA or BCA. But we know that more work is to be done. And we're glad to be a partner in that and use TANF as a tool to achieve that. We increasingly focus on ways to tell this story in both data and in videos. We have a video we could share with you through these links (<http://vimeo.com/53238186> or [tinyurl.com/ColoradoRSP](http://tinyurl.com/ColoradoRSP)).

I think maybe I'd like to pause here and take questions. And see at the end if there is time to show you the video but we really would like to get into your questions and hopefully some answers. So thank you very much.

**Louisa Jones:** Thank you Paul and Levetta. I'm going to remind people how to submit questions. If you go to the top of your screen you can hit on the Q&A button and then type in your questions. And then click on the word Ask to submit your question.

In the meantime, Paul and Levetta I wanted to see if you could address maybe one or two of your biggest barriers in terms of collaboration and how you overcame that in Colorado?

**Paul Stein:** I think one of the biggest barriers was and continues to be with partners who say no we can't do that there's a rule that says we can't do that. And to say well does that rule say you should stop caring about family success? Let's look at that rule or let's look at that program if we've got a program that's a barrier.

If we've got programs that are duplicating services and we can't succinctly explain the differences among ourselves, how will we ever explain the difference to a client? So I think that sometimes some of the biggest barriers are those we put in front of ourselves, not those that clients bring to us.

**Louisa Jones:** Great. Thank you. We have another question here. How has sequestration impacted Colorado's ability to build and maintain its social capital?

**Levetta Love:** From the Colorado Works side, it's not had an impact at all on our federal funding of TANF. And we've not noticed within our counties a decrease in services, service delivery specific to that particular issue, although the increased caseload has certainly had some impact on contracting and service delivery across the state.

**Paul Stein:** And I would say for us the sequestration amount is relatively small to the point of insignificant. Please don't take away more but it is small. And we're observing it mostly on the administrative side. There will be no impact on direct services at all. So the next video we produce might be on an iPhone rather than through a professional studio but that's the only difference you'll see.

**Louisa Jones:** Our next question is how do you track people and for how long after they're no longer receiving services?

**Levetta Love:** You know, that's certainly been an issue for Colorado Works because as soon as they enter into an employment, shortly after that, they are no longer in our Colorado Work system, although they're oftentimes receiving other assistance benefits.

One way that we track specifically for an employment outcome measurement is utilizing our Colorado Department of Labor and Employment data. So we use the data and track our participants once they're beyond our program. And although it's not the best indicator of employment and services delivered, it certainly gives us some basic information.

For example 40% of our recipients six months after leaving TANF are still employed and have employment earnings that are being reported. And that's usually the formalized, if you will, employment beyond that timeframe.

**Paul Stein:** And currently for refugee services, we formally track people at 90 days beyond employment. We've created an incentive plan that is voluntary for refugees to come back and provide additional whole family status updates not just job retention information at 180 days.

Beyond that, however we do have a four year longitudinal study underway of refugee integration. This has a cohort of refugees now in our fourth year. So about three years ago we defined the cohort from arriving refugees at that time of a fair distribution of Burmese, Bhutanese, Iraqi refugees, and some Somalis as well. We've been tracking them over four years asking a set of 100 questions. And this is tracking a few things.

It's tracking their self-perceived acquisition of social capital along nine different integration pathways. And again this is entirely from the perspective of the refugee. It's also tracking the evolution of their understanding of those questions over that length of time. So this is a way to continue tracking not just self-sufficiency but a more holistic sense of well-being and integration for a group of refugees that we think will inform some program decision making in the future.

This is not an evaluation of current programming. We are asking questions that have nothing to do about the limited services we can provide on the front end for recently arrived refugees. This is really creating a four year focus group for us to learn how individuals see themselves. And I think that this is one of the best things we've ever done in terms of actually capturing information in a controlled environment from refugees about social capital.

**Levetta Love:** Well, I need to add that we're currently in the process of working through the business requirements for a change request in our automated system that will enable counties to more easily implement a post-TANF program.

Our state planning encourages post TANF tracking and post TANF services and supports program. However our automated system makes it very difficult currently to provide any kind of incentive payment, support service payment, or any other kind of payment to a person who is not actively receiving benefits. That was absolutely put in place as a result of some program integrity issues, making sure that we're not paying closed cases and things like that. But this new automated change will also make it all lot easier for counties to implement this particular program track through incentives and other types of case management and services.

We hope to have that in place by the middle of 2014. And we'll be able to capture more data, we believe, on the journey of TANF leavers.

**Louisa Jones:** Great. Thank you. I think we have quite a few more questions coming in so we'll ask one and then I think we have someone who wants to make a comment. We'll try to get them patched in.

Our next question is related to the Affordable Care Act. Can you speak a little bit on how the Affordable Care Act will affect refugees?

**Paul Stein:** It will affect refugees. I think Colorado is one of the states that is very well positioned to take advantage of ACA opportunities. And we are a state benefit exchange. Our program and our partners have very much been at the table in program design, redesign, redesign, and redesign as this has moved forward.

There is a lot of acknowledgment of the linguistic and cultural needs for refugees. So we're very confident that at least as the marketplace rolls out refugees will be included.

We had a competitive process in Colorado to identify and fund what our voluntary health coverage guides, basically navigators for the marketplace. Three of our contracting partners to the Colorado Refugee Services Program were funded in that. We've got a fairly strategic overlay of different populations in different geographies in order to get people enrolled in the marketplace.

We've been involved in some of the decision table designs through our state benefit management system so that adult refugees without dependent children will be included in Adults without Dependent Children expansion.

Of course, there are always unanticipated glitches in benefit management systems but the point is we're at the table.

**Louisa Jones:** Great. Thank you. Is our operator (Angela) on the line?

**Operator:** Yes.

**Louisa Jones:** Angela, can we ask you to open Mitiku Ashebir's line please? He'd like to make a comment.

**Operator:** One moment. Let me locate his line. One moment.

**Louisa Jones:** Thank you.

**Operator:** Could you press star 0 and I could open your line?

**Louisa Jones:** And to our participants thank you for all the questions that are coming in. We will get to those momentarily.

**Operator:** Once again please press star 0 and I can open your line.

**Louisa Jones:** Mitiku, you could press star 0 that will open your line so you can make your comment.

**Operator:** Okay. Your line is open.

**Mitiku Ashebir:** Hi. Good afternoon. This is Mitiku Ashebir from the Office of Refugee Resettlement. I am the Director for the division of Refugee Assistance. We work very closely with Paul Stein.

Thank you, Paul. Thank you, Ms. Love. This has been a great presentation. Actually, it gets to the core of the technical assistance effort that overall is getting the help of ICF. I want to really make a comment on one particular area. In Paul's presentation not to talk right now about the large amount of funding, you know, that is flowing from TANF to the refugee program. But with that this, specialized services for TANF clients it gives you a second language, cultural orientation, and job readiness.

Actually when Makda opened the conversation she noted that one of the problems that we have observed with many refugees, although in TANF not probably as clearly delineated here, that there are certain services social services that they don't really make good use of that. And so they probably go back to the voluntary agencies either there is no such social service or there is service but they are not aware.

But here you know, we have a case management, so refugees will not wonder. So really that is what could happen in the TANF services, really working on TANF grantees, moving them in the direction of self-sufficiency, and, as Paul said, toward this integration. So I'm impressed by the whole presentation.

But I really wanted to make that observation because that is what we want to drive home. At least one of the big elements we want to drive home in this technical program. So thank you for this great very, very relevant application in your state. Thank you.

**Louisa Jones:** Thank you. And thank you, Paul and Levetta, for such a great presentation. Our next question is for Paul specifically. And the person wants to know if you think that these changes can be made in states that do not have Wilson/Fish allowances and if so do you have any tips for them?

**Paul Stein:** Yes. I think it can be done. I don't want to diminish what a great program Wilson/Fish is. Wilson/Fish really does encourage public private partnerships. It really does encourage collaboration. It does encourage outside the box thinking in terms of how the state refugee coordinator, at least in our case here, through the state – not all Wilson/Fish programs are through the state – but how the manager of the Wilson/Fish program approaches partnerships. And I think that's the key, the whole notion of partnership and empathy. I mean anyone who's heard me talk about development hears me talk about empathy.

You really need to spend time understanding what the needs are, what the outcomes are for other programs, rather than your own, in order to be able to approach another program and say how you can help meet their need.

If our approach as refugee programs is just to ask how somebody can fill a deficit in our programs through funding, frankly, I don't think you're going to get very far. I think the key is to establishing how it's a win-win solution for all involved.

We would have never gotten off of square one with our program if we hadn't been able to understand what the counties were attempting to achieve with their limited English proficient caseloads, not just refugees, but all limited English proficiency caseloads. And come back to them and say we have a solution for your need. And by working with us you will succeed.

I think that that's been the key to our approach from the very beginning. That the program iterations are less significant as we've moved through this than the fact that we've maintained consistent trust in partnership at all levels of state government.

**Louisa Jones:** Thank you. Our next question is that serving customers who speak so many different languages creates challenges providing quality but cost efficient services to each person. Have you found some best practices to address this issue?

**Paul Stein:** You know, I think our entire approach to contracting with extremely capable voluntary agencies has addressed that. I'm only speaking for Colorado but we've got a wonderful partnership with our VOLAGs. We're very engaged in ensuring that they have annual limited English proficiency plans in place and that they enforce those plans.

If we don't walk the walk of Title VI compliance who will? So we make sure that we do. The VOLAGs are very, very good at adapting their staffing to the evolving needs of the caseloads. And this follows through with all of our services. So we're constantly advocating for mentoring programs to meet Title VI obligations.

We succeed as much as we can in an environment of limited funding. But I don't really find that the complexity of languages and cultures is a barrier. I mean it's enriching. It's one of the things that when you're looking at what's the return on investment for a receiving community in engaging our population and I'm looking at integration. That's really an asset and not a deficit.

**Louisa Jones:** Excellent. Thank you. Another participant said you have a wonderful partnership. They're curious how long you've been in collaboration and how many agencies are involved in your partnership?

**Paul Stein:** Wow, when did you start?

**Levetta Love:** Two years ago.

**Paul Stein:** Yes, so Levetta came in as the Colorado Works Director about two years ago. So we've got a particularly strong personal partnership here. I've been around a little while longer in the Division of Refugee Services Colorado Refugee Services Program.

And, you know, one of the very first things I did as State Refugee Coordinator is made sure that my counterpart at Colorado Works knew who we were. I think our program had been a little bit invisible. I am a big opponent of stealth resettlement where we think we can be insular and simply keep resettlement just within the confines of voluntary agencies and a limited array of refugee specific partners.

I don't think we develop sustainable programs without the mainstream. And where's the money? The money's in the mainstream. The new ideas are really coming out of some bigger mainstream programs. So we've got to be open to challenging ourselves. Establishing those partnerships leveraging resources showing how we can establish those mutual successes.



So that's just been a cornerstone of our approach. How many programs do we work with currently my office contracts? So let's just keep it the innermost circle. We contract with around 16 different agencies through last count, around 32 I think it was different contracts.

But then we've got a wide array of non-contracting partners. And that's where it starts really getting interesting, again just like Colorado Works and the counties are partners we work with mainstream service agencies. We've established a new program called the Colorado Refugee Wellness Center that is an integrated health center for refugees providing medical screening, primary care, and behavioral health care all in one setting. Those are mainstream partners that we do not contract with but that have developed a strong commitment to serving refugees. And we've been attracting a lot of interest and money because of that partnership.

**Levetta Love:** You know, I'd like to add that because I came from the county that I certainly had a very good working relationship with the county. That it often represented counties statewide in multiple meetings and committees representing the Colorado Food Service Directors Association. I was involved in policy meetings at the state. And brought each to the table a really good understanding of how Colorado Works is implemented, as well as really strong relationships specifically with those counties that served the majority of refugees within Colorado.

I think that really, really helped along with, you know, I think Paul did not probably do a great job explaining his achievement and his ability to work with VOLAG over a period of time. There's a lot of confidence associated with their ability to provide this work and services.

And our counties recognize in this particular situation it really make sense to go to the specialist for this level of services and delivery. And so I think we pull all those things together over a period of time and work together. And it's a win-win for everyone.

**Louisa Jones:** Thank you. And just a clarification question that came in. Can you just briefly share how long the Colorado Works and Colorado Refugee Services Program have been working together?

**Paul Stein:** I started here in my position at the beginning of October 2005. So I would say that by the end of October 2005 we were married.

**Louisa Jones:** Excellent thank you Paul. The next question is does the Colorado Refugee Services Program apply sanction policy towards Wilson/Fish or match grant program clients who decline job offers?

**Paul Stein:** So on matching. So the matching grant clients would be tracked separately. And the VOLAGs would handle those. My office is not involved in sanctioning them. And their inner maintenance and employability services are through the VOLAGs that have the slots. Those would not be included.

But yes, we do sanction TANF=eligible refugees who are not participating. There's no free pass on that one. We obviously try and sanction it in a way that promotes compliance. We don't want to be punitive but we're not exempt from that requirement.

**Louisa Jones:** Great thank you. And a final question for you today is just a little further elaboration on how you receive the TANF block grant funding?

**Levetta Love:** So maybe I'll start with that. The TANF block grant funding comes into the state. We go through our legislature to have it appropriated specifically to the various entities. About 85% of the total dollars go to the counties. There is a specific line within our appropriation that goes to refugee services. And that's the amount of money that Paul and his team use to implement their portion of the TANF program. What's interesting is that most TANF dollars that he's using are used specifically for some of the basic cash assistance customers, those customers whose eligibility has been determined through the county department. But they also have the ability to use TANF dollars for what we call the broader definition of TANF and also for the other purposes of TANF.

Along with refugee services, we're using TANF dollars for other types of entities such our domestic violence program. In the workforce development program, there are some small amounts of money there. We, in the past, have funded our energy assistance programs and some direct funding in our child welfare programs.

But about approximately 85% goes to the counties. And then the portion that goes directly to refugee services.

**Paul Stein:** And I would add to that, and it goes back to a previous question about making the case for our program, I think you really need to look at all of the purposes of TANF and figure out what you can contribute to the success of the entire TANF program and not be narrowly looking at just the one program purpose of income maintenance.

TANF really has a much broader purpose. In some ways, TANF gives us a different and broader set of tools than we might have through Refugee Cash Assistance, so it's a nice challenge to have to look at ways to braid those two funding sources together and, as I've been saying throughout this presentation, look at taking a more holistic view of service delivery for the entire caseload and for the entire needs of the family.

**Levetta Love:** You know, one of the other advantages is that our refugee services program identifies other maintenance of effort funding that we could use as funding sources for TANF eligible that we collect on a yearly annual basis to use toward our maintenance effort which helps us with our work participation rates as well.

So, you know, they're a significant contributor on both sides for the customers and we continue to promote funding as well as our ability to really look at different metrics for measuring success within our program.

**Paul Stein:** And I want to add to that, we, for those who don't understand it, we probably don't have time to explain it and you're probably glad we don't, but one of the things that we track in refugee services is the amount of money that we can contribute to the states MOE report. And that's again one of those opportunities to develop empathy with a colleague program and contribute to their success.

Last year we received \$2.7 million from the legislature through our appropriation. We were able to document \$1.6 million in allowable revenue that counts towards the states MOE. So when you look at our percent of the overall TANF caseload you can really make the case that refugee services is paying its way.

And I think that that's a very important talking point around our partnership. The ability to contribute towards the states MOE goal is something we're very proud of.

**Louisa Jones:** Great. We're going to remove the screen. I'm going to I'd finish up with two final questions.

One is how did that line item for refugees make its way into the TANF block grant? Did you reach out to state legislators or did you have another method?

**Paul Stein:** I would not have a job if I personally reached out to a state legislator. So we have a very prescribed internal process of review to advance what we call here a decision item that goes to the legislature. So it varies governor to governor session to session how many decision items each department of government can move forward through the executive. Remember we're the executive branch. So everything we submit on our own have to go through the executive. Now a legislator could say hey, you know, I worked in the Peace Corps. I love refugees. I want to do something. Great they can do that.

But for us to propose something, it has to go through this review process. And so we started out again going back to this. It was late 2005, we made the case that there was a per capita decline in our revenue social services funding when you look at the entire service caseload not just newly arrived refugees. And that we could help this state meet one of its core purposes of TANF around family stabilization by better investing in English as a second language and cultural orientation.

And so we made that case internally. It then went up to the Governor's office for review. It then went to the legislature where our very powerful joint budget committee, a committee comprised of members of both parties from both the House State House and State Senate, to make recommendations. And those recommendations pretty much determined final appropriations.

So we succeeded in making the case, building partnerships, doing the outreach at every step of the way to get the approvals to get our ideas to advance. And then we got our first appropriation which was really a base setting amount. And then based on that base setting number in the long bill -- our annual state appropriation -- we could then go back with data and say here's how the data has changed in the past year in terms of arrival, services, newly identified needs, changing populations. We were able to make a case as you saw in my slide over successive years for increases and then the big bump when we began to provide workforce development.

**Louisa Jones:** Thank you, Paul and Levetta. And the final question for you is, if someone wanted to get a copy of the sets that you used would that be possible and how should they reach out to you directly for that?

**Paul Stein:** Both Levetta and I would prefer you to use the contact information that's on the slide. That's the main way and there is the slide again. And I believe that this presentation will be distributed but right fast there's the information.

**Louisa Jones:** Great thank you. And we just wanted to point out again the video that Paul had shared on his slide it, the two URLs you can use to access it are listed on the slide on your screen. Also if you look in the upper right-hand corner of your screen there is an icon that looks like three pieces of paper. If you click on that you'll be able to download a document that includes the cyber link as well. And again we will be sharing the PowerPoint, recording, and transcript from this webinar in the next two weeks. And it will be posted on the ORR Web site and the Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Web site.

We want to thank Levetta and Paul. Again, we would ask you to respond to two final poll questions before we turn it back to Makda for closing remarks. So you'll see that on the screen momentarily.

Great thank you. We will now turn it back to Makda.

**Makda Belay:** Thank you for attending this webinar and thank you to our speakers for sharing their thoughts and answering questions on how they are connecting refugees to TANF services in their states. And thank you so much for ICF as well.

**Louisa Jones:** Thank you everyone.

**Paul Stein:** Well we're supposed to stay on.

**Operator:** This concludes today's conference. Please disconnect at this time.

**END**