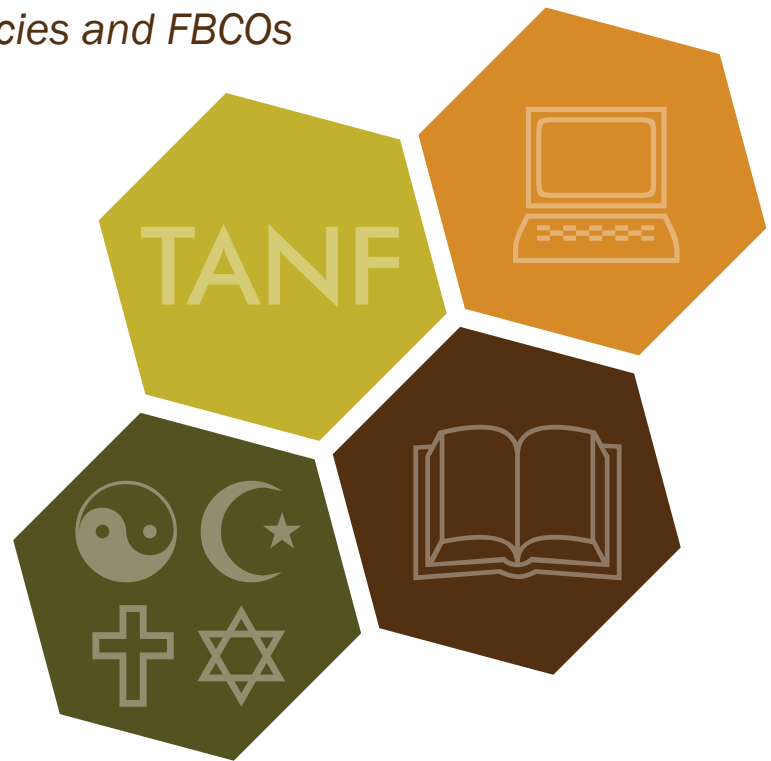




Enhancing TANF Faith-Based and Community Partnerships

*Essential Readiness Factors and
Capacities of TANF Agencies and FBCOs*





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Brief Overview of Government and Faith-Based Partnerships

To illustrate some of the historical challenges and needs associated with government partnerships with faith-based social service providers, we need only to remember the Alamo. More specifically, recall the 1995 Teen Challenge Rally at the Alamo. Teen Challenge, a Christian-based drug rehabilitation program that addressed addiction through religious teaching, not traditional therapy, and was at the time being threatened with closure by the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse. Although the agency did not receive any government funding, as a treatment program it fell under the state of Texas' regulatory power. While Teen Challenge was in violation of a number of regulations, including using treatment staff who did not have state-required educational credentials, its leaders argued that this attempt to shut them down was an infringement on their religious freedom. In protest, they staged a rally at the Alamo—complete with hundreds of former addicts attesting that Teen Challenge had saved their lives. The Texas Governor responded to the backlash immediately, although differently than expected. His response focused on the end-goal: “If we can cure people from addiction, then we ought to cheer success and applaud it, and not short-circuit success by force-feeding a too-narrow government-approved model that robs faith-based charities of the very things that make them so uncommonly effective” (Sager, 2010). With the Alamo Rally serving as a catalyst, Texas created the first state-led Office of Faith and Community Based Initiatives, and began a mission to remove regulatory barriers and welcome faith and community based organizations (FBCOs) to the table as partners in addressing social issues.

This underlying tension between government-regulated programs and the unique approaches of faith-based social service providers reflects a larger debate, and one that has entered the national landscape anew in the last 15 years. Section 104 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) passed in 1996¹, commonly known as ‘Charitable Choice,’ specifically sought to promote self-sufficiency through reduced legal and regulatory barriers to partnerships between government-funded TANF programs and FBCOs. Since the implementation of Charitable Choice, the number of contracts between states and FBCOs has increased—yet, because these partnerships are wide-ranging and local in character, there is much we are still learning about their implementation and effectiveness.

Although the debate is still evolving, the current administration continues its commitment to strengthen FBCOs by reorganizing the White House Office for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships to serve as a resource for secular and faith based nonprofits and community organizations looking for ways to make a bigger impact in their communities, learn their obligations under the law, cut through bureaucracy, and make the most of what the federal government has to offer (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2009). Recent studies have shown that when FBCOs partner with TANF agencies, families can sometimes have greater success in moving toward economic self-sufficiency (Schneider, 2006)—and yet few in-depth comparisons examine outcomes for needy families who receive support from FBCOs versus those who only receive support from TANF or other public agencies. While faith-based and other grassroots community organizations have at times achieved success in supporting “hard-to-serve populations” facing multiple barriers to employment, this success is not always guaranteed. A great deal is still unclear about what makes for effective cooperation, if any, between public agencies and FBCOs (Banks, Hercik, & Lewis, 2004).

This paper is designed to deepen the conversation by identifying the key readiness factors, overall capacities, and practices of both TANF agencies and FBCOs that have led to successful partnerships in eight communities. By examining important elements of these partnerships, we hope to provide guidance to other TANF agencies and FBCOs interested in collaborating to improve outcomes for families and low-income individuals.

¹ The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 established the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and created new requirements on state governments to move welfare recipients into work as a way of reducing welfare dependency and encouraging self-sufficiency.



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The TANF Faith-Based and Community Organizations Initiative: Project Overview

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. As part of the study, Initiative partners compiled consistent data for 139 FBCOs that had relationships either with a local TANF agency or a One-Stop Career Center and then conducting in-depth structured discussions with a group of 23 selected organizations that demonstrated noteworthy collaborative partnerships. Subsequently, a research team conducted two-day site visits with eight FBCOs that had developed the strongest collaborations with their local TANF agency—typically formalized through a direct contract, an intermediary partnership, or an alternative Memorandum of Understanding. In selecting each organization, the project team looked carefully at available data from each site's overall performance outcomes, the economic support they provided in the community, any direct links to public agencies, and other unique characteristics including advantages from inter-faith collaboration or partnership with other grassroots organizations serving low-income individuals.

The analysis that follows is based on information collected during the individual calls and two-day site visits conducted with the following eight organizations and their TANF partners:

- **Bethel Development Corporation**, a faith-based organization linked to Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Millville, NJ.
- **Faith Connections**, a publicly funded intermediary that links congregations and interdenominational faith-based organizations with TANF recipients at the Department of Social Services in Wilson County, NC.
- **Faith Partners**, a co-located program that supports needy families in El Paso, CO, through the local Department of Human Services' TANF Family Independence Unit.
- **Future Foundation**, a community-based organization providing services to disadvantaged and at-risk youth—and their families—in an underserved community in Atlanta, GA.
- **Henry Street Settlement**, a community-based intermediary organization in New York City that works closely with its local workforce and TANF agencies, and with Seedco, a national nonprofit and intermediary organization.
- **Missouri Valley Community Development Agency**, a community-based organization that serves low-income individuals and families in seven counties in rural Missouri.
- **Pathways-VA, Inc.**, an inter-faith community development corporation in Petersburg, VA that serves TANF recipients and troubled youth by supporting them in job-training and placement programs.
- **Sacramento Healthy Marriage Initiative**, a community-based organization that employs TANF recipients and serves low-income, unmarried couples in the greater Sacramento region.



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Why Would a TANF Agency Want to Partner with an FBCO?

David Burns, former director of the Department of Human Services in El Paso County, explained the need for TANF partnership best when he was summoned to a community gathering of faith-based charities upset over the potential impact of time limits imposed in TANF reform. Mr. Burns responded to these concerns by explaining that TANF is designed to help people financially; it was never designed to give people hope. The faith community is uniquely positioned to give hope and help people transition to self-sufficiency. Here are some of the other unique advantages to partnership:

- **Dedicated staff:** Site visits repeatedly illustrated the hardworking nature of individuals who bring an inner motivation to their work. Many view their work as a ministry, an extension of their religious responsibility to care for the less fortunate; driven by their faith they are often willing to go well beyond the traditional workplace expectations. This mission focused attitude often permeates the workplace creating a culture of service.
- **Access to volunteers:** With regular weekly gatherings for worship and other events, many congregations can quickly summon large numbers of individuals to support the needs of TANF recipients. Most of the country's congregations (83%) take part in or support social service, community development, or neighborhood organizing projects. The vast majority of these (91%) report that congregation members volunteer to serve these programs and activities (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2009)). Many of these volunteers are highly skilled, educated individuals. The eight FBCOs report a combined total of 3,340 dedicated volunteers without including those who volunteer through their partner organizations. For example, Partners in Ministry is a coalition of 44 congregations that provides volunteers in support of Faith Connections.
- **Existing relationships within the community:** Henry Street Settlement was founded on Manhattan's Lower Eastside in 1893 to serve the poor and often immigrant population. It has a rich history as a trusted resource, a huge advantage when working with low-trust populations. TANF case managers can leverage these existing relationships to assist families. For example, Faith Connections has clients sign a release of confidentiality. This release allows a pastor to communicate with a caseworker on the client's behalf. This can be particularly helpful when there are comprehension or literacy issues on the part of those seeking services. By serving as a liaison, the trusted pastor can help clients understand and follow through with what needs to be done to remain in compliance.
- **Access to nontraditional supports:** TANF caseworkers are bound by regulatory requirements that determine what services and other supports not provided by TANF they can offer clients. FBCOs can provide supplemental supports like cash assistance for incidentals, work shoes, clothing, donated bicycles, or even cars for transportation. Additionally, the volunteers form an informal support network for those who may not have family or friends to provide assistance. Volunteers through Partners in Ministry adopted a woman who was receiving TANF and got a job, but had no transportation to her night-shift position. The volunteers took turns taking and picking her up until they were able to arrange the donation of a car. One of the volunteers helped her find a house closer to her new job. When asked to comment on what makes services from FBCOs unique, many TANF recipients cite their overall appreciation for genuine, personal support, which sometimes differed from their experience at "less personal" public bureaucracies (Monsma & Soper, 2003).
- **Capacity to help forge change for high-risk individuals:** Though more rigorous studies are needed, TANF officials suggested that sometimes faith-based treatment programs were able to "spark significant change for high-risk addicts who have tried everything," and may wish to seek out unique strategies developed by groups such as Teen Challenge and Alcoholics Anonymous (Bavolek, 2003). Bethel Development Corporation receives a list of approximately 100 sanctioned individuals each month



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from its TANF partner. Diverse partners, dedicated volunteers, and a community-based location allow Bethel to provide a more comprehensive hands-on approach to working with clients facing multiple barriers to success.

- **Organizing capacity, given FBCOs' public dimension and networking access:** For decades, community-organizers have known the power of congregations to make collective social change, including reforms in race relations, banking, education, and other policy arenas. By working with volunteers from FBCOs, TANF officials can access elements of this same broad commitment to social justice, improving community well-being, and involving recipients of public aid in the work of restoring their families and communities. Additionally, through active partnership, TANF officials have access to a venue for educating communities on regulatory changes or new services.

What Does it Take to have an Effective Partnership?

When considered as a whole, site visit interviews with TANF officials and FBCO leaders made clear that some key factors can help determine whether TANF agencies and FBCOs are ideally suited to build successful partnerships that result in improved outcomes for children and families.² For TANF agencies, internal indicators include, among others, the use of performance-based partnerships; agency leadership; and overall openness to community partnerships and place-based strategies - an effort to provide services within the geographic area of need. For FBCOs, readiness factors include internal organizational structure and independent financial management; outcomes-based services; staffing; and providing services that complement TANF's mission and goals. The following represents a collective list of the most important factors for consideration as identified through our interviews:

- **Common goals are important.** TANF's four primary goals are: 1) assisting needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes, 2) reducing the dependency of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage, 3) preventing out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and 4) encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. All eight of the FBCOs provide services that directly or indirectly support two or more of TANF's goals.
- **Clear delineation between religious and social service programming** is particularly important for faith-based organizations that grow directly out of religious congregations. The creation of a separate 501(c)3 organization formalizes the distinction, and several TANF officials specifically recommended this legal "framework" for any FBCO partnerships. Equally important, faith-based leaders must understand the need for and be willing to enforce the requirement of the separation—particularly if a contractual relationship exists. A guide to the legal rules surrounding public partnerships with FBCOs can be an important support for this kind of collaboration.³ Incorporation not only helps to clearly define the separation of funding, it increases access to additional revenue streams (e.g., funding from foundations). Specific TANF/government funding streams often require FBCOs to leverage other resources in order to provide services. As a result, the impact that incorporation has on enhancing access to additional revenue sources was identified as critical by both TANF agencies and their partnering FBCOs.
- **Demonstrated success along with the administrative capacity to track data and make data driven decisions** is important regardless of the level of data management sophistication. Henry Street Settlement recognized that if they wanted to position themselves to access federal funding through performance based contracts, they needed to be administratively proficient. They use a web-based real time data management system that saves time and allows them to monitor client progress. The data

² Ultimately—improved outcomes for TANF recipients means greater family self-sufficiency. But in the specific cases of different FBCO programs, this often also meant stronger job placement and retention rates, improved school performance for youth, lower arrest and incarceration rates, fewer instances of depression, sustained child support payments, and other site-specific criteria noted in the project's online site visit reports.

³ One strong example is the set of principles issued by the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, available online at <http://www.ethicsinstitute.com/pdf/Faith%20Based%20Federal%20Grants.pdf>. Additionally, in November 2010 the Obama Administration released a set of principles clarifying the federal regulations for partnerships with FBCOs, available online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/17/executive-order-fundamental-principles-and-policy-making-criteria-partner>.



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are used to document outcomes as well as inform program decisions. Analyzing the data, they noticed that while employment retention rates between three and six months did not vary much, rates dipped significantly after six months. As a result, they have increased wrap-around services at the six-month point. In Petersburg, VA, Pathways developed a useful form to help track core services delivered by its local partners, and made these results readily available for the local TANF agency. Future Foundations does not use a sophisticated data management system, but tracks the progress of approximately 200 students in the after school program using an Excel spreadsheet. They monitor student grades and attendance.

- **Faith-based organizations that have an established diverse network of partners, including for-profit organizations** are better positioned to more efficiently and holistically meet the needs of TANF recipients, via additional referrals that complement their core services. Strategic partnerships with for-profit agencies can enhance the operations of public and nonprofit partnering organizations by allowing them to “think like a business” and improve overall program management. A recent study evaluating welfare-to-work programs suggested that, in multiple settings, the combination of for-profit agencies and FBCOs delivered highly positive workforce results, and TANF-affiliated partnerships are wise to consider the merits of this approach (Monsma & Soper, 2003). Henry Street Settlement, for example, has worked with United Parcel Service (UPS) for over 40 years. Through this partnership, they have created a workforce development training program and increased job opportunities for low-income community residents in New York’s Lower East Side, assisting the local TANF agency’s goal of promoting job preparation and work in order to reduce families’ dependence on government benefits.
- **Ongoing communication and capacity-building activities are essential.** In addition to ensuring that partnering TANF agencies and FBCOs possess the needed readiness factors to build successful partnerships, agency leaders noted the importance of engaging in on-going communication and capacity building activities to support and further strengthen inter-agency relationships. Specifically, leaders in both TANF agencies and FBCOs suggested that partnering organizations develop policies and procedures to facilitate cross-referrals and information sharing between programs. Programmatic communication was often cited by leaders and staff members alike as one of the most important and also challenging capacity building activities for effective partnerships. Comprehensive information sharing goes beyond data sharing at the case level to developing communication streams that update partners on new programs, changes in program eligibility, and other agency and program developments as they arise. Many of the sites indicated a desire to increase their inter-agency trainings so that staff in both agencies could regularly receive agency and program updates.

Beyond developing policies and procedures to facilitate cross-referrals and communication between agencies, outside technical assistance was also identified as an instrumental tool for helping agencies improve their service delivery and program structures so that they facilitate inter-agency collaboration. Technical assistance was often offered by an outside entity and was provided to TANF agencies and FBCOs on an individual bases; however, its impact on enhancing the capacity and strength of the TANF-FBCO partnership was recognized across organizations.

Considerations for Structuring Partnerships

- **A written agreement such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** between a TANF agency and its outside partners provides clarity of roles and responsibilities, and increases accountability for expected outcomes. While Welfare-to-Work agencies rely on nonprofits to help them effectively reach their goals, the contractual and funding oversight regulations can sometimes intimidate smaller, grassroots FBCOs. To strengthen this system and avoid confusion, TANF agencies and FBCOs need clearly understood protocols or MOUs that govern their fiduciary relationships (Hasenfeld & Powell, 2004). Standardized agreements



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across FBCO partnerships allow TANF case managers to more accurately compare the effectiveness of their partners on improving client outcomes. Examples of some of the agreements used by TANF agencies can be found on the project's online toolkit, linked via the TANF Peer TA website (www.peerta.acf.hhs.gov).

- **Co-location of services** generally strengthens collaboration between TANF agencies and FBCOs when appropriate, given the physical constraints of many local Human Services agencies housing TANF programs. In the three project sites whose offices were co-located, TANF officials described an enhanced ability to refer clients to their local FBCO partner, and TANF recipients stated that it was easier to meet with a partnering liaison during the time of their visit. When services themselves—or a referral by an in-house intermediary partner—are housed in the same facility as TANF case managers, transportation issues can be eliminated for families. In Colorado Springs, Faith Partners' staff actually participates in meetings with TANF case managers, helping to inform the referral and client follow-up process. Similarly, New York City and other communities use online, web-based TANF applications that directly integrate the TANF application process within the social service agency "network" in the surrounding area, allowing families to apply for public assistance at faith-based and community locations.⁴
- **Experienced intermediary** partners generally mitigate financial risk and provide ongoing technical assistance which can greatly benefit TANF-FBCO partnerships. The Ford Foundation affiliated group, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, brought particular strategic management guidance to Pathways, and Seedco similarly helped Henry Street Settlement administer its monthly reports to its TANF partner in New York City. Additionally, developing appropriate infrastructure and fiscal controls is necessary to ensure effective service delivery and compliance with government regulated funding. If these attributes do not already exist within the FBCO, they can often be provided through oversight of an intermediary.

What Characteristics are Important to Look for in an FBCO Partner?

Specific characteristics appear to be common in the FBCO partners that have developed and maintained successful TANF partnerships. It is worth considering the existence of the characteristics or the potential to develop these characteristics before entering into a partnership.

- **Collaborative leadership:** Across communities, respondents agreed that a clear vision, dedication, persistence, and flexibility were important qualities for an effective FBCO leader to possess when partnering with TANF agencies. Successful leaders were able to develop and articulate a vision that clearly identified their organization's mission and how inter-agency collaboration facilitated its achievement. Two specific leadership characteristics were identified as critical in effectively addressing resistance to change, a common challenge for both TANF agencies and FBCOs. First, TANF agency leaders greatly impacted the extent to which their staff valued and incorporated inter-agency collaboration into their daily work. Secondly, TANF agency representatives generally identified the FBCO executive director as their primary contact within the partnering organization, noting that this specific relationship between the leaders often served as the basis for the partnership that existed between the two agencies.

It should be noted that the majority of FBCOs visited continue to be operated by their founding executive directors. While leaders agreed that this is not necessary for partnering, the continuity of leadership often resulted in deep, long-term TANF-FBCO partnerships in the communities where it did exist. A cautionary tale here is important as partnerships built solely on leadership relationships could be at risk when leadership changes. For example Henry Street Settlement's Executive Director retired this year after 7 years as director and an overall 38 year career with the organization. Without succession planning and an integrated culture of partnership that included relationships on multiple levels, program continuity could have been put at risk.

⁴Two excellent examples include the ACCESS Florida program and New York City's TANF and workforce application procedures.



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- **Skilled Staff:** Staffing capacity within FBCOs was another important readiness factor often cited by TANF agency representatives. Capacity was not simply defined in terms of numbers but also the capability of FBCO staff to provide clients with the needed support services they required and communicate the provision of these services back to TANF case workers. FBCO staff need to possess appropriate job skills in addition to their passion to serve families. Internal policies and procedures can also assist staff with consistent performance.
- **Structured Volunteer Management:** Successful use of volunteers requires understanding of volunteer management and the unique motivations that drive volunteers. Organizations with structured volunteer recruitment, retention, and recognition strategies are better positioned to develop a solid base of dependable volunteers. As an example of an organization that has successfully embedded the support of volunteers across all of its service delivery programs, Pathways asks volunteers “to do something with us, not something for us.” Pathways designed its programs so that community volunteers work alongside TANF program participants, developing the relational component helping volunteers feel more connected to the participants instead of the work. This has resulted in long-term commitments from volunteers and support from outside community members, and greatly expanded Pathways’ capacity for providing comprehensive services to TANF recipients.
- **Holistic and Coordinated Service Delivery:** Individuals and families seeking the services of TANF agencies often experience multiple, complex barriers to attaining employment and self-sufficiency. With recent upticks in TANF caseloads due to the national economic recession (2008-10), the ability of FBCOs to provide holistic services was identified by TANF case workers as perhaps the most important readiness factor for distressed communities. While some FBCOs were able to provide a diverse array of services to meet the multiple needs of TANF recipients through programs within their organizations, the majority of FBCOs relied on an expansive network of partners to meet the needs of their clients. FBCOs that were able to make referrals and provide coordinated case management, offering TANF case workers a single point of contact for updated case information, provided the ideal partner for TANF agencies.

Faith Connections provides a strong example of the value of comprehensive and coordinated service delivery models. As a publicly funded intermediary, Faith Connections links congregations, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and individuals in a coordinated manner to meet the needs of TANF recipients that cannot otherwise be met through government programming. Faith Connections informs its partnering entities about the specific needs of TANF recipients, and responses are coordinated through a DSS staff member who runs this loose consortium of faith-based partners. Through this collaborative model, partnering entities can feel secure that their services are going to individuals who are truly in need, while simultaneously filling a gap in service delivery that is not currently being met through government programming. This structure also provides TANF case managers with a single point of contact through which they can attain supplemental resources to help their clients attain self-sufficiency. Given that these partner organizations are community-based, it is also a good example of placed-based strategies, discussed next.

Place-Based Strategies and Collective Impact: Relevant Frameworks for Grounding and Moving the TANF-FBCO Initiative Forward

All eight of the TANF-FBCO partnerships analyzed in this paper represent collaborative efforts to create a network of services that are easily accessible to TANF families and work collectively to move those families toward self-sufficiency. Research suggests there are two concepts at play here that maximize the potential for positive outcomes: *place-based strategies* and *collective impact*:



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What are place-based strategies?

The concept of *place-based strategies* is not new in the faith community. The local house of worship, a central focus of the faith community for generations has regularly drawn people together as a community to participate in religious activities, social events, and church athletic leagues or receive child care, counseling, support groups, or food pantry services. A recent University of Pennsylvania survey examined 1,392 religious congregations in Philadelphia, showing that the vast majority provided social services from within the city limits (Cnaan, Boddie, McGrew, & Kang, 2006).

Place-based strategies targeting community needs in a specific geographic area by focusing resources to leverage investments and draw upon the strengths of local cooperative agreements have recently become increasingly recognized as valuable to low-income communities throughout the country.⁵ Place-based strategies address dual challenges within distressed communities: lack of individual resources and lack of community resources (Crane, & Manville, 2008).

Place-based strategies combine social planning, community organizing, community development, and policy advocacy to generate change within low-income communities. Policy surrounding place-based programming relies primarily on three key elements:

- use of “local knowledge”;
- investing in community capacity;
- recognizing the strength and resources of local government and community leaders (Crane, & Manville, 2008).

These key elements reflect the value added of place-based policies over broad federal mandates.

Building and leveraging local leadership and organizational capacity enables programs and partnerships to efficiently address the needs of populations already known to grassroots program leaders. Consider Bethel Development Corporation; their outreach started with a soup kitchen and as they became aware of other services needed, they worked to expand their capacity to meet these needs. Henry Street Settlement offers everything from job training to afterschool programming to English as a second language to emergency financial assistance. Having co-located services such as those offered by Bethel and Henry Street in a familiar environment increases the likelihood that families will access the available services as needed. Additionally, the opportunity to effectively coordinate access to multiple issue-specific services, contributes to positive outcomes associated with the concept of collective impact.

What is collective impact?

In considering outcomes of TANF programs, researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers often focus on numbers served through job training, work placements, employment retention rates, etc. Unfortunately, for many TANF families, the path from growing up in poverty to becoming self-sufficient is not a straight line. TANF- FBCO partnerships offer an opportunity to look more broadly at traditional outcomes and how they are achieved; the partnerships leverage the collective impact of partnering agencies on individuals, families, and communities. For example, individuals served through Faith Connections receive the usual job training and placement opportunities, but in looking at the case of the woman we highlighted earlier, we cannot definitively say what made the difference in her overall success of transitioning to self-sufficiency. Was it the job training, the donated car, the housing near her job, or the support network of volunteers cheering her on as they provided transportation? Faith Connections’ Partners in Ministry served 1,087 clients, provided 27 donated automobiles to individuals in need, offered financial assistance in varying increments totaling \$37,405, and supplied transportation, mentors, and other nontraditional supports through volunteer efforts. While each activity in

⁵ See http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/memoranda_fy2009/m09-28.pdf for more on current place-based strategy policy.



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and of itself generates an outcome, collectively they create the necessary framework for families to address the multiple barriers preventing self-sufficiency.

In a commentary on collective impact and the necessity of broad cross-sector coordination to effect large-scale social change Kania and Kramer (2011) note:

Substantially greater progress could be made in alleviating many of our most serious and complex social problems if nonprofits, governments, businesses, and the public were brought together around a common agenda to create collective impact. (p. 4)

According to Kania and Kramer (2011), five important conditions can lead to significant social change:

- First, a common agenda wherein all participants have a vision for change is required. The authors highlight the pivotal role funders play in leading collaborators to develop “a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.”
- Second, despite the seemingly monumental task of developing a data system that measures common metrics across diverse technological and organizational systems, the authors note that a common agenda is “illusory” until a shared measurement is developed. Advances in web technology have eased this burden enormously in recent years by increasing access to web-based data management systems.
- Third, because social problems which originate from multiple causes cannot be addressed through uncoordinated actions of isolated organizations, the authors assert that stakeholders’ activities should be orchestrated into a single overarching plan in order to create the greatest amount of impact. They refer to this concept as “mutually reinforcing activities.”
- Fourth, daunting though it may seem to carry out, change strategies which have had the greatest impact have continuous, frequent communication on a monthly or bi-weekly basis (and sometimes continuing for years) to develop trust, a similar language, and appreciation of the common motivations underlying each other’s efforts.
- Fifth, noting that coordination takes time, the authors suggest that dedicated staff (separate from the participating organizations) should be responsible for planning, managing, and supporting the initiative “through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting, and handling the myriad logistical and administrative details.” Interestingly, they note that the belief that collaboration can occur without a support structure is one of the biggest causes of failure.

Linking these Frameworks to TANF-FBCO Partnerships

As TANF reform has taken effect, there has been a shift toward the strategic coordination of comprehensive services (collective impact) directed to one specific location or community (place-based strategies) in order to increase the number and quality of positive outcomes for the people living in the targeted community. In a study of low-income women leaving TANF, Harris and Parisi (2008) illustrate how opportunities, place, and poverty are intricately linked. Noting that “one-dimensional revitalization strategies [can often] have limited impact,” Pastor and Turner (2010) suggest that communities which implement place-based strategies also often experience a number of interconnected problems such as joblessness, crime, social isolation, failing schools, poor public services, and disinvestment. The authors go on to conclude that policy makers, researchers, and advocates can help direct the focus and scope of place-based strategies through rigorous evaluation and creative planning.



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Models that have developed from this shift include the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Making Connections programs, Harlem Children's Zone, and the recently created Promise Neighborhood program from the U.S. Department of Education, which has funded more than 21 initiatives throughout the country since the passage of the nation's Recovery Act in 2009.

- **The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Making Connections** is a long-term, multi-site effort that has clearly demonstrated how poor outcomes for children and families in tough neighborhoods can be changed for the better. The foundation targeted 22 communities to attempt to move families living in these communities towards increased earnings, permanent assets, educational success, civic participation, networks of support, and overall health and supportive services. The three premises behind this 10-year funding initiative are: (1) creating the opportunity to earn a decent living and build assets; (2) building close ties with family, neighbors, kin, faith communities, and civic groups; and (3) having reliable services close to home. In the program's Denver site, over 300 families have opened savings accounts since the introduction of a local office of Denver Community Federal Credit Union, 89 percent of pre-K through 3rd grade children at the local middle school now have health insurance coverage, and 732 children have gained access to preschool. These results are not atypical and can be found across program sites. (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, n.d.a.; and n.d.b.).
- **Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ)** is another increasingly visible place-based model developed for the Harlem neighborhood in New York City, focusing "on the social, healthy and educational development of children." This initiative was designed to be a neighborhood-based, at-scale approach to fighting child poverty, and is supported by a wide range of public and private entities in New York City and across the United States. The model's core principles are: (1) serving an entire neighborhood to scale; (2) creating a pipeline of support; (3) building community among residents, institutions, and stakeholders to create the necessary environment for children's healthy development; (4) evaluating outcomes to inform decision making; and (5) cultivating a culture of success rooted in passion, accountability, leadership, and teamwork. By developing programs in line with these principles, in 2009, HCZ served over 21,000 individuals within a 97 block area in New York and emerged as a leader in the development of place-based collaboration (Harvard Family Research Project, 2005).
- Inspired by HCZ's successes, in 2010, the Department of Education announced the first round of 21 **Promise Neighborhood Planning grantees**. The purpose of this program is to help targeted communities dramatically improve outcomes and opportunities for children and families, at scale, in local neighborhoods. Over time, the initiative is designed to prepare young children for school, to promote academic success including high school and college graduation, and to help families attain greater well-being in terms of their children's physical, emotional, and academic health. The program emphasizes capitalizing on local knowledge, breaking down silos, utilizing existing multi-partner collaborations, and prioritizing rigorous evaluation plans that can better inform similar initiatives. Since many FBCOs operate with a similar mentality—partnering across institutional lines to collectively serve geographic areas of a community, their approach to providing wraparound supports for TANF recipients and other low-income individuals dovetails nicely with the underlying goals of Promise Neighborhoods (Jean-Louis, Farrow, Schorr, & Bell, 2010; and U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Conclusion

In short, the unique approaches of FBCOs should be welcomed—and carefully assessed—by TANF providers who serve a common audience. Many FBCOs are employing certain elements of place-based approaches to serving their communities, and many are achieving results that help promote economic self-sufficiency. The recognition of key readiness factors, organizational capacity concerns, and a strong need for ongoing communication are themes echoed throughout the literature and the TANF-FBCO partnerships.



Enhancing TANF Faith-Based and Community Partnerships

Higher national rates of unemployment in 2009 and 2010 have motivated many TANF program leaders implementing federally funded programs to re-strategize—and broaden—their service delivery systems. One way to reach beyond traditional clients and find creative means to support clients holistically is to partner with FBCOs that are deeply committed to serving the same populations. This paper summarizes some of their innovative strategies, as well as initially promising approaches to partnership.

As TANF agencies and FBCOs consider deepening existing relationships, or forging new partnerships, some of the strategies outlined in this paper can help strengthen supportive services for low-income families and communities. Both contemporary research on collaboration and recent discussions with TANF officials and FBCO leaders in the field provide a shared framework for promoting greater self-sufficiency for low-income families. One key difference in place-based strategies and the TANF-FBCO partnerships assessed in this Initiative is that place-based strategies draw on community organizing and policy advocacy activities to help a community become self-sufficient. In the past, TANF-FBCO partnerships have not tended to take this additional step.

Beginning in the early 1990s, the U.S. government renewed a focused on the power of place-based policies when working to address domestic policy problems. More recently, in 2009, the Obama administration released an inter-agency memorandum, outlining a renewed focus on place-based strategies which included an emphasis on evaluation (Orszag, Barnes, Carrion, & Summers, 2009). This memorandum was meant to direct the FY2011 budget, and has led the way for the development of a framework to allow government agencies to cultivate place-based strategies.

This could suggest an opportunity to direct the focus and scope of emerging collaborations by enhancing the use of local knowledge from community organizers or others, in addressing gaps in individual and community resources. The experiences outlined in this paper suggest that the TANF and FBCO communities have a great deal in common, and have much to gain from collaborating in a shared cause.



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TANF FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS INITIATIVE

