



# Fostering TANF/WIOA Collaboration *Sustainability in Action: The Kansas City and the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan Regions, Missouri Story*

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

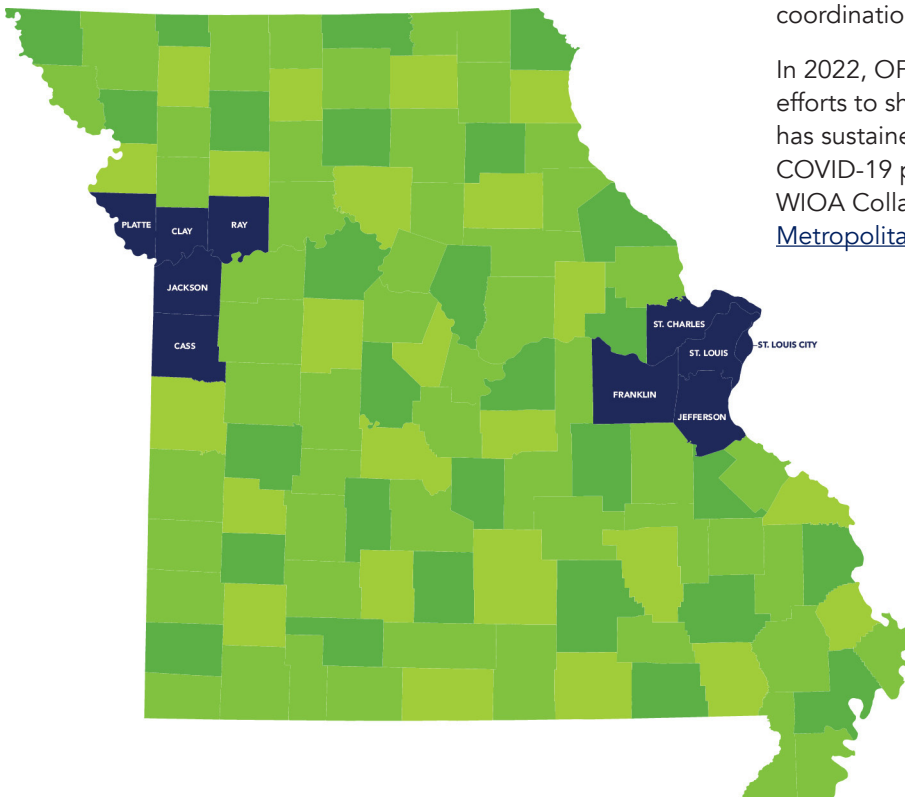
- TANF/WIOA collaboration works best when resource sharing and team cohesion is prioritized.
- The team worked to build community connections to support families during the pandemic, with a special focus on serving immigrant and refugee populations.
- Contending with labor market challenges during the pandemic, the team worked to increase customer participation in registered apprenticeships and credential programs.



## OVERVIEW

Since 2014, states have embarked on coordination between Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs and the workforce system to improve service delivery and reduce duplication. The passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in 2014 served as a catalyst for many state TANF and workforce system leaders to coordinate client services serving low-income or vulnerable populations. In 2018 and 2019, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance (OFA), developed a [series of briefs on TANF/WIOA collaboration](#) designed to highlight innovative coordination strategies between TANF and WIOA programs.

In 2022, OFA conducted an update of five collaborative efforts to share best practices around how the collaboration has sustained through time and evolved as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This brief highlights the TANF and WIOA Collaboration in [Kansas City and the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan Regions, Missouri](#).



**Kansas City and Vicinity includes** Cass, Clay, Jackson, Platte, and Ray Counties. There are two American Job Centers in this region with 8 branch offices.

**The Greater St. Louis Metropolitan region includes** St. Louis City, St. Louis County, St. Charles County, and Jefferson/Franklin Counties.

This brief focuses on St. Louis City and St. Louis County, which are separate administrative regions within the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan region.



## BACKGROUND

The Missouri Workforce Centers (WFC) in Kansas City and vicinity and the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan regions provide

TANF/WIOA customers with an array of services through Missouri Work Assistance (MWA).

In both regions, TANF eligibility is first determined by the Family Support Division (the division of the Missouri Department of Social Services [DSS] that oversees TANF). TANF customers, aged 18 and older or teen parents, who do not meet the exemption are required to immediately participate in employment, volunteering, and/or work-related activities or job training once they are approved to receive TANF cash assistance. After eligibility is confirmed, customer names are sent electronically from the state to the MWA provider. The customer flow from TANF to WIOA differs between Kansas City and the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan regions. However, both sites have a similar process where each MWA contractor and its partners assist TANF/WIOA customers at the WFC to support job entry, skills gain, and work experience.



## COVID-19 MANAGEMENT

During the COVID-19 pandemic, TANF/WIOA staff connected customers to critical information about city services, health and safety protection, school and daycare operations, COVID testing, and essential resources despite the staffing challenges each organization faced due to increased caseloads, layoffs, or resignations. For example, Greater KC LINC, Inc. temporarily furloughed 472 employees on May 1, 2020, which impacted 41 lead staff and 431 line staff across 44 of its locations in Kansas City and Grandview, and in August 2020, Better Family Life, Inc. experienced staffing turning over in key positions such as within community outreach. The COVID-19 pandemic increased TANF and WIOA caseloads due to new customer requests, caseload boundaries being expanded, and the initiatives set in place to support families and job seekers during this time.

**Labor market challenges.** The City of St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE) team quickly responded to employment needs the pandemic posed to the community—expanding its efforts to connect the increase of job seekers

## KANSAS CITY AND VICINITY TANF TO WIOA CUSTOMER FLOW



- Local Investment Commission (LINC): The commission is a citizen-driven collaborative involved in various initiatives aimed at developing comprehensive neighborhood services. LINC invites eligible TANF customers to engage in a LINCWorks orientation.



- After completing orientation, customers are assigned a LINCWorks case manager who provides TANF customers resources and case management.



- LINCWorks case managers meet with TANF customers to discuss their personal and career goals and to complete a needs and career assessment to identify barriers to success, learn more about their work history, and understand their personal strengths and career goals. These assessments are the foundation of the customer's individual employment and barrier removal plans.



- Once TANF customers are deemed work ready, and their individual employment and barrier removal plans have been established, they begin job search activities or embark upon training or work-related activities with the support of the Full Employment Council (FEC).



- FEC will assign each TANF customer with a WIOA-funded career coach. Career coaches provide connections to education, job training, and employment at the WFC. FEC is the Missouri Job Center provider for the Kansas City region, serving five counties.

Through joint TANF/WIOA service delivery, Kansas City and vicinity TANF and WIOA customers are dual-enrolled and receive case management until they are gainfully employed and successfully retain their job for a year or more. Offering joint case management has created a "soft handoff" into workforce services, which has helped the TANF/WIOA Collaboration run smoothly and has been a great benefit to customers.

## GREATER ST. LOUIS METROPOLITAN TANF TO WIOA CUSTOMER FLOW



- When TANF customers in the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan region are referred to WIOA, they visit a WFC where they are required to register on the [MOJobs](#) website. This profile will ensure that they stay informed about opportunities and engaged during employment services.
- Family Workforce Centers of America (FWCA) is the MWA provider in St. Louis City, and Better Family Life (BFL) is the MWA provider in St. Louis County.



- At the WFC, customers will complete a Career Ready 101 assessment for literacy and numeracy. Next, they are matched to job skill-building trainings, establish their career goals, and launch their job search.
  - St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE) is the WFC provider in St. Louis City.
  - Family Workforce Centers of America (FWCA) is the WFC provider in St. Louis County.



- During the job search phase, a “Jobs Team” supports customers with job leads, resumes, and interview support, until they are hired and successfully retain employment for two years or more. Each WFC offers several workforce programs (WIOA – Adult, Dislocated Workers, Out and In School Youth, TANF, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP], Two-Generational, Re-entry). Employment specialists (“Jobs Team”) provide TANF/WIOA youth, adults, and families employment-related services to encourage economic self-sufficiency.

to training programs and employment opportunities, simultaneously assisting employers to fill their growing job openings.

Beginning in March 2020, SLATE team members utilized a new call center to connect with more than 12,000 job seekers regarding employment, skills training, career fairs, and job search assistance in fields such as IT, healthcare, and construction. Nearly 700 people requested SLATE orientations about its programs and services, which primarily took place over virtual platforms. Despite the challenges to job placement, in 2020, BFL and FWCA assisted 429 customers with job placements with an average wage of \$12.60 per hour.

The number of placements that were achieved through the TANF/WIOA Collaboration during this time was impressive, especially since staff reported an increased level of fear from customers about the virus and entering the workforce, as well as mental health needs resulting from isolation or domestic concerns.

**Community connections.** The organizations noted in the Kansas City and Greater St. Louis Metropolitan Region’s TANF/WIOA Collaboration impressively supported the community with referral services to food pantries, held food drives, addressed housing needs, secured supplies, and collaborated with other organizations throughout Missouri. BFL alone reports having served over 183 tons of food to the community during this time. TANF/WIOA staff jointly addressed the holistic needs of the family, such as needs for utility assistance, nutrition support, or vaccine resources.

In March 2020, the MWA providers instituted “community checks” where all available staff members contacted TANF/WIOA customers in person or over the phone to verify

wellness, provide connections to employment or training, and offer support. In St. Louis County, the BFL team conducted more than 145,000 “community checks,” providing more than \$104,000 in support services and \$210,000 in skill-based training. Over 200 participants attended Career Readiness Training, with nearly 115 participants receiving a National Career Readiness Certification. BFL developed grassroots practices to connect to St. Louis County’s TANF/WIOA customers using “street teams.” Through a reverse enrollment process, customers could enroll in TANF and SNAP using the support of staff members who would meet in the community to help collect paperwork for enrollment, share their laptops with customers for their intakes, and even staff hotlines or mobile COVID testing sites.

In March 2020, all TANF staff aided customers with their benefits and food stamps when DSS was approved to extend Food Stamp/SNAP certification periods by six months for those re-certifications coming due in March, April, and May 2020. This action prevented the discontinuation of Food Stamp benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Rapid response to changes in labor market.** DSS waived all work requirements through the end of the federal emergency COVID-19 declaration, providing additional time for TANF recipients to demonstrate work or work-related activities. This temporary elimination of the TANF work requirements in March 2020 helped each WFC contend with challenges to the labor market presented by COVID-19.

The Local Investment Commission (LINC) offers a unique model to state agency collaboration with businesses, neighborhoods, faith-based entities, schools, and grassroots organizations. It upholds “community-level governance,” working together as citizens and key partners to identify the provision of services that will be offered within its “caring communities.” Long before the pandemic, LINC developed a citizen-led board and community-minded staff, allowing for strong relationships to be forged with a shared focus on strengthening Kansas City families.

This sense of community is what allowed Kansas City to pull together easily during the COVID-19 pandemic, offering support not only to TANF/WIOA customers, but to the entire community. For instance, when LINC and FEC noted that the most in-demand jobs were remote jobs—and saw so many single parents struggling to maintain work due to a decrease in childcare options and school closures—they leveraged their business relationships to identify employers that needed remote workers, allowing single parents to secure immediate work opportunities with employers that provided on-the-job training, work tools, and equipment. This was vital, as many customers needed these resources and work tools to be successful.

The new norm of virtual check-ins allowed LINC’s career coaches to increase the frequency of their employment retention supports, astutely incorporating mental health and wellness checks into their work. Now it is common practice to train staff on how to support customers and one another in this capacity, which addresses compassion fatigue in staff, and increases the wellness in customers who have entered the workforce but continue to struggle with transportation, childcare, and wellness needs.

As of 2022, TANF and WIOA MWA staff feel better prepared for the future in the event a circumstance like COVID-19 transpires again. TANF/WIOA staff saw benefits in the new way of working with customers so they will continue to offer virtual training and hiring events. They continue to work at reengaging customers after the pandemic and point to that process as one of their biggest challenges.



## COLLABORATION SUSTAINABILITY

The TANF/WIOA Collaboration has allowed staff to focus on serving the TANF and WIOA needs of each customer, and with leadership’s support, teams host courageous conversations to build trust and work in partnership. The customers benefit from team members who are transparent and able to leverage their knowledge of program resources. This has allowed for more focused and appropriate family services and career training, the right support services at the right time, and employment services that consider more than just finding a job.

“Since 2018 when St. Louis City Better Family Life (BFL) TANF staff moved to the WFC Job Center at The Crossings, a period of transition transpired for this team. Staff acclimated to sharing TANF/WIOA resources and being housed together in an open setting without silos. This move marked the beginning of innovation in St. Louis City, as it expanded into the region allowing for increased TANF/WIOA team meetings, communication, and client utilization of BFL’s wraparound services and referrals to partner programs. It allowed us to serve more people.”

– INTERIM SENIOR DIRECTOR OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, REGION 6

**Collaboration works best when resource sharing and team cohesion is prioritized.** MWA leadership support TANF/WIOA collaboration by taking time to cross-train staff, answer questions, and share resources about both programs. All MWA staff receive joint training and consistently cooperate with each other, sharing a common goal of self-sufficiency. Sharing of TANF/WIOA resources allows customers to benefit from the framework outlined in WIOA, with coordinated workforce services tailored to their needs, and from the case management and family resources provided by TANF staff.

For each location, joint meetings take place no less than monthly, and all case managers attend to collaborate and discuss programs. Each site operates beyond what is on paper in a well-integrated TANF/WIOA collaboration. There is easy, fluent communication from the state level to these teams and vice versa, as well as to their partners.

The teams report zero issues in securing necessary and timely information to convey to staff or customers.

Integrated funding takes place throughout the WFCs in Kansas City, St. Louis City, and St. Louis County. These WFCs braid WIOA funds with their TANF programs to expand service offerings. Staff work together to determine which funding streams, TANF, WIOA, or other funds, can be used to offer customers resources (such as transportation vouchers or work tools) or customized case management. The FEC leadership is notably committed to a systematic approach to service delivery, assisting TANF/WIOA customers in becoming self-sufficient. In the Northland, FEC and LINC are in the same office, and Central City has caseworkers for both FEC and LINC, although LINC employees are not housed in this location. Instead, referrals are distributed by zip code to help ease access.



**Implement a two-generational approach.** For over 10 years, TANF has been supporting two-generational approaches, and this flexibility allows TANF/WIOA staff to develop family solutions that address the needs of parents and their children concurrently, which decreases intergenerational poverty. In Kansas City, for example, the Jobs League Program helps teens and young adults get paid on-the-job training to develop the work skills they need to build a career.

Dependents of parents or caregivers on TANF are automatically enrolled, which provides a double-pronged approach to end the cycle of poverty. In St. Louis City, FWCA and SLATE provide additional assistance beyond customary TANF services—they work with local Head Start programs and daycares to offer education, social, health, and employment services for children and their parents. In 2018, FWCA announced its receipt of a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to further assist its workforce development and employment services efforts called [Advancing Career Pathway Employment Outcomes Thru the American Job Centers/WIBs via Cross-Sector Partners and a Family Centered Approach](#), a project funded by a \$585,728 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan.

FWCA's two-generation approach also offers Food Stamp (SNAP) recipients ages 16-59 with opportunities to "[skill-up](#)" and become employed. FEC in Kansas City also hosts several skill-up programs for [youth](#) to explore career paths in emerging careers, such as cybersecurity apprenticeships or certifications in high-demand industries. Through the [SkillUp: Intergenerational Poverty Initiative](#), BFL has partnered with ARCHS to develop a comprehensive training and employment program for low-income residents living in the Promise Zone, which includes parts of North St. Louis City and North St. Louis County. TANF families with children currently receiving SNAP benefits may participate to gain skills, training, and work experience. Additional support services include transportation assistance, support with work-related expenses, and childcare assistance.



## COLLABORATIVE IMPACT

TANF/WIOA collaboration has not only been helpful in reducing duplication of services but also allows staff to support customers with an added layer of assistance to address barriers to work, such as childcare solutions, job readiness training, and financial literacy. It provides for progressive movement from TANF into WIOA, offering career pathway training, and a "same page" system of expectations for career planning. Through joint case management, customers can customize their individual employment and barrier removal plans, culminating into high-quality jobs.

Dual enrollment streamlined services at the customer and administrative level and assures that the funding and assistance provided is appropriate, and efforts are not duplicated. Customers meet with TANF and WIOA staff to discover career pathways, address barriers, and receive support for their employment or job training goals.

In Kansas City, an Enrollment Committee, made up of senior managers from FEC and LINC, determines which customers should be dual-enrolled. The Committee reviews each customer's individual employment and barrier removal plans, along with the customer's application. The Committee looks for items such as major barriers to employment, where a customer may benefit from involved job training, and to assure services are not being repeated between programs. In St. Louis City and St. Louis County, all TANF customers are dual-enrolled in WIOA, so that when TANF customers are assigned to WIOA, they are immediately linked to training opportunities that relate to the goals established in their individual employment and barrier removal plans.



## SPECIAL FOCUS

### FOSTERING INNOVATION

#### Background

Full Employment Council (FEC) strives to increase the number of TANF/WIOA participants in Registered Apprenticeships (RAP) and certification programs. The FEC offers RAPS in multiple work sectors, such as Information Technology, Healthcare, Business and Financial Services, Advanced Manufacturing, and Green Jobs/EPA.

#### Innovation

FEC upholds a career pathway approach, collaborating between TANF and WIOA programs to network and address the customer's needs on multiple levels. Missouri ranks in the top 10 in the nation across four out of five categories for Registered Apprenticeships. As of February 2022, Missouri currently ranks third in the nation for completed apprenticeships, fourth in the nation for new apprentices, and sixth for active apprentices. [In FY 2021, Missouri had 14,520 active apprentices across 460 registered programs.](#)

Family Workforce Centers of America (FWCA) supports TANF/WIOA customers in emerging careers within Bioscience and Technology, a rapidly growing field.

In partnership with St. Louis Community College, TANF/WIOA customers 18+ can engage in a 12-week interactive classroom experience and wet lab training in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). Customers will first engage in Career Readiness Training (CRT), which runs in a 2-week format. Upon successful completion of CRT, they may enter [FWCA's Lab Tech Training Program](#). This is a Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development certified 12-week comprehensive training and career program that prepares entry-level workers for STEM careers. Employers from each industry, such as PerkinElmer, a multi-million-dollar lab equipment sales company, help students develop critical thinking skills, occupational training, and professional development.

SLATE emphasizes credentials, partnering with entities such as MTC, Roadmasters, and 160 Driving for a [Class A CDL certification](#) program to increase the number of fully-trained and certified commercial drivers in the City of St. Louis.

Through the rest of 2022, SLATE will provide students with career guidance, training, supplies, materials, and uniforms, and upon completion, job placement assistance.

Serving immigrant and refugee populations, MWA has continued its focus on serving immigrant and refugee populations, and has noted a recent increase in Afghani referrals, many with large families and very little notice about their arrival, as well as refugee populations—Aslyee, SIV, Cuban/Haitian Entrant, Somali, Syria, Congo, Ukraine, and Ameriasian in the U.S. for less than 5 years. The TANF/WIOA Collaboration has allowed working with refugees and immigrants to be seamless through co-location of staff and shared resources. It is easier to serve this population, especially when translators are required for services.

Staff in the St. Louis region take a trauma focus to their work with immigrant and refugee populations, working closely with their [International Institute of St. Louis](#) (IISTL) partner. Often referred from the Missouri Office of Refugee Administration to TANF, IISTL partners with TANF/WIOA staff to support customer success. By leveraging resources from the [Wilson/Fish Alternative Program](#), combining funding from TANF and WIOA, and implementing IISTL's multi-tiered programs, refugees and immigrants have been supported with workforce and family solutions. In 2020, despite refugee arrivals being cancelled during the COVID-19 pandemic, 32 refugees arrived in St. Louis between April and September 2020, with 133 refugees being resettled by IISTL in the calendar year (representing a drop from 232 arrivals in 2019). IISTL supports the TANF/WIOA Collaboration with translation and family success plans that can be used as an assessment for both TANF and WIOA programs, Career Pathway programming, and in assuring equity and inclusion take place in a pipeline to the workforce.

## TANF SNAPSHOT



Management Information System Name:

**Missouri Work Assistance Case Management System**

TANF Workforce Programming is called:  
**Missouri Work Assistance (MWA)**

### AVERAGE NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS PER MONTH FY2021



**15,333**

Adults and Children



**3,198**

Adults



**12,135**

Children



### STATE DEPARTMENT

**Family Support Division (FSD) within the Department of Social Services administers TANF and contracts TANF management to different organizations at each locality.**

**\$846**

Max Monthly Earnings for Single Parent/2 Kids



**\$292**

Max Monthly TANF Cash Benefit for Single Parent/2 Kids

**\$197,701,922**

Federal TANF Expenditures FY2020

## WIOA SNAPSHOT



Management Information System:

**MOJobs**

American Job Center is called:  
**Missouri Job Center (MJC)**

State Agency Administering WIOA:  
**The Missouri Office of Workforce Development (OWD)**

### EMPLOYMENT SERVICE (WAGNER-PEYSER) FEDERAL APPROPRIATION



**\$11,234,763**

Program Year (PY) 2022



### WIOA ADULT FEDERAL APPROPRIATION

**\$9,425,238**

Program Year (PY) 2022



### WIOA YOUTH FEDERAL APPROPRIATION

**\$10,182,689**

Program Year (PY) 2022



### WIOA DISLOCATED WORKER FEDERAL APPROPRIATION

**\$10,956,060**

Program Year (PY) 2022



Suggested citation: Chiaraluce, Danielle, Abner, Kristin, Roberto, Mary, & Crean, Caterina (2022). "Fostering TANF/WIOA Collaboration Sustainability in Action: The Kansas City and the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan Regions, Missouri Story." Washington, DC: Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.