



# Cross-Agency Data Partnerships

Building the Infrastructure to Share Data, Facilitate Knowledge Exchange, and Improve Service Delivery

TANF Program Integrity Office Hours | Session 1 Companion Product

This companion product accompanies Session 1 of the [TANF Program Integrity Office Hours](#) series, a peer learning initiative for state TANF program administrators and related agency staff. You may review the recording on the TANF [Program Integrity Office Hours](#) webpage now. This resource summarizes key takeaways from the session and offers tools for assessing and strengthening your agency's cross-agency data partnerships.

## WHY IT MATTERS

TANF non-assistance funds flow through workforce boards, employment program providers, and community partners—but data about service delivery often lives in separate systems. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has identified this as a core program integrity challenge: without cross-agency data infrastructure, TANF agencies struggle to assess provider performance, identify service gaps, and connect spending to participant outcomes<sup>i</sup>.

## WHAT STRONG CROSS-AGENCY DATA PARTNERSHIPS LOOK LIKE

These are common features among TANF agencies with strong cross-agency data partnerships:

### 01 FORMALIZE THE AGREEMENT<sup>ii</sup>

A data sharing agreement establishes what gets shared, at what frequency, under what conditions, and with what safeguards. It doesn't need to be comprehensive on day one—but it needs to exist. Formal structures are easier to expand than informal ones.

### 03 MAKE THE CHANNELS FORMAL AND CONSISTENT<sup>iv</sup>

Data systems don't produce insight—people do. Structured recurring data-focused touchpoints at different organizational levels create space to interpret data, surface gaps, and make decisions together. Match frequency to function: frequent operational calls for day-to-day problem-solving; less frequent workgroups for policy needs. Avoid mixing both in one meeting.

### 02 CREATE CHANNELS FOR PARTNER FEEDBACK<sup>iii</sup>

Front-line providers often know things that never enter a database—shifts in participant circumstances, service gaps, cost pressures. Forums where providers can raise concerns give administrators a fuller picture than data alone and help build institutional knowledge.

### 04 CONNECT DATA TO DECISIONS—AND DOCUMENT IT<sup>v, vi</sup>

A cross-agency data partnership only works if the insight it generates shapes program choices. When data and partner input inform a program or budget decision, name the connection. A decision trail demonstrates stewardship to oversight bodies and builds the case for continued infrastructure investment.

### Michigan: From WPR Pressure to Cross-Agency Infrastructure

Around 2010, Michigan's Work Participation Rate (WPR) was struggling—in part because participant wrap-around supports weren't connecting across agencies. Improving WPR required improving service delivery, which required more structured coordination and knowledge sharing between the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO): consistent meeting cadences, shared data, and formalized feedback loops.

In the years that followed, Michigan worked to build cross-agency coordination capacity incrementally—strengthening relationships between MDHHS and LEO and developing the feedback channels that would eventually support a more formalized system.

A 2024 update to LEO's OSMIS employment system created a natural moment to revisit and formalize what the state had already started building. Rather than restoring the status quo, Michigan used it as an opportunity to strengthen the partnership structure itself.



**WHAT THEY BUILT:** Not just improved data infrastructure, but also formalized communications and coordination structures—updated data sharing agreements with nightly/daily data syncs between Bridges (MDHHS eligibility) and OSMIS (LEO employment system); biweekly operational calls between MDHHS and LEO; monthly cross-agency coordination with the Michigan Poverty Task Force<sup>1</sup>; and quarterly convenings with MichiganWorks! Agencies to raise local service needs directly with state leadership.

**TAKEAWAY:** *A compliance challenge can be the impetus for real cross-agency data sharing infrastructure, but so can a system update, a new interagency relationship, or a shift in leadership priorities. You don't need to wait for the perfect moment—be ready to pursue formal, consistent data and knowledge exchange arrangements at any opportunity, and sometimes you can create that opportunity yourself.*

#### Short-term results

- Updated data sharing agreements formalized; cross-system data exchanged daily
- Service gaps became visible and addressable
- Formalized provider feedback channel through quarterly convenings

#### Long-term results

- WPR improved

## WHERE TO START

Where is your agency in building cross-agency data partnerships? Use these questions to identify your starting point and find your next step:

Stage	Ask yourself...	If your answer is “no”...
<b>1. Getting started</b>	<b>Do we</b> know what data is needed to monitor subrecipient performance and participant outcomes—and which agencies or partners hold it?	<b>Start by</b> listing every agency or provider that touches your TANF participants — then note which ones you currently receive data from and which you don't.
<b>2. Building the foundation</b>	<b>Do we</b> have a formal, written data sharing agreement with the right partners that specifies what gets shared, at what frequency, and with what safeguards?	<b>Start by</b> identifying partner agencies most ready to formalize an agreement then meet to discuss what data and sharing terms best support shared goals.
<b>3. Adding structure</b>	<b>Do we</b> have consistent, recurring touchpoints with our partners? Are they structured to separate day-to-day problem-solving from longer-term coordination?	<b>Start by</b> scheduling one recurring call with your primary data partner. Before the first meeting, agree on the agenda format, attendees, and frequency.
<b>4. Deepening the partnership</b>	<b>Do we</b> have a formal channel for frontline providers to share what the data doesn't capture? Does this input regularly reach state leadership?	<b>Start by</b> identifying which providers should be in the room. Pilot a quarterly convening — even informally — to hear frontline insights on participant experience.
<b>5. Using it</b>	<b>Do we</b> regularly use data or partner feedback in our program and funding decisions? If so, do we document what information was used and how?	<b>Start by</b> bringing data or partner feedback into one upcoming program or budget decision. Formally document what was used and why.

<sup>1</sup> The Michigan Poverty Task Force (MPTF) is Michigan's cross-sector body that convenes state agencies, local partners, and advocacy organizations to coordinate policy and programmatic efforts to reduce poverty. MDHHS and LEO participate in monthly MPTF coordination meetings as part of their broader cross-agency data partnership.



## LEARN MORE

GAO REPORTS	PRACTITIONER RESOURCES
<p><a href="#"><u>HHS Could Facilitate Information Sharing to Improve States' Use of Data on Job Training and Other Services</u></a> <i>United States GAO, 2025</i></p> <p>Examines how states use data on job training and other TANF-funded services—and how HHS can support better information sharing across agencies.</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>AISP Network Toolkit: Guidance on Data Governance, Legal Frameworks, and Agreement Templates</u></a> <i>Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy, University of Pennsylvania, 2025</i></p> <p>Practical tools for integrated data systems, including legal frameworks and agreement templates. Supports Stages 1–2.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>Enhanced Reporting Could Improve HHS Oversight of State Spending</u></a> <i>United States GAO, 2025</i></p> <p>Reviews how ACF-196R spending data is collected and used, with recommendations for improving federal oversight of non-assistance expenditures.</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Implementing Cross-Agency Collaboration in Government</u></a> <i>IBM Center for The Business of Government, 2013</i></p> <p>Practical guidance for government managers to develop and sustain the trust, networks, and communication processes necessary for effective cross-agency collaboration. Supports Stages 3-4.</p>
<p><a href="#"><u>Leading Practices to Enhance Interagency Collaboration and Address Crosscutting Challenges</u></a> <i>United States GAO, 2023</i></p> <p>Identifies eight leading practices for effective interagency collaboration, including formalizing agreements and building feedback mechanisms.</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Expanding TANF Program Insights: A Toolkit for State and Local Agencies on How to Access, Link, and Analyze Unemployment Insurance Wage Data</u></a> <i>MDRC, ACF, 2022</i></p> <p>Concrete strategies and practitioner-tested tools for accessing and linking UI wage data for program monitoring, reporting, and evaluation. Supports Stage 5.</p>

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### End Notes

- <sup>i</sup> United States Government Accountability Office (2025). [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: HHS Could Facilitate Information Sharing to Improve States' Use of Data on Job Training and Other Services](#). GAO-25-107226.
- <sup>ii</sup> United States Government Accountability Office (2013). [Human Services: Sustained and Coordinated Efforts Could Facilitate Data Sharing While Protecting Privacy](#). GAO-13-106.
- <sup>iii, iv</sup> United States Government Accountability Office (2023). [Government Performance Management: Leading Practices to Enhance Interagency Collaboration and Address Crosscutting Challenges](#). GAO-23-105520.
- <sup>v</sup> Kemp et al. (2025). [Finding a Way Forward: How to Create a Strong Legal Framework for Data Integration](#). Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy, University of Pennsylvania.
- <sup>vi</sup> Wavelet et al. (2024). [The Five Phases of Successful Data Analytics: TANF Data Collaborative Pilot Resources Toolkit](#). OPRE Report 2024-066. Washington, DC: Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.