Peer Technical Assistance (TA) Short Summary

Requesting Agency:	Utah Department of Workforce Services
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TA Event Tracking #:	142
TA Requested:	At the request of the Utah Department of Workforce Services, this event was created to assist participants in improving systems and resources for providing services to TANF participants residing in rural areas, and providing quality service delivery under the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.
TA Goal:	The goal of this Roundtable was to enhance the capacity of Utah to utilize innovative strategies and learn from other states with rural areas to effectively serve Utah's TANF families in rural areas.
TA Format:	Roundtable
Sample Evaluations:	"(There were) lots of good ideas, good examples and good connections. It was especially helpful because the presenters are working in comparable circumstances to ours." - It was a great conference and very resourceful. - I liked the discussion of best practices. I liked hearing all, but picking and choosing those you wanted more information.

Analysis:

At the request of the Utah Department of Workforce Services, this event was created to assist participants in improving systems and resources for providing services to TANF participants residing in rural areas. Key barriers identified included:

- **Capacity building** - how do other States build capacity in rural areas to offer customers a range of program options for services.
- **Technology** - how can online/distance learning programs be made available for customers.
- **Transportation** - how are other states providing transportation services to their rural customers.
- **Supervision** - how can rural areas track work participation activities, due to the large service delivery area.

This Roundtable included participants from the Utah Department of Health and Welfare's Regional Offices, and representatives from programs in Texas, New Mexico, Virginia, and Vermont. Features of the program included interactive dialogue among participants, an in-depth overview of challenges facing rural areas from the Rural Policy Research Institute, presentations from partner States, facilitated action planning for Utah to strategize about next steps for necessary programmatic and policy changes, and opportunities for participants to learn from one another and share ideas.

Partner states presented on innovative ways to serve rural families and address barriers to employment in States with large rural areas. Texas' *Business Access* program provided information on their in-home learning retention project where computers are installed in the homes of clients who have become employed. The program provides education and job training programs via the Internet, which includes G.E.D. courses and job skills development programs. New Mexico showcased a mentoring program for TANF clients that was developed as a partnership with the New Mexico Aging and Long Term Care Department and the Department of Human Services. Vermont offered information on mitigating transportation barriers through the Good News Garage program that solicits donated cars, refurbishes them, and for a nominal fee, provides the cars to TANF clients. Finally, Virginia gave information on an innovative onsite training programs where clients receive on-the-job training and perform unpaid work under the supervision of the plan management.

Building on this base, networking sessions afforded participants the opportunity to leverage the Roundtable as a catalyst for action planning efforts across and among regions in the State of Utah. Overall, participants, speakers, and facilitators agreed that the Roundtable was a successful event that will help build the statewide and local capacity for Utah to support families in rural areas.

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