

# **The Office of Family Assistance: Rural Communities Initiative (RCI)**

## ***Strong Roots: Fostering Self-Sufficiency in Rural America***

ACF Regions VI & VIII Meeting  
Dallas, Texas  
July 27-29, 2010

# RCI: Overview and Background

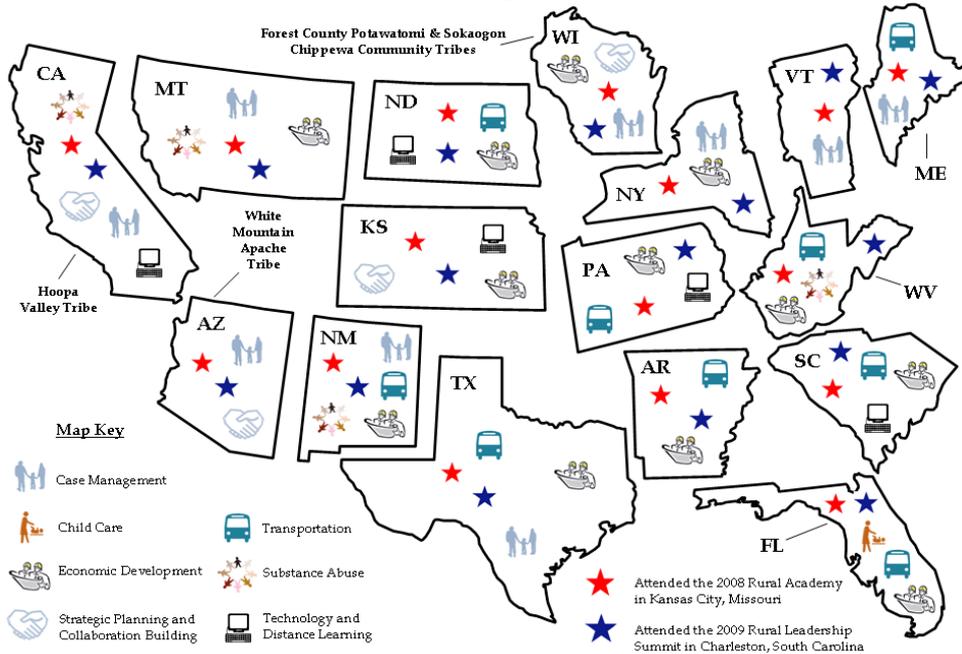
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- ◉ What is the Rural Communities Initiative (RCI)?
- ◉ RCI goals.
- ◉ Renewed importance placed on rural self-sufficiency.
  - Driven from the experience of the Urban Partnerships Initiative.



# RCI: Site Selection

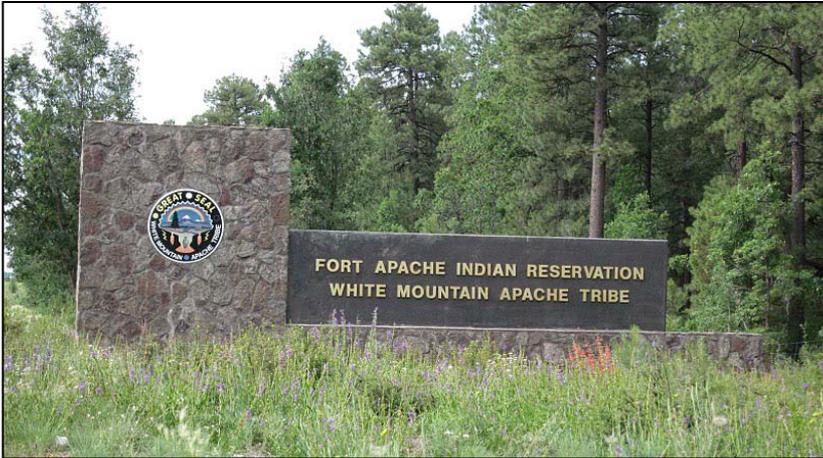
Technical Assistance Delivered During the Rural Communities Initiative



- Site selection criteria.
- Partnering with ACF Regions for site nomination.
- Final approval process by OFA.
- Outreach to each site to announce nomination.

# RCI: Needs Assessment & Rural Academy

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- Development of each site's "ITAP".
  - Initial structured conversation.
  - On-site needs assessment.
  - Convening the Rural Academy.
  - Drafting of site's TA action plans.

# RCI: ITAP Example



**TANF Rural Initiative**  
Rural Communities Academy



Individualized Technical Assistance Plan  
HOOPA VALLEY Tribal TANF Program

Goal #2: Enhance Hoopa's substance abuse program tied to TANF to serve clients in a more consistent manner and better address substance abuse as a barrier to self-sufficiency.

OBJECTIVES	STAKEHOLDERS TO BE INVOLVED	TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS	TIMELINE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compile information from academy for TANF Director Andrew Andreoli that provides with him the goals/objectives Hoopa outlined to get his buy-in.</li> <li>• Explore the "Fifth Generation" program in Wisconsin and how they provide services (specifically aftercare services).</li> <li>• Develop a formal substance abuse policy.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contact Humboldt County to see if they can provide Hoopa with their policy.</li> <li>2. Contact Maine to get their policy.</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Contract with Tribal Dept. of Human Services to provide the substance abuse counseling services required for TANF Clients.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need buy-in from TANF Director Andrew Andreoli for all objectives.</li> <li>• Need buy-in from Tribal Council.</li> <li>• Key TANF staff including current TANF substance abuse worker.</li> <li>• Need conversations with Wisconsin, Humboldt County and Maine TANF stakeholders.</li> <li>• Human Services Department and counselors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance in compiling information to TANF Director for buy-in.</li> <li>• Potential site visit to Wisconsin to see their "Fifth Generation" program.</li> <li>• Assistance in attaining other tribes' and counties' substance abuse policies to use as starting points.</li> <li>• Lit review and information gathering of how other tribes are addressing substance abuse in their TANF clients and how they contract out to substance abuse providers.</li> <li>• Assistance in developing analyses of existing materials and tools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within the coming weeks</li> <li>• TBD</li> <li>• TBD</li> <li>• TBD</li> </ul>

# RCI: Technical Assistance (TA) Delivery

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- **Cross-site analysis of TA requests.**
- **Delivery of TA:**
  - Webinars;
  - Conference calls;
  - Facilitated site visits;
  - Site exchanges;
  - Roundtables;
  - RCI research; listserv;  
Web site; resource lists;  
and environmental scans.



# RCI:TA Examples

- ① Roundtable: *Expanding Transportation Options in the TANF Population.*
- ① Roundtable: *Implementing Strategies for Rural Employer Engagement.*
- ① On-site Training: *Hoopa Valley Tribal Community Strategic Planning Training.*
- ① Teleconference call: *Opportunities for TANF Participants within the AmeriCorps Program.*



# RCI: Program Outcomes and Results

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- ◎ Development of collaborative efforts.
- ◎ Program implementation:
  - Transportation;
  - Child care; and
  - Online Work Readiness Assessment (OWRA).
- ◎ Increasing case management/staff capacities.
- ◎ Initial quantitative data.

# RCI: Moving Forward

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- ◎ RCI also tracking site's intended next steps.
  - Transportation Expansion in New Mexico.
  - Rollout of the OWRA tool statewide in North Dakota.
  - Employer engagement efforts in Pennsylvania.
  - Implementation of a subsidized employment program in West Virginia.



## Helena, Arkansas (Phillips County)

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### Fast Facts About Phillips County, Arkansas

- Phillips County, Arkansas is located in the “Arkansas Delta” Region
- Unemployment Rate- Has risen from 6.8% in 2008 to 9.7% in 2010.
- Although it’s the 35<sup>th</sup> most populated Arkansas County, Phillips County has the 6<sup>th</sup> highest TANF caseload in Arkansas.
- Work Participation Rates – 15% All Families and Two-Parent



## Helena, Arkansas (Phillips County)

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### Fast Facts About Helena-West Helena, Arkansas

- Helena-West Helena is the county seat of Phillips County
- Helena is Phillips County's largest city with a population of 15,012
- 72% of Phillips County Residents reside in Helena – West Helena



## Helena, Arkansas (Phillips County)

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- TEAM Helena's focus was in the following areas:
- Identifying **Transportation Solutions** that assist TANF participants' access to available jobs
- Increasing the **Employability** of Phillips County TANF Participants to improve their access to available jobs
- Enhancing existing partnerships with **Economic Development** to identify future jobs
- Increasing **Educational Opportunities** for TANF Participants to increase skill levels for placements in available jobs
- Establishing **Subsidized Employment Pilot** to increase availability job opportunities

## Helena, Arkansas (Phillips County)

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- TEAM Helena has accomplished the following:
- Identifying Transportation Solutions that assist TANF participants' access to available jobs



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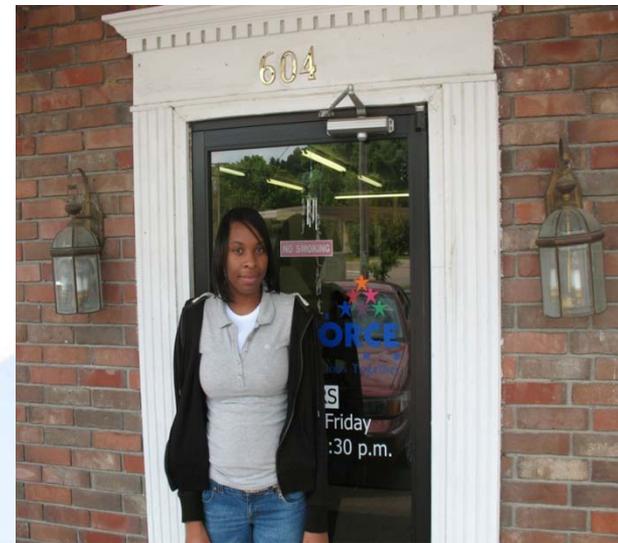
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## Helena, Arkansas (Phillips County)

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- Establishing Subsidized Employment Opportunities to increase availability job opportunities



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STATE TANF AND  
WORKFORCE MEETING  
JULY 27, 2010

FANNIN COUNTY, TEXAS

A background image of a rural landscape with rolling green hills, a blue sky, and a large tree on the right side. A blue diagonal shape is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# FANNIN COUNTY, TEXAS

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- Located in North Texas, Fannin County, has an approximate population of 33,337, according to the 2006 U. S. Census Bureau.
- The County Seat, located in Bonham, has a population of approximately 10,661, leaving the balance of the county's population at approximately 14,610.



# FANNIN COUNTY, TEXAS

- Fannin County’s 21 small rural communities offer few jobs with no access to public transportation.
- Fannin County traditionally has a high unemployment rate.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES		
	June 2008	May 2010
State of Texas	4.4%	8.3%
Fannin County	5.7%	9.2%

# FANNIN COUNTY, TEXAS

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## ◎ Rural Initiative Trainings

- Rural Communities Initiative Academy, Sep 2008
- West Virginia Transportation Roundtable, Feb 2008
- Leadership Forum, Sep 2009
- North Dakota Roundtable, May 2009
- Employer Engagement Workshop, Louisville, KY Jan 2010

# FANNIN COUNTY, TEXAS

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## ◎ Rural Initiative Trainings

- Webinars:
  - Rural Subsidized Employment Jan 2010
  - Rural Transportation Jan 2009
  - Rural Transportation Models Serving TANF Participants, Parts 1 & 2, Feb & Mar 09
  - WeCare Jan 2010



# FANNIN COUNTY, TEXAS

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## ◎ CHALLENGES & KEY FOCUS AREAS

- **Transportation Access and Availability**
- **Work Participant Rate**
  - High numbers of exempt TANF customers
- **Small number of available Employers / Jobs in the County**

# FANNIN COUNTY, TEXAS

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## ◎ **SUCSESSES**

- Partnership with Texoma Council of Government's (TCOG) and Texoma Area Paratransit (TAPS) Public Transit organizations to develop a transportation strategy for Fannin County.
  - Citizens Committee developed to explore transportation solutions.
  - Application for JARC planning grant to be submitted NLT Dec 2010.
  - TAPS ride scheduling available with 24 hours notice.

# FANNIN COUNTY, TEXAS

## ◎ SUCCESSES

- Increase in Exempt TANF and Two-Parent Families Participation Rates

		Oct 09-May 10	Oct 08-Sep 09	Oct 07-Sep 08
Single Parent		48.86%	49.07%	27.65%
Exempt	↑	11.56%	8.35%	
Two-Parent	↑	58.48%	31.67%	16.67%

# FANNIN COUNTY, TEXAS

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## ◎ **SUCSESSES**

- **Subsidized Employment initiative initiated to assist TANF customers in:**
  - Acquiring work experience.
  - Enhancing connections to employers.
  - Remove barriers.
  - Developing work-related skills and experience.
- Ongoing discussion with three other workforce development boards and the Texas Workforce Commission about implementing a WeCare pilot program in Texas.

# RCI: Available Resources

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- WPTA Web Page:  
<http://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm>
- Click on “TANF Initiatives”.
- Select “Rural Communities Initiative”.

# RCI: Questions and Answers

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- James Butler, Family Assistance Program Specialist, OFA, RCI  
Federal Project Officer  
(phone) 202-401-9284, [james.butler@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:james.butler@acf.hhs.gov)
- Patrick Heiman, Senior Research Associate, ICF International  
(phone) 703-225-2310, [pheiman@icfi.com](mailto:pheiman@icfi.com)
- Marsha Lindsey, Operations Manager, Workforce Solutions Texoma  
(phone) 903-957-7408, [marsha.lindsey@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:marsha.lindsey@twc.state.tx.us)
- Phil Harris, Assistant Director for TANF, Arkansas Department of  
Workforce Services  
(phone) 501-683-5363, [phil.harris@arkansas.gov](mailto:phil.harris@arkansas.gov)