

REALIZING INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY IN WIOA

Aligned by Design: WIOA and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

The enactment of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which goes into effect on July 1, 2015, provides new opportunities for the public workforce system and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs to collaborate in meeting the needs of low-income individuals. In the coming months, states will be developing comprehensive plans that outline their overall vision and strategy for training and employment services, which among other things must clarify the role of TANF services in supporting the state's workforce goals. This paper outlines some key areas where WIOA and TANF alignment can be supported or enhanced.

ONE-STOP PARTNERING

WIOA requires that TANF programs be partners in the American Job Center (AJC) one-stop delivery system, unless Governors opt out of this requirement. Partnering with the one stop-system can help enhance collaboration between TANF and other federal and state workforce programs and can create savings through shared infrastructure such as resource rooms. State and local plans should identify operational elements such as shared assessments, case management systems, cross-training of program staff, and family-friendly policies to ensure that TANF participants can benefit from the full range of services available through the AJC system.

STATE PLANNING PROCESSES

Under WIOA, states must develop either a "unified plan" that includes the "core" programs¹ funded under WIOA, or an expanded "combined plan" that includes not only the core WIOA programs but also one or more additional federal programs, such as TANF. Regardless of the type of plan submitted, TANF representatives should be included in the planning process from the outset to help define TANF's role in achieving the state's goals, and to identify and address potential barriers to collaboration. TANF representatives could include state or county TANF agencies and organizations serving TANF participants.

LABOR MARKET INFORMATION

WIOA requires states and local workforce development boards to provide a rich array of labor market information about workforce and skill needs, and to use this information in setting policy and priorities. TANF agencies should also take this data into account when setting policies and assigning clients to work activities.

CAREER PATHWAYS

WIOA requires states and local areas to develop career pathways — a combination of education, training, career counseling, and support services that align with the skill needs of industries. Career pathways enable an individual to attain a secondary school diploma and a postsecondary credential. TANF representatives should be engaged in developing and implementing career pathways models, to ensure that they are responsive to the employment and educational needs of TANF recipients and other low-income individuals. In addition to training activities, TANF and WIOA funds can also be leveraged where appropriate to provide supportive services (such as child care assistance) that can help low-skilled individuals sustain participation in career pathways programs

¹ WIOA includes six core programs: Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth formula grants under Title I; adult education state grants under Title II; Wagner-Peyser Employment Services under Title III; and vocational rehabilitation state grants under Title IV

PRIORITY OF SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

WIOA includes enhanced “priority of service” requirements to ensure that recipients of public assistance and other hard-to-serve populations are able to access critical employment and training services through the AJC system. TANF programs should work with workforce development boards and AJC operators to develop and implement new priority of service policies, and ensure that TANF recipients are prioritized under such policies and that they are offered services that meet their needs.

WORK-BASED TRAINING

WIOA strengthens the workforce system’s focus on work-based training strategies for adults and youth with barriers to employment, including on-the-job training, subsidized employment, and work experience. Some TANF agencies have recent experience with such programs for disadvantaged

workers, and can assist WIOA agencies in implementing them. State and local planning efforts should identify areas where WIOA and TANF resources can be aligned to support and expand these efforts.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Local workforce boards must engage employers in order to ensure that workforce investment activities meet the needs of businesses. Importantly, WIOA emphasizes the creation and use of industry or sector partnerships, which bring together stakeholders connected to local industries to develop short- and long-term workforce strategies in those industries. TANF programs should be included in local sector partnerships in order to engage employers and ensure that TANF participants can access emerging job opportunities.

By working together in these and other ways, WIOA and TANF programs can create a more efficient and effective workforce development system that improves employment outcomes for low-income individuals and responds to the needs of state and local labor markets.



National Skills Coalition is a broad-based coalition of employers, unions, education and training providers, and public officials working toward a vision of an America that grows its economy by investing in its people so that every worker and every industry has the skills to compete and prosper.



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