

Report on Highlights of Site Visits

Serving TANF and Low-Income Populations through WIA One-Stop Centers

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Prepared for
Alana Landey
Office of the Assistant Secretary for
Planning & Evaluation
U.S. Department of Health and
Human Services
200 Independence Ave., SW
Rm. 404E
Washington, D.C. 20201

Abt Associates Inc.
55 Wheeler Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Prepared by
Alan Werner, Project Director
Kendra Lodewick

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Executive Summary

National welfare reform legislation in 1996 created the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program, which imposed time limits on cash assistance receipt and broadened and strengthened mandates for clients to work or engage in work-related activities. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) rationalized and consolidated multiple employment-related public programs into a unified system through which comprehensive labor market information, job training, and job-finding assistance could be provided in “one-stop” service centers. WIA legislation mandated that public assistance recipients and other low-income citizens were to have priority for employment-related services. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, initiated a study to help understand and assess the degree to which TANF and WIA programs work together to further their mutual policy goals at a time when both programs were undergoing congressional reauthorization.

This report presents major findings from that study, *Serving TANF and Low-Income Populations through WIA One-Stop Centers*. The study gathered information about how WIA participation and services for individuals receiving TANF and other low-income populations may be affected by TANF and WIA program context, management structures, policies, and administrative arrangements. Findings are based largely on in-depth interviews with local informants and available program data for seven purposively selected one-stop centers, including: Anoka County (MN), Dakota County (MN), San Angelo (TX), Round Rock (TX), Bridgeport (CT), West Oxnard (CA), and Edgecombe/Nash Counties (NC). Major findings include:

Successful WIA/TANF program coordination is promoted where program management functions, case management functions, and administrative systems are shared across agencies.

- In two study sites, WIA and TANF are managed within the same County Human Services agency.
- One study site teams WIA and TANF workers to manage the same caseloads together.
- In Texas, the WIA and TANF automated administrative data systems interface and automatically exchange key program information.

Successful WIA/TANF program coordination is promoted where WIA and TANF line staffs are co-located and/or communicate regularly to discuss specific cases and policies.

- TANF eligibility workers and employment services workers are co-located in three study sites.
- In some sites, managers and staff from WIA, TANF, and other one-stop center partner agencies hold monthly meetings to discuss cross-program issues, including case-specific issues and specific policies or procedures.
- One study one-stop dedicates a staff member as the primary contact for cross-program questions regarding specific cases or policies.

Effective WIA/TANF program coordination may be inhibited by differing institutional cultures and a lack of knowledge and understanding of policy and procedures across agencies.

Effective WIA/TANF program coordination and communication may be inhibited where agency administrative systems do not interface or automatically exchange relevant case information.

WIA participation among TANF clients and other low-income populations is higher where local WIA agencies make a commitment to focus intensive and training services on those clients.

- One of the study sites reserves all WIA intensive and training services for TANF clients.
- One WIA program has adopted income eligibility standards for WIA intensive and training services, thus operationalizing the commitment to prioritize service to low-income populations.

WIA participation among TANF clients and other low-income populations is more likely where education and training services are on site at WIA one-stop centers.

WIA participation among TANF clients and other low-income populations is thought to be more effective where training services are appropriate to local labor markets for low-income and entry-level workers.

- WIA agencies in two sites periodically contract for labor market surveys to assess local industry needs for low-income and entry-level workers.

Both WIA performance standards and federal TANF work participation rules may affect what WIA training services are provided to TANF clients.

- Many informants indicated that the relatively high expectations for post-training placements for WIA participants embedded in federal WIA performance standards have led to procedures to screen out individuals with low educational attainment and/or low work experience.
- Federal TANF work participation policies restrict the percentage of a state's nonexempt TANF caseload that may be engaged in education or training services and be counted toward the work participation rate.

Informants indicated that work-first TANF policies that stress immediate job placement over longer-term training also may affect enrollment of TANF clients in WIA intensive or training services.

The study sites have implemented several innovations and promising approaches to improving WIA/TANF coordination and integration. Some conclusions to draw from those practices include:

- When TANF and WIA are in separate local agencies, good cross-program coordination requires strong upper-level management attention.
- The co-location of front-line employment services workers and TANF eligibility staff aids in cross-program coordination and integration.
- Interactive employment agency and TANF agency administrative data systems assist in coordinating case management across programs.

- Understanding the local market for low-income workers helps in planning WIA training services for TANF clients and other low-income populations.
- Regular meetings of employment services and TANF managers and line staff help foster mutual understanding of program policies and practices.
- The on-site provision of education and training services is an important convenience for low-income clients.
- The progressive upgrading of the education and vocational skills of TANF clients and other low-income populations helps link services to labor market needs.

Chapter One: Program and Policy Background

Rationale and Overview of Study Design

In the second half of the 1990s, the nation's major cash assistance and workforce development systems underwent sweeping changes. In 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) created the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program, which imposed time limits on receipt of cash assistance and broadened and strengthened mandates for clients to work or engage in work-related activities. These changes in particular increased the need for employment-related services for welfare recipients, applicants, and potential applicants.

In 1998, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) consolidated multiple employment-related public programs into a unified system through which comprehensive labor market information, job training, and job-finding assistance could be provided in "one-stop" service centers. Moreover, WIA mandated that in service areas in which funds are insufficient to serve all citizens, public assistance recipients and other low-income citizens have priority for services. Legislative intent was to have the two systems working together to improve the employment chances of low-income individuals.

Ongoing research on WIA/TANF coordination and integration has revealed wide variation in management structures, administrative designs, and implementation experiences.¹ More recently, studies have begun to focus on the degree to which various factors may influence cross-program coordination and the degree to which WIA program services are provided to TANF clients.² This study, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, was motivated in large part by the need to understand and assess the degree to which TANF and WIA programs work together to further their mutual policy goals at a time when both programs were undergoing congressional reauthorization. One of the major purposes of this study is to gather information from informed stakeholders in WIA and TANF about how WIA/TANF program coordination and WIA participation for TANF clients and other low-income populations may be affected by WIA and TANF program context, management structures, policies, and administrative arrangements.

The study includes case studies of seven purposively chosen WIA one-stop service centers, with a focus on services to TANF recipients and other low-income individuals as well as on their participation in WIA services and, to the extent possible, their employment outcomes. Four of the sites for the case studies are two pairs of WIA one-stop centers in two states in which the TANF agency is a mandatory WIA partner and/or is directed by state legislation to use WIA one-stop centers to deliver employment services to TANF clients. State-level informants identified one of the centers in each state pair as a high performance site in terms of its coordination with the local TANF agency; the other site was identified as average along the same dimensions. The other three sites in the study were identified by informants as exemplary in their service and outcomes for TANF recipients and

¹ For a brief overview and summary of the research on WIA/TANF integration and coordination, see Appendix C.

² See, for example, a recent study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Labor: Nightingale et al. (2002).

other low-income populations and/or innovative in their approaches or solutions to problems in serving these populations. The sites chosen for the case studies include:

- Paired sites:
 - Anoka County WorkForce Center, Blaine, MN; Dakota County WorkForce Center, West St. Paul, MN;
 - San Angelo County Workforce Center, San Angelo, TX; Round Rock Workforce Center, Round Rock, TX.
- Exemplary sites:
 - Southwestern Connecticut CTWorks One-Stop Center, Bridgeport, CT;
 - West Oxnard Job & Career Center, West Oxnard, CA;
 - Edgecombe-Nash Job Link Career Center, Rocky Mount, NC.

The case studies are based largely on information gathered through on-site interviews with key informants and administrative data³ on the WIA participation and the employment outcomes of TANF clients using WIA-funded and other employment services. Key informants were usually drawn from WIA agency and TANF agency management and line staff.

This report identifies the major findings based on the site visits and participation and outcomes data, including factors affecting WIA/TANF integration, coordination, and client experiences and outcomes. The Highlights Report also includes indications of best practices and recommendations for improvements in WIA/TANF coordination and results. Finally, the Highlights Report includes a summary of site characteristics (Appendix A), a description of the study limitations (Appendix B), and a summary of the research literature (Appendix C). The next sections of this chapter provide overviews of WIA and one-stop service centers and linkages between the WIA and TANF programs.

Overview of WIA and One-Stop Centers

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) signaled a major overhaul of the nation's federal workforce development programs. Specifically, WIA replaced the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), and was intended to streamline access to services, reduce duplication of employment-related services, and encourage coordination across workforce development efforts and associated social services.

WIA Program Basic Structure

The structure of the workforce investment system involves federal, state, and local participation. Federal responsibility for WIA rests in the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). Each state must establish both state and local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs). The state board, whose

³ Those data have some important limitations. For example, data on the WIA participation and outcomes for TANF clients were rarely available at the level of the individual one-stop centers in the study or at the level of the WIA region. (Although states must report information about TANF clients in WIA to the federal government, they are not required to maintain or report such data at the level of individual WIA regions or one-stop centers.) Moreover, some of the states included in the study did not have recent WIA data available for public distribution. Finally, many of the individual one-stop centers included in the study do not maintain consistent or comparable data on the WIA participation and outcomes for TANF clients.

membership is appointed by the governor, must develop a five-year strategic plan that describes statewide activities and outlines how special populations will be served. The state board also monitors and advises on ongoing statewide workforce activities, including the labor market information system, and helps report on state activities to the Secretary of Labor.

Local WIBs, appointed by local elected officials, develop a plan for the governor's approval, and oversee the local WIA system. The local WIA regions are designated at the state level under federal guidelines and correspond roughly to local labor market areas. The local WIBs also typically designate one-stop center operators (see below), identify training providers, monitor service provider performance against established benchmarks, and negotiate performance measures with the state board.

WIA legislation mandates that WIA-funded employment and training services and services associated with other related programs be provided through one-stop centers. Note that although the WIA legislation imposes the requirement for states and regions to implement one-stop centers, the centers are not intended to be "owned" by WIA, nor are they financed entirely through WIA funding. The distinction between WIA-funded services and other employment services available to TANF clients at one-stop centers is important when considering the degree to which TANF clients have access to WIA services and the overall state and local strategies for providing services to diverse populations. That is, TANF-funded education and training services are often a more important resource for TANF clients than WIA-funded services, although the TANF-funded services may be accessed through, or otherwise rely on, WIA one-stop centers.

WIA is guided by several key principles (USDOL, 1998):

- Streamline services—provide needed services more efficiently and effectively through co-location, coordination, and integration of services through the one-stop delivery system.
- Empower individuals—enable individuals to select their own training provider through the use of vouchers (sometimes called individual training accounts), and provide them with the information needed to make informed decisions.
- Universal access—provide all individuals with access to core workforce development services.
- Increase accountability—track core performance indicators and implement continuous quality improvement across states, regions, and training providers.
- Develop a strong role for local WIBs—collaborate with private business and labor entities to identify strengths and challenges and improve the local workforce investment system.
- Provide state and local flexibility—allow state and local program managers to implement innovative workforce development initiatives that meet local demand.
- Improve youth programs—encourage program development that promotes youth development, increases connections between academic and occupational efforts, and more closely links youth initiatives with local labor market needs.

WIA legislation includes five Titles associated with different various workforce development priorities. WIA Title I authorized the new Workforce Investment System and a number of national programs, including Job Corps, Native American programs, and migrant and seasonal farm worker programs. Title I also established separate funding streams for adults, dislocated workers, and youth. Most of the intensive and training services provided to TANF clients fall under Title I adult programs. WIA Title II reauthorized Adult Education and Literacy programs for Fiscal Years 1999 to 2003. Title III amended the Wagner-Peyser Act to require that employment services become part of the one-stop system and established a national employment statistics initiative. Title IV reauthorized Rehabilitation Act programs through fiscal year 2003 and linked those programs with state and local workforce development systems. Title V contains general provisions that include granting states authority to development unified plans that involve multiple workforce development programs.

One-Stop Centers

A key mechanism to support these general WIA principles is an extensive one-stop service delivery system. The goal of the one-stop system is to “unify numerous training, education, and employment programs into a single, customer-friendly system” (USDOL, 1998). Major objectives of the one-stop system are to reduce the burden on customers and to increase the efficiency of services. WIA requires each local area to establish at least one comprehensive one-stop center that provides universal access to a range of workforce development services. Many states had started to develop one-stop centers prior to the passage of WIA, and states whose existing one-stops were performing satisfactorily were encouraged to develop their one-stops to meet WIA requirements. Although one-stops were mandated under WIA, the centers offer non-WIA-funded employment-related services and other types of services through the one-stop system. Some programs are required by WIA legislation to be partners in the one-stop system:

- Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities (core, intensive, and training services related directly to employment);
- Employment Service (typically job listings and job-finding and job-matching services);
- Adult Education and Literacy;
- Job Corps;
- Employment and Training for Native Americans;
- Welfare-to-Work (a grant program designed for TANF clients and noncustodial parents of children on or eligible for TANF);
- Title V of the Older Americans Act;
- Trade Adjustment Assistance;
- NAFTA Transitional Adjustment Assistance (now consolidated with Trade Adjustment Assistance);
- Veterans Employment and Training Programs;
- Community Services Block Grant;
- Unemployment Insurance;
- Postsecondary Vocational Education;
- Vocational Rehabilitation; and
- HUD-administered Employment and Training.

Optional one-stop system partners identified in WIA legislation include: TANF programs, employment and training programs authorized by the Food Security Act, programs authorized under

the National Community Service Act, and other appropriate partners. In addition to these required and optional partners, local areas may include other public or private entities—such as local employers, schools, or community-based organizations—as one-stop partners.

One-stop centers provide comprehensive core services and access to center partners' programs and services. Partners are co-located or technologically linked to ensure program access. One-stop center operators are typically selected by local WIBs through a competitive process, or are designated by a consortium of entities that must include at least three of the federally required one-stop partners. One-stop operators are responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the one-stop system, and many different types of organizations are eligible to serve as operators. Potential operators include: postsecondary education institutions, employment services, private for-profit entities, non-profit entities, government agencies, and business organizations.

Local WIBs may design a variety of partnership arrangements for their one-stop system. Two common arrangements include co-location of separate programs either with coordination of service delivery or with full integration of services (Hoff, 2000). When one-stop partners are co-located, they share space and coordinate services while maintaining independent administrative identities and resources. In some cases only certain programs or activities of a partner agency are available at the one-stop, and participants are referred to another location to access comprehensive partner services. In other cases, partners may not be physically present at the one-stop, or may be present on a partial or temporary basis, but individuals can apply for services at the one-stop through electronic linkages or referrals to partner agencies. In one-stops that are fully integrated, all partner programs and agencies are administered under one management structure with joint delivery of services, common intake tools, and pooled resources. The degree of collaboration through the one-stop system is sometimes decided at the local WIB level, but also may be mandated through legislation and administrative arrangements at the state level.

Each one-stop partner agency or entity typically enters into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the local board. The MOU among partners typically includes: a description of services available; how the costs of services and operating costs for the system will be funded; a method for referring workers between one-stop operators and partners; duration of the MOU and procedures for amending it; and other provisions agreed upon by parties to the MOU. Recent research illustrates a range of arrangements in which the MOU can develop. Some states enact state-level MOUs among the relevant agencies, others develop a prototype MOU at the state level that localities can tailor to fit their needs, and some states leave the agreement to be developed wholly at the local level.⁴

WIA Services

WIA services are organized into three sequential categories of assistance based on the needs of the customer. Core services are available to all adults age 18 and older, regardless of income or skill level. Core services are supported by Wagner-Peyser Act funds, WIA funds, and funds from other one-stop partners, and can be provided by the partners, the operator, or through other arrangements. Examples of core services include:

- Eligibility determination for other WIA services;

⁴ Nightingale et al. (2002).

- Outreach, intake, and orientation;
- Initial assessment;
- Job search and placement assistance;
- Provision of employment statistics;
- Assistance with Unemployment Insurance claims;
- Provision of WIA program performance and cost information; and
- Referral to supportive services.

Each one-stop partner must make available through the one-stop system the core services that are applicable to its programs.

Intensive services are available to dislocated workers or other adults who are unemployed and unable to find work through core services. Individuals who are employed but who are determined by the one-stop operator to be in need of intensive services to obtain or maintain employment that leads to self-sufficiency are also eligible for intensive services. Intensive services may include:

- Comprehensive and specialized assessment of skills levels (i.e., diagnostic testing);
- Development of an individual employment plan;
- Group counseling;
- Case management; and
- Short-term pre-vocational services.

Individuals who are unable to obtain or retain employment through intensive services may be eligible to participate in training services; training services must be linked to occupations shown to be in demand within the local area. Adults typically access training through individualized training accounts. Training services may include:

- Individual training accounts (the main vehicle by which individuals access training);
- On-the-job training; and
- Customized training tied to an employer's commitment to hire the trainee upon successful completion of training.

Unlike JTPA, which was targeted to economically disadvantaged adults and individuals with serious barriers to employment and which did not include most of the core WIA services, all adults are eligible for WIA core services. However, in areas where funds are limited, priority for intensive services must be given to public assistance recipients or other low-income individuals. Although WIA legislation does not specify how this requirement is to be implemented, some WIA regions have adopted income eligibility requirements for intensive and training services (for example, the Southwestern Connecticut CTWorks Center—one of our study sites—has an income eligibility ceiling for WIA intensive or training services) or informal or formal policies that restrict WIA intensive and training services to TANF clients (for example, at the Anoka County (MN) Workforce Center) or other low-income populations.

Coordination and Integration of TANF and WIA

Overview of the TANF Program

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, which replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), fundamentally altered the nature of cash assistance policy. The legislation ended the federal entitlement to cash assistance by establishing a five-year lifetime limit on federally funded cash assistance, and imposed broader and more stringent work requirements on employable welfare recipients.⁵ Under TANF, states receive a block grant allocation, which they can use with considerable flexibility to accomplish the goals of TANF. These goals include assisting needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes; reducing dependency of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; preventing out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

TANF recipients are expected to work as soon as they are job-ready, or no later than two years after the start of assistance. In 2002, at least 50 percent of all families (90 percent for two-parent families) were required to be engaged in work activities (as defined by federal TANF regulations) for at least 30 hours per week (35 or 55 hours for two-parent families, depending on circumstances). Activities that count toward a state's federally determined work participation rate include, for example: unsubsidized or subsidized employment, on-the-job training, work experience, community service, job search, vocational training, job skills training, secondary school attendance, and providing child care to individuals who are participating in community service. No more than 12 months of vocational training, six total weeks of job search, or four consecutive weeks of job search may count toward a state's federally determined work participation rate.

The work-first emphasis of current welfare policy, coupled with the lifetime limit on cash assistance, has encouraged TANF agencies to develop new strategies for promoting employment and earnings among program participants. Although TANF is not a mandatory one-stop partner, many states and localities have elected to coordinate services between the two programs. According to USDOL, about half the states have opted to make TANF a mandatory one-stop partner.⁶ Two states have combined formerly separate agencies that provide welfare and workforce development services.

Types of Formal Relationships Between TANF and WIA in the Study Sites

WIA legislation does not specify the structure of the relationship between WIA and TANF programs; states and localities have considerable flexibility in establishing these relationships. Some states have legislated TANF as a mandatory one-stop partner in their state WIA plan; others leave the decision up to the local WIB. Some states have designated WIBs as the entities to design and deliver employment-related services to TANF clients. A recent U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) survey on the integration of WIA and TANF services through one-stop centers found that TANF

⁵ States may provide federally funded TANF assistance beyond five years to as much as 20 percent of the caseload and may also provide services to families beyond the federal limit through state funds or Social Services Block Grant funds. States also may set shorter time limits on assistance.

⁶ Note that sometimes the entire TANF program is a mandatory partner and sometimes only the employment- or training-related program for TANF clients is a mandatory partner. Nightingale et al. (2002).

funds support one-stops in 36 states, one-stops were linked with TANF in some capacity in 44 states, and TANF work programs were co-located to some degree in 39 states (GAO, 2002). In 15 states, TANF is one of the three largest funding sources for one-stops.⁷ The states included in our study represent a range of the relationships established between WIA and TANF agencies.

Connecticut. In Connecticut, the WIA one-stop system is administered through the State Department of Labor (DOL) and eight regional WIBs. The system of one-stop centers in Connecticut was implemented in 1994, and is known as Connecticut Works (CTWorks). The centers are organized within each WIA region by the regional WIB and typically provide a variety of employment- and training-related services and resources to individuals and employers.

The CTWorks centers have statutorily defined duties within the state’s Job First Employment Services (JFES) program for TANF clients (TANF is known as Temporary Family Assistance—TFA—in Connecticut). Unless exempted, all TFA clients are required to enroll and participate in JFES services. DOL, the regional WIBs, and the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) jointly administer JFES. In general, DSS is responsible for identifying non-exempt TFA clients and referring them to JFES. At CTWorks centers, JFES participants attend an orientation session presented jointly by staff from the three agency partners. Most JFES participants first engage in a structured job search organized and monitored by DOL. Overall case management for JFES participants is the responsibility of the regional WIBs. Case managers may refer JFES participants to a variety of education and training services, including those offered through WIA Title IB adult services.

Minnesota. In Minnesota, the one-stop system is administered through the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), a newly created agency combining the former Departments of Economic Security and Trade and Economic Development. The TANF program (known as the Minnesota Family Investment Program, or MFIP) is not a mandated WIA partner in Minnesota, but is linked to services at the WorkForce Centers by state statute. At the state level, staff from DEED and the TANF agency (the Minnesota Department of Human Services—DHS) work together weekly on an Employment Services team to plan and monitor the provision of employment services to MFIP clients.

Responsibility for employment and training services for welfare recipients in Anoka County rests with the county’s own employment and training agency. The Anoka County Workforce Council has responsibility for planning employment and training services for MFIP recipients, and has committed all resources for WIA Adult Title I training programs entirely to MFIP clients.⁸ Dakota County, which served as the second Minnesota study site, contracts with three workforce development entities, including Dakota County employment counselors, the DEED Job Service, and the Dakota County Technical College (DCTC), for employment services. The Dakota County WorkForce Center reserves its WIA Adult Title I training funds largely for the non-MFIP population, since MFIP clients have other resources, such as TANF funding, that they can access for employment services. The variation in funding decisions between Anoka and Dakota County illustrates the diversity in WIA and TANF relationships, even within one state.

⁷ Nightingale et al. (2002).

⁸ Prior to the implementation of WIA, virtually all JTPA training resources were also committed to serving welfare recipients. Core WIA services are available to all citizens.

North Carolina. In North Carolina, the Department of Commerce, Division of Employment and Training, operates as the administrative agency and grant recipient for WIA, and the Commission on Workforce Development, also within the Department of Commerce, serves as the state Workforce Investment Board. Although the Commission on Workforce Development is the principal workforce development policy body, the Employment Security Commission (ESC) also provides workforce development services, including employment services, unemployment insurance, and labor market information. Under the First Stop Employment Assistance Program, which established by statute the relationship between the ESC and the TANF program, all non-exempt TANF (Work First) applicants and recipients are required to register for employment assistance at a local ESC office. The ESC is considered the presumptive primary provider of job placement services for the Work First program, but there are specific policies or procedures mandated in the statutes. For example, county Department of Social Services (DSS) agencies may contract with the local ESC for additional services such as job search, job placement, and referrals to community services, but they are not required to do so.

Texas. The WIA one-stop system in Texas is administered through the Texas Workforce Commission and 28 regional Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), including 270 local Workforce Centers. Since the implementation of PRWORA, the Texas Department of Human Services is responsible for determining eligibility for TANF cash assistance and the work participation status of TANF clients, and the Workforce Centers are responsible for providing employment services to both TANF and non-TANF customers. By state statute, non-exempt TANF adults must register at a Workforce Center and participate in Choices Employment Services; failure to comply may lead to the loss of all TANF cash assistance. WDBs are forbidden by statute to provide employment services directly; the Boards must contract with other entities for employment services and many Workforce Center services, including those provided to TANF clients, are delivered by private service provider.

California. The TANF program in California is known as California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (“CalWORKs”). At the state level, CalWORKs is administered by the California Department of Social Services. The California State Workforce Investment Board provides policy guidance to the Employment Development Department, which oversees the regional administration of the WIA program. Although the TANF and WIA programs are operated by separate agencies at the state level, the counties have considerable latitude in organizing these services. Our study site, the West Oxnard Job and Career Center, is located in Ventura County, one of a handful of counties that integrate the administration of TANF and WIA programs within the same agency. The Business and Employment Services Department (BESD), a division of Ventura County’s Human Services Agency, administers CalWORKs, WIA, food stamp and medical benefits, and other employment and public assistance programs in Ventura County. BESD delivers all services through six Job and Career Centers and two satellite offices that function as one-stop centers designed to prepare adults and youth for employment.

Chapter Two: Findings

The major goal of this study is to expand knowledge about factors affecting WIA/TANF program coordination and client participation. This chapter draws on information from the case studies to present findings on how WIA and TANF program context, organization and management structure, and administrative and policy factors may affect overall WIA/TANF program interactions and client participation.⁹ A major, and not surprising, finding is that the interrelationships among those factors and results are varied and complex. Table A-1 in Appendix A summarizes major contextual, organizational, and policy factors in the study sites.

Contextual Factors

Contextual factors, such as local labor markets, local demography, and historical relationships between employment services and cash assistance agencies, as well as differences in institutional cultures and philosophy, were cited by key informants as critical factors in determining WIA/TANF program interactions and client experiences. While many contextual factors are outside the control of policy makers and program operators, those factors must be considered when assessing WIA/TANF coordination and when designing program policies and services. Important contextual factors include: socioeconomic conditions, demographic factors, historical relationships between employment services agencies and welfare agencies, differences in bureaucratic cultures among agencies, and TANF caseload size and trends.

Socioeconomic Conditions

Informants cited a variety of ways in which local socioeconomic conditions are important factors in WIA/TANF coordination and in the use of WIA training for TANF clients. One of the most important factors is the local labor market, including the entry-level opportunities for lower-skilled workers, as well as the opportunities for individuals provided education or training. For example, in Tom Green County (TX), a rural location, the relative lack of higher-skill, career-ladder jobs affects decisions to invest in skills training for TANF clients and other low-income individuals. Most of the entry-level employment in the area is in retail and service occupations. In Anoka County (MN), on the other hand, the local economy has a relative lack of retail and service jobs. There, clients who choose not to enter skills training, or who do not have sufficient educational attainment for skills training courses, are assisted in finding transportation and employment in the Twin Cities or to the inner suburban ring, where more retail and service industry jobs are located.

In some areas, the local standard of living has affected the structure of services and training strategies for one-stop centers. For example, at the Southwestern Connecticut CTWorks one-stop center (Bridgeport, CT), program managers have established a relatively high self-sufficiency wage target (\$35,000 for a family of three) due to the high standard of living in the area. One-stop center management has commissioned labor market studies to identify industries with entry-level jobs and career ladders leading to self-sufficiency wage targets. In turn, they have used the market information to plan education and training services to prepare clients for jobs in those industries. In the West

⁹ Note that many of the specific categories under these general factors overlap to some degree; nevertheless each category was referenced separately by study informants as an important issue affecting WIA/TANF program interactions.

Oxnard Center (CA), informants also noted the high cost of living and the insufficient wages of entry-level jobs as challenges in designing services to help TANF clients become economically independent.

Demographic Factors

In all of the study sites except the Edgecombe-Nash Job Link Career Center (NC), local informants cited the relatively low educational attainment and unstable work histories of many TANF clients as an important issue in choosing which WIA-funded or other employment services to provide. That is, informants acknowledged that many TANF clients require intensive, relatively long-term educational and vocational skills training even to qualify for many entry-level positions.

The implications for WIA/TANF program interaction of the relatively low human capital attainment among TANF clients must be understood in the context of other policy issues described in greater detail below, such as the degree to which TANF employment programs stress the work-first approach; incentives to “cream” created by federal performance standards for WIA; federal participation rules for non-exempt TANF clients; and the length of the time limit on TANF cash assistance.

Generally speaking, sites operating under a work-first TANF philosophy and shorter time limits on TANF assistance were more reluctant to provide WIA-funded education or training to TANF clients. On the other hand, some of the study sites recognized the need to upgrade TANF client skills to attain long-term economic self-sufficiency. For example, in Anoka County (MN) nearly all WIA-funded training is reserved for TANF clients. In Bridgeport (CT), a large portion of WIA-funded training slots (about one-third) are used by TANF clients. Nevertheless, in both Anoka County and Bridgeport, informants acknowledged that WIA performance standards created strong incentives to enroll only the most highly qualified TANF clients in WIA training. In Bridgeport, this feature led program operators to adopt a commitment to long-term human capital upgrades for TANF clients and other low-income individuals. Note that this longer-term commitment was made in the context of a relatively short 21-month state-imposed time limit on TANF cash assistance.

Differences in Bureaucratic Cultures

The general consensus in the research literature, as well as among many study informants, is that coordination between WIA (or any employment services program or agency) and TANF agencies may be undermined by important differences in organizational cultures. Typically, employment services workers were described as more likely to be “outcome oriented” as opposed to “process oriented,” which is usually used to describe the culture of welfare departments. Moreover, employment services workers are said to be less sympathetic to, or less knowledgeable about, the life problems often faced by TANF clients and other low-income populations. Finally, within the work-first atmosphere of many welfare reform programs, employment services workers sometimes voice serious doubts about the employment prospects of long-term and hard-to-serve TANF recipients.

While many informants reported on the traditional “cultural divide” between WIA and TANF agencies, the informants also indicated that the cultural differences were much more prominent in past years, particularly at the beginning of the current phase of welfare reform, as welfare agencies came to rely more and more on employment services agencies to train and place welfare clients. Most of the study sites reported that the initial clashes over fundamental philosophies are long past,

but informants at five of the seven study sites reported that employment services workers and cash assistance workers are sometimes uninformed or confused about each others' program goals, policies, and procedures. This situation may lead to duplication of services, conflicting messages to clients, and/or inefficiencies and errors in monitoring TANF client compliance and imposing sanctions. Most of the sites have taken some action to try to correct these problems.

Historical Relationship Between Employment Services Agencies and Welfare Agencies

In general, sites that had a longer history of collaboration between employment services agencies and welfare agencies had overcome much of the "discomfort" caused by the differences in bureaucratic cultures and/or confusion about other agencies' procedures and policies initially experienced when the agencies first started working together. Local areas in which the employment services agency and the welfare agency had already developed a good working relationship and line staff had gotten to know one another had a stronger foundation for WIA/TANF coordination.

For example, in Anoka County (MN), a strong tradition of cooperation and coordination between job training programs and welfare programs goes back at least to 1988, when the County Board of Commissioners integrated employment services for AFDC recipients with other county employment services. There, the WIA and TANF programs were implemented within a strong existing framework for program coordination and integration. On the other hand, for example, Texas first began to shift the responsibility for employment services to welfare recipients from the Department of Human Services to its workforce system in 1995. In both of our study sites in Texas, informants reported that there was a great deal of friction between the two agencies in 1995. One of the Texas sites (San Angelo) has had some success in overcoming that friction, but the other site (Round Rock) has had more difficulty in getting the two agencies to coordinate services well.

TANF Caseload Sizes and Trends

A final set of contextual factors affecting one-stop employment services for TANF clients and mentioned by study informants is the size and composition of the TANF caseload. There are two ways in particular in which these factors affect WIA/TANF program coordination and outcomes. First, where TANF caseloads have risen over the past year, individual employment services worker caseloads have also increased in some of the study sites. For example, in Bridgeport (CT), while the TANF caseload has risen, the budget for employment services workers at the one-stop has actually decreased. As a result, the job counselors serving TANF clients have seen their individual caseloads increase from a maximum of 135 cases last fiscal year to 175 cases in fiscal 2004. Informants reported that the increase is beginning to affect the quality and consistency of case management.

Another way in which TANF caseload sizes and trends may affect WIA/TANF program interaction is the way in which trends change the composition of the TANF caseload. That is, where the TANF caseloads have increased over the past year or two, more and more former TANF clients who have lost their jobs have returned to the rolls. Those recently unemployed clients are more likely to need help in finding another job, rather than longer-term educational or employment skill upgrades.

Organizational and Management Factors

Organizational and management factors at the state and local level also affect WIA one-stop and TANF program interactions. Specifically, the following issues are important determinants of how

WIA one-stops are serving TANF clients and other low-income populations: state agency organizational structure; local agency organizational structure; the agency or program with primary responsibility for employment services for TANF clients; administrative systems; employment services worker caseloads; co-location of WIA and TANF; other agency partners at the one-stop center; provision of core WIA services; and budgeting issues related to WIA intensive and training services.

State Agency Organization and Discretion at the Local Agency Level

A fundamental issue related to WIA/TANF integration and coordination is the organization of the programs at the state level, as well as the relationship between state agencies and local service delivery. Traditionally, employment services programs have been part of a state's employment security agency or a state department of labor. Rarely is the administrative responsibility for TANF cash assistance in the same agency that oversees WIA or other employment services programs. On the other hand, however, and in particular since welfare reform imposed broad employment-related requirements on TANF clients, states have increasingly mandated that employment agencies oversee the provision of employment services for welfare recipients.

Although the state-level management structure for TANF and WIA one-stop services has some impact on WIA/TANF integration and coordination at the local service delivery level, the amount of discretion allowed counties and regions in determining how TANF and WIA interact is more important. For example, in Minnesota, the only current requirement for county MFIP agencies is that if there is no one-stop center in the county, the MFIP program must partner with at least two employment service providers. If there is a one-stop in the county, the MFIP agency may contract directly with the center alone for employment services, or it may contract with two or more providers, including the one-stop. The two WorkForce Centers visited for this study, in Anoka and Dakota Counties, each serve an area coextensive with the county. Nevertheless, while the Anoka County MFIP Program relies exclusively on the county WorkForce Center for services (a "one provider" county), Dakota County has chosen the other service option, partnering with the WorkForce Center, the Minnesota Job Service, and a technical college located elsewhere in the county.

Compared to the situation in Minnesota, in Texas and Connecticut there is less discretion at the local level in determining the ways in which one-stop centers are to serve the employment-related needs of TANF clients. In both of those states, nonexempt TANF clients must register with regional WIA one-stop centers for employment services. Although the centers, as well as their WIBs, have some discretion in the use of WIA-funded services for their TANF customers, they must develop services for TANF clients and must coordinate service delivery and case management with TANF agencies. Note that employment services for TANF clients at these local sites are supported mainly by TANF block grant monies, rather than by WIA funds. Some state-level informants in those two states reported that while WIA and MFIP agencies in many counties enjoy good working relationships, some county MFIP agencies would rather arrange their own employment services directly with other providers.

Finally, in California, although TANF and WIA programs are operated by separate agencies at the state level, the counties have considerable discretion in organizing these services. As discussed above in Chapter One, Ventura County, our study site, is one of a handful of California counties that integrate the administration of TANF and WIA programs within the same county agency. This arrangement avoids many of the inter-agency confusions, disagreements, and differences in

philosophy experienced in other localities in which TANF agencies must rely on a separate employment services agency to provide services and case management for nonexempt TANF clients. In Ventura County, employment specialists and TANF eligibility workers work for the same agency, are co-located, and are made familiar with the procedures, policies, and regulations governing each others' programs, services, and benefits. Moreover, although TANF clients receive some specialized services, they are generally not treated differently from other individuals seeking one-stop services. The West Oxnard one-stop visited for this study has established a special staff position of employment and career service liaison to provide a dedicated staff person to further improve communication between programs.

Local Agency Organization

The manner in which local programs are organized within the overarching state system can be critical in determining the level and quality of WIA/TANF coordination and integration at the service delivery level. In particular, where overarching county human services agencies include WIA one-stops, other employment programs, and TANF within their management framework, there is a greater potential for ensuring mutual cooperation and effective coordination of the two types of workers and programs. For example, in Ventura County (CA) the county Business Employment Services Department administers TANF, food stamps, medical benefits, WIA, and other employment services programs. The advantages of combining WIA and TANF under one agency umbrella are described in the previous section.

In Anoka and Dakota Counties (MN), although WIA and TANF are not in the same county agency as they are in Ventura County, the programs are both administered at the county level and both answer to county executives and county-based WIBs. Anoka County has taken advantage of this structure by choosing to use the Anoka County Job Training Center for all TANF employment-related services.¹⁰ This approach effectively mirrors the system in Ventura County, where a single agency oversees welfare and employment programs. On the other hand, Dakota County agency managers have decided to contract out the provision of TANF-related employment services to various providers, including the county's own employment services agency. Dakota County executives chose this approach to ensure high quality services through the competitive bidding process, but have traded off some consistency of service across employment providers and some problems involving coordination and communication between MFIP staff and non-county employment workers.

The local organization of agencies and services is similar in the Texas and Bridgeport (CT) sites. In those sites, state legislation mandates that TANF clients register at local one-stops for job finding and other employment services. In Texas, local TANF agencies must refer TANF clients to local workforce centers that provide services under the Choices TANF employment program. As there is no management structure overarching both programs, WIA/TANF coordination requires strong cooperation and communication between local TANF programs and one-stop centers. In Connecticut, TANF clients are also mandated to register with one-stops to participate in Jobs First Employment Services (JFES). Like Choices in Texas, JFES is administered at one-stop centers, with some involvement by the state Department of Labor. In Bridgeport, the local TANF agency also takes part in the JFES orientation and holds formal meetings with one-stop employment counselors to review changes in policies or procedures.

¹⁰ Note that Minnesota county MFIP programs have the option to contract with other service providers for TANF employment services.

The formal connection between TANF programs and WIA one-stops is the most attenuated in the Edgecombe-Nash (NC) site. In North Carolina, state legislation has established a connection between the TANF program and the state Employment Security Commission (ESC). Although the ESC is distinct from the WIA one-stop system, most WIA one-stops include the ESC, and the ESC operates many regional one-stops by contract with local WIBs. In our study site, the ESC operates the regional WIA one-stop center. The only required employment service for TANF clients is a three-week Steps to Self-Sufficiency (SSS) class, which is taught at the one-stop by a TANF agency staff member. Although local TANF offices may arrange for other ESC or employment services for TANF clients, the TANF agencies associated with our one-stop study site had not done so. Also, a TANF agency worker, as opposed to an ESC or other employment services worker, provides case management for TANF employment services. Although TANF clients have the same access to WIA services as other citizens, they do not necessarily get any preference. In fact, in large part due to the work-first emphasis in North Carolina, very few TANF clients are enrolled in WIA, or any other, longer-term training.

Primary Responsibility for TANF Employment Services

In some instances, the agency or program with primary responsibility for TANF employment services affects the ways in which WIA one-stops and TANF clients interact. As discussed above, for example, state legislation in Minnesota, North Carolina, Connecticut, and Texas establishes some connection between one-stops and TANF programs. In Minnesota, county TANF agencies have authority in contracting out for employment services, and may or may not do so with local one-stop employment agencies. The intent is to have Minnesota county TANF agencies use the power of performance-based contracting and the attraction of significant TANF employment services funds to exact quality service from employment services agencies. In Connecticut and Texas, on the other hand, state law has removed primary responsibility for TANF employment services from the TANF agency and placed it in the hands of regional WIA one-stop centers. In North Carolina, although TANF clients must register with regional one-stops for some minimal employment services, local TANF agencies may contract with the one-stop or any other employment services provider for additional services. Finally, in California, county administrations may determine which agency has primary responsibility for TANF employment services. In Ventura County, TANF, WIA, and other employment services programs are housed in the same county agency.

In study sites where primary authority and funding for TANF employment services were removed from the TANF agency and placed in local WIA one-stop agencies, some initial resentment and mistrust on the part of TANF agency personnel had to be overcome before the two agencies could work together effectively. In Bridgeport (CT) and San Angelo (TX), efforts on the part of agency management to develop better mutual understanding of each agency's philosophy and policies, as well as to work out effective means of cross-agency communication, have largely been successful in ironing out the initial discomfort of the new arrangements. In Round Rock (TX), informants reported that some interagency difficulties persist and may interfere with more effective TANF and WIA one-stop coordination.

WIA One-Stop and TANF Administrative Systems

In sites where separate agencies operate WIA one-stop employment services and TANF programs, and the WIA one-stop is responsible for providing services to TANF clients, each agency's

administrative data system relies on information from the other agency. For example, WIA one-stop personnel need to know which nonexempt TANF clients must register at the one-stop for services. TANF eligibility staff need to know whether or not TANF clients are complying with program rules and attending scheduled employment services, or when TANF clients obtain employment. WIA one-stop staff need to know whether noncompliant TANF clients are being sanctioned for noncompliance, or have left the TANF rolls. Both agencies need to have the same up-to-date information on clients' status.

The problems of communicating across administrative systems are minimized in West Oxnard (CA), where both programs are in the same agency and use the same administration system. In the Minnesota sites, as well as in Bridgeport (CT), workers rely more heavily on automated systems. Informants at these three sites reported that the administrative systems of the employment services agency and the TANF agency cannot entirely communicate with each other. However, employment workers in Bridgeport have read-only access to the employment module of TANF case files and may communicate new information to TANF eligibility workers using the case narrative portion of the TANF administrative system. Similarly, in Minnesota, employment services workers who are county employees normally have read-only access to TANF case files. But even though employment workers in those sites have some access to TANF program automated files, the workers do not always take the time to read the files, nor do they otherwise know when important new information has been added to the files. Informants in those sites reported that some new client information “falls in the cracks” between the two agencies unless workers notify each other of changes in person, by phone, or by email.

The WIA one-stop and TANF agency administrative systems in Texas are unique in our study in that they share information through a nightly interface. The interface updates any new information from one agency that is not yet entered into the other agency's system. The interaction between the two systems is especially important in monitoring compliance among nonexempt TANF clients and in the application of sanctions.

Worker Caseloads

In sites where WIA one-stop employment staff maintain caseloads of TANF clients, informants reported that worker caseload size might affect service to TANF clients, as well as coordination and communication with TANF agencies. Although there are no national standards for employment services worker caseloads, and although casework may involve very different activities in different sites, some of the sites had similar worker caseloads for employment workers. For example, in Anoka County (MN), employment worker caseloads are about 100–120 cases; in San Angelo (TX), the caseloads are 100–130 cases; and in Bridgeport (CT), the maximum employment worker caseload was 135 cases, until this year when the maximum rose to 175 cases. In Dakota County (MN), the worker caseloads were much lower, at about 65–80 cases. Informants in Bridgeport (CT) felt that worker caseloads (maximum caseload of 175) were getting too large to ensure effective attention to all cases and to maintain the quality of casework.

Co-location of TANF and WIA

The research literature has amply documented the advantages of co-location to cross-program integration and coordination. (See the discussion of the research literature in Appendix C.) Although the literature often mentions the convenience of WIA and TANF co-location to TANF clients, in our

study informants stressed the ease of communication across programs and the resulting advantages for avoiding mutual confusion about each other's program services and policies, updating case files, and fostering a better sense of community and common purpose across programs. Among our study sites, WIA and other employment services staff and TANF staff are co-located in West Oxnard (CA) and in Anoka and Dakota Counties (MN).¹¹ In Bridgeport (CT), because TANF agency staff participate in a mandatory program orientation for TANF clients at the one-stop, a TANF agency representative is often available to employment services workers on an informal basis. At the Edgecombe-Nash (NC) one-stop, a TANF agency worker conducts the mandatory Steps to Self-Sufficiency class for nonexempt TANF clients and so is available to one-stop staff. Also, an employment services worker from the Edgecombe-Nash one-stop has been outstationed at the Nash County TANF office to provide job finding and referral services.

Other Agencies and Services Located at One-Stop Centers

As discussed above, a core concept of the one-stop center is to bring together available resources aimed at improving individuals' employability and employment. Among the customers using one-stop centers, TANF clients tend to have more varied and more intensive needs. For example, TANF clients tend to have less schooling or educational attainment than the public in general and may need adult basic education, GED, or ESL training. Also, TANF clients have children of various ages, and usually need some type of child care to attend training or to go to work. Finally, TANF clients are far less likely to have access to computers, Internet services, or photocopying or fax services, which may be needed for an effective job search. One-stops that include access to these services on site tend to be more convenient and effective for TANF clients.

All of the one-stop centers in our study were able to make referrals to local service agency networks that could provide most of the ancillary education and supportive services needed by TANF clients; many of the one-stops in the study had at least some of the other services needed by TANF clients co-located at the center. For example, in Anoka and Dakota Counties (MN), the WIA one-stop is located in the county human services building, where most other agencies providing relevant services are also housed. These one-stop centers co-locate the broadest variety of other services and agencies among the sites in our study. Moreover, both counties use space at the one-stops to provide adult education, ESL classes, and other short-term employment-related courses, such as basic computer literacy classes. In Dakota County, however, TANF clients assigned to one of the three employment services providers attend training at a technical college and do not have on-site access to many of the services available at the one-stop center.

Other one-stops in the study also have some relevant services or agencies on site, although not as many as in Anoka and Dakota Counties. For example, although WIA and TANF are integrated in the same county agency in West Oxnard (CA), other local agencies are not housed at the one-stop. While TANF clients in West Oxnard have access to childcare subsidies at the one-stop, they must go elsewhere for adult education classes or training courses provided by the county community college. The Bridgeport (CT) one-stop was particularly effective in bringing essential services for TANF clients on site. For example, both adult education and ESL classes are held at the one-stop center. As part of their statutory responsibility for employment services for TANF clients, the San Angelo and Round Rock (TX) one-stops have on-site access to supportive services for TANF clients. They do not

¹¹ In Dakota County, staff from two of the three TANF employment services contractors are co-located with TANF staff at the county's Workforce Center.

normally include facilities for adult education or ESL classes, however. Finally, the Edgcombe-Nash one-stop center has the least amount of other services co-located. There, TANF clients have access to supportive services at the TANF agency and must be referred to other localities for adult education services.

TANF Clients and Core WIA Services

WIA one-stops must all provide core services to all individuals, including TANF clients. Some of the one-stops in our study take extra steps to ensure that TANF clients know what those services are and have full and easy access to the core services. For example, in West Oxnard (CA), as part of their mandatory employability assessment, TANF clients are given a personal tour of the one-stop's resource room and the core services available. As part of the Workforce Orientation for TANF Applicants in the Texas one-stops, clients are informed about WIA core services and how to access them. In Anoka and Dakota Counties (MN), TANF clients are acquainted with the one-stop centers' resource rooms and core services, and are given more intensive training in resource room services before engaging in job search. In Bridgeport (CT), TANF clients are formally registered for WIA core services during their mandatory orientation to employment services.

WIA Budget and Available Services

WIA funds are distributed to states and regions in separate funding streams for services for youth, adults, and dislocated workers.¹² Funds for adult services, which are the source of most WIA training services for TANF clients, are distributed to states in equal thirds by three measures: relative numbers of disadvantaged adults, areas of substantial unemployment, and excess unemployment. Note that these formulas have their roots in the JTPA program and were carried over to WIA to prevent major shifts in funding. Note also that, unlike JTPA, eligibility for WIA services is not income-tested under federal law, although states or WIA regions may impose income eligibility for various non-core services and are required to give priority to low-income individuals in providing non-core services, as described in Chapter One.

Clearly, one important factor determining access for TANF clients to WIA intensive and training services is the size of the budget for those services relative to the TANF population. WIA legislation does not mandate or specify any particular allocation of program funds across core, intensive, or training services, but only that regions must make all core services available to the general public. In our study, one-stops had widely varying funds available for WIA adult intensive and training services, depending on their initial allocations as well as on their choices regarding funding levels for core services and how remaining funds are allocated between intensive and training services. In general, however, TANF monies available for employment services for TANF clients were far greater than the total WIA budget for intensive and training services. As a result, the number of TANF clients enrolled in WIA training services is not necessarily an indication of the overall availability and use of more intensive training and education services for TANF clients.

This point is well-illustrated by comparing the experiences of the two Minnesota sites, Anoka and Dakota Counties. In Anoka County nearly all available WIA training resources are used to serve TANF clients. In Program Year 2003, however, WIA training funds could support training for only 24 individuals, while another 252 TANF clients were provided training or education through TANF

¹² For a more detailed description of WIA fund allocations see USGAO (2003a).

funds. In Dakota County, on the other hand, TANF clients used only 3 WIA training slots. However, many more TANF clients received education and training services through TANF and other funds. In fact, roughly the same proportion of TANF clients received education or training services over the referenced year (about 14 percent of those engaged in employment services or work). The use of TANF and WIA funding for TANF clients is addressed as well in the following section.

Administrative and Policy Factors

In addition to contextual and organizational and management factors, WIA and TANF administrative and policy choices have an important influence on the level and quality of WIA/TANF interaction for participants. These factors are particularly important since they are often subject to greater choice at the state and local agency levels than contextual or organizational factors. Included among those administrative factors that the study found important are: the work-first orientation of the TANF employment program; the local agency philosophy regarding the use of WIA-funded training by TANF clients; eligibility for WIA intensive and training services; the sequencing of TANF employment services; outreach to employers; approaches to cross-program case management; cross-program communication; WIA performance standards and TANF work participation rules; and the use of services designed specifically for TANF clients.

Work-First Orientation of TANF Program

Since the advent of welfare reform, many states have adopted a work-first orientation in their welfare policy. Under this approach, welfare recipients are encouraged or mandated to find and accept employment rather than engage in pre-employment upgrading of educational or vocational skills. In part, this approach is supported by earlier research that suggested that accepting any job leads to more stable employment and shorter spells on welfare than engaging in human capital upgrades before entering the job market.

As indicated below in the section on sequencing of employment services for TANF clients, most of the study sites assign most newly-certified nonexempt TANF clients to an initial job search, indicating a work-first policy orientation. However, within the general framework of work-first approaches, some of the sites emphasized immediate job finding more than others. For example, in Bridgeport (CT) employment workers often arranged adult education services for clients with low educational attainment and decreased the required hours for job search.

In sites that have adopted a strong work-first philosophy for their TANF program, informants reported that this policy orientation provides a strong rationale for helping TANF clients find immediate employment rather than placing them in education or training, whether funded by WIA or other sources.¹³ In the two study sites in Texas, for example, a relatively large portion (over 50 percent in each site) of nonexempt TANF clients are working to fulfill their employment-related behavioral requirements; less than 10 percent are engaged in skills training. The work-first orientation in Texas is further enforced by state-level policies restricting the amount of time allowed for training or education. In the Edgecombe-Nash one-stop, TANF and other low-income populations

¹³ Most of the study sites assign most non-exempt TANF clients to an initial period of job search, which is an indication of an underlying work-first approach. However, there are variations in the degree to which the work-first approach is stressed. For example, in Bridgeport, clients with low educational attainment are usually assigned to education classes at the same time they are engaged in job search.

have priority for WIA intensive and training services. According to on-site informants, however, because of the strong work-first orientation of the state's TANF program, TANF agency employment workers are reluctant to refer their clients for WIA training.

Agency Philosophy Regarding Use of WIA-Funded Training by TANF Clients

As indicated in Chapter One, WIA legislation establishes priority of service for TANF clients and low-income populations where resources are insufficient to serve all customers. There is no specific legislative language about how this mandate is to be implemented at local one-stop centers. The study sites varied in the degree to which TANF clients and other low-income populations were given priority for service and in the ways in which priority for service was institutionalized. (See Appendix A for data on the percentage of WIA participants that receive TANF in the study sites.)

The two sites in Minnesota are good examples of how the local one-stop philosophy regarding priority of service affects the degree to which WIA intensive and training services are provided to TANF clients. In Anoka County (MN) the county workforce development agency has committed nearly all WIA-funded training slots for use by TANF clients. In Dakota County, however, county WIA managers have adopted a distinctly different philosophy. There, because TANF clients have exclusive access to TANF-funded training opportunities, WIA-funded training is largely reserved for the non-TANF population. As a result, very few TANF clients are enrolled in WIA training. As indicated earlier, although these differing philosophies do affect the use of WIA-funded training by TANF clients, they do not necessarily affect the proportion of TANF clients with access to education and training resources.

Another study site that has adopted and institutionalized a preference for a particular population when enrolling individuals in WIA-funded intensive or training services is the Bridgeport (CT) one-stop center. There, the WIB has committed WIA intensive and training services to low-income populations by implementing an income eligibility cap for those services. Specifically, only individuals from households earning less than 50 percent of the state's median household income are eligible for WIA intensive or training services. In Program Year 2003, TANF clients used a relatively high 36 percent of WIA training services.

In the West Oxnard (CA) one-stop, informants report that WIA intensive and training services are readily available to TANF clients. Informants indicated that in practice, however, relatively few TANF clients can meet the educational skill level requirements for WIA training services. Similarly, in the Texas study sites, any prior commitment to serve TANF clients with WIA services is offset by the state's strong work-first philosophy in the TANF program and relatively high skill requirements for WIA training services (these issues are also discussed in other sections in this chapter). Finally, in Edgecombe/Nash Counties (NC), informants report that TANF participants and other low-income individuals receive preference of service for WIA and training options. In fact, WIA case managers actually recruit for intensive and training services at DSS and Food Stamp programs as a result of this preference. As is the case in some of the other study sites, however, respondents noted that relatively few TANF clients enroll in WIA training due to the strong employment focus of the state's TANF program.

Eligibility for WIA Intensive and Training Services

WIA legislation mandates that WIA services are to be provided sequentially. That is, individuals seeking employment are normally not eligible for intensive services until they have used core services, and not eligible for training services until they have used intensive services, although there is some flexibility for states to permit access to intensive services without exhausting core services (and to training services without exhausting intensive services).

Most of the study sites have implemented additional eligibility requirements or guidelines for WIA intensive and training services. In addition to the sequential services requirements mandated by WIA, the state and regional eligibility requirements may limit access to those services for TANF clients and other low-income populations. The eligibility requirements are of two types: income-tested and skill-tested. The Bridgeport (CT) one-stop's income eligibility policy is discussed in the previous section. Bridgeport has also implemented formal skill-related minimal requirements for training services, based on objective tests. Similarly, in West Oxnard (CA), a WIA assessment specialist evaluates potential participants in WIA-funded training; informants report that very few TANF clients meet the skill level requirements for those services. The Anoka County Workforce Center also has skill-level standards for WIA training services. Even though all WIA training services there are used by TANF clients (see above), only the most highly skilled and well-educated TANF clients are enrolled.

Sequencing of TANF Employment Services

In most of our study sites, most nonexempt TANF clients are first assigned to a period of job search before having access to other, more intensive services, whether through WIA or other programs. Note that even in sites that provide an initial assessment of clients' employability skills, most clients are assigned to a period of job search, or to a period of job search training followed by job search. The prevalence of immediate job search is in part an indication of the wide acceptance of the work-first philosophy. Informants indicated that the initial period of job search may serve to divert to immediate employment many TANF clients who might otherwise benefit from more intensive training services. Moreover, many TANF clients may have difficulties meeting the attendance requirements of these initial activities and become involved in the noncompliance and sanctioning process.

Outreach to Employers

In addition to assisting individuals with employment-related information and services, WIA one-stops also serve local employers and the business community. In our study, some of the one-stop centers we visited engage in outreach efforts to potential employers of TANF clients and low-income individuals, including conducting market studies focusing on the entry-level and low-wage end of the labor market. For example, the Bridgeport (CT) WIB commissioned a study of the low-wage labor market and developed a strategic plan for WIA training that focused on training for in-demand occupations. The Ventura County (CA) WIB funds similar research and also works with local employers to provide assistance, develop jobs, and match employers with job-ready TANF and other clients. Finally, in Round Rock (TX), the Workforce Center also conducts outreach to identify potential employers for low-income individuals, holds job fairs, and allows employers to use the one-stop center space for recruiting.

Cross-Program Case Management

A key administrative factor influencing WIA/TANF program coordination and integration is cross-program case management. In most of the study sites TANF clients are served by at least two case managers: a TANF eligibility worker and an employment services worker. Typically, TANF eligibility workers determine initial and ongoing eligibility for TANF benefits. Eligibility workers also inform TANF clients of their rights and responsibilities, including their obligation to participate in work or activities designed to lead to employment. Finally, TANF eligibility workers usually make an initial referral for nonexempt TANF clients to the relevant employment services program. Typically, employment services workers manage the employment program part of TANF cases. That is, they assess client employability, assign or refer clients to employment and supportive services, and monitor client progress and compliance with employment-related behavioral requirements.

A variety of cross-program case management arrangements were found in the study sites. In general, WIA/TANF program communication and coordination is enhanced where eligibility and employment workers share the same specific caseloads, where both types of workers are employed by the same agency, and/or where both types of workers are co-located. For example, in Anoka County (MN), income maintenance workers, childcare assistance workers, and employment counselors are all county employees and are organized into teams with common caseloads. The various teams each meet together formally monthly, mainly to review important policy and procedural changes affecting their caseloads. Because team members are also located in the same area within the one-stop center, however, individual team members easily communicate on a daily basis. In general, informants felt that communication and coordination among the various programs represented in the teams is highly effective.

Co-location of employment workers and TANF eligibility workers also improves cross-program communication and coordination. For example, coordination across programs is enhanced in the West Oxnard (CA) one-stop, where the TANF agency and WIA and other county employment services are co-located. Curiously, in three of the four other study sites, TANF employment services are the responsibility of the WIA agency, but employment workers and TANF workers are in different locations. Finally, in Edgecombe-Nash (NC), both types of workers are employed by the TANF agency. There, although a TANF worker performs case management of employment services, employment services are most often delivered at the one-stop center.

Communication across Programs and Agencies

Besides sharing information across administrative data systems (see above), TANF eligibility and employment services workers often need to communicate with each other about specific policy or procedural issues that may arise in the course of case management. As discussed above in the context of general cross-program case management, informants felt that communication across WIA and TANF programs is generally better where workers from both programs are co-located. Where this is not the case, management and staff must take more effort in communicating across programs and often formalize cross-program communication.

TANF eligibility workers and employment services workers are co-located in the Anoka County (MN), Dakota County (MN), and West Oxnard (CA) one-stop centers. In Anoka County, TANF eligibility workers and employment services workers occupy the same general space at the County Workforce Center and share specific caseloads. Most communication among workers is informal and

one-on-one and does not involve forms or administrative systems. When a client meets with a TANF worker, the worker often will call the client's employment counselor to check if the counselor needs to see the client. In turn, employment counselors report instances of noncompliance to TANF workers, and TANF workers are generally reliable in informing counselors about the status of sanction referrals. In Dakota County similar informal communication occurs mainly between TANF workers and the employment counselors employed by the county WIB, but is less likely to occur between TANF workers and employment counselors from the other two employment services contractors that work with TANF clients, even though one of the two other contractors is also located at the Workforce Center.¹⁴ At the West Oxnard one-stop center, the two programs' staffs are co-located; a single center manager oversees both programs. According to informants, this arrangement facilitates communication across programs and ultimately benefits clients.

The other four study sites do not co-locate TANF workers and employment services workers. Workers at these sites have adopted a number of ways to communicate in addition to using administrative systems (see above). At the Bridgeport (CT) one-stop center, for example, when information is needed quickly job counselors and TANF eligibility workers will often telephone each other. Similarly, email has become a popular and frequent mode of communication among staff across agencies. However, if staff do not take the initiative to email or telephone, informants report, some important communication can, and sometimes does, get delayed. In part because of the shortcomings of data systems in maintaining up-to-date interagency information, various management and staff from the TANF agency and the WIA agency, as well as representatives from other participating agencies, hold monthly partners meetings. These meetings may include any outstanding interagency business, including case-level discussions. Also, TANF and WIA caseworkers and supervisors often meet on an ad hoc basis to discuss individual cases.

In San Angelo (TX), communication between employment services and TANF workers has been formalized to some extent. For example, employment workers for TANF clients are supposed to take specific questions about TANF policies or case actions first to their supervisor. Any questions that cannot be answered by the supervisor are forwarded to a designated TANF agency supervisor. Questions about policies and procedures that affect multiple cases may lead to a cross-agency meeting between the Workforce Center and the TANF agency. As the relationship between the agencies has matured, the cross-agency meetings have declined in frequency.

In the Edgecombe-Nash (NC) one-stop center, the relationship between WIA agency workers and TANF workers is less direct than in the other sites. That is, the employment services case managers for TANF clients are TANF agency employees. Although the employment workers may refer their clients to a variety of education, employment, and supportive services, the TANF agency workers maintain primary responsibility for case management. Nevertheless, diverse one-stop partner agency staff provide ad hoc, informal services to the TANF program's Steps to Self-Sufficiency class, such as conducting mock interviews, providing job leads, describing available services, and performing assessments. All one-stop center staff also participate in weekly meetings that facilitate cooperation across programs. More formally, the TANF agency directors from Edgecombe and Nash Counties are part of the one-stop center's management team, which meets quarterly to discuss broader policy decisions.

¹⁴ The Dakota County TANF program contracts with three employment services providers: the county's workforce development agency, the state Job Service (located at the one-stop), and the Dakota County Technical College.

WIA Performance Standards and TANF Work Participation Rules

Informants in many of the study sites generally cited certain aspects of WIA performance standards and TANF work participation rules that make it difficult to enroll TANF clients in WIA training programs. Performance measurement systems have been a part of national workforce development programs for many years. The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), which WIA replaced, mandated and developed performance measures (the specific outcomes assessed, such as “percentage of those exiting WIA that enter employment”) and standards (the specific benchmark levels for performance measures, such as “75 percent of those exiting the program and entering employment”) for local service delivery areas. WIA modified the JTPA performance system in several ways. For example, under JTPA only local service delivery areas had performance standards; under WIA, both states and regions have standards. Both WIA and JTPA performance standards take some account of local conditions, but the way in which standards are adjusted changed under WIA. Finally, specific performance measures have changed somewhat under WIA.

The WIA performance measure for adult training programs is calculated for all adults exiting WIA training, including TANF clients.¹⁵ The WIA program managers interviewed for the study all reported that the performance standards for job finding and job retention are strong affect decisions to enroll the “average” TANF client in WIA training services. In all of the WIA programs in the study, workers limit access to WIA training services through formal or informal skill level standards. That is, employment services workers either rely on their own judgment about whether an individual has the ability to benefit from WIA training, or combine that judgment with results from objective academic skills tests.¹⁶ The result is that even in the study sites in which a meaningful proportion of WIA training slots are provided to TANF clients, the clients are among the most employable and skilled TANF recipients.

Some study informants reported that federal TANF work participation rules also make it difficult to enroll TANF clients in education or training services, whether funded by WIA or other means. As described in Chapter One above, states must enroll a specific proportion of their nonexempt TANF recipients in a prescribed, allowable activity. States that do not meet the participation standards are subject to fiscal penalties, and those that exceed the standards are rewarded with lower state fiscal maintenance-of-effort standards. Federal regulations allow training as a countable activity, but limit the length of time that TANF clients may be enrolled in training, and limit the proportion of TANF clients participating in training. According to study informants, these policies sometimes make it difficult to enroll TANF clients in long-term education and training programs.

Services Designed Specifically for TANF Clients

In most of the study sites, either TANF or employment services agencies have designed special services for TANF clients. In most cases, participation in those services is mandatory. In some instances, participation in those sequenced services may divert some TANF clients from participation

¹⁵ The state-level performance measure for TANF clients is also reported separately.

¹⁶ Note that in Dakota County (MN), the reason given for enrolling very few TANF clients in WIA training is the fact that while TANF clients have access to other training resources funded by TANF block grant funds, many other needy individuals do not and are thus given preferential treatment.

in WIA intensive or training services either because the clients find employment first or drop out of TANF either voluntarily or involuntarily through sanctions.

For example, in Anoka and Dakota Counties (MN), nonexempt TANF clients are required to attend an overview of employment services. In Anoka County, the overview session is one day long; in Dakota County, it lasts for four days. In Edgecombe-Nash (NC), TANF clients must attend a pre-employment workshop called Steps to Self-Sufficiency. The workshop lasts for three weeks; the last week is a self-directed job search session, after which unemployed clients may be referred to short-term skills training courses at local community colleges. In San Angelo and Round Rock (TX), TANF applicants must attend a Workforce Orientation for Applicants session before their application may be certified; after certification, they must attend a Job Search seminar and engage in job search.

Summary and Conclusions

The factors that affect WIA/TANF program coordination and client participation are many and varied. Those factors may be conveniently summarized by the degree to which they tend to promote or inhibit cross-program coordination and participation.

Factors promoting WIA/TANF program coordination include:

- When management oversight for the WIA and TANF programs is combined in the same local agency, there is a greater potential for effective cross-program coordination.
- In general, WIA/TANF program communication and coordination is enhanced where eligibility and employment workers share the same specific caseloads, where both types of workers are employed by the same agency, and/or where both types of workers are co-located.
- In some of the study sites regularly scheduled meetings of WIA and TANF supervisors and line workers to discuss specific cases and policies have promoted cross-program coordination.
- One of the study sites has established a special staff position of employment and career service liaison to improve communication and coordination between programs.

Factors inhibiting better WIA/TANF program coordination include:

- Employment services agencies and welfare agencies usually have different bureaucratic cultures which can undermine efforts at WIA/TANF program coordination and performance; agencies that have a longer history of collaboration are more likely to have overcome these differences in devising effective ways of working together.
- In many states, legislation has shifted primary responsibility for employment services for TANF clients to state and local employment agencies, including WIBs. In our study, the sites in which responsibility for TANF employment services had been removed from the TANF agency had to overcome initial resentment and mistrust across agencies.
- Effective cross-program coordination and communication may be compromised where WIA and TANF administrative data systems do not interact, or where workers in one agency do not have convenient access to the other agency's data systems.

- Changes in TANF caseloads and resource constraints on state agencies have increased employment caseworker caseloads and may be undermining effective case management and cross-program coordination.

Factors promoting WIA participation among TANF clients and other low-income populations include:

- Local WIA agencies have varying philosophies regarding the use of WIA training resources for TANF clients. For example, in one study site, managers have committed nearly all WIA training funds to TANF clients to maximize resources aimed at reducing dependence. Another study site has taken the opposite approach, limiting access of TANF clients to WIA training because TANF clients have other (TANF-funded) training resources.
- One study site has imposed income eligibility limits for WIA intensive and training services to ensure priority service to TANF clients and other low-income populations.
- Ongoing client participation is greatly enhanced in study sites where education and training services are delivered on site at one-stop centers.
- Some of the study sites have used labor market surveys to link training services to local needs for low-income, entry-level workers.

Factors inhibiting WIA participation among TANF clients and other low-income populations include:

- Most of the study sites assign nonexempt TANF clients to an initial job search, indicating a general work-first policy approach. In sites where the work-first orientation is particularly strong, employment services workers tend to stress immediate job placement over education and training services.
- Some aspects of WIA performance standards and TANF work participation rules may affect decisions to enroll TANF clients in WIA training. Specifically, WIA standards for post-program employment and job retention, and federal restrictions on the percentage of a state's TANF nonexempt caseload that may be engaged in education and training, are thought to limit TANF client access to WIA-funded or other training.
- Many of the study sites have developed employment services designed specifically for TANF clients that may serve to divert them from WIA intensive and training services.

Chapter Three: Best Practices

Chapter Two presented findings on how WIA and TANF program context, organization, and policies may affect WIA/TANF coordination and client participation. Those findings included both factors that promote coordination and WIA participation among low-income clients and factors that inhibit coordination and WIA participation among low-income clients. This chapter focuses specifically on innovative and/or promising practices that have been implemented in the study sites.

When TANF and WIA are in separate agencies, good coordination requires strong upper-level management commitment and attention.

Study informants generally supported the notion that WIA/TANF coordination and integration are enhanced when the programs operate out of the same county or local agency. On the other hand, however, effective interprogram coordination can take place in a context of separate line agencies. This is particularly true when upper-level managers at one or both agencies monitor coordination efforts and take a hand in ensuring a healthy ongoing relationship. For example, in both of the study sites in Texas, there was a great deal of friction when responsibility for TANF employment services was first shifted from local Department of Human Services offices to the Workforce Commission. Of the two sites, San Angelo seems to have had more success in moving the two agencies closer together. Based on informant reports, the greater success in San Angelo is due in part to the close attention paid to interagency coordination by the regional WIB.

In Edgemombe-Nash, there is strong ongoing coordination between Career Center services and TANF program operations. Informants acknowledged an open and collaborative relationship between agencies. In part, this arises out of a tradition of cooperation between employment agencies and welfare agencies in the local area. More formally, the TANF agency directors from Edgemombe and Nash Counties are part of the Career Center management team, which meets quarterly to discuss broader policy decisions.

Co-location of front-line employment services workers and TANF eligibility staff aids in coordination and integration.

As indicated in Chapter Two, co-location of front-line employment services workers and TANF eligibility staff aids in interprogram communication and coordination. The physical proximity of the two agencies' staffs allows for informal and timely communication during the course of casework. When a question arises about a policy issue or about client information, it is far more efficient and reliable to be able to approach staff from other agencies in person while the question is at hand, rather than communicating by telephone or email, or by more formal channels. Moreover, co-location allows each agency's management and staff to become acquainted and develop good working relationships.

Even where staffs from the two programs are co-located, coordination may be further enhanced by more formal administrative arrangements. For example, in West Oxnard (CA), the informal communication fostered by co-location is further bolstered by a WIA employment and career service liaison. The liaison attends all cross-program case conferences and is a resource for any cross-program issues.

Interactive employment services and TANF administrative data systems assist in coordinating case management across programs.

Informants at most of the study sites reported that when employment services and TANF administrative data systems do not communicate directly and automatically, case records in one system may not match or be as up-to-date as case records in the other system. This situation can lead to duplication of services, continuing to serve closed or sanctioned cases, or otherwise mistaking case status. Even where line staff from one agency may have “read-only” privileges for parts of the other agency’s administrative system, staff may not be aware that relevant case information has been added or changed in the other agency’s case records.

Among our study sites, the two in Texas have the advantage of a system that allows automated case records in one agency’s computer to be matched and updated with case records from the other agency’s computer. In a nightly interface between the Texas Workforce Information System (TWIST) and the TANF agency system, newly certified TANF clients are cross-registered in TWIST. Thereafter, TANF eligibility workers and employment services workers can automatically exchange case status changes through a special transmittal form.

The interaction between the two systems is especially useful when monitoring client compliance and the application of sanctions. If an employment worker determines that a client is not complying with the work plan, the information is entered into TWIST. This information is subsequently communicated to the TANF administrative system, and TANF eligibility workers decide whether a sanction is warranted. Each month, one TANF eligibility worker is responsible for processing all sanction requests. Workers in both offices generally expressed satisfaction with the sanctioning process and communication across agencies.

Understanding the local market for low-income workers helps in planning WIA training services.

WIA agencies in Bridgeport (CT) and Ventura County (CA) invest resources in labor market surveys of low-wage, entry-level jobs. The surveys help the WIA agencies in planning training services for TANF clients and other low-income populations. Training unemployed individuals in high-demand occupations enhances the probability that training investments will lead to stable employment. Moreover, informants in those sites considered the market surveys to be part of their service to the business community, as well.

Regular meetings of employment services and TANF managers and line staff help foster mutual understanding of program policies and practices.

In the sites where WIA and TANF workers were not co-located, one strategy that informants felt fosters cooperation across agencies is all-center meetings of staff or representatives from partner agencies. For example, in Edgecombe-Nash (NC), there are weekly meetings of all one-stop center staff, which facilitates cross-agency coordination. In Bridgeport (CT), the one-stop center hosts monthly meetings of all one-stop partners, including the regional TANF agency. Finally, the one-stop center in San Angelo (TX) holds weekly all-staff meetings. Although the meetings do not normally include TANF eligibility workers, the meetings do include TANF employment services workers.

On-site provision of education and training services and tailoring training to local labor market needs are important for low-income clients.

Many of the training and education services available to TANF clients and other low-income populations are provided on site in Anoka and Dakota Counties (MN), Bridgeport (CT), and West Oxnard (CA). Informants in those sites generally feel that this convenience enhances attendance and program completion among low-income customers. It also improves cross-program communication and communication between service providers and case managers.

In the Bridgeport (CT) one-stop center, managers have developed a model of progressive education and training tied to needed client upgrades and local labor market opportunities. Through the concept of a “Career Academy,” one-stop center staff have institutionalized the recognition that some TANF clients and other low-income clients require long-term skills upgrades to attain stable employment and economic self-sufficiency. The Career Academy offers lifetime membership to WIA clients and is designed to provide a specific progression of education and skills training leading to employment in a number of high-demand occupations.

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Appendix A: Summary of Selected Site-Specific Data

The seven one-stop enters included in the study varied on a number of factors. This table summarizes key organizational and policy features, as well as key statistical features, of the study sites.

Table A-1

Selected Study Site Characteristics: Contextual, Organizational and Policy Factors

Site Characteristic	Study Site						
	Anoka Co. (MN)	Dakota Co. (MN)	San Angelo (TX)	Round Rock (TX)	Bridgeport (CT)	West Oxnard (CA)	Edge.-Nash (NC)
Local TANF caseload, May 2003	2049	1475	360	329	2033 ^a	641	878
TANF is mandatory WIA partner			✓	✓			✓
TANF and WIA are administered in same county agency	✓	✓				✓	
WIA agency is responsible for TANF employment services ^b			✓	✓	✓		✓
One-stop provides all TANF employment services ^c	✓				✓	✓	
WIA and TANF co-located	✓	✓				✓	
WIA and TANF workers share same caseloads	✓						
Strong work-first orientation			✓	✓			✓
WIA and TANF administrative data systems interface			✓	✓			
Proportion of WIA Title I Adult training services clients receiving TANF	95.7% ^d	3.0% ^d	10.0% ^e	N/A	36.0% ^d	N/A	N/A
Proportion of non-exempt TANF clients engaged in education or training	14.0% ^d	14.0% ^d	13.7% ^e	23.5% ^e	19.0% ^a	20.0%	30.0%
Proportion of non-exempt TANF clients in jobs	66.0% ^d	51.0% ^d	75.7% ^e	67.4% ^e	26.0% ^a	33.0%	20.0%

Table A-1**Selected Study Site Characteristics: Contextual, Organizational and Policy Factors**

Site Characteristic	Study Site						
	Anoka Co. (MN)	Dakota Co. (MN)	San Angelo (TX)	Round Rock (TX)	Bridgeport (CT)	West Oxnard (CA)	Edge- Nash (NC)
TANF time limit	60 months		12, 24, or 36 months, depending on employability		21 months	60 months	24 out of 60 months; 60- month lifetime
Maximum TANF benefit for family of 3 ^f	\$801		\$201		\$543	\$645	\$272

N/A = not available

^a Data are for April 2003

^b State legislature has shifted primary responsibility and funding for TANF employment services out of TANF agency and over to WIA agency.

^c Indicates that employment services for TANF clients are normally provided at the one-stop center, whether through the WIA program or otherwise.

^d Data are based on activity counts (which may double-count individuals) for the year 7/2002 – 6/2003.

^e Data are based on activity counts (which may double-count individuals) for the year 9/2002 – 8/2003.

^f Benefit data are for 2001. Source: National Center for Children in Poverty website.

Appendix B: Limitations of the Study Methodology

The study design has several limitations that should be noted. First, the study used a purposive sampling design to choose 7 one-stop centers. Under this scheme, sites were chosen on the basis of specific characteristics, as described in Chapter One, not to be representative of any larger group of sites. Consequently, although the findings are likely relevant for other one-stop centers, they cannot be generalized as applying to the nation as a whole or to the study site states.

Another limitation is the study's reliance on informant reports for many of the findings regarding factors influencing WIA/TANF coordination and client participation and outcomes. The study design does not test informants' views about what promotes or undermines effective cross-program administration and results. Nevertheless, the use of multiple informants helps ensure the identification and occasional rejection of unique or extreme views. Moreover, the study interviewer guides usually probed for informants' reasons for their specific judgments, so that researchers could assess to some degree the reasonableness of the grounds adduced for some responses.

As mentioned in Chapter One, study sites included two pairs of one-stop centers in two states. State informants were asked to select one high performing site and one average performing site in terms of WIA/TANF integration or coordination and TANF client WIA program participation and outcomes. The rationale for this design decision was to flesh out factors that seem to contribute to high performance by controlling for a number of contextual conditions (such as state policies, for example). In selecting paired sites, however, the study was limited by state-level informants' opinions and understanding of "high performing sites." In fact, it appears that when selecting high performing sites, state-level informants rested more heavily on their assessment of how well WIA and TANF programs were integrated or coordinated, and not also necessarily on participation and outcomes. Moreover, while using paired sites does allow the study to control for a variety of shared factors, the small number of sites does not control for all external factors that may influence WIA/TANF interaction and outcomes.

Finally, although the study attempted to collect available data on WIA participation and outcomes for TANF clients (some data are displayed in Exhibit A-2 in Appendix A), those data were either not available or limited in their usefulness for more in-depth quantitative analysis. For example, data on the WIA participation and outcomes for TANF clients were rarely available at the level of the individual one-stop centers or at the level of the WIA region. Moreover, some of the states included in the study did not have recent WIA data available for public distribution. Finally, many of the individual one-stop centers included in the study do not maintain consistent or comparable data on WIA participation and outcomes for TANF clients.

Appendix C

Findings From the Recent Research Literature

To provide a broader context for this study and its findings, this Appendix summarizes major findings from earlier research on WIA/TANF coordination and integration. This summary is based largely on a review of the literature conducted in the course of developing the research questions and design for the current study (Werner et al, 2002), but includes findings from more recent studies that were not available at the time of the earlier review.¹⁷ The research findings are organized into the following categories: WIA/TANF coordination and integration; services to TANF clients and other low-income populations; and best practices and recommendations.

WIA/TANF Coordination and Integration

The research literature includes a number of general findings about the level of WIA/TANF coordination and integration, including:

- Most states coordinate TANF and WIA program operations and services to some degree, although there is wide variation in the type and success of linkages.
- More coordination and integration occurs at the local service delivery level than at the state level.
- In some local areas, all TANF work services are provided through the one-stop; in others, one-stops provide only specific aspects of the TANF work program, such as job registration or employment search.
- Most studies argue that effective WIA/TANF coordination and integration is beneficial to TANF clients and other low-income populations. Benefits cited include: improved employment-related services for TANF participants; broader access to supportive services for workers and job seekers; more flexible use of funding to provide skills training; a greater responsiveness to employer needs; and increased customer and staff satisfaction.

The research highlights various factors that promote or inhibit effective WIA/TANF coordination and integration:

- Recommendations for improving TANF/WIA coordination include: aligning the two systems' participation, outcomes, and performance measures; providing adequate physical infrastructures; developing unified administrative systems; streamlining intake and assessment procedures; co-locating line staff for the two programs and for other relevant social service programs; and providing post-employment services that focus on retention and advancement.

¹⁷ The new studies include Nightingale et al, (2002); Rangello, Patel, and Greenberg (2003); Richer, Kubo, and Frank (2003); USGAO (2003b); and Barnow and King (2003).

- Challenges to coordination include: TANF and WIA program differences, including different program definitions; different and incompatible administrative systems; different reporting requirements; different performance measurement systems; different program philosophies.
- One study noted that the best examples of service integration overall are those relatively rare instances in which TANF and WIA services are fully integrated at the case management level.
- The active engagement and support for coordinated provision of services by the local WIB improves integration of TANF and work-related services through one-stops.

Services for TANF Clients and Low-Income Populations

Major findings regarding services for TANF and low-income populations include:

- There is no broad-based consensus on the optimal level of integration of services. Some studies recommend using separate program specialists for the TANF and WIA programs, while others recommend merging the programs and functions at the case management level.
- One-stop centers usually provide services in one or more of the following three ways: they primarily provide information about available services in a local area; they provide for the co-location of employment, education, and training providers in one space; and/or they provide direct access to, and help coordinate, available services.
- A variety of job services may be available to TANF participants at WIA one-stop centers, including pre-employment, employment, and post-employment services. Other services, such as case management and support services, are usually shared by several agencies; specialized employment services are usually provided by other public or private agencies.
- The limited resources and staff in rural one-stops limits their ability, relative to more urbanized areas, to provide access to a range of TANF and work-related services.

Best Practices and Recommendations

Major research findings on best practices in coordinating WIA/TANF programs include:

- In sites where TANF and WIA line staff are not co-located, interprogram coordination and access to services may be improved by outstationing line staff off-site at partner agencies.
- Center-wide meetings to cross-train staff on all partner services improve program coordination and access to services.
- In some one-stops, TANF, Medicaid, Food Stamp program, and WIA caseworkers share caseloads, have access to a common administrative system that provides comprehensive client information, and develop coordinated service plans that address clients' employment and self-sufficiency goals.

- Dedicating specialized WIA staff to work with employers or industries has been found to improve the employment chances of low-income clients.

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