















#### **Dallas- Fort Worth**

- Reduced caseload by 50 percent.

#### **Detroit**

- Strengthened system-wide accountability and more recipients retain employment.

#### **Minneapolis**

- Reduced TANF caseload by 22 percent; reduced food stamp error by 50 percent; increased work participation rate to 43 percent.

#### **Oakland**

- Eliminated \$3 million worth of overpayments by implementing a tracking system.

#### **Omaha**

- Increased engagement in TANF populations from 40 percent to 87 percent.
- Increased EITC uptake to \$51 million returned into the community.

#### **Seattle**

- Utilized the GMAP process to monitor and improve program outcomes.

- Developed a transportation initiative for the WorkFirst participants in partnership with faith-based organizations.

#### **St. Louis**

- Successfully partnered with community- and faith-based organizations to support recipients in finding and maintaining employment.

The ten cities profiled in this volume have been the leading lights of this Initiative. They have exceeded even the highest expectations for communication, sharing, and partnership development. The success stories described in a *Tale of Ten Cities* began with a commitment from these ten cities to exemplify the objectives of the Urban Partnerships Initiative, and they have done nothing less.





## City Profile

# Atlanta



### *City Background Information*

Agencies in two counties—Fulton and Dekalb—administer most of the TANF programs and services for the City of Atlanta through their Departments of Family and Children Services. Both counties provide temporary cash assistance and other support services, with a 48-month time limit, to needy families with dependent children who are deprived of the support of at least one parent and whose family income is below the State's Standard of Need. The grant amount depends on family size and income. The counties also provide temporary cash assistance with a 48-month time limit for two-parent families as long as the assistance unit meets the definition of a two-parent household.

### *Success Story*

In recent years, Atlanta has implemented several innovative and successful programs. In particular, Fulton County implemented the Performance Management Report Card in 2003. This system generates monthly reports that show each caseworkers' performance and holds workers on all levels accountable for the outcomes of their cases and for meeting specific participation rates. The original goals set by Fulton County for its caseworkers were structured so that Atlanta could meet a 40-percent work participation rate. Fulton County later changed their goals so Atlanta would comply with the 50-percent Federal standard.

Caseworkers who achieve their monthly goals are inducted into the "50-percent club," treated to lunch at a local restaurant, and presented with certificates of achievement and other gifts. Workers who fail to meet their goals must attend a meeting with management, where the caseworker discusses why they were unable to meet their goals and what support management can provide in the future.

In addition to the report card system, several other innovative programs are underway in the Atlanta



Atlanta's recent experience has led to the following lessons learned:

- Systems that hold staff accountable for their efforts are instrumental in making personnel changes, developing leadership, and improving the overall effectiveness of an agency. These types of systems enable poor performance to be addressed through transfers or terminations, and good performance to be rewarded through incentives and promotions. For example, in 2005, Fulton County promoted five case managers based on their performance as documented through the report card system.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Atlanta's innovative programs have been successful because they are shaped around the following principles 1) TANF is a work program; 2) TANF is not good enough for any family; 3) excellence is expected from all staff; and 4) all staff on all levels are accountable.
- The representatives from all of the agencies that support TANF programs in Atlanta, including staff at both the State- and county-level, have found the onsite visits conducted through the Urban Partnerships to be helpful. This includes both their visits to other cities, and when representatives from the around the Nation have visited Atlanta. These visits provided opportunities for staff to see programs and people in action.

area, including the implementation of a performance measurement data system to monitor work participation rates, and a program that monitors vendor work participation rates. If vendors fall below expectations, the contracts are either terminated or not renewed.

### *Program Impact*

Atlanta's innovative programs have had the following effects:

- Management initially met with some resistance when it started sharing the monthly report card with all staff. Over time, however, the report card system has created a friendly competition between case managers, supervisors, and service centers, and created an incentive for caseworkers to work harder to meet their monthly goals.

*“Fulton County fully supports the Urban Partnership, which is why we send such a large team to each Urban Academy. These teams include not just management, but staff from all levels, because at the end of the day, it is staff from every level that are responsible for making our programs a success.”*

William Cook

Fulton County Department of Family and Children Services

- As a result of these innovative programs, Atlanta's work participation rate increased from 9 percent to 60 percent, and TANF adult cases fell from 5,975 to 1,800, from December 2003 to January 2006.
- Because caseloads have declined, Fulton and Dekalb County are now able to provide more intensive services to the recipients who need them most.

### *Looking to the Future*

Due to declining caseloads, Fulton and Dekalb Counties are now focusing some of their efforts on providing new types of programs, such as healthy marriage services and programs to reunite fathers with children. In addition, Atlanta is moving toward an integrated system that addresses both employment and family issues. The State has already conducted two pilots with this type of system.

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## City Profile



# Baltimore

### *City Background Information*

The city of Baltimore accounts for approximately 53 percent of Maryland's total assistance payment expenditures. These expenditures, as well as all TANF-related programs in Baltimore, are administered by the Baltimore City Department of Human Services, in conjunction with the Maryland Department of Human Resources.

The city's TANF program is characterized by a full-family sanction. If a family receives a sanction, it can only be cured by 1 day of work program compliance for the first violation, 10 days of program

compliance for the second violation, and 30 days of program compliance for the third and all subsequent violations.

Baltimore's full-family sanction along with other efforts have helped the city's TANF program succeed over the past few years. For example, in July 2006, the caseload of persons receiving temporary cash assistance and who were mandated to work was 4,995, the lowest since the inception of the TANF program. Also impressive is Baltimore's improvement in their work participation rate, from a low of 5 percent in January 2004 to 23.4 percent by July 2006. In addition, the average number of people receiving TANF benefits each month in Baltimore has declined by more than 25 percent in recent years, from a monthly average of 47,873 in 2000 to 35,680 in 2005.

### *Success Story*

Several years ago, after a visit from Turner Government Operations (TGO), a consultant for the Urban Partnerships, Baltimore implemented a universal engagement program for all work-eligible TANF recipients from the day they submit their applications. Prior to this, Baltimore focused on a



After participating in the Urban Partnerships for several years, Baltimore has this advice for getting the most out of an Urban Academy:

- When attending the Academies or other events, be open and honest about what is working and what is not working. You have to be willing to let other people help you solve problems.
- Recruit people beyond your TANF office to join your Partnership team. In January 2004, Baltimore asked

## LESSONS LEARNED

representatives from State agencies to join their team because State support is critical to the City's success. For example, the State controls all of the data systems needed to operate and improve Baltimore's work program, and only the State can make changes to the system.

- Bring staff to the Urban Academies from throughout your organization so everyone can get a feeling for the big picture. In particular, Baltimore has brought field office staff with them because they actually implement the welfare-to-work program and interact with customers.

24-month program, where people received cash for 24 months and were not required to participate in work activities or search for jobs until the end of the 24-month period. Universal engagement, which is the first part in Baltimore's 3-step strategy to improve its work participation rate, now requires every applicant to become engaged in work activities from the first day they apply for assistance. Baltimore implemented this program because their goal is to be at 50 percent workforce participation by October 2007.

### *Program Impact*

Due to universal engagement, more than 98 percent of recipients in Baltimore currently are engaged in work activities, which is an increase of 45 to 50 percentage points from the level before Baltimore met with TGO.

*“ While you can learn a lot from the other people when attending the Urban Academies, and from the Urban Partnerships in general, let other members of the Partnerships also remind you of what you are doing right because it's easy to get bogged down in the day-to-day details and always focus on what you're doing wrong. This attitude has helped us realize a 30-percent caseload reduction since joining the Urban Partnerships.”*

Tracey Paliath  
Baltimore City Department of Social Services

### *Looking to the Future*

In the future, Baltimore plans to implement a work program for pregnant women, an idea they received from Seattle's Urban Partnership team. Baltimore will implement the program in partnership with the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Baltimore and the Baltimore City Head Start Program. Baltimore also is actively searching for partners who can provide employment services to its disabled population.

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## City Profile

# Boston



equals approximately 50 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), and the standard for case closure for earnings is 82 percent of FPL.

### *Success Story*

The Boston city team joined the Urban Partnerships Initiative with a firm commitment to improving collaboration and systems integration. This commitment is evidenced in their success around reducing the food stamp error rate – without increasing staff at the TAFDC case manager level.

Boston has also made improvements in their contracting process by moving to a performance based system that is fully cognizant of the program realities mandated by the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA). For example, Boston has embraced the universal engagement model and changed contracts to require vendors to provide screening, assessment, and program services to formerly exempt populations (e.g. individuals with disabilities).

### *City Background Information*

TANF services in Boston are delivered at the Commonwealth level via the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance's (DTA) Temporary Assistance to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) program. Suffolk County (Boston) is home to approximately 20 percent of the State's TANF caseload and, as with many other urban areas, trends in caseload and work participation are very similar in Boston and the entire State. The maximum TANF grant available to families



Boston offers the following as important lessons learned from their experiences:

- Performance based contracting is an important tool for ensuring vendor services are aligned with agency directions.
- A streamlined sanction process improves customer service and supports improved data reporting with respect to the Federal work participation rate.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Industry-based skills training is critical to developing a stable workforce.

### *Program Impact*

- In addition to the significant change in moving toward a universal engagement model, Boston has had to learn a new way of doing business after time spent under a Federal waiver. This change to understanding that all program participants are included in Federal work rates has been a paradigm shift for the city.
- Related to these changes, Boston continually reviews their TANF caseload for accuracy of participation data and “lives the idea” that all participants can be engaged in meaningful work activities. This idea is supported at all levels through staff training, service design, program requirements, and a constant feedback loop.

*“ The Urban Partnerships Initiative has helped to clarify and illustrate our goals and objectives. We have been able to connect with our partners, find commonality among the participants, and learn some valuable new ideas.”*

Yasmin Otero  
Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

### *Looking to the Future*

As Boston grapples with transitioning out of wavier status and faces the new requirements associated with the DRA, they are committed to developing and implementing a management information system (MIS) that allows them to capture and report high-quality, verifiable data. This will support them in increasing countable work hours and establishing appropriate work activities.

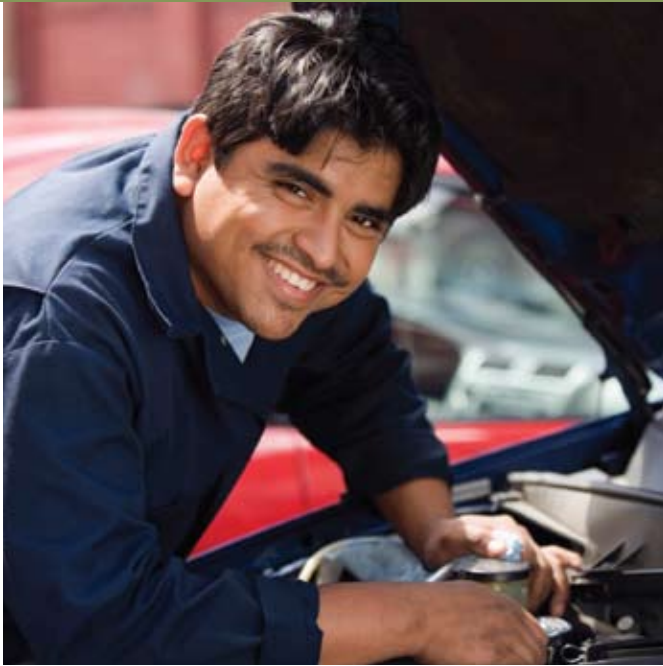
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## City Profile

# Dallas-Fort Worth



### City Background Information

In the Dallas-Ft. Worth (DFW) area, the State of Texas Health and Human Services Commission is responsible for eligibility determination for TANF programs. Employment programs, however, are delivered locally by two separate workforce development boards: WorkSource for Dallas County and Workforce Solutions of Tarrant County. The population receiving TANF benefits has decreased over the years in the DFW area and local agencies are now working with the hardest-to-serve clients, many of which are child-only cases.

### Success Story

The staff in the DFW area responsible for TANF programs have had tremendous success with their Business Access Distance Learning Project, which originated in Dallas County under welfare-to-work funding. The County designed the program as a retention project for welfare recipients who had accepted entry-level employment and offered participants an in-home computer so that they could access additional training from home, without after-hours daycare and travel expenses. Once participants complete their assigned curriculum, they earn ownership of the computer equipment.

So far, Dallas County has enrolled more than 3,000 participants using a variety of funding sources, including a National Emergency Grant for Katrina evacuees, Welfare-to-Work funding for welfare recipients meeting certain criteria, and funding from the Workforce Investment Act for Youth.

The Business Access program offers training on numerous subjects, including basic accounting and banking; basic computer literacy, business





## City Profile

# Detroit



### *City Background Information*

The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) is the State agency responsible for administering TANF programs. Under the directive of DHS, the Wayne County Department of Human Services is charged with overseeing the TANF operations for Wayne County, which includes Detroit. As of July 2006, Wayne County had 34,947 Family Independence Program cases, 165,663 food assistance cases, 246,490 medical assistance cases, and 19,403 child day care cases.

### *Success Story*

The Work First program has been Detroit's most successful welfare reform initiative and instrumental in getting thousands of Detroit residents off welfare. The Work First program helps TANF recipients, non-custodial parents, and recipients of non-cash assistance with support, such as child day care, Medicaid, and food stamps, establish and maintain a connection to the labor market.

In collaboration with DHS, the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth administers Work First. Funding for Work First is allocated to 25 Michigan Works! agencies that contract with local organizations to deliver services.

In Detroit, the Detroit Workforce Development Department (DWDD), a Michigan Works! Agency, administers the Work First program. DWDD uses its funds to provide job search services, education and training programs, and employment-related supportive services, such as transportation allowances, uniforms, tools, and automobile repairs. Participants enter the program after being referred by the Wayne County Department of Human Services.

With the assistance of the Urban Partnerships, multiple agencies across the Detroit region were involved in team meetings to address and resolve barriers faced by TANF recipients. Team partners included representatives





## City Profile

# Minneapolis



From about 2000 to 2003, total unduplicated TANF cases went from 20,290 to 21,452. Since then, however, these numbers have declined, with just 18,985 TANF cases reported in 2005.

The Federal work participation rate also has varied over the past several years in Hennepin County, from a high of 40.5 percent in 2002 down to 25.2 percent in 2004. This decrease is due in large part to the loss of a Federal waiver that previously allowed Hennepin County to disregard exempt participants from inclusion in the participation rates.

### City Background Information

In Minneapolis, the Hennepin County Human Services and Health Department administers TANF, including the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), the State's welfare reform program for low-income families with children.

Through MFIP and other initiatives, Hennepin County serves approximately 29 percent of Minnesota's TANF cases. More than one-third of these participants are non-citizens or naturalized citizens.

In recent years, TANF cases in Hennepin County have fluctuated, but now appear to be shrinking.

### Success Story

Minnesota is responsible for introducing the highly successful Diversionary Work Program (DWP). Implemented in July 2004, DWP is a work-focused initiative that enables families to meet employment goals quickly through a short-term, intensive effort. The purpose of DWP is to move people immediately to work, thereby diverting families away from ever enrolling in MFIP.

For families participating in DWP, all adults in the family are considered jobseekers and must focus on obtaining immediate employment. Before families receive any benefits, jobseekers must work with counselors to develop employment plans that focus







## City Profile

# Oakland



### *City Background Information*

In Oakland, CA, the California Department of Social Services supervises and the Alameda County Social Services Agency administers the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program, California's version of TANF. The State sets overall policies, makes rules, determines eligibility criteria, and sets benefit levels. State agencies also monitor local practices and provide technical assistance to counties to ensure State policies are followed. Within these parameters, counties have varying amounts of administrative flexibility.

### *Success Story*

The Urban Partnerships Initiative's focus on tracking performance management provided Alameda County with new insights to solve a pressing problem in a related area—child welfare. In 2003, the Alameda County Social Services Agency developed and implemented an award-winning automated voice response system after realizing that the agency had overpaid its foster care providers by millions of dollars. This error was largely due to the inability of the agency to accurately track payments. The agency also had difficulty recovering funds when they discovered overpayments.

Working directly with their telephone and computer vendors, Alameda County developed the new foster care tracking system, which requires case workers to report any change in the placement of a child via telephone. In addition, foster care providers must use either the telephone tracking system or the related web site option to report on each child's status during the prior month before the agency will issue any payments.





## City Profile

# Omaha



family that turns to public assistance. Omaha accomplishes this by promoting personal responsibility and empowering parents to support their families.

Over the past 10 years, Omaha's historic caseload has declined from a high in 1996 of 6,912 families, to 4,672 families in 2007. Similarly, the State's work participation rates have risen, from just over 28 percent in 2002 to nearly 33 percent in 2005. The 2006 targeted work participation rate is 32 percent.

### *City Background Information*

The City of Omaha accounts for more than 50 percent of the TANF cases in Nebraska. This caseload is served through Omaha's Employment First program. The goal of Employment First is to provide temporary, transitional support for Nebraska families so that the provision of training, education, and employment preparation will assist the families in attaining their maximum level of economic independence possible.

With this mission, Omaha is dedicated to improving the standard of living and quality of life for every

### *Success Story*

After attending an Urban Partnerships Academy several years ago, Omaha, with support from the United Way, developed a program to ensure that families involved in the Employment First program were receiving their Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Prior to implementing the program, the tax credit money was previously sitting untouched, and families were not receiving the money they deserved.

To implement the EITC program, Omaha formed a coalition with various organizations, including the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, local chambers of commerce, Goodwill Industries, and others, to disseminate information to targeted areas regarding





## City Profile

# Seattle



### City Background Information

In Washington State, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is responsible for issuing TANF benefits, case management, and social services. The responsibility for administering the State's welfare-to-work program, known as WorkFirst, is in the hands of a joint partnership between several State agencies, local employers, tribal governments, workforce development councils, and community organizations. Implementation and coordination of the WorkFirst program is handled at the local level by 32 local planning areas (LPAs), 3 of which cover the City of Seattle. The LPAs are comprised

of representatives from State and local agencies, community and technical colleges, nonprofit organizations, tribes, and contractors.

Until recently, Washington State did not track its workforce participation rates at the local level. It did, however, keep historic caseload data and trends for Seattle and surrounding King County. These data show that the WorkFirst program has been a success in the region over the past several years, as caseloads have dropped from a high of 8,374 cases in October 2005 to 7,319 cases in June 2006, a reduction of more than 12 percent in less than a year.

### Success Story

Several years ago, Seattle started the Food Stamp Employment & Training (FSET) pilot program, after receiving related technical assistance funded by the Urban Partnerships. The FSET project is a partnership of community organizations and colleges that use private grants, State and city funds, and partner revenues in an innovative way to draw matching Federal monies. For the pilot project, Seattle used these funds to expand job search, employment training, and job placement services to recipients of





## City Profile

# St. Louis



In St. Louis, the local workforce investment board, known as the St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE), is responsible for administering the TANF program for the City through a contractual agreement with the Missouri Division of Workforce Development.

In St. Louis, the total number cases and recipients have declined in recent years. In 2001, St. Louis had a total of 16,980 cases and 49,983 recipients. By 2005, these numbers had gone down to 12,668 cases and 33,376 cases, a reduction of 25 percent and 33 percent, respectively.

### *City Background Information*

In Missouri, the employment and training component of the TANF program is administered by the Missouri Division of Workforce Development, per executive order of the Governor in 2003. The Missouri Department of Social Services' Family Support Division, however, retains the role of the State TANF agency, and therefore continues to determine eligibility and make initial decisions on whether or not an individual is a mandatory work participant according to the Federal and State TANF laws.

### *Success Story*

In fiscal year 2005, TANF recipients and other low-income individuals began participating in a new pilot initiative called the Career Pathway Life Sciences program. Designed by Better Family Life, Inc. (BFL) and the Metropolitan Education and Training Center, in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the program offers an innovative approach to creating educational "stepping stones" for the advancement of workers and job seekers, including those with basic skills deficiencies, to provide a qualified workforce to local employers. Participants in the program receive training for entry-level careers in the life sciences, including biotechnology, biomedical devices, pharmaceuticals, health care, and food and beverage industries.





## Ten Cities, Ten Lessons

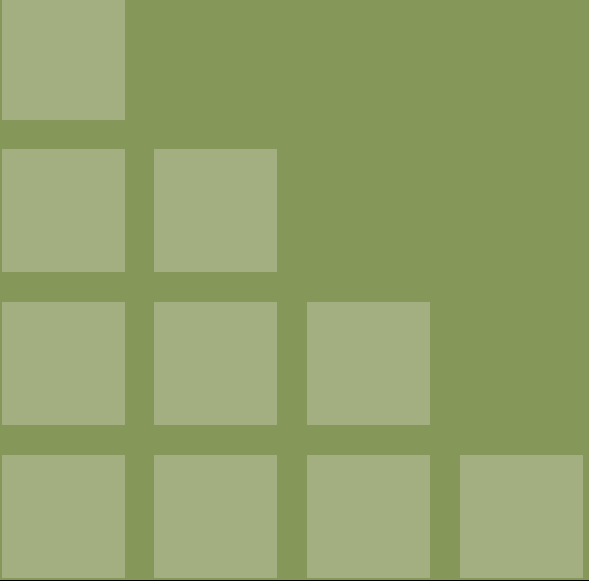
As Urban Partners, the participants have been change agents in their home cities. Over the course of their participation in this Initiative, great progress has been made in serving TANF families and supporting their journey to self-sufficiency. Urban Partnerships' Academies foster the peer-to-peer methodology of the Initiative and support TANF stakeholders in large

urban centers from around the country. The following include key lessons learned that have helped advance the Urban Partnerships cities implement innovative, successful work-first TANF programs.

- **Institute change at all levels – empower staff to implement new programs.** Moving in new directions can be challenging. It is critical to clearly articulate programmatic directions and empower staff with the training, skills, and information necessary to effectively carry out the agency vision.
- **Promote universal engagement and develop programs and policies that support staff to do the same.** The Urban Partners recognize that all recipients have the capacity to work in a rewarding and meaningful placement. Universal engagement at the front end operationalizes this commitment.







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