**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Promoting Economic Self-Sufficiency through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) & Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA)
2Gen Partnerships**

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JEN JOHNSON: Now I'd like to hand things over to Megan Baird. She's the program manager for the Office of Workforce Investment at the Employment and Training Administration. Megan?

MEGAN BAIRD: Thanks, Jen. And hi, everyone. Thank you for joining us today. We are very excited to have one of our partners in WIOA, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, joining us for today's event on, again, "Promoting Economic Self-Sufficiency Through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families – TANF – and Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act – WIOA – 2Gen Partnerships."

And also joining us today are our workforce colleagues in Maryland and Washington State. And together we'll be highlighting specific strategies to support 2gen efforts and how these efforts have resulted in improved policies, collaboration, and outcomes for families.

Again, my name is Megan Baird and I will be your moderator for this WIOA live event. I am the program manager for our H1-B funded grant programs with the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Workforce Investment, providing national leadership, oversight, policy guidance, and technical assistance to the public workforce system, through several discretionary grant initiatives.

Joining me is Susan Golonka, the acting director of the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance. And in this role Susan oversees the administration of the TANF block grant, Tribal TANF, the Health Professional Opportunity grant, and Health Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood activities; and provides overall guidance and direction for the work of the Office of Family Assistance.

Also joining us is Brandon Butler, deputy assistant secretary of the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulations, Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, which oversees workforce development and adult education initiatives throughout the state. And Brandon has also recently led efforts to craft Maryland's state combined workforce plan, and is part of implementing the department's youth apprenticeship initiative.

And last but certainly not least, our final presenter today is Louisa Erickson, who currently serves as the WIOA project manager at the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Economic Service Administration. Louisa leads program and policy work related to the planning and implementation of WIOA relevant to TANF, as well as alignment among broader workforce development efforts.

So as you can see, we have some really knowledgeable speakers joining us for today's event.

And before we move forward into the objectives, we wanted to quickly review a polling question that we had up when you were all signing in today, to help us identify your experience with 2gen efforts.

And it looks like most of you are fairly new to two-generation concepts and approaches. And a good chunk of you are familiar with the concepts but came here today to learn more. And a handful that seem to have already begun planning or already have efforts in place. So hopefully you leave today and can really understand more about these approaches and hear some specific strategies from our speakers.

Our goals for today's event are to provide an overview of 2gen approaches, as well as connection to TANF and WIOA implementation opportunities. We will also highlight specific promising strategies that Maryland and Washington State are using to leverage TANF and WIOA funding in support of 2gen efforts. And finally, we will share how WIOA state planning and 2gen efforts have resulted in improved policies, collaboration, and outcomes for low-income families.

And just a quick summary of today's agenda. We have a great discussion planned and we'll be leaving time at the end for questions from you all. So feel free to start typing those in the chat function as we go along, or you can hold onto them for the end of today's event.

And now, to get us started, I'd like to turn it over to Susan Golonka with Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, to get us started with an overview of 2gen. Susan?

SUSAN GOLONKA: Thank you. And I'm delighted to be here, representing the Administration for Children and Families, where we have really given some thought to this notion of a two-generation approach to strengthening families and reducing poverty.

And I think it's particularly timely to have this discussion with our WIOA partners because now that TANF is a mandatory partner at the One-Stop, we're excited to bring how we think about serving families to the new collaborations that are occurring at the One-Stops. And you'll hear more about that from our other speakers today.

So really – and it's very basic – a two-generation approach is about meeting the needs of children and parents together. And if you start from a place of serving children, perhaps your Early Head Start program, you might think about how can we weave in ways to serve parents to help strengthen their parenting skills, for example. Or if you start from a place of serving adults, perhaps you're an employment and training program, you're thinking about how might we provide quality child care to those children.

From ACF, our starting point has been that we want good outcomes for children. And to achieve that, it's important to recognize that children grown up in families; that strong, supportive, and economically stable families promote better outcomes.

Additionally – and this I think is important when we think about the starting point for the workforce system – when we consider efforts to promote success in employment for adults who are parents, we must be mindful of the roles, responsibilities, and challenges that workers face as parents. It's not simply about do we have the right training program; are we connecting to the right employers? All of which are critical.

But it's also issues that relate to a parent's success in employment and training. Is child care available? Is transportation available? What happens when the children are sick? When happens when school is out? Do the hours of training align with school?

So there's a whole host of questions like that, as well as things like, are there health, mental health, or other issues that might need to be addressed? And I think those are the sorts of thinking that TANF and their experience with thinking about that a parent has child responsibilities as well, that's what we hope to bring to the table. And I would say these insights aren't new, but they're not always reflected in the programs we design.

And now this slide here has a few sort of – some of the outcomes that we talk about when we look at a two-generation approach. And these are not all of the outcomes. And in fact, there's some diversity in outcomes that programs are thinking about.

But when we think of parent outcomes, really, what can you do to strengthen a parent in terms of the skills and the nurturing they provide to their children? How can we lessen stress as they try and meet their responsibilities? How can they work better with the school system, for example?

Child outcomes. Of course, an important one, is the child ready for school? Have they improved their social and emotional development? And how are their interactions with their parents?

And then the family outcomes. Are we increasing family income and financial security? Do families have the ability to meet their – parents have the ability to meet their basic needs?

So when we talk about 2gen activities, though, some of the areas we focus on include linkages between high-quality educational services for children, and workforce development and training programs for their parents. We talk about programs that can help parents strengthen the skills and knowledge and resources to support their children's development. And then we focus a great deal on the economic and social supports needed for stability and resilience.

And then what we sometimes call the "secret sauce" in two-generation approaches is what we call building social capital. And that's really helping families create those connections that help them achieve their goals, whether it's connecting them to other families who are confronting and dealing with some of the same issues; or often it's connecting them to resources that they don't have on their own, like community-based organizations, employers, and the like.

Looking more specifically at some of the programs, when we talk about a child-focused program it would be sort of intentionally helping the families connect to Early Head Start, high-quality child care, home visiting, behavioral health programs. And then for the parent, it's within the context of workforce development, occupational training, postsecondary ed, these other issues here – home visiting as well, coaching, parenting skills.

And I think it's sort of important to note that we talk about this as an approach. There's not any single model or a particular initiative we would necessarily point to, but it's really about thinking about how do you address all the needs of the family – or many of the needs? And it often starts with a basic assessment.

It's also clear from – when you look at these lists of activities, it's not about one system or program doing all of it, but it's really about aligning systems and providing opportunities for families to connect to these. And we often talk about it's not just referring families; its' helping that family get that service and making it easy for them to access that service.

And finally, the quality of the service is just very important. It's not that any old service will do; we want high-quality services that really will foster the better outcomes that we're desiring.

And then more specifically, we talk about how might we connect TANF and WIOA in a way that will strengthen families. One is to offer contextualized adult education, where we might be starting at the bottom rungs, if you will, of a career ladder or career pathway. It's working with providers to perhaps provide training, or employers, around a child's school day. Of course access to child care and transportation.

And then, again, I think a starting point for much of this is that when a family comes in the door – or a parent comes in the door – it's providing – looking at the whole family and doing an assessment that looks at the whole family's needs.

When we look around – well, let me just say, two-generation is something I think is gaining traction, if you will, or resonating with many individuals, many service providers. And when we look at this map here, you can see some of the efforts around the country. These ones in particular, most of them are related to work that has been going on in the federal government within the Office of Family Assistance.

We have a two-generation community of learning among some of our grantees. We had a policy academy, where several of the jurisdictions focused on 2gen. We have a rural impact program, which has been a cross-department initiative. And the Department of Labor, which we'll hear from shortly, is strengthening – had some grants around strengthening families.

So with that, I'm going to turn it back over. And I just encourage good conversation and questions later on. Megan's going to be talking now about the grants in particular that DOL has provided around two-generation strategies.

MS. BAIRD: Thanks, Susan. And as Susan highlighted, WIOA offers a host of opportunities that support strategic alignment and framework for service delivery, which includes opportunities for innovation and 2gen engagement at the local, state, and national level.

And in an effort to fund innovative workforce strategies that support parents with child-care needs, the Department of Labor recently announced the H1-B funded Strengthening Working Families Initiative – or we call them SWFI grants – which parallels WIOA goals for strategic alignment and coordination of service delivery.

And this initiative provides support to parents who face barriers to training and are in need of increasing skills and competencies that would prepare them for entry or advancement along a career pathway for jobs in middle- to high-skilled occupations.

And through the SWFI grants, nearly 54 million (dollars) was awarded to 14 public and private partnerships. And these partnerships included the public workforce system, education and training providers, child-care service providers, child-care programs, local human service providers, business entities, and employers. And these grants will give more working parents a career pathway to secure higher wage jobs by addressing the significant barriers to participating in and completing training, and in trying to find and acquire affordable quality child care while attending skills training programs.

And these grants also leveraged additional public and private funding to support the grant funds that were awarded, in an effort to promote activities that address barriers to accessing training and employment, including: the colocation of training and child-care services; increased access through unconventional training delivery times or locations; flexibilities related to scheduling and child-care exigencies; and improved access to child care and other related participant support services.

Now, these grants are still now. They're about six months in, so really just getting off of the ground. But we do look forward to sharing promising strategies that result from these grants, and address the training and child care needs of working parents.

And if you are interested in additional information on the Department of Labor Strengthening Working Families grant – oh, next slide – you can see on the next slide that is about to come up – there we go – where the grants are located. So there's 14 of them across the U.S. And there is a link on this slide as well to the grantee project abstracts for each of the 14 funded grants.

And now I will turn it over to Brandon Butler, who is going to share an overview of Maryland's 2gen effort. Brandon?

BRANDON BUTLER: Thank you, Megan, very much. And good afternoon, everyone. My name is Brandon Butler. I'm the deputy assistant secretary for the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, and I'm very excited to be highlighting some of Maryland's 2gen approach, something that I've entitled "Pockets of Innovation and Promise for Maryland's Families."

I would like to thank the team at ACF in the U.S. Department of Labor for hosting this webinar. And thank you all for also taking the time out of your busy schedule to join us today.

As any good attorney, I wanted to start with a disclaimer. We are very grateful for the invitation, but we in Maryland don't have it all figured out. We are starting in our 2gen journey, just like many of you that are on the webinar today. And for us, the 2gen approach really starts with vision and partnership. And so that's what I really wanted to share today.

I would have entitled my presentation "Build It and They Will Come," but unfortunately, a blockbuster movie had already used that one.

So moving to the first slide, we're talking about the vision in the TANF and workforce partnership. And it's really evolving in a fantastic way in Maryland and we really have one thing to credit, and that is WIOA.

Two-gen, as was mentioned by Susan earlier, is really about financial security. And what is more about financial security than providing a sustainable career pathway to our customers? So we're proud of the steps that Maryland has taken thus far to memorialize Governor Larry Hogan's vision of Maryland's workforce system, one that provides economic development and jobs, that's fiscally responsible, that is dedicated to improving the lives of Marylanders.

We are very proud of the innovations that have been outlined in our state plan, as many of you all are on this call, and we are looking to foster that at the local level through local plans, through memorandums of understanding and resource sharing agreements.

We've created in Maryland an alignment group that was a creation of the state plan that represents the core partners in the system. We're very proud of our partners at the Maryland Department of Human Resource; the Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Rehabilitation Service; and even adult education, our partners that are just across the hall from us in workforce, that are integrated within the system that is helping us, and as we're moving together as a systems approach to move Maryland's workforce system further along.

And as I have the quote there at the bottom, this has really been the call for us in Maryland. "There's a better way to do it, find it."

So here's where we started. We started with nine WIOA work groups. We really took a look at hitting the reset button. It was really one of those things for us to realize that it's not just about the workforce programs at the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation. Other places, other agencies, are doing workforce too. It's very akin to seen in the Wizard of Oz, where everything switched from black and white to technicolor.

We had the charge from our region – and region two U.S. DOL has been amazing partners for us because they challenges us not to wait, challenged us to confront the tough issues, to have the difficult conversations. And we took them up on hitting the reset button because, just because something was done a certain way, doesn't meant that it was done right.

And so we've had hundreds of comments over two comment periods of our plan. I provided there a list of – or a statement that we provided right at the front of our state workforce plan. And that last little phrase, "Maryland dedicates to learn together, to discuss the pressing issues, and to come to lasting solutions for our collective customers."

We have a mantra in our state plan called "placing people before performance." And I provided the little segment there that says, "Placing people before performance means that Maryland's workforce system is dedicated to focusing its efforts on those who need our assistance the most.

This strategy does not mean that Maryland is going to forsake all performance measures."

And let me say that again for our partners at U.S. DOL. Maryland is not going to forsake all performance measures. But it means that Maryland's workforce system is dedicated to improving the lives of Marylanders.

So here we have this audacious statement at the beginning of our workforce plan. How are we going to have that statement? How are we going to say that and not be innovative? How are we going to say that and not work together? How are we going to say that and not focus on all Marylanders?

So we're one of 14 states that has taken TANF as a combined plan partner. As I mentioned, we had that mantra of placing people before performance and we've gotten kudos from a number of organizations; I've listed two there, CLASP and the Aspen Institute. And really, though, it's not about the accolades; it's about placing our customers at the center of our focus.

So here it is. April 1, 2016 could have come and gone. We hit the button on the portal. We got the email that said, congratulations, you now have a workforce plan. Now what? It could have sat on the shelf. It could have sat on the shelf, collected dust for two or four years and that could have been it. It could have been simply a compliance document or it could have been a roadmap.

So here we have: It's one thing to plan; it's a totally different thing to implement. And so now we have all these compliance – the compliance part of WIOA, the local plans, the MOUs, the resource sharing. We've now seen in our local areas they're creating alignment groups. And really, again, the focus – we can be innovative in Maryland because there's a relationship.

And we've had two state convenings we've been very, very proud of, building up not just people that have come from workforce, but we have actually tasked our local areas – our 12 local areas – to develop teams, to bring in local providers of adult education, to bring in local TANF providers.

We've been also very lucky to have support from HHS and from national leaders such as Mathematica and Michelle Derr. We've been a part of the Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy. We've taken part in the Ascend at the Aspen Institute. I've been very fortunate to be a co-chair of the state policy group. Been also part of the National Governors Association events.

And we have two sites, one in Garrett and Allegany County – Garrett County originally – where I'm originally from. Very rural part of the state. And also Montgomery County. The interesting part there is that they're having the same discussions that we're having about implementation of WIOA. They're talking about resource sharing. They're talking about common intake and common forms.

So we've been very fortunate also to develop in Maryland Benchmarks to Success, a way that we're moving the system forward in Maryland. I wanted to outline the goals of those benchmarks.

Goal one, increasing the earning capacity of Maryland's workforce system customers by maximizing access to employment. Another, by maximizing access to and the use of skills in credentialing. Also, maximizing access to and use of life management skills. Another, by eliminating barriers to employment. And another, building effectiveness and efficiency in Maryland's workforce system.

We could not have done that had it not been the close working relationship that we currently have with our partners, both at the state and local level. And again, if a picture paints a thousand words, there it is. We're moving together as a system – Maryland's workforce system.

So here's what we've learned thus far, very quickly. Build a system. Don't be satisfied in being the best-kept secret. If we are the best-kept secret, we can continue to be – continue to go on business as usual. We're celebrating innovation in Maryland. We've got a best practices guide where we are celebrating the innovations that we're finding at the local level already.

Prepare for barriers; cylinders of excellence, as one of the secretaries in Maryland likes to say. Our assistant secretary started this journey with WIOA and he's talking about – and he's really talking about – he had a conversation and said, it would be a cold day in you-know-where before we start collaborating. Well, he stood up at the last convening and said, hey, welcome to a cold day.

So here we are. Path forward. How can we leverage 2gen to add value to the TANF/WIOA relationship? We're asking the question, what does a family-friendly job center look like? How can we translate 2gen into workforce development? There's a lot of people on the call with workforce development. And I really, truly believe this is not just about human services, but how can we build a relationship?

And finally, where does 2gen fit in with adult education? Because let's remember that Title II of the act is Adult Education and Family Literacy. What is more 2gen than that?

So I wanted to end with a quote. This is from a book that I absolutely love called "Peak Performance." They said, "A key element to innovation is making a compelling case for change. If you can't convince people that change is needed, you won't get very far."

So thank you very much for your time and attention. And I am turning it over to Louisa Erickson.

LOUISA ERICKSON: Good afternoon, everybody. I'm really excited to be able to be here with you and talk about WIOA and TANF alignment, and also the impacts that can potentially be had on intergenerational poverty and looking at 2gen approaches.

When we started thinking about TANF and access to TANF services and integration through WIOA, we had a couple of different places that we needed to start. And while the natural fit may seem to be just focusing in on the legislation and how to meet our requirements, we wanted to take a really mindful and intentional approach to how we came into this as strong partners, both in our external working environment with our workforce development partners, internally within our own department, and the multiple programs and services that are housed within the Department of Social Health Services, not just in our own administration or through TANF.

And then also thinking about the framework that we're trying to create around whole family approaches and really building capacity for individuals, families, and communities in order for folks to be more successful.

So in thinking about TANF and WIOA alignment, I'm going to talk about that workforce development aspect a little bit first; and then go into it a little bit more around the foundations that we're trying to create for better overall community, whole family success around economic security.

(Pause.) Sorry. I'm having some – there we go.

So when we started thinking about TANF and WIOA alignment, we started thinking about our collaboration and what we needed to do in order to be part of the planning process and at the table. We set up opportunities for us to start working in specific localities; we have 12 workforce development councils across the state. And also participating in the statewide planning with our broader workforce development partners.

We considered looking at the programs and services that we administer here in economic services. And then considering when Washington was looking at whether we would have a unified plan or a combined plan, what do we want to bring our programs in and have them articulated as workforce development system programs and better show the alignment there? And we decided that yes, we would.

And so Washington state did select a combined plan. And here at DSHS we brought in TANF and also our SNAP E&T – basic food, employment and training program – into the combined plan. As Brandon mentioned, there are only 14 states that brought TANF into the combined plan, and we are one of them.

So when we were considering our TANF access and integration opportunities, we wanted to think about what are the real reasons that we want to partner, and use that as the foundation for our work going forward. And what we really want to do is make sure that TANF recipients have more access to the high-quality opportunities that are tied to openings, career pathways, education and training opportunities through our workforce development system partners.

And then also think about how can we improve the continuity of supports and services for parents who may move off of TANF, or come off and on TANF over time? What can we do to better align and create intentional pathways through different programs in that client-centered approach? As opposed to kind of making sure that the client is familiar with everything and that they have to figure out what happens next. How can we work together to partner and collaborate to make an integrated pathway for clients throughout, regardless of where they start when they enter the workforce development system and the needs that they may have?

As you all know, TANF is a relatively low rung on the ladder when it comes to supports, both financially and in terms of education and training opportunities for clients. And when we want to see people not only entering the workforce, but strongly attaching to the workforce and then having opportunities for career and wage progression over time, we need our partners. What can we do and what can they do to make this happen?

And then lastly, we have a real opportunity to look at reducing duplication services and activities. Right now, our WorkFirst program, which is our TANF work-based aspect, I think we have a very strong program and it partners very well with all of our existing workforce development system partners. But it does kind of run alongside and parallel our system, rather than completely intersect and integrate.

So what could we do to reduce that parallel nature of our TANF work program, and then free up resources not just within the TANF environment but both in the WIOA environment as well, to have shared cohorts of clients and different opportunities to share information and resources?

So one of the things that we decided to do when the WIOA legislation was passed was to make sure that we had good stakeholder feedback on what the folks that support and access the TANF system would like to see in a good, ideal world around integrated services with TANF and the broader workforce development system.

We held nine regional forums, invited stakeholders from all of those regions that included providers, our partners, and community members that may access the program. And we also contracted with another provider to do four regional sessions that were specifically for our immigrant and refugee communities, to get some specific feedback there as well.

And there was very consistent feedback across all of these forums, some top issues that emerged that folks would like to see Washington state consider when they're thinking about the workforce development system, how strong it could be, and fully integrating TANF. And these were the items that emerged.

So cross-training and professional development for both TANF and workforce system partner staff. How can we be better informed about each other's programs and work, and work together? Better data information sharing.

Common intake. Now, this is something that benefits us at the provider side as well as in terms of the clients, reducing the need for redundant information and streamlining entry.

Looking at blended and braided funding. And considering that not just from the aspect – blended and braided funding is something we talk about a lot and figuring out how to kind of provide a patchwork of services. But in this sense, really thinking about where do funds come into play and how can we align them for clients specifically. But that work should be something that's done kind of behind the curtain and the clients aren't too aware of it or burdened by it. How do we make that happen?

Considering coordinated approaches to life skills or soft skills or employment and career readiness education. And one of the reasons for this is we have a lot of different life skills curricula out there that may be done differently across providers. How can we have common elements that we're allowing folks to kind of build capacity in areas that would make them more successful?

And one of the things we wanted to consider here was not just the typical kind of pre-employment instruction and information that people get when they're in job search. But this is one of our 2gen efforts here as well is to start to think about how can we build individual capacity around parenting skills, around health and wellness? Whole person and whole family approaches to helping individuals be successful and have a lot of integrity around their abilities to both enter and attach to the workforce.

Employer and business engagement and education. That is not just along the lines of the typical kind of business engagement model or labor exchange model with employers. Yes, we do serve employers when we think about workforce development and providing a well-prepared and educated workforce.

But one of the things that we all know is that the folks that we're serving today, and the needs that they have, and the needs of the children that we'll be serving in the future, are very different than the needs of the workers 10 years ago or 20 years ago. And while we're all working to think about innovation and how we better prepare our workforce, we also need to align with employers to think about how we can share with them that information, so they can think about maybe some different models for employer retention strategies with clients and workers, so that their workers can be more successful and they can have a more engaged and retained workforce.

Access was a huge topic of discussion in all of our stakeholder forums. And not just access in the physical sense or for individuals with disabilities, but thinking about true cultural access, literacy issues, and – like Susan mentioned earlier – transportation, child care, different aspects that people that may have socioeconomic challenges may find in accessing a One-Stop.

And like Brandon said earlier, from the "Field of Dreams" around "If you build it, they will come," they may come. But if they're not welcome, it's not accessible, or there aren't true opportunities there for folks, they won't come back.

And lastly, equity. True equity and thinking about where we are in terms of the needs that our workforce system, our TANF clients, and the disproportionality that exists; and that when we're thinking about programs and services and providing good services, that we need to be intentional about disproportionality as well.

So the really great part about getting out front right away and doing this stakeholder feedback, and being a part of the planning process with the broader state system, was we were able to take this feedback back to the planning table with our broader workforce development partners and advocate for it strongly every step of the way. And our Washington state combined plan has every single element that I just mentioned here as core goals embedded within it. And so we feel really good that our program was able to help craft some of that.

As we are also thinking then about coming strongly within the workforce development system, we had to think about our internal opportunities. And Brandon mentioned some cylinders of success. And I would say that that picture that Brandon showed, which was the siloes on the farm, unfortunately sometimes that's how they end up representing instead, which is standing together and yet separately and not merging.

And so we started thinking about what do we have going on internally? Not just within economic services here at DSHS, but across our broader departments, that are the populations that are represented under WIOA that need stronger attachment to the workforce.

And so we created an internal steering committee that has representation from all of our different divisions and administrations, and comes together monthly to talk about employment-related opportunities and activities, but also to kind of intentionally align.

So we have engaged because of WIOA, like I said, our SNAP E&T program; foster care; our juvenile rehabilitation for youth that are involved with the juvenile justice system; the Senior Community Services Employment Program, which also came into our combined state plan under the Department of Social Health Services; the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation as well. So that we're talking together about the opportunities that WIOA creates and how we may start to think about aligning ourselves a little bit better.

We also have a department goal that we are working to really create a framework around, and WIOA plays a strong role here. But also, the 2gen efforts, which is – we have an articulated goal to reduce the number of household in poverty that are at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level by 2025. And so we're thinking about all the different aspects that may come into play there.

We have participated in the Frontiers of Innovation work, which is a partnership with the Harvard Center for the Developing Child, and really focuses in on the impacts of trauma and adversity and the resulting toxic stress that then has impacts on executive function and development for children, that has lifelong consequences into adulthood. And this is one of our strong 2gen approaches.

About three years ago we, as part of the Frontiers of Innovation project, partnered with our Department of Early Learning and also Thrive Washington to bring evidence-based home visiting to TANF parents and help those folks have a stronger connection with their children and build individual capacity, particularly focusing in on parents that were on our infant exemption – so those who were exempted from work requirements while their children were infants – and spending some time there not just being their child's first and best teacher, but maximizing that opportunity.

We are involved with the Systems of Family Stability Policy Academy. And within that we did choose three enhancement areas that align around our poverty goals, as well as our workforce development and our strengthening individuals and communities. So TANF and WIOA integration. Two-generational approaches to reducing poverty.

And using NEAR science – which is not almost-science, but actual science – combining four elements, neuroscience, epigenetics, adverse childhood experiences, and resilience, to inform case management and coaching for TANF families.

And we selected – as part of our work we wanted to kind of surface good ideas and see where we might have some local successes that we could test further and potentially replicate and scale. And so we instituted 15 pilots across 25 of our community services offices, with at least one of the three enhancement areas that I just mentioned.

So as part of that work, one of the things that we did was we trained 11 of our community services offices on the NEAR science. And then we followed up that and thought about, understanding NEAR science, what we do know about adversity and trauma and some other elements of brain development during childhood is that executive function skills can be negatively impacted. Either while the brain is developing or because of toxic stress and the kind of flood of chemicals that comes into the brain that doesn't allow either good connections to be made; or where good connections exist, for them to be accessed.

And I'm just going to talk very briefly about what executive function skills are, which is where we focus in when we're thinking about capacity building for our clients.

And executive function skills are the skills that we use – there are three areas there, used to organize and plan things, so organization, time management, planning/prioritization; skills we use to control how we react to situations, response inhibition, flexibility, emotional control, metacognition; and then the skills we use to get things done, task initiation, sustained attention, goal-directed persistence, stress tolerance, and working memory.

And if you look at all of these things and you think about what it takes to be successful both as an individual, as a parent, as a part of a family, a community, and most definitely in the workplace, these are the skills that you need to have in order to be successful.

And what we hear from employers and what we know from our own experiences, people can get jobs. Keeping jobs is the hard part. And when we hear about the reasons why people can't get jobs, too often it's tied back to executive function skills.

And so as part of our 2gen approach and workforce development, we're thinking about how do we build capacity around executive function skills? And when we build that capacity with parents, we are going to have effects with children as well. Not just from the modeling and the repetition there, but from building actual neuropathways while their brains are developing around how we react to things, how we organize things, how we get things done.

One of the ways that we'll be looking at leveraging WIOA funding around these efforts is, through the WIOA discretionary funds opportunity in Washington state, we applied and were awarded $1.2 million to conduct a pilot where we will be taking a look at intergenerational approaches to impact workforce development.

Now, workforce development itself really is an intergenerational approach because, as Susan mentioned earlier, when households have attachment to the workforce and they have more resources, there are positive impacts on the family and around the intergenerational aspect.

Workforce development allows us to help folks with educational attainment. What we know about educational attainment is – a couple of kind of correlating pieces of research – that parents with a higher level of educational attainment have more involvement in their children's education; that the number one indicator for student success is parental involvement. So helping parents get to that place is going to help children as well.

Additionally, that parents with a higher level of educational attainment, their children tend to have a higher level as well. Educational attainment, very, very important in terms of economic self-sufficiency and security, and workforce entry and attachment.

We also are going to look at some other aspects. And what we want to do is really conduct a thorough stakeholder and partnership building planning year, where we're going to think about strategies. But not just those that are typically around workforce development. Thinking about community strengthening; asset development; building protective factors; recognizing and mitigating risk factors; intentionally building resilience around multiple domains, from individual, family, school, community, and also considering the workplace.

We're going to focus in on sector strategies, particularly career pathways development in our IBEST – or integrated basic education and skills training. How can we bring more integrated, contextualized education to our folks? Because what we know through research here in Washington, and student success with IBEST, is that students are more successful when they have integrated, contextualized education, and are more likely to be successful along that career pathway.

We'll be focusing in on educational attainment, not just for parents but also for youth. Incumbent worker training, making sure that we're providing supports to the sectors that we've identified – which are health care, agriculture, and government – around skilling up entry-level workers so that they can move into the next level and we can backfill with an entry-level pipeline of participants that we're working to build whole family capacity with.

And then really thinking about how we commit to that as well, that within Economic Services Administration and the Community Services Division, which administers TANF, committing to also being an incumbent worker training employer in that area. So finding opportunities to bring entry-level workers in and skill ours up as well.

And then in year two, our implementation strategies. And we're going to use rapid cycle evaluation techniques in order to tweak strategies quickly and evaluate for success and be ready to think about replication and scale pretty immediately after year two.

So we're very excited that this particular WIOA discretionary funds project is specifically around 2gen and whole family strategies to workforce development. And we hope that we'll be able to look at how we can spread some of these aspects throughout the state. We also will be using strategies that were surfaced during our System to Family Stability pilots around this particular pilot.

And then also in Washington here, and with TANF, something very exciting that's coming out of the System to Family Stability Policy Academy is, where we see some of those local successes, how it can potentially transform TANF case management. And intentionally thinking about applying some of those learnings into our current case management model and having some systems change there.

Some of the other efforts that are enhancing TANF and WIOA integration that we've been participating in is a cross-agency kind of ad hoc partnership that's been looking to identify opportunities for streamlining entry into WIOA-funded programs by using TANF eligibility and SNAP eligibility as baseline elements to identify what other programs individuals would be eligible for. And then starting to create good communication around that.

And then also in Washington state, we have a wonderful web-based portal called Washington Connection, which DSHS administers, that allows customers to link in and actually apply for DSHS-oriented services. We're now looking at Washington Connection as potentially serving as an entry point for multiple WIOA-funded programs as well. Or at least providing opportunity for program communication around individuals who are entering the Washington Connection portal that may be eligible for multiple programs, and how we can reach out to them and bring them into the system better.

We've already inventoried all of the – our partners, WIOA-based and workforce development-based programs that are administered across the states, and added them into this resource sharing portal so that folks can be aware of the services. And we have one kind of clearinghouse for information under Washington Connection.

And with that I'll turn it back over to Megan.

MS. BAIRD: Thanks, Louisa. And also thank you to our earlier presenters, Brandon and Susan. And we hope for everyone joining us today, whether you're new to the 2gen concepts and approaches, familiar with them, or you've begun planning and developing or already have efforts in place, we hope you were all able to take something away today that really can help move forward your state's efforts around 2gen policy and programming.

And with that, we'd like to take some time to answer questions from you all. So if you have not done so already, we encourage you to type your questions into the chat function. And we will get started with our first question for Susan.

And Susan, the question is, "Some 2gen activities don't fit into any federally – (inaudible) – TANF activity. Do you have any guidance in terms of how to address that?"

MS. GOLONKA: Thank you for that question. First of all, I would want to refer folks to an information memorandum that we have on the Office of Family Assistance website. And it's called "Strengthening TANF Outcomes by Developing Two-Generation Approaches to Build Economic Security." One of our short titles. But that will provide some – I think some valuable information, both about how TANF can be used and sort of this issue of the context of the work requirement.

I would say that one of the things is that there really is a fair amount of flexibility. And I think it's important to bring your partners together and talk about, all right, this is what we want to provide for the families in our effort. And certainly vocational educational training is countable for up to 12 months; and up to 30 percent, roughly, of those counting in your work requirement can be engaged in that activity.

But there's also ways – but clearly there are things like we talk about parental skills training, home visiting, some of those activities. And those will not count towards a work participation rate. But I think there are ways to think about how do you structure the delivery of those services so it's easier for the family to participate in them? Maybe it's having some parental skills training aligned with the Head Start program, that you receive it when you go to pick up your child, or it's on Saturday.

So part of it is figuring out how some of these activities that are not work-related and that don't count, how you might structure them into the family's day or life so it does not provide a burden.

I would also add that we have provided some clarification on our website about how one could integrate sort of basic skills, ESL programs into a vocational educational training program. So without getting into a lot of detail, basic ed on its own is not a core activity. But we have clarified that if it's integrated in, concurrent with, or a short-term prerequisite, and if these activities will – sort of critical to the success of one participating in vocational educational training, then it's allowable to combine then.

So that again is a lot of detail. But if you go to our website on our – where we have questions and answers, you will find more information on that.

And then again, I think it's always a reminder that what counts and what you can do are two different things. And a lot of activities may not count fully; but sort of depending where you are and your work rate, maybe you can allow certain portions or a few people here and there to participate in some of these activities, knowing that they won't count towards your work rate.

And then the final thing I would just say is to remember that TANF is also a flexible block grant in the way of what can be funded. So as you think about home visiting programs, you think about quality preschool programs, you think about financial literacy programs, those are activities that TANF funds can be used toward. And I think it's important to think about that and to talk to those who are allocating TANF dollars within your state.

So with that I'll stop. Thank you. That was a great question.

MS. BAIRD: Thanks, Susan. And there's a question for me regarding the Strengthening Working Families Initiative – or SWFI grants – about can those – can other needs, like transportation, be addressed through this grant?

So I'm not sure if you're a grantee or not. If you are, congratulations. But that is – the Strengthening Working Families Initiative grant, while it focuses predominantly – or 100 percent – on serving parents with child care needs, it does also – with those child care needs it does allow flexibility for other types of support services, of which obviously child care is the predominant one, given the population focus. And transportation is one of those and it's other types of support services necessary to help parents successfully complete their training program.

And certainly if you are an FPO (sic), you should definitely reach out to your federal project officer if you have questions about what your specific grant can or cannot do.

And I'll turn it over to Brandon for – Brandon, I think you can tackle this question. "Where can we go to see our personal state position on TANF/WIOA work to have an idea of where our state is in the process?"

MR. BUTLER: Sure. Thanks, Megan. You can actually – one of the good things about the portal that was set up was RSA has – if you google "RSA state plan," it's the second one down. I know because I just did it. That will provide a downloadable copy of your state plan.

And I think the second part is, if you haven't reached out to your local workforce or local human services TANF provider, do that as well. I think this is a great opportunity to really expand the horizons of what was traditionally seen as workforce. And if your state isn't currently doing it, maybe they're already thinking about it. Maybe you can partner with them.

So there's the website. Again, if you google "RSA state plan," it's there. But also, reach out and build the relationship.

MS. BAIRD: Thank you. Louisa, we have a great question for you. "In attempting to involve adult education GED students in career pathways, what success have states have in securing Pell grants for those who have not yet achieved the GED to begin studying the initial level of the career pathways? An example is the initial apprenticeship for electrical journeyworkers for IBEST programs that high school students are allowed to dual enroll in, but are shut off to the adult education population." (Cross talk) – you are out of it for good.

MS. ERICKSON: Yes. That's a great question. And so what we have done in Washington state with IBEST and then also with the states we've worked with – in my previous life, before DSHS, I actually worked with our state board for community and technical colleges, helping to provide technical assistance to other states on IBEST, and worked with more than 20 states.

And what's very useful is using Pell – what's called "ability to benefit." So under Pell, there's an option called ability to benefit where if a student who does not have a high school diploma or GED is able to earn six college-level credits, they then become eligible for Pell.

So what you do then is, in Washington state we use other funds to bridge students through paying for those first six credits of college-level work within the IBEST program, which is integrated and contextualized and does include college-level professional technical credits, and have their FAFSA ready to go and ready to apply for Pell, and then transition off whatever bridge fund it may be.

Now, you may able to look at using SNAP E&T funds. You may be able to look at using your TANF dollars. In Washington state we have something called Opportunity Grant, which is a state-funded grant. Or we also have a state need grant, which is similar to federal need grant, but it's state-administered.

So identifying the sources that can help you bridge those first six credits will allow students that didn't get their high school diploma or GED to get Pell grants.

MS. BAIRD: Thanks, Louisa. It looks like some questions for you too around SNAP. The first one is, "You said that your program included SNAP clients. And how did you pay for child care? Or was it not an issue for SNAP clients?"

MS. ERICKSON: So it seems there might be a little bit of confusion with what including our program meant. So when I mentioned that we included SNAP E&T in our Washington state-WIOA combined plan, BFET – which is our SNAP E&T program – is listed as a combined plan partner. But it didn't change any elements of the service that are provided under BFET. It's there to be articulated as a workforce development program.

It's a little bit different than TANF because, while TANF is in the state plan as a partner program, TANF is also included under WIOA as a mandatory partner. So as a mandatory partner at the One-Stop and thinking about integrated services, we're thinking about TANF differently in how we integrate.

We didn't have to come into the plan, but we still would have had to be a mandatory partner and integrate. So it's just a little bit different. So I think there might be some confusion there. We haven't changed anything in terms of SNAP E&T and how it's administered.

MS. BAIRD: Great. And I think we have a question we'll turn over to you, Brandon, first, and then Louisa for some thoughts as well. "Has there been any concern from the WIOA service providers about TANF clients hurting or hindering the federal performance measures for WIOA?"

MR. BUTLER: Sure. I mean, I think that the answer to that one is, sure, there has been. The transition between what was previously done under WIA and what can be done under WIOA, there's always the concern, whether it's TANF, whether it's integrating adult education. I really think that there's a lot of – often there's a lot of misconceptions whenever you don't frequently build – or that you haven't had a relationship with your partners from TANF.

And so are there – were there concerns? Yeah. Are we getting through that? Yes, slowly but surely. I think the thing about 2gen that is great is that when you – if you can build a relationship with your local TANF provider, or if you can build a relationship with your state TANF provider, then 2gen, again, is an initiative not because it's what everybody's talking about now; but it is an initiative that you can then use to leverage the relationship you've already built.

MS. ERICKSON: Yeah. You know, in Washington we have heard that there are concerns. Everybody's always concerned about their performance measures, and especially when funding is tied to that. And we are in a change, like Brandon said.

I think that for us, our workforce development councils and our state workforce development board have been very open and very much on board in thinking about the 14 populations that are identified as priority of service under WIOA. And how we can start framing the workforce development system to be more accessible and equitable and have a full complement of services for clients, depending on where they are.

And I would say that, from the TANF perspective and in our partnerships, what we're trying to do to help allay some of those fears is to really articulate what expertise and partnership we're going to bring to the table, to help make sure that we all are doing our part to have the most prepared and supported customers that we are jointly serving.

But those things do exist. And that's our number one tactic is really bring our own expertise to the table and making sure that our partnership is real.

MS. BAIRD: Thank you, Louisa. And we want to be cognizant of time. I know most of you have hung onto those extra eight minutes; we want to make sure you can get to your next meeting or whatever your plans are.

Some specific questions came in, asking for links to certain things or information on certain – (inaudible) – that were mentioned. I think some of the speakers are going to follow up offline to make sure you get that information.

We did want to make sure that you all had our contact information for all of the speakers today.

And on behalf of all of our presenters, I wanted to thank everyone for joining us for today's WIOA Wednesday. And turn it back over to Jen who is going to wrap things up.

(END)