

During the Strategic Planning Committee meetings we did not hear any negative comments regarding treatment of participants and/or the inability to refer WoRC participants to appropriate services within the communities. Again, having face-to-face meeting is necessary in order to evaluate and provide the participant with the services they need.

### **Cash Benefit Policies**

Career Futures, Inc. staff agrees with the Cash Benefit Policies as written.

### **Service Delivery**

In reading the minutes of the Strategic Planning Sessions and from attending the meetings, what was brought up by the audience members and committee members was the use of a **Liaison** position between the local Office of Public Assistance and WoRC Operators. That this position would bridge the gap between these two offices to provide a better Service Delivery for the participant and programming entities by following the bullet points already in place within this section. A Liaison, associated with the WoRC Program, could be collocated at the Office of Public Assistance. A Liaison between the Office of Public Assistance and WoRC Operators was mentioned numerous times in a positive manner.

As it is written in this recommendation it makes it appear that the current WoRC Contractors do not address the needs of the TANF WoRC Participants and do not broker services appropriately to assist the participant in becoming successful. This is the main purpose of the WoRC contracts as well as the FES and SEP/AESP programs and is a requirement when responding to the Request for Proposal (RFP's) for the programs. This gives the impression that the current contractors do not have the experience, knowledge and/or case management experience to assist the TANF participant.

Referring to the initial statement: *Redesign the TANF service delivery system using a client advocate model that emphasizes self-direction . . .*

What is this definition? If it is the bulleted items, then that is what is currently in place. If it is a more centralized service delivery system where the "self-direction" is done via computer or telephone to a "client advocate", we strongly oppose this. Once again, it was brought forth to the committee by audience members and committee members alike that face-to-face meetings is imperative to the success of the participant and program. The participant is, many times, unable to "self-direct"; hence why they are seeking help.

### **Localization**

Within the Request for Proposal (RFP) process, localization is a requirement when responding to the RFP. Local Community involvement is essential when designing programs to assist low-income individuals to become self-sufficient. Throughout the Strategic Planning Sessions, it was brought up that the WoRC Contractors have relationships with referral agencies, schools, colleges, medical community, etc.; statements within this section, give the impression that current contractors do not have local community involvement when working with TANF clients.

### **TANF Services for American Indians**

Career Futures, Inc. is not involved with any one Tribe in the State of Montana.

**Bullet Four** – This is a confusing statement. This statement **must** define what is: *utilizing a transparent, structured process when setting programmatic direction that prioritizes services that prove to be effective while maintaining federal work participation rates.*

Missing in this statement is: *using the WoRC Contractors knowledge and relationships with local and state resources to assist the TANF participants in becoming successful.* This relationship with the local and state resources was brought out numerous times to the Strategic Planning Committee who in turn were impressed and pleased this was ongoing; some WoRC Contractors even publish a Resource Guide on an annual basis that is distributed to participants and the various other resource agencies within the community.

If this bullet item is referring to an online transparent structure instead of face-to-face meetings, then this is a misrepresentation of what was brought to the committee of what the participant **needs**. Throughout the Strategic Planning Sessions, it was brought up to the committee by audience members and the committee members themselves that a centralized online/call center type of structure is NOT beneficial to the participant. Face-to-face meetings with Case Managers and other resources is what makes the program successful as demonstrated by the audience comments, the “fish bowl” exercise, and committee members.

**Bullet Five** – *Evaluate the TANF transfer dollars.....*

The transfer dollars need to assist TANF recipients in order to follow the four purposes of TANF as defined in the background information.

**Bullet Six** – *Consider piloting and implementing promising.....*

Current TANF WoRC Contractors were instrumental in designing the Family Economic Security (FES) Program as well as the Subsidized Employment and Accelerated Programs within the TANF Block Grant. These models have been successful and a similar approach to re-design would also lend to success.

**Bullet Seven and Eight** – *Develop an ongoing training system..... and As new service delivery models are adopted.....*

Agree with ongoing training system for TANF staff and contractors covering customer service etc.....

#### **Application and Assessment**

**Bullet One and Two** – *Streamline the TANF application process ... and Align the TANF application ...*

Combine these two bullets since this is in regards to the application process and corresponding paperwork. This was suggested at the November meeting.

**Bullet Three, Four and Five** – *Ensure that clients are receiving ... and Require repeat assessment ... and Update the screening and referral process ...*

These are currently being completed by the Office of Public Assistance when the individual applies for TANF and again with the current TANF WoRC Contractors within their communities.

December 31, 2014

Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of the TANF Strategic Planning Committee Public Meetings that were held from April through November, 2014. After review of the TANF Strategic Plan Recommendations we have compiled comments as a current Work Readiness Component (WoRC) Program contractor and previous contractor for the Family Economic Security (FES) Program and Subsidized Employment Program (SEP).

**Page 1 through 10** - In reviewing the minutes of the Strategic Planning Sessions, a suggestion would be to provide the PowerPoint presentation of the "TANF Federal Funding" which describes how the Federal Funding is distributed in the State of Montana. The PowerPoint presentation is very specific to where the Federal Funding, Maintenance of Effort (MOE) and the reserve money are allocated and to what programs. This would also be beneficial to the legislative body in describing the allocation process and the mandated transfers of dollars to specific programs.

**Page 11 – TANF Strategic Plan Recommendations:**

**TANF Administration:**

***Bullet One – Prioritize TANF programming, supports and opportunities ...***

A definition of Prioritizing would be helpful – who will prioritize programming supports and opportunities. DPHHS currently has Employment and Training Contractors who are knowledgeable about local resources within their community to assist TANF participants in becoming self-supporting.

***Bullet Two – Create an on-going committee to advise the TANF Program, to include.....***

As a non-profit community based organization, Career Futures, Inc. is in support of this committee.

***Bullet Three - Simplify the overall program, reviewing and reducing the number of contracts, and creating stability in programming and funding structures, including multi-year contracts.***

During the Strategic Planning Session there was a 'fish bowl' approach with current contractors where we brain stormed ideas brought forth by the committee. One of these was the idea of having TANF participants participate in activities that **fit their needs** which in turn will assist them in becoming self-sufficient. This particular idea (which came out of the brain storming session) was brought to the Strategic Planning Committee where the current WoRC contractors would be able to 'try' this concept to make sure that the TANF participant can attain self-sufficiency. Other ideas were brought to the committee that included the WoRC Contractors working with the program participants. This was perceived to be a very important process with the Strategic Planning Committee; at no time in this process was a reduction of contracts discussed – in fact, the WoRC Contractors were relied upon through this process.

### **Youth Programming and Childcare**

It is important to have local Resource and Referral Agencies within the same communities as the WoRC contracts to ensure quality child care is provided to TANF children. Relying on the Office of Public Assistant to also administer the Best Beginnings eligibility and application process is adding complications to the TANF process. The participant needs to be able to take steps throughout this application process in order to keep track of a confusing and stressful process. A lot of information is "thrown at" the families at one time, adding to this is cause for confusion in trying to keep "things straight". 4C's is an integral part of the WoRC Program administered by Career Futures, Inc. to ensure that the Best Beginnings is properly delivered to the TANF participant and children. They also are the experts that the families rely upon when needing help.

Allowing the child care benefits to follow the child instead of being dependent on the parent's compliance with the WoRC participation activities would provide greater stability for children in TANF families.

Career Futures, Inc. is in support of the TANF Youth Program contracts and funding structures that are currently in place with Department of Labor and Industry.

### **Data Collection and Evaluation**

Data Collection for all programs, to include WoRC/FES and Subsidized Employment Programs, need to be collected to ensure that TANF and non-TANF programs are successful in meeting federal participation rates as well as having low-income individuals become self-supporting.

### **Carry Over**

The TANF service delivery system, with current contractor's involvement, should identify a seamless system to include Financial Literacy, Subsidized Employment, Accelerated Employment and other services identified within the community. Jamie's model is ideal because of the tiered/category effect for TANF recipients to emphasize meeting the specific needs of the family for participants to become successful.

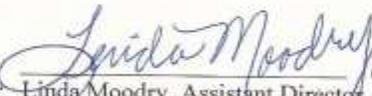
In summary, we appreciate this opportunity to comment on the Draft Strategic Plan and being able to participate in the Strategic Planning discussion.

Thank you for all your hard work on behalf of the TANF recipients in Silver Bow, Beaverhead, Granite, Powell and Deer Lodge counties.

Sincerely,



Mary J. Berg, Executive Director



Linda Moodry, Assistant Director



Sarah DeMoney, Program Facilitator